The Impossible Ideal? Fictional Parental Figures from the Long Nineteenth Century Through the Lens of Parenting Advice Literature

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1. Introduction

Advice literature has long been famous for its obviously didactic tone and the hierarchical reader-author relationship which, despite the lessened adherence of modern society to strictly hierarchical structures, exist to this day (cf. Dahmer, 25). The education of children and parenting methods are among the fields that have a long-standing connection to advice literature, which persists in the twenty-first century in spite of the evident changes in prevalent values and norms. This interest in the child-adult relationship already hints at the ubiquitous theme of childhood in literature and scholarship. Indeed, most scholars focusing on family structures in Britain in the nineteenth century have tended to concentrate on children and concepts of childhood; thus, even if parents implicitly played an important part in their studies as well, they were not exactly in the centre of their research.[1] One of the reasons for this is the rising interest in and the shifting perspectives on childhood in the course of the nineteenth century:

> […] [T]here had been intense interest in the 'wild child' during the Romantic era, with Jean Itard's study of the 'Young Savage of Aveyron' (1801) offering one of the first great studies of child development […]. Rousseau's theories had inspired the educational experiments of the Edgeworth's and Thomas Day, whilst the idea of the 'baby diary' as an aid to studying the process of development also seems to have taken root in the Romantic era, with the publication by the German philosopher Dietrich Tiedemann of Observations on the Mental Development of a Child (1787) (Shuttleworth, 221).

Especially the Victorian perception of femininity, with its strong focus on girlhood and early womanhood has attracted much scholarly attention in the past; a key publication in this context is Deborah Gorham's study *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* from 1982, which also includes a discussion of the impact of advice texts on the formation of femininity for young women. However, since Gorham's text refers to the Victorian girl, and the shaping of the Victorian girl into a form that society perceived as ideal, the parent role of a Victorian woman is not at the centre of her discussions (cf. "Preface," npag.).

[1] For example: Pollock, Linda A. *Forgotten Children. Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900*. London & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983; Nardin, Jane. "Children and their Families in Jane Austen's Novels." *Women and Literature* 3.1 (1983): 73-87; Berglund, Birgitta. "Spoilt Children and Fond Parents: On Children and Childhood in Jane Austen's *Emma*." *Angles on the English-Speaking World* 8.1 (2008): 51-61; Shuttleworth, Sally. *The Mind of the Child. Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900*. Offord & New York: Oxford University Press, 2010; Gorham, Deborah. *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*. Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 1982.

Cornelia Dahmer's examination of advice literature from 2017 likewise focussed on young ladies and their education according to the idealised principle of truthfulness and spiritual development. She chose to focus on conduct books that usually featured good manners and spiritual progress as principal goals.[2]

Shifting the focus to the parents, this thesis aims to reveal underlying social currents and dynamics by analytically targeting the reflection of supposedly ideal parenting behaviour in advice texts as well as fictional literary works by female authors of the long nineteenth century. The question why and how conformity or non-conformity to contemporary ideals is depicted in the respective fictional text will be central to this study. The results can support the exposure of remnants of intuitively applied social prescription still existing today. The theoretical part of my PhD thesis will deal primarily with a reconstruction of the sociocultural context of the parent-child relationship in the nineteenth century, addressing the genre of advice literature in general and its subgenres, paying attention to their tone and intended readership. Issues such as middle-class social ideals and socio-economic currents which formed the backbone of family and parenting standards will be addressed as well, followed by an examination of how pregnancy was treated, the domestic ideology and the mother in her presupposed sole role as educator and moral beacon responsible for the celebrated mother-child bond, which reflected, in some cases, "the rigid limitations of women in family life" (Adams, 504). Of course, children who live, even in fiction, must have been born; so the theme of pregnancy and birth is far from unimportant, especially since it was a prominent topic in advice literature (cf. Hanson, 77); Berglund remarks that the "rather cool attitude towards children and childbearing" (51) which is sometimes apparent in Austen's letters was not caused by indifference towards children but rather by "common sense and a healthy concern for the women involved" (Berglund, 51), who were sometimes suffering under the burden of a very large family and its effects on both family income and health (cf. Berglund, 51), as well as under the pressure to be the centre of the often "idealized domestic castle[…]" (ibid., 26): "According to the ideal of domesticity in its original form, a mother's special sphere was the home, where she provided a refuge from the brutalities of the

[2] Dahmer, Cornelia. *Conduct books für junge Damen des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts. Aufrichtigkeit und Frauenrolle*. Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2017.

outside world" (Homes & Nelson, 5). Since being a parent has arguably never been a particularly easy task, this study will discuss how worries shaped parental behaviour, and how legislation that could approve or disapprove of parental actions (cf. Pooley, 26) affected family life in the nineteenth century, and whether those adversities changed in the course of this period, as so many things where undergoing changes in this period of transition (cf. Gossage, 9-10). The topic of "(religious) family ideology" (Van Osselaer & Pasture, 8) naturally requires an inquiry into gender-related role allocations and gender ideology with its prescriptive transmission of ideals. In order to develop a more complete picture of the influence that gender-concepts had on parents and parenting, additional secondary works, for instance Connell's influential work *Masculinities*, will be included, as well as Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Roger's study on "The Empire of the Father" (2007).

Gender ideals were deeply imprinted in the social environment of the nineteenth century and the "socio-economic changes" (Van Osselaer & Pasture, 9) that characterise this time period also led to an "intensified gender ideology" (ibid.), which, among other consequences, resulted in an "increasing stress put on gender differentiation" (ibid.). The boundaries and limitations laid upon the respective gender were more flexible for the upper classes of society, in which the often-mentioned boundaries between public and private sphere were less fixed (cf. Goujon, 70). However, in the course of the century these distinctions generally became stricter, especially among the middle classes (cf. ibid). Not only women in their domestic environment were affected by the boundaries of gender ideology: Men, as well, had their part in the struggle to keep up the gender-based ideals of their time, which were primarily defined by the term 'manliness' (cf. Tosh, 3). But this term was by no means clear in its definition: As Tosh states, "[i]t was defined in different variants, according to class and religion" (2). It was the father's declared duty to "impose […]" (23) his rules upon his sons and fear of feminisation of boys made this ideology even "more aggressive" (ibid.). While confusion as to what the term 'manliness' actually meant was in fact "a very common experience among men" (21), these uncertainties could still prove fatal for their position as a father or a son within the context of the family, but also in the wider context of society (cf. Strange, 77). Moral dilemmas could result from a struggle for conformity: For instance,

as Tosh observes, [n]o man could maintain his public support for women's suffrage without reflecting on what his manhood really consisted of" (104). The father's place, his "paternal responsibilities" (Strange, 21) as a "breadwinner […]" (ibid.) and "public figure" (Maurits, 61) were more often "outside the home" (Strange, 8), which could result in a rather "distant" (ibid., 4) father-figure.

The attention that has been paid to family structures in research also included engagements and marriages as topics of particular interest, especially for the Victorian Era, since this time is commonly known as a period in which the concept of the family and the ideal home as such gained in importance (cf. Ruggles, 131 & Pooley, 25). Many modern scholars have thus examined Victorian phenomena like the "glorification of home and family" (Ruggles, 131), "bourgeois respectability" (ibid.) and "sentimentalization of childhood" (ibid.). The subjects of parents and parenting have been addressed most prominently with respect to the Victorian era with its focus on the famous "Victorian Home" (ibid.): "People could agree that the home, and the family it sheltered, was a space that was central to national civilization, gendered identities, and ideals of independence" (Pooley, 25). Parenting, however, has arguably always been a topic important to every social environment since it was – and is –widely assumed "that society as a whole rests upon a healthy family life. Distressed families, however, shatter society and make it ready for overthrow" (Schneider, 37). So, family and home are closely related concepts that were at times even used to denote the degree of civilization of the respective society (cf. Pooley, 25). Parents became necessary for the study of child-development in the context of fiction as well, because father and mother as the child's background and supposedly closest relatives were formative for any development process (cf. Nardin, 73). Jane Nardin writes that in fictional works the heroine's family and "upbringing help […] both to explain her personality and to develop the novel's themes" (84). Of course, this idea relates closely to some of the central questions of this study: do fictional parents conform to the ideals of their time and, if yes, in what ways? Or, contrarily, do they choose to go against society's rules and, if yes, how? What does their particular behaviour tell the readership about the characters? Jane Nardin is of the opinion that it is in many cases exactly this

imperfection, the shortcomings of the family and the main character's upbringing which render the plot interesting or are even necessary for the plot:

> [T]he family [primarily the parents] must be credible as the heroine's point of origin, yet must fail to guide and protect her completely, so that her coming to maturity will not lack interest. Her family background must help to explain her good traits, as well as her serious flaws and her early errors (73).

Of course, imperfections within family life, the failings of parents and parenting, are not limited to the background of the heroine; the faults of parents and the resulting "tension and conflict" (Nardin, 73) also flesh out and provide a certain sense of reality to minor characters. What do the 'bad' mother on one hand and the ideal mother on the other hand look like? And which occupations and opinions does the ideal father in the nineteenth century have? Do these ideas change over time, or are certain standards relatively stable? For reasons of consistency the choice of authors will, as mentioned earlier, be limited to female novelists. Non-fictional texts will be used to reconstruct those values and norms of the time that had a bearing on concepts of parenting. Consulting contemporary advice literature makes it possible to determine whether fictional parents adhered to the social parenting standards of their time, holding on to the respective values and norms, or ignored, subverted, or even violated the current paternal and maternal ideals.

The relevant pieces of advice literature, which promise to be particularly useful for my study of depictions of parents and parenting in fiction, include examples of professional (medical) advice: William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* (1769), Thomas Graham's *An Account of Persons Remarkable for their Health and Longevity* (1829), *Hints to Mothers* by Thomas Bull (1837) and the midwife Martha Mears's *The Pupil of Nature: or, Candid Advice to the Fair Sex*. (1797). In addition, Conduct Books and Moralising advice manuals will be drawn upon: Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1798), John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774), William Cobbett's *Advice to Young Men* (1829), Elizabeth Gaskell's "Diary" and Maurice Colin's *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct. Being The Etiquette of Every-day Life* (1893).[3] Lastly, so-called household manuals will be consulted: Isabella

[3] Gaskell's diary was first officially published in 1923 but fulfilled its function as a private advice text much earlier on. More information on this subject is provide in chapter 2.3.

Beeton's *Mrs Beetons's Book of Household Management* (1861) as well as *Cassell's Household Guide*. *Being a Complete Encyclopaedia of Domestic and Social Economy, and forming A Guide to Every Department of* (1869). It must be noted, though, that genre boundaries tend to become blurred, especially between the last two categories.

As to the fictional works, this study will start with an examination of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) since this novel displays a wide variety of both main and minor characters who either are parents and/or discuss parenting (cf. Nardin, 73). Especially useful for the analysis of *Sense and Sensibility* are, for instance, Susan Ford's study "Thoughts on the Education of Daughters in *Sense and Sensibility*" (2022), which, though focussing only on education and daughters, provides valuable contributions to the examination of parental figures in general, and Joyce Kelley and McKenna Odom's article "*Sense and Sensibility* and the Position of Women in the Romantic Era" (2023), which especially provides insight into the representation of women's economic dependency within the novel, which affected family dynamics. Kathleen Anderson and Jordan Kidd's article "Mrs Jennings and Mrs Palmer: The Path to Female Self-Determination in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*" (2008), Sheryl Craig's "'Wealth has much to do with it': The Economics of *Sense and Sensibility*" (2011) as well as Libby Bagno-Simon's "Stronger Alone? Bridging Gaps and Reaffirming Sisterhood in *Sense and Sensibility*" (2017), while having a different vantage point, support the inquiry into the relationship of Austen's parental figure to the parenting ideal presented in advice literature.

The analysis will continue with Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), whose controversial reception at the time of publication was primarily due to the portrayal of an independent but nevertheless maternal and sacrificial heroine, Helen Huntingdon. Examinations of motherhood and fatherhood in general are part of many studies on gender representations, especially in Victorian novels, since this period is rich with depictions of family ideology and gender-related ideals. Elizabeth Rose Gruner's article "Plotting the Mother: Caroline Norton, Helen Huntingdon, and Isabel Vane" (1997), for instance, explores women's custody rights, their legal history and the fictional characters' mode of dealing with and reacting to their limited scope of action. Marianne Thormählen's three studies on *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* have proven equally

valuable, despite the fact that they do not centre directly on the question of parenthood: “The Villain of Wildfell Hall. Aspects and Prospects of Arthur Huntingdon” (1993) includes thoughts on Anne Brontë’s depiction of Helen Huntingdon’s relationship to her degenerate husband, which evidently also affects the portrayal of parenthood and parenting. “‘Horror and Disgust’: Reading *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*” (2019) incorporates ideas on Gilbert Markham’s paternal association with Helen’s son and his motives for the formation of this paternal bond, and “Literary Art and Moral Instruction in the Novels of Anne Brontë” (2023) compares different maternal characters from Brontë’s writings, but without including the parental ideal presented in advice texts. Judith Coffey’s work *“The Power of Love.” Heteronormativität und Bürgerlichkeit in der modernen Liebesgeschichte* (2013) adds to the discussion of the middle-class ideal and its reflection in Brontë’s novel, and Kirstin A. Le Veness’s article “Lessons from *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*: Recasting the Mother” (2011) as well as Minica Hope Lee’s “A Mother Outlaw Vindicated: Social Critique in Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*” (2008) briefly hint at the difficult relationship of realistically depicted maternal characters and the maternal ideal. Judith E. Pike’s “Breeching Boys: Milksops, Men’s Clubs and the Modelling of Masculinity in Anne Brontë’s *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*” (2012) reflects on gender stereotypes with a special focus on the masculine ideal, even referring to the author of advice literature William Cobbett, but the limited scope of her text does not allow for a detailed reflection on the relationship of the gendered ideals and the parent-child relationship in the novel. Rebecca Sheppard’s study “‘You have Only Yourself to Blame’: Mind and Reason in Anne Brontë’s: *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*” (2022) deals with the precarious position of the women depicted within the novel and the social demands which shaped their situation, but does not focus on maternity and paternity.

I will explore the topic of controversial and, partly, transgressive motherhood with a detailed look at Ellen Wood’s sensation novel *East Lynne* (1861) and Mary Brunton’s more didactic (and unfinished) novel *Emmeline* (1819). Since both novels depict female (and male) protagonists in quite similar circumstances, it will prove beneficent for the aim of this thesis to examine the works in close proximity, which promises to reveal similarities and significant

differences which can help to uncover tendencies within genres and their conventions with regard to reflecting on and dealing with contemporary gender ideals. Since maternity is central to the plot of *East Lynne* it is hardly surprising that other studies have already included the subject, although with differing approaches. Ellen Bayuk Rosenman's study "'Mimic Sorrows': Masochism and the Gendering of Pain in Victorian Melodrama" (2003) as well as Ann Cvetkovitch's "Crying for Power: *East Lynne* and Maternal Melodrama" (1992) focus on the theme of the suffering mother, and Vicky Simpson in "Not-So-Happy Homemakers: Women, Property and Family in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*" (2012) elaborates on this subject with Victorian economy at the centre. This focal point is arguably shared by John Kucich in his article "The Professional and the Mother: Moral Disempowerment in *East Lynne*" (1994), which provides many valuable insights into the developing power dynamics within families during the Victorian era. Kucich's findings, however, remain largely free from any references to advice literature. Similarly to Kucich, Sarah Fitzparick in "Separate Spheres: A Closer Look at Ideological Gender Roles in Victorian England through the Sensation Novel" (2015) highlights the ideological impact of Victorian gender roles on the novel, a notion which is already present in Lyn Pykett's work "The 'Improper' Feminine" (1992). In relation to this subject, the connection between power and transgression is explored in Sun Jai Kim's text "Owning a Sense of Perversity in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*" (2022), which especially helps to shed light on Archibald Carlyle's relationship to his two wives and thus, in turn, provides inspiration for a discussion of potentially shifting parenting methods. Astonishingly little research has been done on Mary Brunton's *Emmeline*, in contrast to Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, despite the fact that the fates of both heroines are somewhat similar. Emily C. Friedman's article "Austen among the Fragments: Understanding the Fate of *Sanditon* (1817)" (2013) comments on the popularity of the themes depicted in Brunton's didactic novel and already mentions some parallels to *East Lynne*, which are, however, not analysed in detail. The paper "Scotland and the Literary Call to Freedom in Mary Brunton's Fiction" (2016) by María Jesús Lorenzo Modia expands on the impact of Brunton as an author on the 'female novel' and her moralistic background, which is reflected in *Emmeline*, while Andrew Monnickendam in "The Nature of Aesthetics in the Works of Mary Brunton, Hugh McDiarmid and

Alasdair Gray" (2016) very briefly mentions the character of the heroine as a victim. Can the protagonists Emmeline and Isabel, on the one hand, still adhere to the Victorian ideal of motherhood, while on the other hand subverting norms by abandonment and even illegitimate motherhood in the case of Isabel (cf. Wilson, 94 & 108), or is the ideal presented as unachievable? Since the argument in favour of 'natural', biological, maternity is quite prominent in these novels, can "good motherhood" (Grey, 82), by contrast, be expected of a stepmother such as Barbara Carlyle?

The study will conclude with an investigation of the maternal and paternal characters in Frances Hodgson Burnett's Emily Fox-Seton series, which includes the novellas "The Making of a Marchioness" (1901) and "The Methods of Lady Walderhurst" (1902). Since motherhood and fatherhood are of far greater relevance in the latter text, the focus will lie on this narrative and its portrayal of pregnancy and mostly absent and distant fatherhood. Since Hodgson Burnett's fiction for adults is considerably less well-known than her writings for children, including such celebrated works as *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) and *A Little Princess* (1905), it comes at no great surprise that previous research on the Emily Fox-Seton series is rather sparse and therefore also limited in the exploration of the themes and tropes included in Burnett's text. However, important works which have to be referenced are, for example, Alison Lurie's article "The Making of a Marchioness" from the collection *In the Garden. Essays in Honor of Frances Hodgson Burnett* (2006) as well as the introduction to the Penguin edition of *The Secret Garden* (2002) by the same author. Thomas Recchio's "Historical Dreamscapes and the Vicissitudes of Class: From *A Lady of Quality* to *The Methods of Lady Walderhurst*" (2022) focuses especially on the portrayal of the heroine as well as the depiction of male characters and their relationship to the women in their lives and thus proves to be a helpful contribution to an examination of parents and parenting in the two novellas. John Goode's review of Burnett's work (1968) as well tackles the topic of masculine representation and attitudes towards femininity, and Charlotte Mitchell in her review of "The Marriage Market" (2001) highlights Burnett's depiction of the dichotomy of reality and the 'fairy tale' tropes included in the plot, which supports the analysis of the differences between the parenting ideal taken from advice literature and the depiction of actual parental attitudes in Burnett's novellas.

Drawing upon research already accomplished on related topics, this thesis will address the following questions: Do the authors of the selected texts choose to describe their characters to be influenced by contemporary advice literature? And, even if this is not explicitly mentioned, do the characters comply with the same norms and values that advice literature recommends to be "instill[ed] in children" (Jarrar, 61), or do their actions contradict them? Does, for example, Mr John Dashwood act according to the advice that is given in Cobbett's *Advice to Young Men*? Does Lady Middelton's absorption in motherhood make her the 'ideal mother' according to advice texts, or is there more to her portrayal? Is Brunton's Emmeline capable of the quality of female sacrifice, which, according to Gisborne, was especially important (cf.17; Holmes & Nelson, 1)? Is Brontë's Mrs Hargrave to be condemned for wanting her daughter to marry advantageously? And, regardless of whether the answers are negative or affirmative, why is this particular approach chosen? Does Archibald Carlyle's patriarchal family management turn him into the perfect "*pater familias*" (Maurits, 58)? How do he and the other literary characters cope with the challenge of maintaining the masculine idea(l) of the time, at least in the eyes of society, while at the same time remaining emotionally invested parents? This study will attempt to answer all of these questions, hopefully providing an interesting insight into the complicated and paradoxical world of the parenting ideals prevalent during the long-nineteenth century.

The examination of historical parenting advice texts and the question whether or not the principles they propagate can be recognised in fictional works from the long nineteenth century offers a contribution to the field of literary and cultural studies in general. However, the insights into shifts concerning social, familial, and individual identity are particularly valuable to feminist literary and cultural studies as well as gender studies due to their relevance to (gendered) cultural realities, social norms, stereotypes and hierarchies, which underlie the constructed power structures that affect even current ideas of parents and parenting.

Pioneering authors of feminist literature, such as Simone de Beauvoir and her work *The second Sex* (1949), and gender studies, such as Judith Butler and their study *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993) debated

the frameworks in which sex and gender are conceptualised and normalised.[4] De Beauvoir writes: "It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity" (13). Through the clash between the gender ideals presented in advice literature and literary representations of parents in the selected novels, readers are confronted with this dilemma of defining a socially acceptable identity for mothers, but also for fathers. Beauvoir already hints at the fact that idealised gender concepts are hard or even impossible to achieve in reality, remarking "[a]lthough some women try zealously to incarnate this essence [of elusive femininity], it is hardly patentable" (ibid.). However, it is not only femininity that succumbs to questioning. Masculinity, concepts of 'the man' and 'the father' and his relation to the child as well as the mother are also topics that reveal a clash between ideal and realisation. The custom that, as de Beauvoir explains, "man represents both the positive and the neutral" (15) marginalises women but also puts male persons under pressure to live up to the demands imposed on 'men'. This mechanism can also be recognised in the warnings and admonitions for fathers presented by advice texts from the long nineteenth century and is reflected in literary father figures and their various successes and failures to keep up the customary familial power structures they were born into. As Judith Butler writes, "'sex' is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, 'sex' is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time" (1). One could argue that one of the means of materialization is advice literature and the ideals it prescribes. Thus, historical parenting advice from the long nineteenth century helps to understand where gendered power dynamics come from, how they evolved and how they were interpreted. The individual depiction of said power dynamics promotes awareness of how these hierarchies were realised, or supposed to be realised, more or less imperfectly, in everyday life.

The fact that both female and male voices are present in the realm of advice literature, and specifically in parenting advice, renders the genre, interesting for an examination of early examples of boundary breaking and crossing of fixed

[4] De Beauvoir's work was originally published in French under the title *Le Deuxième Sexe*. The edition used here was translated and edited by H.M. Parshley.

social thresholds, despite its didactic and often gender-stereotypical nature. It thus, as Butler states, “call[s] into question the fixity of the structuralist law that divides and bounds the ‘sexes’” (11) almost paradoxically through the combined actions of the authors of the texts that help to promote said rules. For instance, the emergence of a distinctive female voice of authority in an advice-giving function already implies that gender identity is less “fixed” (ibid., 95) than the advice, provided by these voices of authority themselves, usually suggests to its readership. For the literary parent figures discussed in this study, it is a similar matter: Examples that purely and exclusively adhere to one fixed gender standard without ever breaking into habits commonly ascribed to the other parent, are extremely rare, which confirms the relevance of a closer examination of these ideals in combination with their fictional performers.

2. Quacks, preachers & medics: Historical background and types of advice literature in the western European and British context

Even today, advice literature represents a genre of its own with special rules and conventions, usually approved by contemporary society's consensus, reflecting popular social trends or even political developments. Today, as Macvarish notes, "[c]hild-rearing advice is now as likely to be found on the Internet or via smartphone app as from the pages of a 'parenting' manual" (1183). Still, the main purpose of advice literature, parenting advice in particular, remains providing help for a readership who seeks to be enlightened on a certain subject and is looking for practical counsel: "Vom Kochbuch bis zum didaktischen Roman, von Hinweisen zu Tischmanieren bis zur Predigt kann jeder Text als Ratgeber gelten" (Dahmer, 25).[5] Advice literature is a diverse genre that encompasses many different forms of texts which are separated from each other by boundaries that are often extremely blurred (ibid.).[6] Advice literature has existed across many different regions and cultures and has even produced similar variants and subtypes notwithstanding some temporal and even cultural differences (cf. ibid. 26). The great diversity of the genre is also the reason why researchers tend to focus on one specific field of the genre, such as Cornelia Dahmer, whose chosen focus is the subgenre of the conduct book in the eighteenth century (cf. 56-47).[7] To mention just three other examples, Agata Ignaciuk centres her study "No Man's Land? Gendering Contraception in Family Planning Advice Literature in State-Socialist Poland (1950s–1980s)" (2020) on the promotion of contraceptives and related gender-specific behaviour prescribed in medical advice texts in Poland under socialist rule, while Zeyaul Haque in his text "Advice Literature in the Time of Akbar: A Sixteenth-Century *mathnawıas* a book of advice for the Emperor of Mughal India" (2022) discusses the didactic function of Indo-Persian poetry in the given period, and Whitney Wood examines the advice available to women and mothers-to-be in late nineteenth-century Canada and the United States in her article "'The Luxurious Daughters of Artificial Life': Female

[5] "From cookbook to didactic novel, form suggestions on table manners to sermons, every text can count as advice text" (Dahmer, 25). All translations are mine.
[6] One example of such a difficult distinction between two text forms is the case of advice literature and the conduct book as a subcategory, which will be discussed in chapter 2.3.
[7] Tabitha Kenlon chooses a similar research focus in her work *Conduct Books and the History of Ideal Women* (2020).

'Delicacy' and Pain in Late-Victorian Advice Literature" (2014).[8] Despite the diversity of the subgenres, the language and style used in most advice texts tend to show certain shared characteristics, at least in a western-European cultural context: Advice manuals usually employ what Rossman Regaigon calls "[a]dvice literature's totalizing rhetoric" (139). It's by default prescriptive character is emphasised by this choice of language, which is meant to inspire "confidence" (ibid.). Thus, the authors seek to build up the trust of the reader in their advice, sometimes even insisting on the idea that the 'truth' is expressed in their text. Jan Macvarish confirms that especially parenting advice texts have always laid "claims" to "moral authority or scientific expertise" (1180). In doing so, the writer is potentially able to convince the trusting reader to embrace the rules laid down in the advice text (cf. Rossman Regaigon, 139). Problematic as this approach could potentially be, it was, and still is, widely used and broadly accepted among the readership across many different time periods, including the present (cf. ibid.).

The intended readership of advice literature included, and still includes, a wide range of people usually specified by the topic(s) covered in the respective advice text (cf. Dahmer, 26).[9] Advice literature has gained considerable "cultural authority" (ibid., 140), though, admittedly, not every member of past and present societies consumed advice literature at some point in their lives, and there is no proof that even those persons who regularly read such texts live according to the counsel given in them (cf. Mechling, 173). Rossman Regaigon confirms this idea: "Advice is not always taken" (ibid.), and, besides the evident reality of social

[8] One could also mention Rachel Schine's 2018 study "A Mirror for the Modern Man: The *Siyar Šaʿbiyya* as Advice Literature in Tunisian Judeo-Arabic Editions", Diane M. Hoffman and her work "How (not) to Feel: Culture and the Politics of Emotion in the American Parenting Advice Literature" (2009) and Yauheniya Lekarevich's text "Russian Advice Literature for Girls. Brief History and Bibliography" (2019) among many others.

[9] In her article "Living the Life of a Domestic Goddess: Chick Lit's Response to Domestic Advice Manuals" (2005), Caroline J. Smith expands on the topic of the importance of contemporary advice literature for popular literature of the 1990s and early 2000s. Her arguments emphasise the singular social importance that advice literature still possesses in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (cf. 673-674). As a prominent example, she uses Helen Fieldings *Bridget Jones's Diary* from 1996, explaining that "[b]y presenting readers with outrageously funny instructions that stand in opposition to those instructions included in popular domestic-advice manuals such as Stewart's, *Bridget Jones's Guide to Life* (2001) mocks the excessive domestication exhibited by these publications and the implied promises these publications offer readers" (672). By pointing out Fielding's "satirical" (ibid.) take on advice manuals, Smith puts her finger on characteristic issues and shared problems that were always present in a discussion of advice literature, even during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as an idealised presentation of domesticity (cf. 674), and the societal pressure put on consumers, specifically women, to adhere to a certain standard (cf. ibid.).

pressure to conform to society's ideals in certain ways, no one was forced to adhere to advice which might involve an unpleasant, bothersome, or awkward interference in private life. Nevertheless, the striking popularity of advice literature and its extreme "pervasiveness" (ibid.) can serve as an indicator that in some cases even inauspicious counsel was heeded. Besides its rhetoric, another contributing factor to the common impact of advice literature is the assumed authority of the author; Dahmer explains: "Das in der Beratung angelegte Machtgefälle zwischen Beratendem und Beratenem ist besonders groß, da die Leser nicht widersprechen, keine Rückfragen stellen und sich auch sonst nur rezeptiv mit dem Rat auseinandersetzen können" (34).[10] These rules hold true for most advice texts and are, therefore, also applicable to parenting advice, which this chapter will pay special attention to. The persuasiveness of the language, coupled with the authority of the author, was, and sometimes still is, often due to triggering emotions such as anxiety and the feeling of inadequacy (Rossman Regaigon, 140), which led the addressees to consume more and more advice literature in order to improve themselves and ease any fears of failure at professional parenting (cf. Åström, 114). Since more and more women were able to read from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, they became "an even more ambitious target for pedagogues who recommended good breeding practices and infant care" (Opitz-Belakhal, 273).

An additional source of potential stress and confusion among the more regular consumers of advice texts, especially child-rearing advice, was the fact that not all pieces of advice literature were of one mind: "[C]ontradictory recommendations" (Åström, 114) were, and indeed are, not infrequent, and it was up to the user to filter the information according to its practicability. Rossman Regaignon also points out that there is always a certain discrepancy between the explicit addressee of the advice text and the so-called "invoked reader" (142). Advice texts incorporating the subjects of children and education were usually, but not exclusively, "either written by or specifically directed to mothers, often state a connection between maternity and the implementation of discipline" (Lecaros, 142). Indeed, mothers or pregnant women were, and still are (cf. Macvarish, 1184), common addressees for advice texts; consequently, they were *typical* addressees, while the *invoked* readership in

[10] "The inherent hierarchical nature of an advice texts causes a power imbalance between advice giver and advice receiver which is even more pronounced due to readers' inability to contradict or question the advice, being only able to receptively engage with the text" (Dahmer, 34).

this case would be the type of mother that the text presented to the actual recipients (cf. Lecaros, 142). This procedure projected expectations and/or stereotypical errors on to the reader and led to the establishment of a so-called "imagined readership" (ibid.).

2.1 Shifting times and shifting addressees? The historical context of advice literature

2.1.1 Brief historical overview

Written advice in some form presumably has existed ever since people could write (and oral advice certainly existed even before that time), but this type of text has become increasingly significant since the invention of printing. Oral parenting advice, referred to as "'folk', 'lay', or 'tacit'" knowledge" (1181) by Macvarish, doubtlessly existed before writing and printing and continued after both new techniques had become commonplace in society. As Jay Mechling confirms, "[t]he very appearance of printed advice literature meant to help parents rear a child signals a profound historical change in the social distribution of knowledge. In most cultures, across space and time, child-rearing advice is an oral genre found in face-to-face groups" (170). Sarah Emily Newton observes, for instance, that there was a notable "advice tradition well-established in Renaissance Europe" (139) which most often consisted in the "writing down [of] precepts of behavior considered important to convey to children or young adults" (ibid.). I will focus in the further discussion of advice literature's origins on the English-speaking world, specifically Great Britain.

From its oral origins, advice literature moved on to become a 'fully fletched' literary genre with the evolution of printing, established in both Great Britain and the American colonies (cf. ibid.). The increasingly high demand for this written advice, especially on child-rearing and housekeeping, was due to certain shifts in infrastructure and family dynamics which might demand "increased physical mobility of families (who might move away from the extended family)" (ibid.), causing the closed social network which had hitherto provided oral advice to disappear and leave a void which was to be filled by written texts (cf. ibid.). According to Mechling, professional medics were the first to distribute their written advice on raising children, but clerics and other groups endowed with social

authority were soon to follow (cf. ibid.). Not unlike later examples of this type of writing, the main purpose of these early pieces of advice literature appears to have been to "formulate […] a code of ethical behavior that delineates approved gender roles" (ibid., 140). Newton comments that "these conduct books [were] sometimes written by parents […] but more often written by amateur writers or hacks or even clerics" (ibid.).[11] As specified by Mechling, the Enlightenment and its focus on rationality furthered the growing demand for written advice, which was often based on or heavily influenced by well-known philosophers like Locke and Rousseau, and this development coincided with the increasing attention paid to the concept of childhood during the eighteenth century, which, in turn, stimulated the production of advice texts centred around the topic of education and the raising of children (cf. 170-171). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the popularity of advice literature reached one of its peaks during the eighteenth century (cf. Dahmer, 25), as, for instance, the success of Thomas Gisborne's *Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1798) confirms; however, it was not until the nineteenth century that advice manuals, especially parenting advice books, could be considered "a booming industry" (Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 801). This increase in the number of consumers can be explained by the rise of industrialisation and the fact that printed texts in general could now be mass-produced and were, therefore, more affordable for a wider range of society, reaching from the upper- to the lower middle- and even the working classes (cf. Mechling, 170). In her study *The Mind of the Child. Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900* (2010), Sally Shuttleworth notes this success of the genre: "The Victorians were deluged by domestic medicine and child-rearing manuals […]. Manuals on child-rearing and diseases covered the practicalities of nursing, feeding and physical illness" (48). Obviously, this success went hand in hand with the rise of the "nineteenth [...]

[11] Advice literature, especially the prominent sub-category of conduct books, was not only popular in Europe but also spread rapidly in "early America" (cf. 140) and had apparently no small impact on "the formation of American literature as well as character" (ibid.). Newton mentions Susanna Rowson's *Mentoria, or the Young Lady's Friend* from 1791 and Hannah Foster's *The Boarding School; or, Lessons of a Perceptress to her Pupils* from 1798 (146). Both texts are also great examples of the hybrid character of many conduct books, especially in the late eighteenth century, highlighting the problem of properly classifying a genre that features very blurred boundaries: "a literary hybrid which cast acceptable conduct precepts in the form of the admittedly appealing narrative" (ibid.). This form is, as Newton puts it, "puzzling to many literary historians because it cannot be discussed profitably either in terms of art or traditional literary genre" (ibid.). It is, however, still highly interesting because it "illustrate[s] the close ties between conduct book models and the fictive heroine types and plot motifs of usable conduct fiction" (ibid.).

century publishing industry" (ibid.), which, in rudimental forms, were already traceable in earlier eighteenth-century advice texts. Social developments, such as the amplifying importance of stricter separations between the so-called private feminine sphere and the public masculine sphere of professionalism, as well as the emergence of concepts such as the "cult of motherhood" (Mechling, 171) or the sanctification of domesticity (cf. Shuttleworth, 48) had a strong influence on the way parenting advice was presented during the Victorian Era. Towards the end of the nineteenth and at the start of the twentieth century, scientific developments severely impacted advice texts and caused parenting and child-rearing advice to include steadily more and more 'new scientifically proven' methods of dieting, exercising and householding (cf. Mechling, 171 & cf. Macvarish, 1182). Even from the late twentieth century to the present, advice, though in a modernised form, continues to hold "ideological weight" (Mechling, 173), echoing social, scientific and political changes, and thus has been a valuable source of study for historians as well as social scientists to this day (cf. ibid.).

Scholarly interest in the subgenre of parenting advice literature has not been overly intense in recent years, but there has been a steady number of researchers concerned with the topic. Jan Macvarish briefly addresses the subject matter in their contribution "Parental Advice Literature" in *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Children and Childhood Studies* (2020), and Jay Mechling does the same in her brief entry "Child-Rearing Advice" in the *Encyclopaedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society* (2004). Dara Rossman Regaignon's contribution "Anxious Uptakes: Nineteenth-Century Advice Literature as a Rhetorical Genre" (2015) offers many interesting insights which are of value to this study can draw upon. As Macvarish confirms, parenting advice holds a continuous interest for "[h]istorians and social scientists" in the examination of "identity shifts" and "social relations, in particular, developments in the conditions of childhood and beliefs about family roles" (1181).

2.1.2 Something for every taste and need? Subgenres of advice literature and shifting addressees

When discussing parenting advice, Macvarish differentiates between "'lay' advice" and "expert advice", the former referring to oral advice and the latter to written

advice by persons with "clerical or medical authority" (1181). In this thesis, however, I will concentrate on written advice texts which can be categorised as either amateur advice, advice written by lay people, including conduct books and household manuals, or professional advice published by people using their professional authority, i.e., either physicians or midwives. The different subcategories of amateur advice are often difficult to define, since conduct books and household guides are in part difficult to distinguish (cf. Dahmer 26): On the one hand, household books are typically directed at a broader audience because they traditionally address a wide variety of topics which were thought to interest more than one specific group of readers.[12] Conduct books, on the other hand, tend to have a specific community as "imagined readership" (Lecaros, 142) which is sometimes already specified in the title of the work (cf. Dahmer, 28-31). The origin of conduct books was not household-centred and, instead, lies in the fourteenth century, when these texts, in the form of "courtesy books […] offer[ed] advice to men who wanted to prosper at court" (Kenlon, 2). The primary group of addressees began to shift to some extent with the growth of literacy among women, but it was not until the eighteenth century that women became the dominant target readership (cf. ibid.).

Today's advice literature definitely stands in the "larger tradition of household management books and magazines" (Smith, 675) of nineteenth-century America and England. In her article, Smith mentions "books like Catharine Esther Beecher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841) and Isabella Mary Beeton's *The Book of Household Management* (1869)" (676) as examples for popular works that, due to their wide dissemination had an influence on the public and significantly impacted later works of the same genre (cf. ibid.). Mrs Beeton's household manual will also form part of the discussion within this thesis; however, because of limited space, periodical publications such as women's magazines, which also form a significant part of advice literature, will not be included here.[13]

[12] An example would be *Cassel's Household Guide* (1869), which is going to be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.3.

[13] Besides the advice published in books, which will be mainly drawn upon here, magazines that provided advice to the public existed as well: "Household instruction guides did not only reach the public in the form of books. In the nineteenth century, there was also a proliferation of women's magazines that focused on cooking, the home, and gardening. One of the earliest manuals was produced by Samuel Beeton, Mrs. Beeton's husband" (Smith, 676). Women's magazines had in part the same function as household advice published in non-serialised form and therefore were closely connected in style and content (cf. Smith, 677). One difference was the fact that they were more

As briefly mentioned earlier, the most prominent group of advice literature's addressees were female and either mothers or mothers-to-be. Advice especially addressed at fathers existed but was rarer since the father's key role was to finance the household, which was run by his wife (cf. Åström, 117). Some of the more extensive advice texts, such as household manuals which featured a wider range of topics, would include some paragraphs addressed at husbands or husbands-to-be, either already married or contemplating the idea of entering matrimony and starting a family (cf. *Cassell's*, 75). The main addressee, however, was usually still the housewife. The fact that advice for mothers and mothers-to-be was so much more common than advice to fathers and fathers-to-be indicates the inherent assumption of habitual insecurity of the female sex, and the enhanced need to conform to 'an ideal', while, at the same time, pointing towards the common conjecture that women were, and are, the primary parenting figure, thus implementing traditional role allocations and reminding of the model of the separate spheres (cf. Åström, 113-14). Thomas Gisborne, for example, follows the practice of divulging his intended addressees directly in the preface of his work, which was not unusual for authors of late eighteenth-century advice texts; he writes in this early part of *Duties of the Female Sex* that he devised his work especially for the "instruction" (4) of women. William Cobbett's guide from 1829, one of the rarer instances of a nineteenth-century manual addressed primarily at men, follows a similar strategy, explicitly disclosing the envisaged addressee(s) in the title *Advice to Young Men*

affordable than their counterparts that were published in book-form and became more of a commodity that was available for quick use in the every-day lives of a broad readership (cf. ibid.). The rather short-lived nature of this form of advice distinguishes it from the advice texts primarily used in this thesis, but an examination of these magazines would prove an interesting topic for further study One additional reason is the fact that within these magazines, advice was not the only content that was offered, making the discussion of advice provided within the magazines a more complex and rather intricate exercise of discernment: "Introducing domestic advice into magazines, however, also contributed to the blurring of the genre line. Some magazines existed solely for the dissemination of domestic advice while other magazines contained more varied content—a trend that continues today. Thus, the definition of what constitutes a "domestic magazine" and a "women's magazine" became complicated as domestic advice was incorporated in a variety of forms within magazines" (ibid.). The research interest in advice literature, particularly in women's magazines, is not entirely new: In her book *Women's Magazines, 193-1968* from 1970, Cynthia White explores the important development of this type of contemporary popular literature which shaped advice literature as we know today. She describes their start as [i]solated periodicals for women" (23) towards "the end of the seventeenth century" (ibid.) which appeared only in such small numbers that their impact did not "justify their classification as industry" (ibid.). The eighteenth century, however, saw their rise to popularity, promoting such goals as the "amuse[ment]" as well as the "instruct[ion]" (ibid.) of their female readership. Popular examples of such magazines were *The Ladies Mercury*, from 1693, of which John Dunton was the publisher (cf. ibid.) and *The Ladies Diary* from 1704 (cf. ibid.).

and (Incidentally) to Young Women in the Middle and Higher Ranks of Life. *In a Series of Letters, Addressed to a Youth, a Bachelor, a Lover, a Husband, a Father, a Citizen, or a Subject.* It is interesting to observe that, while men remain the main focus of the text, the author still secures himself access to the part of advice literature's recipients who were in the ascendant – the ever-growing section of women readers – in order to secure as wide an audience as possible.

A development similar to the shift in addresses for conduct books can be detected in household manuals. Even though they formed the largest part of advice literature's intended addressees, consumers of such advice texts had not always been exclusively, or even predominantly, women. During the eighteenth century, especially in the latter part of the eighteenth and the earlier nineteenth century, the field of addressees at which advice literature, in this case usually called 'household manuals', was aimed, underwent a certain shift. Broughton and Rogers explain: "Where hitherto advice on the running of the house had been aimed principally at men, women now became the target audience of household literature" (7). Financial duties, the maintenance of the establishment, as well as the punishment of any misbehaving members of the family were very much in line with the upkeep of the housefather's image as provider and breadwinner, the type of masculinity also promoted in the later Victorian period (cf. ibid.). But it was primarily the location of gender-specific work which changed and brought about a certain modification of the power structures within the home (cf. ibid.). This development was also due to the changing dynamics of labour in the wake of industrialisation as well as the steady emergence of the so-called 'domestic ideology' (cf. ibid.) as a reaction to the changes and insecurities industrialisation engendered. In their volume *For her Own Good. 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (1988), Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English confirm the idea that the industrialisation had an enormous impact on the gender-related organisation of the home, focusing for the most part on middle-and lower-class families (cf. 5): "Incredible, once unthinkable, possibilities opened up as all the 'fixed, fast-frozen relations' between man and woman, between parents and children, between the rich and the poor – were thrown into question: Over one hundred and fifty years later, the dust has still not settled" (ibid. 5-6).[14]

[14] Ehrenreich and English describe the common 'old order', pre-industrial lower-status family dynamic as such: "The family relation is not secluded in the realm of emotion; it is a working

Pre-industrial families lived in a rigidly patriarchal world and reflected this outer order in their inner structure: "He, the father, makes the decisions which control the family's work, purchases, marriages. *Under the rule of the father, women have no complex choices to make*" (ibid. 7, emphasis added). The pre-industrial practice of male involvement in household affairs had been due to the fact that the male place of occupation was traditionally the place where he earned his living. In the course of industrial progress and the building of factories, however, "male labour moved away from the household" (ibid., 6).[15] Since their field of occupation – the workplace – was no longer close to the domestic sphere, men came to identify themselves less and less with their home and the household; instead, their "primary identity became associated with the shop, the office or the factory, and with the role of the provider" (ibid.). This development left all household affairs in the hands of women, who, as "homemakers" (ibid., 7), were now unquestionably the main addressees of household manuals. Despite these changes and the shifting focus of male interest and labour, women's agency did not necessarily improve. Ehrenreich and English argue that in fact almost the opposite was the case:

> [T]o a degree that is almost unimaginable from our vantage point within industrial society, the Old Order is *gynocentric*: the skills and work of women are indispensable to survival. Woman is always subordinate, but she is far from being a helpless dependent. Women of the industrial world would later look back enviously on the full, productive lives of their foremothers (8, original emphasis).

Because of the ensuing changes of the workplace and the ever-widening gap between the public and private sphere, a certain insecurity concerning gender role allocation established itself in social and familial relations, and, in order to compensate for this insecurity, a growing rigidity of separation between emotion and production or economy became the norm: "The two spheres stand, in respect

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relation. Biological life – sexual desire, childbirth, sickness, the progressive infirmity of age – impinges directly on the group activities of production and play. Ritual and superstition affirm the unity of body and earth, biology and labor: menstruating women must not bake bread; conception is most favored in the time of the spring planting; sexual transgressions will bring blight and ruin to the crops, and so on. The human relations of family and village, knit by common labor as well as sex and affection, are paramount. There is not yet an external 'economy' connecting the fortunes of the peasant with the decisions of a merchant in a remote city. If people go hungry, it is not because the price of their crops fell, but because the rain did not. There are marketplaces, but there is not yet a *market* to dictate the opportunities and activities of ordinary people" (6-7, original emphasis).

[15] Of course, women started to work in factories as well. However, at this point in history, families would only let the female members of their household work, especially in this environment, if they were very hard-pressed financially.

to their basic values, opposed to each other, and the line between them is charged with moral tension" (ibid. 10). Even though the patriarchy was more and more put into question, this development was, according to Ehrenreich and English, "the end of the gynocentric order" (11) and the basis of the Victorian emphasis on rigid respectability.

In comparison to household manuals, child-rearing advice remained comparatively constant in terms of its chosen addressees, since, even prior to the Victorian era with its strict focus on propriety in the expression of masculinity and femininity, "the rearing of infants and children was considered to be pre-eminently the task of the mother" (Gorham, 65). Especially Victorian middle-class women were supposed to find their fulfilment in motherhood and were, consequently, expected to use every possible method available to perfect their parental performance (cf. ibid.). Motherhood-advice, which was lavishly published during the period, suited this idea perfectly: Gorham explains that especially during the Victorian era, motherhood gained 'a new image' of professionalism; it was no longer just a natural process, an emotional and physical bond, it came to be regarded as "a skill" (ibid.) that could – and should – be studied and perfected (cf. ibid.). The literature for such studies was provided by a growing number of texts, published in book form or in magazines which were supposed to secure the mother's knowledge on such matters as "moral and spiritual welfare of their children" as well as "their physical care and their intellectual and social training" (ibid.). As the century progressed, changes in women's lifestyle due to scientific advancement, reflected in such tendencies as "the domestic science movement […] which would fundamentally alter women's relationships to the home" (Smith, 677), also impacted the form and function of advice literature. Because of these radical changes and the space that would be required to do them justice, advice texts that fall into this category cannot be covered here as well. Other impactful developments were the growing political and, as a result, increasing social tensions brought about by military conflicts in the late nineteenth and primarily, of course, in the early twentieth century: During World War One, women's (and men's) lives were dominated by the war, which transformed not only their needs but also their whole lifestyle drastically, causing 'old-fashioned' parenting advice to feel antiquated and out of touch: Because of the necessity of women's widening engagement in

traditionally male connotated fields of labour, domesticity was no longer the focus point, and this overall trend stayed in the common consciousness until the Second World War, after which the 1950s saw a return of the idealised 'domestic and professionalised' housewife consuming advice literature (cf. Smith, 678).[16]

2.2 Voices of authority? Professional medical advice

As briefly mentioned earlier, advice manuals could originate from different sources: Both professionals as well as amateurs wrote such literature, the former, and earliest, group according to Mechling (cf. 170), being formally qualified in their field by being in possession of an officially recognized form of expertise. These forms of expertise could vary very much in their nature as well as in their genuineness and relevance, but the incidence of these added qualifications, nevertheless, sufficed to call the authors 'professionals'. After all, the foundation of advice literature, whether from the long nineteenth century or from modern times, depends upon the assumption that the author has a certain authority that enables him or her to give advice to a less knowledgeable person (cf. Wagner, "Men of Sensibility" 144). In consequence, authors of all time periods were anxious to make this proof of their authority public and thus heighten the credibility of their respective advice.

2.2.1 Physicians

In the context of parenting advice, professionals were usually medical practitioners who definitely adhered to the widespread practice of highlighting their academic title and professional position. A very probable reason for this was the fact that professional authors were eager to distance themselves from the despised amateur advice (cf. Rossman Regaignon, 144). William Buchan, the author of *Domestic Medicine* (1769), mentions in his preface that even before the publication of his

[16] The end of the Second World War, again, brought a return of the ideal of domesticity and with it domestic advice literature and household manuals: "What women were experiencing after World War II, however, was a reconnection to their homes, which many had been forced to abandon in order to help out with the war effort. After the war's resolution, traditional family structures were reinstituted, and the predominant role encouraged of women during that time was that of ideal homemaker, epitomized by such popular culture icons as June Cleaver and Donna Reed. As historians have noted, during this time period, domesticity was marketed in ways that it had not been before through the development of household appliances and packaged and semi-prepared food" (Smith, 768).

work some friends had warned him of "selfish and narrow-minded" (vi) characters within the medical profession who were totally against having their 'medical secrets' made public (cf. ibid.). Ignoring his friends' advice, he states his astonishment at the realisation that they had not been far wrong with their warnings but that, indeed, some colleagues "have not failed to persecute both the book and its author" (ibid.). In conclusion, the disinclination of some professional medical men to have their advice published also arose from their aversion to being rated alongside the less professional advice of amateurs (cf. Åström, 116). Advice, predominantly dealing with physical care for children, "was either written by medical practitioners themselves, or was influenced by their beliefs" (Gorham, 66). Gorman also comments on the increasing importance and influence of advice texts written by professional medical men:

> [M]edical practitioners [did not] restrict themselves to comments about the physical health of children; they also expressed views about their psychological well-being, both in writing for lay readers, and for their fellow-professionals. The growing influence of medical practitioners on child-rearing in the nineteenth century was in fact one manifestation of the increasing prestige that medicine was acquiring during these years (ibid.).

Thomas Graham and William Buchan, whose works I will discuss later in more detail, conform exactly with this kind of behaviour: Whether as a primary care physician, like Graham (cf. 1), or as head of a hospital, as in Buchan's case (cf. vi), both make sure to verify their professionalism directly on the title page before commencing with their advice. The preface, or introduction, usually served a related purpose, as Rossman Regaignon comments: "If the title pages emphasize the authors' credentials, the prefaces underscore their professional experience" (144). These credentials were meant as guarantee for good advice in the hope of ensuring continuous health of the infant or infants in question, since, after all, "physical care of the infant and small child" constituted an increasing "focus of concern" (Gorham, 66) in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This concern, as Gorham explains, was strengthened by the high mortality rate of especially younger children, despite the progress of medical science, which caused a considerable "anxiety" (ibid., 67) and a wish for security.

Having assured the audience of their right to claim authority, the author customarily moves on to the next steps, which go hand in hand with the

establishment of the power relationship between reader and author: an explanation why the advice in question is absolutely indispensable to the target readership and providing (usually quite explicitly) admonitions and predictions of the consequences if said counsel is not heeded (cf. ibid., 145). In the direct context of parenting advice, Rossman Regaignon describes these parts of the texts as "dire warnings [which] form a potent cocktail, made up of equal portions of knowledge (of the fragility of infant life), ignorance (of how to preserve it), and responsibility (to safeguard it)" (ibid.).[17] Especially in advice texts addressed at middle-class women, there exists not only a strongly implied gap in the authority and in the intellectual hierarchy, but the effort to make the reader "dependent on the advice of the medical expert" (ibid., 146) can be discerned as well. The dependency, the establishment of the absolute authority of the author, in connection with the stress laid on the seriousness of the issue in question is meant to unconsciously "generate a perpetual desire for more information" (ibid., 150). This procedure allows the success of the professional advice text as subgenre to become much more comprehensible even for the modern reader. However, while this deliberately manipulative tendency in advice texts has caused the genre to be frequently considered solely as a "representation of ideology" (ibid., 140), there is more to it than a mere casual glance can tell the modern reader.

In the following, I will give an overview of the selected professional advice texts that will have a bearing on the discussion in this thesis. William Buchan's work *Domestic Medicine, or, a Treatise of the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and simple Medicines with the Observation of Sea-bathing, and the Use of private Practitioners* (1769) is among the earliest texts: It continued to be in use well into the Victorian era, however, and the steady re-publishing, taking place until the year 1848, indicates the continuous interest in Buchan's work (cf. Hanson, 35). The treatise was a "bestselling" (ibid.) piece of literature although it produced, as Buchan himself mentions, some opposition from other professional medical practitioners when it was first published (cf. vi.).[18] Despite its existence within what was still considered a "niche market for guides aimed at women" (Rossman

[17] Of course, the content of this part of the text varies according to the context of the advice that is given.
[18] Dara Rossman Regaignon considers Buchan's work as influential even though it became popular and accessible to a broader audience only as late as the 1840s (cf. 144).

Regaignon, 144), Buchan's work inspired many authors to write books with similar content, and a far from insignificant number of other advice books "followed its lead" (ibid.). As hinted at earlier, professional and amateur counsel met –and often clashed – (cf. Åström, 116) in the field of advice literature, and professional doctors such as William Buchan often warned their clients of listening to "tattling gossips" (86). Adopting a disdainful attitude towards this kind of advice, Buchan stresses the fact that mismanagement and neglectful behaviour as well as ignorance make proper medical advice, whether received through a text or otherwise, extremely necessary: "No one, who has not had an opportunity of observing them, can imagine what absurd and ridiculous practices still prevail in the nursing and management of infants, and what numbers are by that means lost to society" (vi.). The professional advice published in Buchan's book was meant to be read by so-called "home practitioner[s]" (Rossman Regaignon, 144); this rather professionalized title meant no other readership than the group that would in another context have been called 'amateurs', meaning the person responsible for the household "who was typically but not necessarily the woman of the house" (ibid.). Considering the date of its first publication, it already appears self-evident that, from today's perspective, medical advice such as that contained in Buchan's work would be far from flawless in its recommended customs and practices because of the scientific assumptions the text was based on (cf. Åström, 116). Yet, many ideas, which were sometimes mere conjectures or vague notions, were quite often "presented as certainty" (Hanson, 37).

An equal claim to scientific professionalism can be perceived in the work of Thomas John Graham, published in 1829: His *Account of Persons remarkable for their Health and Longevity* included, besides various success-stories of long-lived persons, also advice concerning "Modern Domestic Medicine" (1). Graham's medical studies are primarily concerned with "hereditary tendenc[ies]" (5) and the question how parental diseases can affect children (cf. 3-5). Since the text was published "By A Physician" (ibid.), it was likely to be regarded as professional medical advice as well (cf. Åström, 116). In contrast to Graham's approach, the advice manual *Hints to Mothers* by Thomas Bull, M.D., first published in 1837, is solely concerned with female health, pregnancy, and motherhood (cf. 3). Bull himself was a normal practical physician from London who had "a hospital-based practice […] from the 1830s through the 1850s" (ibid., 147). In his preface to the

second edition, published in 1839, Bull declares himself extremely "gratify[ed]" (A 2) with the reception of his manual. Bull as well as Buchan mention "rapid sale[s]" (ibid.) of their texts, which is why one might well assume that the success of such medical guides was not just imagined by the authors themselves but that there was indeed a considerable market for these texts and that this market was growing continually (cf. Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 801). Rossman Regaignon confirms the success of Bull's works by arguing that his books probably "fill[ed] a textual void" (148), causing them to be "immediately and sustainably popular" (ibid.).[19]

What all three texts have in common, however, is the fact that, like Bull's study, they stand in line with the advice texts which "medicalized" (Åstöm, 119) the role of women within the concept of motherhood, thus trying to depart even more from midwife-advice or other semi-professional ideas which often showed tendencies of moralising (cf. Åström, 120). Yet, despite the outward reduction of sentimentality and moralising in his argumentation in favour of a stronger focus on medical knowledge, Bull's work, for instance, remains "explicitly didactic, even lecturing" (Rossman Regaignon, 150) in its tone and rhetoric.

2.2.2 Midwives

Since it was not the norm for women to achieve the qualification of an academic degree during a major part of the long nineteenth century, female professionalism was continuously questioned by male professionals, for whom it was common to possess academic qualifications and degrees. In the realm of medicine, it therefore quite frequently happened that women achieved a status of semi-recognized professionalism by becoming a midwife; this was a profession that required a remarkable amount of medical knowledge (if the duties were performed correctly) but that was also very practically oriented despite the fact that an official qualification was not required until the year 1902, when the Midwives Act came into force (cf. Pitt, 218). The fact that no officially sanctioned expertise was needed to perform the office of a midwife was one of the main arguments critics of the

[19] As medical science advanced, more and more young men were able to take up a profession in this field with the result that not every doctor could earn enough money to keep up his middle-class status or even finance his living; therefore, it was a welcome option for many younger doctors to be able to earn extra money by producing advice texts (cf. Rossman Regaignon, 146). Especially in the middle and later half of the nineteenth century "[c]hild-rearing advice books were a perfect adjunct to [their] effort, both for individual doctors and for the profession as a whole" (ibid.).

profession used to support their scepticism of the midwives' influence on their patients (cf. Mottram, 134), which will be discussed in more detail later. The profession of the midwife was predominantly concerned with 'female matters' – pregnancy and motherhood. Because of this, it generally reached a relatively wide societal acceptance as an officially recognized female profession, especially among male professionals, who were eager to draw a strict line between their elevated position and 'amateurs' (cf. Rossmann Regaignon, 144). Despite the more recent scholarly opinion that "the promotion of healthy pregnancies, therefore, was not an entirely feminine concern as a first wave of studies has perhaps too easily assumed" (Cavallo, 466), pregnancy and childbirth were traditionally seen as female matters, and men, despite their academic status in medicine, "were only marginally involved or were excluded" (Williams, "Childbirth", 234).[20] It was only in the course of the sixteenth century that men gained ground in the realm of childbirth and pregnancy primarily because they "made surgical intervention their specialty" (ibid.). For this reason, among others, scholars point out that "[t]he history of childbirth from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries is often seen as one of the gradual encroachments of medical men into what was once an entirely female preserve" (Pitt 218).

Despite this circumstance, the position of the midwife can look back on a very long history and has influenced and shaped the development of medicine especially in the realm of pregnancy, childbirth, and early childcare in almost every culture. Focusing on the development of midwifery in western European communities, Diana Pérez Edelmann describes the profession as crucial for modern medicine because

> [t]he history of professional obstetrics begins, of course, with the midwife, for prior to the eighteenth century, childbirth was the exclusive province of women. In this way, midwives held a kind of power inconsistent with traditional roles for women, who were to be weak and dependent (228).

Medieval or even older accounts of midwifery, written by the practitioners themselves, are very rare, and even texts mentioning this profession explicitly have

[20] Cavallo mentions that husbands could assume "a range of supportive roles when wives experienced miscarriages or complications related to difficult pregnancies and deliveries" (466).

to be examined carefully.[21] One reason for this circumstance is the fact that during the majority of the official existence of the midwifery profession, printing had not yet been invented or was not in common use and "hundreds of discrete, and often brief, references to midwives and midwifery, as many of the usages examined […] were likely in use long before they made it into print" (Chalk, 94).[22] From medieval times onwards and even earlier, midwives held a special position within most Western European communities, which allowed them to deal out advice without being obliged to earn the explicit approval of a male superior.[23] It is consistent with this fact that the typical midwife was widely acknowledged to possess a remarkable range of general every-day as well as medical experience.[24] This led to differences in the popular depiction of the midwife, depending on the author's point of perspective. Fear of the midwife's knowledge and experience would commonly lead to a negative portrayal, whereas awe, thankfulness for previously

[21] There are medical volumes written by so called 'wise women', or even saintly women: Ehrenreich and English name Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1178) and her work *Liber Simplicis Medicinae*, a "compendium of natural healing methods" (36), which provides us with "some idea of the scope of women healers' knowledge in the early middle ages" (ibid.).

[22] The Bible mentions the involvement of midwives in several instances. For example, in Exodus 1:15-22 it reads "if the midwife sees a boy on the delivery stool, he should be killed; if it is a girl, she may live." When in Genesis 35, Joseph's birth is recounted, the midwife plays a role in the tale: "When she was in labour, the midwife told Rachel not to be afraid, she is having another son." Dascăl argues that such accounts support the supposition that the profession of the midwife was of special importance for a major part of human existence (cf. 147).

[23] Besides the western European environment, other cultures, for example, Chinese and Hindu communities, also recognised the special position of the profession of the midwife and documented this in their writings (cf. Dascăl, 147).

[24] While midwifery as a profession has always been predominantly in female hands, manuals and handbooks on this subject were, previous to Louise Bourgeois and Jane Sharp in 1671, usually written by men (cf. Hobby "Introduction", xvi & ibid. "Gender, Science", 146). Famous sources written by men from antiquity include, for example the ancient Greek physician Soranus of Ephesus who wrote his texts roughly 100 AC in Rome: "Von ihm sind Werke überliefert, u. a. zu den Themen Reproduktionsmedizin, Anatomie, Hygiene, Chirurgie und Frauenerkrankungen. Hinsichtlich der Betreuung Schwangerer wird dezidiert auf Kindslagen, Änderung der Kindslagen durch innere Wendungen und Beckenendlagengeburten eingegangen" (Weichert & Heinrich, 499). The first manuals used in Britain were, according to Hobby, translations of already existing works which were hardly self-reliant because they "largely dependent on the writings of Galen, Aristotle, and Hippocrates" (ibid.). As an example, Hobby names among others James Guillimeau and his text *Childbirth or the Happy Delivery of Women* [1612] as well as Nicolas Culpeper, whose work *A Directory for Midwives* [1651, 1656] "borrows equally freely from Greek sources" (ibid. & Hobby "Gender, Science", 146). Medically, Sharp's work could appear confusing or even "contradictory" (ibid., 147) because at the time of publication medical science was undergoing many changes (cf. ibid.). New science was challenging long standing medical traditions which were often, again, derived from ancient Greek sources (cf. ibid.). Even though Jane Sharp appears to be a female midwife at first glance (due to her name and the address of the readership), there is actually some doubt as to her real identity: Her texts are "heavily weighted in favor of theoretical learning and subjects of debate, including a lengthy opening book devoted to a survey of both male and female reproductive organs. In contrast, there is a striking absence of case histories or specific personal experience to authenticate the author's claims to be a midwife" (Worth-Stylianou, 281).

accomplished services and the feeling of security would lead to a more positive image of the accoucheuse: "While the midwife was variously depicted as a wise and good old woman and as a bawdy, licentious witch, her role in the giving (and potentially taking) of life inspired both awe and fear in the popular imagination" (ibid.).[25] Whether positive or negative, the dominant picture of the midwife was certainly that of an influential, if slightly mysterious, figure.

Because of their potential power within their communities, midwives were often the subject of scandals or even criminal trials, especially in the context of witch hunts during the late medieval and early modern periods (cf. ibid. & Dascăl, 150).[26] Not only was their inherent power and freedom of mobility (socially as well as physically) frequently perceived as potential threat to other authorities (cf. Dascăl, 149-150), which could result in themselves becoming the subject of these scandals and trials; they were also often associated with these subjects in more indirect ways. Because of their profession,

> they were called upon to act as important witnesses for rape, infanticide and bastardy. […] City councils often called upon midwives to give opinions in legal cases of infanticide and abortion, to examine women charged with fornication or female prisoners who claimed to be pregnant in the hope of delaying their corporal punishment or execution (ibid.)

Apart from secular forces, spiritual authorities also habitually relied on the midwife's help for some religious practices, in particular (emergency) baptism, for which they would receive a licence (cf. ibid.).[27]

In the seventeenth century, female domination in the field of midwifery began to be strongly challenged: A new wave of male professionals fuelled by a newfound

[25] The association of midwifery and 'not quite respectable matters' can also be due to the fact that "[m]idwifery manuals were the closest to a respectable source on sexual matters available in the vernacular in Restoration Britain, normally including explicit material on human reproduction" (Hobby "Mad Men", 181).

[26] Edelman mentions the case of Elizabeth Cellier, who, besides her profession as a midwife, was a member of the Catholic Church and involved in the Warming Pan scandal of 1688. The scandal evolved around the question of the succession to the throne of England and, consequently, aroused many discussions and controversies: "The story begins when Cellier predicted that Mary of Modena, the Catholic wife of King James II, would give birth to a son. On 10 June, soon after these predictions, Mary gave birth to a son. If she did, Protestant Mary, daughter of James II and his first wife Anne Hyde, would not be heir to the throne, which would go to the Catholic son" (Edelman, 229).

[27] The profession of midwife was closely connected to spiritual life because they (officially) had to be licensed by the bishop, on occasion visit the church together with their patients who were still in need of attendance and, as already mentioned, carry out emergency baptisms (cf. Hobby "Gender, Science", 148).

enthusiasm and trust in science and scientific development threatened to "colonize[…] the space of the birthing room" (Dascăl, 155).[28] Midwives themselves were well aware of this development which strongly affected their professional lives, and more than one midwife searched for ways to speak out and counteract this transformation of their professional environment. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, midwives started to publish texts which dealt with their working experiences, spreading knowledge in their field of expertise. In the early seventeenth century, the French midwife Louise Bourgeois was the first among her profession to publish an account of her work.[29] Her professional experiences "provide valuable insights into women's medicine and family life at both the royal court (where she attended all the deliveries of Marie de' Medici) and through all levels of Paris society" (Worth-Stylianou, 452). In consequence, this text can be regarded as among the first advice texts published by a female professional. In the context of female professionalism, Bourgeois' character can also be regarded as influential since she defended "the right of midwives rather than male surgeons to attend normal deliveries, at a time when male-midwifery was just beginning to gain some ground in Paris" (ibid.).[30]

The eighteenth century, the first real period of flourishing for the advice genre, saw the publication of texts such as Sarah Stone's *A Complete Practice of Midwifery* (1737); this work tried to impress its readership with the inclusion of "Upwards of Forty Cases or Observations in that valuable Art, selected from many

[28] Ehrenreich and English confirm that the friction "between women's traditional wisdom and male expertise centered on the right to heal. For all but the very rich, healing had traditionally been the prerogative of women. The art of healing was linked to the art and the spirit of motherhood; it combined wisdom and nurturance, tenderness and skill. […] The historical antagonist of the female healer was the male medical professional" (34). The notion of medicine as a *profession* was in some ways an advance over the unexamined tradition of female healing: A profession requires systematic training, and, at least in principle, some formal mechanisms of accountability. But a profession is also defined by its *exclusiveness*, and, and has been since the professions of medicine and law first took form in in medieval Europe. While the female healer operated within a network of information-sharing and mutual support, the male professional hoarded up his knowledge as a kind of property, to be dispensed to wealthy patrons or sold on the market as a commodity" (34).

[29] Louise Bourgeois' texts were published in three volumes in the years 1609, 1617, and 1626. Her first work is largely dedicated to female infertility and adheres largely to opinions previously expressed by French male professionals such as in Ambroise Paré's *De la generation de l'homme* (1573) (cf. Worth-Stylianou, 285-286).

[30] Even though Bourgeois defends the right of the midwife to take part in the procedures, she in no way questions the authority of male physicians and is rather in favour of a "good collaboration" (Worth-Stylianou, 289) between both parties. Nevertheless, she does not shy away from warning surgeons of certain kinds of behaviour that would, in her opinion, be harmful: "This is why I beg physicians to be well informed of the patient's constitution before allowing themselves to be persuaded by such persons" (149).

Others, in the Course of a very Extensive Practice" (Stone, III). Interesting about this additional descriptive advertisement on the title page is the fact that it resembles quite closely the advertising strategies of male professionals (such as Thomas Graham [cf. 3]) who also used to mention their professional credentials as a first introduction to their texts and thus marked them specifically as 'not-amateurish'. It can be assumed that Stone's hint at "Extensive Practice" served a similar purpose. and is therefore noteworthy even if, as an advice text, like the work of her predecessor Bourgeoise, her work will not be used any further in this thesis. Like Bourgeois, Stone is eager to defend the position of the midwife especially in front of young male practitioners who tend to get the fame:

> For I cannot comprehend, why Women are not capable of completing [sic] this business when begun, without calling in of Men to their assistance, who are often sent for, when the Work is near finish'd [sic]; and then the Midwife, who has taken all the pains, is accounted of little value, and the young men command all the praise (x).

Even though Stone's presentation of the circumstances sounds disbelieving and almost suspicious, she does not exclude the possibility that patients might have complained of wrongful treatment at the hands of the midwife (cf. ibid.). However, in an afterthought she reveals that such complaints are more likely to be due to societal pressure and trends: "[I]t is become quite a fashion; especially with the Bristol-Ladies" (ibid.).

Even though publishing an advice text was a method for women to enter a world that came at least a little closer to professionalism and independence (cf. Mandal, 7), this does not mean that the advice provided by female professionals (or amateurs for that matter) was always progressive and in favour of additional freedom gained by the women who read these advice texts. In many instances, the opposite was the case (cf. Gilroy, 17): In her book *The Pupil of Nature; or, Candid Advice to the Fair Sex* (1797), republished in 1805, Martha Mears clearly displays her priorities, which consist of her duties towards her country and the maintenance of stability within society (cf. ibid.). Following William Buchan in his argumentation that mothers were at the very core of the social community and therefore responsible for "the safety and prosperity of the state" (36), Mears proclaims solely "conservative models of femininity" (ibid.), and even though her text is rather patriotic in its ideas and intentions, she directly "disclaims any interest

in the unfeminine topic of public politics" (ibid.). In describing politics as a "subject […] quite out of my sphere" (Mears, 157), she, in a certain way, has already made a political statement: Her sphere is female, private, while politics belong to the public sphere, the sphere of men. And while she, as a midwife, certainly belongs to the authors whose advice is despised by Buchan as being of dubious use to the patient (cf. 87), Mears herself emphasizes the doctor's importance in childcare and pregnancy and explicitly states that she has no intention "of encouraging domestic quackery" (viii) through her advice.[31] In this point she seems to agree with Bourgeois and Stone, who both assert the doctor's importance in the process of delivery (cf. Worth-Stylianou, 289, 291).[32]

Even though she regards professional medical advice as important, Mears does not fail to provide the recipe for some simple medicines in her text as well. However, in some cases, she definitely advises against mixing, or even applying, medicine without looking for the doctor's orders:

> A skilful practitioner must be called in, as great danger may arise from the use of strong, forcing medicines. Should these improperly persisted in, a small quantity of the foeces [sic] in a liquid state, escaping by the sides of the intestine, may seem to promise success. But this often turns out a fatal delusion (ibid., 81-82).

One of Mears' warnings, for instance, touched upon misguided, unprofessional recommendations concerning opium, a common remedy habitually used during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for relief of pain, also during pregnancy: Even though Mears is not *per se* against employing opium as a painkiller for pregnant women, or even children during weening (cf. 155), she counsels that it should be administered only under observance of strict rules and "with great discretion" (88)

[31] There is one among the very few cases in which Mears decidedly appears to advise against the doctor's explicit orders: In the context of female diet during pregnancy, Mears adds that should the woman in question violently fancy a certain kind of food, she must be speedily provided with it (provided, of course, that the food is wholesome and not poisonous) (cf. 64). It is, in Mears' opinion, essential that the pregnant woman must get her desired food quickly because "the danger of disappointment of delay, are greatly increased by the exquisite sensibility of her condition" (ibid.). Even the physician's advice might be ignored in the case of "unaccountable cravings" for food that commonly might "be deemed improper" (ibid.). Otherwise, "[d]eath in many cases may be the consequence of a rigid prohibition, and the instances are without number of persons who have recovered from the most hopeless state by disobedience to the doctor's commands" (ibid.).

[32] Louise Bourgeois, for example, strongly advises for a doctor to be sent for in the case of "some fluxions, illnesses, or severe blood loss" (116) during pregnancy. She strengthens her warning with the use of the common saying "One must not hide anything from the priest or the physician in order not to be guilty before God or man" (ibid.). The connection Bourgeois draws here emphasises the prominent position she still assigns to the profession of the doctor.

and strongly advises against amateur use of opiates: Mears considers opium to be "one of the most powerful and excellent things in the world in skilful hands, [but] in unskilful most mischievous" (ibid.). Choosing a professional medical attendant during pregnancy is, as Mears observes, also more difficult than should be supposed but nevertheless indispensable. With this opinion, Mears positions herself in the tradition of the earlier work of Sarah Stone, who, although she in other cases harshly defends the midwife's position, explicitly warns them not to overstep their role:

> I shall not fill any part of this book, with needless discourses on the Parts of Generation, nor the Reasons of Conception; neither shall I concern myself, or give my opinion, why some Women do not conceive; many Authors being copious on such Subjects. For my part, I think all the Disorders of Teeming Women do not belong to Midwives; but they ought to commit themselves to the Care of a Physician; a Midwife's business being only to be well instructed in her Profession (Stone, xviii-xix).

Even though at a first glance this appears to be almost a confirmation of traditional male authority, Worth-Stylianou looks at the statement from a different perspective: Considering the fact that male midwives or "male-midwife surgeons" (Worth-Stylianou, 281) gained a lot of popularity in fashionable circles, Stone's remark "may well have been a sideswipe at male-authored works on childbirth and women's health" (ibid.), politely asking them not to overstep their boundaries.[33] In the chapter "Letter to a Father" of his advice manual published in 1829 and dedicated to young men, even the amateur author William Cobbett declares himself to be shocked at the growing popularity of male midwives, so-called accoucheurs, and opines that to even name the term is proof of indelicacy, a sign of society's moral decay (cf. 239). Of course, Cobbett's criticism is derived from a strictly middle-class perspective on the ethics of fashion and upper-class lifestyle, and not from a professional or financial standpoint which might have modified his assessment.

[33] Worth-Stylianou also surmises that Stone's commentary may have been an indirect criticism on the work of Jane Sharp, who published *The Midwives Book. Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered* from 1671 (cf. 281). Sharp's text relies quite frequently on an earlier work, written by the professional medical man Nicolas Culpeper in 1651 (cf. Hobby "Introduction", xviii & Worth-Stylianou, 281). Worth-Stylianou also supposes that Louise Bourgeois would not have entirely agreed with Stone regarding her statement that midwives' work should not mingle with the work of the physician: "For Bourgeois, the care of women's fertility and infertility depends on a mutually respectful collaboration between the female midwife and the male physician" (293).

Even few professional medical men possess, according to Mears' observation, the 'skilful hands' required for the practice of midwifery, while they, through the provision of wrong or even harmful advice, quite often join ranks with the "ignorant minds" (94) of amateurs who, even if inadvertently, carelessly harm their patients. Yet, as Mears remarks, it is not always accident or ignorance that causes patients to suffer at the hands of doctors: "[H]e who will conform to vulgar error at the expense of his patient's safety, [sic] and is afraid to oppose them [the 'foolish' amateur advisers in his patient's environment] lest his own interest should suffer, acts below the dignity of his profession and the principles of an honest man" (ibid.). The sin of selfishness, which in contemporary advice literature is very often alluded to in the context of typically maternal faults (cf. Gisborne, 379), is here mentioned with reference to the corrupt or egocentric physician. On closer inspection, it becomes clear that the ideal of the mother and the ideal of the doctor might share some characteristics: Both have essentially caring professions which are inherently connotated with selflessness; Mears' presentation is consequently even more impactful since her argumentation suggests that it is even worse to find the common fault of egocentricity manifest itself in a person that ideally should think less about him/herself and more about others.

One example of a professional physician's inherent selfishness would be a fatal tendency towards vanity which, in Mears' opinion, becomes apparent when those medical men try to 'improve nature', for example in attempting to form the child's body – once born – through restrictive clothing or other harmful methods in order to conform to a certain ideal body shape (cf. 153-154).[34] In Mears' view this

[34] There were, however, also cases of midwives being accused of using unadvisable methods for the sake of vanity as well. In the seventeenth century, Louise Bourgeois, in the first volume of her advice text *Diverse Observations* (1609), describes just such a case: "Others, lacking the patience to wait to feel the child quicken in the womb, call the midwives to examine them, begging them to […] tell them the truth. These women tell the midwives that they are thought to be the most capable judges, and they blame other midwives who have failed to tell them the truth. They go to such an extent that these midwives are charmed by such praise. They try their hardest to see if the woman is pregnant, and since they want to insert a finger into the womb in order to do so, they cause veins or arteries in the womb to be opened, from which so much blood flows that the child is left dry and without nourishment, and mother and child die" (116). By giving an account of these situations, Bourgeois does not only remind the midwife never to listen to flattery and be led by vanity to become careless; she also warns the mother not to be impatient and, through this impatience, tempt the assisting person to forego prudence. In another section of the same volume, Bourgeois becomes even more outspoken about "presumptuous" (122) midwives, who are so driven by their own egotistical wish to achieve some fame in their profession "that when they see that it is impossible for them to deliver a woman, even after making several attempts to do so, nonetheless persist until all is lost" (ibid.). According to the author, the situation is even made worse by the fact that in a lot of cases the physician is

behaviour has nothing to do with 'helping' the patient but rather originates from a vain and unnecessary desire to exhibit one's own skill in public, thus "spoil[ing] what the Author of our being has made perfect" (154). Moreover, the physician's selfish performance may come at the expense of the person they are supposed to cure; Mears stresses "how cruel it is to expose a child to lameness, or some other lamentable injury, for the sake of hiding at the time the effects of rashness and ignorance" (ibid.). Especially during pregnancy and the process of delivery "the practitioner's awkward or improper interference" (ibid.) in a process that nature normally should complete itself without any outside help can be likened to the offence of not assisting the patient at all and, therefore, is condemned by Mears as an almost criminal offence (cf. ibid.). Although she does not mention it explicitly, Mears nevertheless clearly infers the fact that physicians should admit their own shortcomings.

According to the midwife's observations, even some physicians who exhibit talent and eagerness in their profession sometimes demonstrate a tendency towards meddling and abundantly discuss "the merely speculative parts of midwifery, - [sic] those, the knowledge of which, even if reduced to the utmost certainty and precision, would be of little use in practice" (103). Those "men of talents [who] could not resist so seducing a temptation [to] comment profusely on purposeless ideas" (ibid.) can very well produce "theories [that] are entertaining" (ibid.) but fail to be "instructive" (ibid.) and thus fall utterly short of their aim. An occupation that merely stimulates the brain and the interest of the doctor, without being a practical help to the patient is, from Mears' point of view, superfluous and out of place in midwifery. It is interesting to note that, although Mears has an overall high opinion of most medical practitioners (cf. 94), in this instance she almost exhibits a condescending attitude towards a certain group of professional medical advisers. The fact that she uses expressions such as "entertaining" but "not very instructive" (103) gives the reader the idea that she, as a midwife of extensive experience, values her own instructions more than the ideas born from complicated academic discussion on useless topics. She does not, however, succumb to the 'vanity' she has just criticized in medical practitioners: Frequently quoting professional advice

blamed for the midwife's irresponsible behaviour (cf. ibid.). Generally, Bourgeois advises against all kinds of vanity: "There is a thousand times more honor in asking for help that in letting mother or child – or, as often happens, both – die in their hands" (135).

and recommending other advice texts written by medical professionals, she freely acknowledges her non-academic status, by stating for example that "[t]he only service I can here render my female readers is to warn them of the dangers […], that they may apply to proper persons for immediate relief" (ibid., 83). This assumed humility might also be perceived as a way of confirming the traditional patriarchal hierarchy and recommending her own moral adequacy in a rather norm-conforming environment.

However, there is one characteristic which Mears freely pronounces to be her own number one asset which allows her, for once, to unreservedly claim superiority in her status as a female midwife: "Yet, in spite of prejudice, I hope my own sex will grant a candid hearing to one who is herself a mother: - who has united the advantages of experience with those of regular education and a moderate share of practice [as a midwife]" (3). Her position as woman and mother represents the one point in which professional male advisers cannot humble her "with an idle parade of learning" (ibid., 2), and, in a way, it is her trump card. Gilroy agrees to this argument by supporting the idea that Mears' advice is in general "rational, tender, non-coercive, but perhaps thereby even more compelling than older-style patriarchal prerogatives" (20-21). The earlier mentioned Sarah Stone makes use of a similar line of argumentation in her text from 1737:

> I have seen several Women open'd [sic]; and tis [sic] not improper for all of the Profession to see Dissections, and read Anatomy, as I have done. But had I inspected into them all my life, and not been instructed in Midwifery by my Mother, and Deputy to her full six years, it would have signified but little; nor Should I have dared to have undertaken such a Profession, lest any Life Should have been lost thro' [sic]; my ignorance (xv).

This as well as other statements stresses the fundamental importance of personal experience and the power of maternal knowledge (cf. Dascăl, 150) as a form of expertise and consequent learning platform, which supplements and supports female professionalism in the field of midwifery. Indeed, one of the most common career paths for a midwife was not being officially medically trained, but doing "an informal apprenticeship with an established midwife who was often their mother or some other member of the family" (Loudon, 181-182 & cf. Williams, "Childbirth", 234). Despite the advantages of personal and intimate learning in a familiar context, the various and unregulated ways in which women could become midwives led to

uncertainties in defining the profession since “it cannot be assumed that they were a homogeneous group” (ibid., 181).

One argument that was frequently used by voices aiming to criticize the position of the midwife and attempting to reduce her powers was the fact already alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, that up to the year 1902, midwifes did not need an official qualification (cf. Mottram, 134). The Midwives Act, in a way, secured the position of the midwife insofar as that it provided midwives with a much-needed official qualification in a world in which ‘professionalism’ was gaining more and more ground (cf. Pitt, 218). In praxis, the execution of the Midwives Act “at a local level was delegated to county and county borough councils with powers to investigate charges of incompetence and suspend them from practice. Some authorities operated the act efficiently, others did little” (Mottram, 134). The emphasis on the strong authority that was given to the third, executive party already hints at the fact that these authorities did not always use their power in an objective way: To many professional medical men who had long since seen professional midwives as threatening entities to their reputation and their jobs the act gave an opportunity to diminish their authority (cf. Pitt 218). Seen in a larger historical context, their mission could be regarded as accomplished since “[a]s the twentieth century progressed, the autonomy of the midwife was further eroded as the place of birth moved from home to hospital” (ibid.).

As mentioned previously, the majority of British physicians of the long nineteenth century could definitely not be described as supporting the public image of the midwife. Even though during the nineteenth century midwives were still a central part of birth and pre- as well as post-natal care, their faults were often described as outweighing their merits (cf. Loudon, 180). Their bad reputation was of course partly due to the lack of training and official qualification that was required to practice midwifery (cf. ibid.). Despite the strictly respectable and ‘delicate’ impression of Martha Mears in her own text, some advice texts written by professional medical men suggest that the basis for the negative image was indeed already established during the eighteenth century and grew worse and spread in the public consciousness over time, especially as such accounts were often re-published and re-read well into the nineteenth century (cf. Hanson, 35). In 1769, the earlier mentioned physician William Buchan complains about the incompetence

of some midwives: "[M]ost women in child-bed require to be managed with skill and attention, and […] they are often hurt by the superstitious prejudices of ignorant and officious midwives" (534). He, therefore, utters the warning that "most of […] [the damage] might be prevented by allowing no women to practise midwifery but such as are properly qualified" (3). In 1837, Thomas Bull especially mentions that his position as physician accoucheur to "a large and important Midwifery Institution" (A 3) was among the primary reasons why his instructional text came into being. In his preface he expresses his hopes that the explanations in his manual might be used in such institutions (cf. ibid.). The reader can assume that he, as the professional physician, naturally saw himself in the role of the instructor and that he was of the opinion that the instruction of midwives was extremely necessary.[35] Despite this criticism of 'amateurish' midwives, advice published by midwives differed in many ways from 'real' amateur advice.

2.3 Amateur advice literature and conduct books

Conduct books and the slightly broader type of 'amateur advice' literature had been massively popular since the eighteenth century as well (cf. White, 23) and continued to be widely used, (cf. Waldron, 49). In contrast to medical manuals, other advice texts, not published by professional physicians or midwives, were of a more 'personal nature,' focusing on everyday aspects of private life. In this thesis, I am going to categorise solely advice texts written by authors of a professional status (midwives and physicians), who were using their professional experience to provide counsel, as 'professional advice'. Authors who are giving advice on every-day matters as well as moral issues, even though they might have a professional degree, such as the physician John Gregory, who does not use his credentials for the advice he is giving since it is not related to his medical knowledge, will be considered amateurs. In many cases, the work of these amateurs belonged to a specific sub-category of advice literature, nowadays known as 'conduct books', a term that has been used in research roughly since the 1930s (cf. Dahmer, 27). Conduct books were, and still are, difficult to separate from the broader genre of advice literature:

[35] Bull often stresses that not only the midwifery institution of which he is part but first and foremost his own professional presence is indispensable for women: "On an average, between forty and fifty poor women call upon me every month, with midwifery letters for attendance in their confinement" (31).

"Der Begriff dient der zusammenfassenden Bezeichnung einer Gruppe von Ratgebertexten, die aufgrund ihrer gemeinsamen Merkmale aus heutiger Sicht als eine spezielle Textsorte erscheinen" (ibid.).[36] Dahmer also emphasises the fact that even though this category is commonly used in modern research, the actual term only came into use in the second half of the nineteenth century, even though the kind of literature that it referred to had existed long before that date (cf. ibid.). Consequently, texts that nowadays would be called 'conduct books' were most likely not known under that name by a contemporary readership, though this depends, of course, to some extent on the date of publication (cf. ibid.). Traditionally, conduct books could take on different forms, from "collections of sermons" to "letters" (Kenlon, 2) or even smaller didactic tales.

The main aim of these pieces of literature was to provide guidance in moral as well as social comportment. As Ostry explains,

> [c]onduct books address the child and/or parent, and focus on the moral development of the child. They include lectures on morality, cautionary and exemplary tales complete with glosses, and sermons. […] In the boarding school context, the book stands in for the mother, as the mother tries to maintain influence over the absent child (27-28).

Because of the strong similarity regarding authorial intention, it is not always easy to separate conduct books from other types of amateur advice literature; the similar aims as well as groups of addressees (i.e., predominantly younger women) logically cause semblances in tone and style as well, and the boundaries between both kinds of texts are decidedly blurred (cf. ibid.). In addition to the blurred boundaries between texts that only fall into the category advice literature and texts that can also be considered conduct books, the transition between conduct books and fictional tales with similarly instructive aims is in some cases also very difficult to discern. Waldon comments on this liminal nature of amateur advice literature, especially conduct books: "There was an avalanche of conduct books which by their very structure (often epistolary) began to edge into fiction" (49). Besides acknowledging the hybrid nature of advice literature in general and conduct books in particular, of which many "Mischformen" ('hybrid texts', Dahmer, 28) such as didactic novels

[36] "The term serves as a classification for a specific group of advice texts which share certain common aspects and, from today's perspective, therefore appear as a distinctive sub-genre" (Dahmer, 27).

and poems could exist (cf. 26-28), Dahmer, however, re-affirms the fiction/non-fiction boundary of the two genres by stating: "Die meisten conduct books im hier definierten Sinne sind nicht fiktionale Texte verschiedenster Art" (28).[37] One reason why a classification of conduct books as fictional or non-fictional can be difficult is to be found during the "print revolution" (Dahmer, 37) and the time when the first novels rose to popularity: In this period, many fictional texts emulated non-fictional writing to appear more believable and appeal to an audience who could be taught morality more easily if they were directly addressed by a seemingly 'real' – non-fictional mentor figure (cf. ibid.).[38] Kenlon even argues that due to the increase of the popularity of fiction, traditional conduct books experienced a strong "decline", being replaced by so-called "etiquette and self-help books" (2). One

[37] ["According to the definition used here, most conduct books are non-fictional texts of various forms" (Dahmer, 28).] Some sentimental novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries shared some characteristics with conduct books that were popular around roughly the same time, especially regarding style and language. Dahmer mentions the circumstance that many didactic novels, which were usually also quite sentimental in the way the delivery of their didactic message could have a function similar to a conduct book (cf. 28). *The Young Philosopher* (1798) by Charlotte Smith and Amelia Opie's novel *Adeline Mowbray, or The Mother and Daughter* (1805) are examples of this genre and overtly represent a firm moral system and aim at improving the reader's mind by teaching a moral lesson. A common factor of both conduct books and didactic fiction was the strong voice of the narrator, who often directly addressed the readership to convey the intended message on morality in a more explicit, unmistakable way (cf. Dahmer, 37). The didactic novel *Adeline Mowbray, or The Mother and Daughter* has not only a moral but also a political message which emphasises the importance and the impact of the didactic purpose. As Gilroy explains, "Adeline's mother neglects her childrearing duties because of the American Revolution" (26). She is too much occupied with politics, a realm of interest that traditionally belonged to the public, the male sphere (cf. Nudelman, 199) and is consequently not able to fulfil her private duties as a mother, which finally leads to a tragic result (cf. Gilroy, 26). The addressees of this type of fiction were usually female or persons of such a youthful age that they were deemed to be still in need of instruction (ibid.). Besides the novels that were clearly meant to "function […] within the broader trend" (ibid., 25) and reflect rather uncritically upon the prevailing ideology of domesticity, there were examples of didactic fiction which approached the important topic of maternity and paternity in a somewhat different way. Mary Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) thematizes the "victimization" (ibid.) of a young mother by the father of her child. Maria addresses her daughter at the start of the embedded narrative (her own biographical tale) with the following words: "Addressing these memoirs to you, my child, uncertain whether I shall ever have the opportunity of instructing you, many observations will probably flow from my heart, which only a mother – a mother schooled in misery, could make" (Wollstonecraft, 44). Even though the topic is highly sensitive and emotional, the autodiegetic narrator still emphasises the word 'instructing' as the main purpose of her tale – a tale with clear didactic purposes for her inexperienced daughter (cf. Gilroy, 25).

[38] In her article "Magical Growth or Moral Lessons; or, How the Conduct book informed Victorian and Edwardian Children's Fantasy," Elaine Ostry elaborates on the connection between non-fictional and fictional literature, both incorporating elements of advice literature indicating the permeability of genre boundaries: "Two genres, conduct books and fantasies, seem diametrically opposed. However, I suggest that they intersect in the treatment of maturity. For the Victorians, moral growth was as important as, if not more so than, physical growth. As the child grew, his or her moral development was as regulated as diet. In works of fantasy, magical physical growth can be a way of exploring the topic of moral maturity: it is a metaphor for the invisible side of growing up" (27).

example for this trend would be the manual *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* from the late nineteenth century. For the sake of clarity, however, I will still refer to this text as a conduct manual in this thesis, since the differences are only slight and concern primarily a general shift in fashion and mannerisms.

Gorham notices a trend regarding the tone and focus of these amateur advice texts, explaining that during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, advice texts "dealt more with the child's moral and spiritual welfare than with physical care, and […] [were] usually explicitly shaped by evangelical religious belief" (66).[39] In the second half of the nineteenth century, this focus began to shift, and spiritual care was often less directly addressed, while physical matters gained in importance and 'semi-professional' household matters became a new focus point with only elements of 'conduct book-style' surviving in these household manuals (cf. ibid.). Kenlon also confirms a shift in tone: While former manuals were more "authoritative" (109) in their ways of address, later manuals had to acknowledge ongoing discussions about the adequacy of female education and the shifting dynamics in gender relation and social and professional life (cf. ibid.). The first amateur advice text to be discussed here presents a definite example of the earlier kind of advice literature. Such texts were often, but definitely not exclusively, written by clergymen, or alternatively by "pious mothers whose experience of motherhood and whose piety qualified them to give advice to others" (Gorham, 66).

[39] Didactic or evangelical novels, for example, also were meant not primarily for entertainment but were supposed to provide counsel and attracted a wider readership in the early nineteenth century (cf. Mandal, 5). Mandal describes this type of text as "morally improving fiction [that] can be understood as an outgrowth of the broader evangelical revival that was taking place in British society in the last third of the eighteenth century" (ibid.). The evangelical critique on slackened morals and lax religious and educational practices was frequently voiced through the medium of the novel, especially when family life and the authoritarian inadequacy of the so-called mentor figures as figures of authority were concerned: "[D]ysfunctional famil[ies]" (Waldron, 50) and neglected children were popular topics. The idea that the genre of the novel was chosen by evangelical writers for didactic purposes does, at a first glance, appear somewhat contradictory when one considers the fact that through the course of the eighteenth century, and even in later times, novels were regarded as lighter, less serious, and potentially frivolous literature (cf. Mandal, 5). Hannah More, for example, the author of the evangelical non-fictional text *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) is abhorred by the fact that "[n]ovels, which used chiefly to be dangerous in one respect, are now become mischievous in a thousand. They are continually shifting their ground, and enlarging their sphere, and are daily becoming vehicles of wider mischief" (31). Not only evangelical authors published moralising fictional stories in the form of novels, but even those works that were not explicitly religious or didactic were frequently heavily influenced by evangelicalism. Mandal describes this tendency "as part of a social mood that remodelled the country into a modern nation driven by middle-class propriety" (6). This process of "domestica[tion]" (ibid., 5) of the novel, again, reflects a social trend – the growing importance of domesticity within society (cf. Van Osselaer & Pasture, 9); one can argue that this form of literature, therefore, shares the same background with more conventional forms of advice literature.

John Gregory, the author of the advice text discussed in the ensuing passage, is neither a clergyman nor a mother, however; he is a single parent who, though inadequately, as he thinks, has performed part of the duties of both father and mother (cf. Gregory, 3 & Dahmer, 519).

The volume *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* by the Scottish physician John Gregory MD, written in 1761, after the death of his wife (cf. Gregory, 1) and first published in 1774 by Gregory's son, with many new editions printed, such as the widely used versions from 1781 and 1808, was indeed "a very popular and conservative conduct text" (Newton, 142).[40] It was known even in North America and influenced some similar texts produced in the (former) colonies (cf. ibid. 6; cf. Kenlon, 92). Gregory's treatise exhibits many characteristics that are commonly known from many eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century novels. The text is basically a compilation of his letters to his daughters, which are artificial, meaning they were never actually sent, thus exhibiting the characteristic "epistolary" (Waldron, 49) style which became so popular in early novels. The explicit address of the intended readership (in this case the author's daughters) turns Gregory's text into a perfect example of the kind of conduct book that shared characteristics of popular sentimental and epistolary novels such as Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-48) and *Pamela* (1740) (cf. ibid., 49).[41] Kenlon asserts that conduct books, such as Gregory's, "faced increased competition" during the eighteenth century through the increasing popularity of the novel, which, maybe for that same reason among others, was commonly "regarded with suspicion" (84).

According to the author of the preface of Gregory's text (i.e., the editor, not Gregory himself), it was never the intention of the Scottish physician to publish this rather private treatise (cf. Gregory, v).[42] However, in the editor's opinion, it is

[40] For further information: A Father's Legacy | University of Strathclyde. Last Accessed 17th of June 2026.

[41] Newton explains that epistolary novels and conduct books had a lot in common in the promotion of certain themes: "The dramatic tension of good and evil, the interplay of the sexes, the danger of seduction, the suspenseful possibility of the happy ending complete with the ideal of 'rational' marriage – or not if the heroine misbehaved – this is the very stuff of which Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe and Pamela were made" (146).

[42] Gregory was a trained medical man of some status, who had, when he was working on this text, already published several works in his professional field including *A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World* (1765) and the *Essay on the Office and Duties of a Physician* (1770), both of which had, in the editor's words, met with a "very favourable reception" and "been very generally read" (ibid. vii). However, since *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, as a conduct book, does not rely or touch upon his professional medical background, he can definitely be called an amateur in this field.

especially this privacy that makes Gregory's admonitions so genuine and honest (cf. Dahmer, 520):

> In such domestic intercourse, no sacrifices are made to prejudice, to customs, to fashionable opinions. Paternal love, paternal care, speak their genuine sentiments, undisguised and unrestrained. A father's zeal for his daughters' improvement in whatever can make a woman amiable, with a father's quick apprehension of the dangers that too often arise, even from the attainment of that very point, suggest his admonitions, and render him attentive to a thousand little graces and decorums, which would escape the nicest moralists who should undertake this subject on uninterested speculation (Gregory, v-vi).

Even so, John Gregory shares many characteristics with moralistic evangelical writers such as Hannah More, especially in terms of style and tone. A large portion of his text is dedicated to religion and the religious education of his daughters; it is the first chapter after the introduction and is followed by sections dedicated to 'Conduct and Behaviour,' 'Amusements,' and 'Friendship, Love, and Marriage.' Throughout his whole work, Gregory always returns to the principles of delicacy and modesty (cf. ibid., 9, 19, 26, 45, 46 & 64), which, in his opinion, should be the guiding principles of female comportment in every situation. The idea that the women's realm was especially hallmarked by the presence of sensibility (cf. González Mínguez, 29-30), emotion as well as respectability and delicacy, is indeed strongly present in Gregory's text.[43] This view is obviously shared by other amateurs as, for instance, Thomas Gisborne, and again Hannah More. In his *An enquiry into the duties of the female sex* from 1798, Gisborne, as well, promotes the importance of "delicacy and feeling" (32) as the key features that set off women's characters to their best advantage (cf. ibid.).

[43] Especially during the eighteenth century, sensibility and emotions were usually regarded as a mark of 'true femininity' (cf. Dahmer, 211-13). However, this was only the case if the emotion was entirely genuine and was only made visible involuntarily, against all efforts of the woman trying to control them (cf. ibid.). Control over "passion" (Mears, 32) was deemed to be extremely important to both physical and spiritual health (cf. ibid.). Particularly the perception of the woman's spiritual disposition, her character, depended on her ability to control her emotions in a way that appeared proper to society (cf. Dahmer, 211-13). In order to illustrate this theory, Dahmer mentions Mary Poovey, who explains that the ideal of femininity in conduct books was highly focused on "propriety", "modesty" and "self-denial" (Poovey, 35). All of these concepts were thought to be related to emotional control, which was necessary in order to evaluate the true worth of the emotion that was expressed. Dahmer explains this rather contradictory phenomenon as follows: "Die Zurückhaltung verweist darauf, dass etwas zurückgehalten werden muss […], und wirkt dadurch attraktiv" (113). ["Control of expression implies the actual presence of something that needs to be controlled and, in consequence, appears attractive" (Dahmer, 113).]

Such an ‘advantageous’ education is, in John Gregory’s own words, best achieved through direct maternal counsel. Since he, as a father, is unable to provide this, though, his thoughts and methods, especially those which he wishes his children to follow, are firmly modelled after their late mother’s ideas on female education which he sets up as an ideal. In his introduction he informs his readership that he considers himself lacking the requirements to talk about such matters to his daughters and that in this field he is sadly inferior to his late wife but, due to her death, has to tread in her footsteps and fulfil this task that would normally be judged a female domain: “I can request this [his daughters’] attention with a greater confidence, as my sentiments on the most interesting points that regard life and manners were entirely correspondent to your mother’s, whose judgement and taste I trust much more than my own” (Gregory, 3). He continuously refers to her when explaining his rules of conduct (cf. ibid. 19). His assumptions about his wife’s superiority in morality and spiritual education echo the common idea, which was later elaborated and strengthened in Victorian domestic ideology, that women had to function as the superior moral entity in the family, rescuing the ‘rough’ man from the moral dangers he had to endure in the public sphere (cf. Langland, 113). Gregory puts himself into second place and explicitly mentions the educational authority of his wife and the conviction that his own advice will inevitably “be very imperfect” and the “manner” in which his guidance has to be delivered is likewise bound to be extremely “imperfect” (3). Of course, it remains a fact that this humility is assumed from a place of privilege since John Gregory was not only male but also a member of the educated bourgeoisie, a successful professional and author and, as the lifestyle promoted in his treatise also suggests, financially reasonably well-situated. Moreover, Gregory’s declaration of humility does not concern his life, character, or profession (unlike for example partly in Mears’ case [cf. 83]) but is solely directed at his inadequacy to step into a place that was not a traditionally male domain (cf. Gregory 3-4). Authorial humility in front of the ‘superior entity’ is, indeed, a common strategy of amateur advice texts, which is also used by the moralist Hannah More, for example, even though the identity of this superior authority is different, since she, as a spiritual and conservative woman, rather yields to male superiority in the public sphere: “Though it be one main object of *this little work*, rather to *lower* than to raise any *desire of celebrity* in the female heart; yet I would

awaken it to a just sensibility to honest fame" (More, 39, emphasis added).[44] Of course, Gregory's male profession of humility is rather limited, yielding solely to the superior domestic influence of his late wife, who is no longer present to question his maxims, and not to his intended readership, his unmarried daughters, for whom his words have to appear as potent as possible.

Because of the identity of the addressees, one could argue that Gregory's advice is not parenting advice; however, his care towards his daughters and the kind of advice he provides them with are in themselves to be considered a kind of advice to parents, especially parents of daughters in a similar situation of life to provide their offspring with similar instructions. They were intended for this purpose by the publisher of the volume:

> His [the author's] own precarious state of health inspired him with the most tender solicitude for their [his daughters'] future welfare; and though he might have concluded, that the impression made by his instruction and uniform example could never be effaced from the memory of his children, yet his anxiety for their orphan conditions suggested to him this method of continuing to them those advantages (v-vi).

Gregory himself is also very open about his motives for writing the treatise as well as the circumstances that influenced him in making this decision. His intention is simple and straightforward – provide advice on the way his daughters should conduct themselves in every-day-life, especially within a social context:

> The anxiety I have for your happiness has made me resolve to throw together my sentiments relating to your future conduct in life. If I live for some years, you will receive them with much greater advantage, suited to your different geniuses and dispositions. If I die sooner, you must receive them in this very imperfect manner, - the last proof of my affection (2-3).

Gregory does not only mention his motives for writing the text, but he also describes the conditions of his surroundings that made him feel such an instruction would be absolutely necessary. Apart from the fact that the motherless state of children, as well as his own fading health, situates them in a potentially rather helpless situation, he is very much concerned about the state of "mankind" (1) and the countless dangers that his daughters will have to encounter in their social circles: In his opinion, true friends and honest advisors who provide counsel from unselfish

[44] The midwife Martha Mears, whose advice texts were discussed in chapter 2.2.1, exhibits similar tendencies when she acknowledges the authority of male professionals (cf. xviii).

motives are rare (cf. 1-2). At this early point already, the strongly religious tone of the text makes itself felt; Gregory declares that his qualms about the many hazards and pitfalls of social life, especially for young women, are somewhat softened by the trust in "Providence" (2) and the idea that his late wife's spirit and especially her "virtues" (ibid.) will influence his daughters for good. Even though Gregory often proclaims his wish to prevent his daughters' domestic unhappiness, he is, as Kenlon confirms, definitely not liberal: "although he claims to liberate women from drudgery and slavery, he immediately ushers women not into equality, but the bondage of tending to the hearts of men" (92).

The moralist and middle-class author William Cobbett, just as John Gregory, addresses specific intended addressees with the objective of improving their behaviour and 'rescuing' them from possible self-constructed harm. In order to do so, he, as well, structures his advice manual in an epistolary style, but, in contrast to the aforementioned author, his addressees are rather a general group and the epistolary form is just a stylistic choice to emphasise his paternal authority. He addresses groups of people by employing a *pars pro toto* form: His work *Advice to Young Men and (Incidentally) to Young Women in the Middle and Higher Ranks of Life*. *In a Series of Letters, Addressed to a Youth, a Bachelor, a Lover, a Husband, a Father, a Citizen, or a Subject* (1829) is, as the title tells, meant to be read by men and women belonging to the stations indicated. As a rare piece of advice specifically for men, and especially fathers, Cobbett's text has proven to be very valuable for this thesis. As usual for advice texts, Cobbett's declared aim is to transmit the experience he has acquired to other men (and women) and provide them with "a knowledge of the peril" (1) that they might face if they do not adhere to his warnings and prevent any need "to repent" (2) for the neglect of these admonitions. His qualifications for his office as instructor are provided in an equally self-confident manner, as he states that his experiences have made him so much superior in knowledge to the broad mass of men that no one is justified to question his authority (cf. 4-5), but everyone will usually benefit from his advice since he has been praised various times for providing knowledge that far exceeds the subjects taught in schools (cf. ibid.).

Cobbett promotes marriage and fatherhood as the best and the most 'natural' destiny for a man. This can already be deducted from the way his work is structured;

the order of his chapters successively addresses – youth, a bachelor, a lover, a husband, a father (cf. 8). Argumentations concerning the duties of a child towards his parents and teachers are followed by a description of the young man's public duties towards his employer and society, which is then succeeded by prescriptions for the process of choosing the right partner for life, the management of married life and the rearing of children as the final stage of development. Due to this structure, one can assume that admonitions concerning public duties, employment, the accumulation of money, choice of dress, servants and establishment are provided with the final goal of marriage and ultimately fatherhood already in mind. According to Cobbett, being a "sober, abstinent, industrious and well-informed young man" (53) is the best groundwork for a good husband and father, because he will, doubtlessly, marry the right woman not for reasons of "passion [which] […] overpowers reason" (82), nor for entirely materialistic aims, but out of consideration of both love and reason (cf. ibid.). The requirements of reason, however, seem much more prominent in comparison since the author adds a list with prerequisites which young men in search of a wife, the future mother of their children, should look for. The list encompasses, for example, "chastity" (Cobbett, 90), "sobriety" (ibid., 91), "*trust-worthiness*" [sic] (ibid., 92, original emphasis) and modesty. In Cobbett's opinion, only then the household is able to function, and the children grow up with respect for their parents because they have fulfilled the function of role model figures for life. In this context, he recollects the perfect behaviour of his own wife and emphasises its function as good example and guideline: "Need I tell kind-hearted English parents what effect this anecdote *must* have produced on the minds of our children? Need I attempt to describe what effect this example ought to have on every young woman who shall do me the honour to read this book?" (97, original emphasis).[45] The personal note which is added through the anecdotes from the author's private life is obviously used to stress the genuineness of the counsel provided as well as provide evidence of relatability and authority.

A female author who, many decades later, adopted a style very similar to the intimate epistolary form used by Gregory and Cobbett was the famous writer Elizabeth Gaskell, whose diary-used-advice-text, like Gregory's address to his

[45] This anecdote is later going to be mentioned in chapter 4.2.1.

daughters, is intended to provide her non-fictional child(ren) with counsel for their future life: Gaskell meant her diary to be advice primarily of a private nature in which she shares her experiences around the birth and early education of her daughter Marianne (cf. Wilson, 11).[46] The text is dedicated to her daughter and meant primarily for her use, "as a token of her mother's love and extreme anxiety in the formation of her little daughter's character" ("My Diary" 50). This dedication proves how real the fear of failure, of being the cause of any supposed mishap in the physical and psychological development of children was for mothers. A major motivation for wishing this rather private and intimate volume to be read as advice text by her daughter is clearly laid out by the anxious mother herself: The consultation of official guidebooks on parenting was a very conflicting experience for Gaskell personally, because "[b]ooks do so differ" (ibid. 52 & cf. Shuttleworth, 222), and she presupposes that a first-hand account of experience by a trustworthy person, the mother herself, would help her daughter in a similar situation. One issue which specifically raises Gaskell's doubts about other advice texts concerns the proper treatment of a crying child: The texts she consulted, according to her, recommend opposite ways of parental behaviour to their readership, which left her in a state of utter confusion (cf. "My Diary", 52). Her efforts to find professional advice texts which directly catered to her needs and provided her with the desired self-help were apparently in vain, as Rossman Regaignon confirms: "Struggling with one of the paradigmatic challenges of new parenting, Gaskell does research but fails to find a single recommendation that she wishes to follow consistently" (149).[47] In consequence, Gaskell falls back upon her own compilation of practices which she intends to follow methodically and resolutely, though she admits to frequent failure in this respect: "I am afraid I have not kept to it quite as I ought, I still think it [her set of rules] a good one" ("My Diary", 52). As she proceeds to explain, these rules are the results of her own experiences and her own feeling and

[46] Gaskell was not the first to make use of her diary to document the physical and mental progress of her children: Shuttleworth notes that as early as 1787 the German philosopher Dietrich Tiedemann utilised the same method to study "the progress of his son from birth to two and a half. The idea of a diary of an infant's progress was also introduced into pedagogic and child-rearing literature. Madam Necker de Saussure's *L'Education progressif* (1828-32), in which she recommended keeping a diary of your child, was translated into English in 1835 with a sample of the diary by the translator" (221-222).

[47] In her diary, Gaskell mentions a French text by Mme Neckar de Saussure which advised her, in case of crying, to immediately provide anything the child wants to have (cf. 52). Another manual (whose title is not given) had, as she mentions, previously told her to act in directly the opposite way, stating: "'Do not let them have anything they cry for'" (ibid.).

intuition of what is right and wrong (cf. ibid.). Because of her various parenting dilemmas, Gaskell is very explicit in her wish to keep her daughter from feeling as 'lost' as she was herself by letting them know that other women have struggled in a similar way (cf. "ibid., 50): "If that little daughter should in time become a mother herself, she may take an interest in the experiences of another […]" (ibid.). Even though Gaskell's journal was only officially published in 1923, it became the property of her daughter after Gaskell's death in 1856 and thus fulfilled its intended nature as a private domestic advice text.[48]

Even though Gaskell proclaims herself able and willing to stand behind her aim, her diary clearly shows her insecurities and her fear to fail her daughter by making a mistake in parenting: "There have been times when I have felt, oh! So cast down by her wrongdoing, and as I think I am very easily impressible, I have fancied there must have been some great mismanagement to produce such obstinate fits […]" (ibid., 61). In her work *The Mind of the Child. Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900* (2010), Sally Shuttleworth confirms that the "mishandling by the parents" (27) was indeed regarded as a very grave issue that – in the worst case – could cause insanity or at least severe behavioural problems (cf. ibid., 26-27). William Cobbett, in his chapter "Letter to a Father", appears to support this pattern of thinking by asserting that "*sanity* of mind" (268, original emphasis) is something that can be influenced by parents, for better but also for worse.[49] He continues to describe an instance of paternal carelessness in which an injury to the child's brain was, according to his judgement, the consequence of the parents' thoughtlessness and selfishness. Even though there was no direct causal connection, Cobbett proclaims the need for punishment, especially of "[t]he mother herself [who] was […] the greatest offender of the two" (ibid.). As so often in advice literature, it is noticeable that the greater responsibility for the child's well-being lies with the mother because of the mother-child bond and the belief in the woman's naturally more caring and emotional disposition.[50]

[48] See also: https://elizabethgaskelljournal.com/gde-aboutpage.html. Last Accessed 17th of June 2026.

[49] Shuttleworth adds that the majority of children suffering from mental health problems were thought to be affected by parental mismanagement or, alternatively, hereditary issues (and thus also originating from their parents) (cf. 29). She provides the example of "a six-year-old girl who was admitted to Bethlehem Hospital in 1842" (ibid.). The little girl was diagnosed with insanity caused by visions of "spectres" (ibid.) that were supposed to have a religious connection (cf. ibid.). People in charge at the time diagnosed her with "hereditary predisposition" (ibid.).

[50] For more information on the mother-child bond, see chapter 3.6.1.

Shuttleworth observes that Gaskell, accordingly, appears to stress methods which would "help […] her daughter control her passions and develop self-restraint" (ibid.). Interestingly, Gaskell also seems to reflect contemporary discussions on excessive educational pressure put on children and endangering their mental development (cf. ibid.). To avoid this danger and backed up by a doctor, she makes the decision not to start the proper education of her daughter until the age of four (cf. Gaskell, "My Diary", 61 & Shuttleworth, 222).

The content of the diary is very straightforward, presented to the readership in chronological order: Starting on March 10th, 1835, Gaskell describes her daughters' development and their growing relationship from the time Marianne, her first daughter, reaches the age of six months to the time her second daughter, Meta, is eighteen months old. Marianne, as the elder, is evidently the central character, even though, especially towards the end of the text, more and more passages are dedicated to Meta's development as well. As is to be expected from her notes, Gaskell does not focus on the medical aspects and bodily functions of men, women and children in general; instead, she provides her readership with an inside perspective on everyday middle-class life and struggles that went with it. Her descriptions certainly include the portrayal of Marianne and Meta's illnesses as well as their treatment and outcome, but the didactic value of these accounts is clearly not as strong as in books solely dedicated to these purposes.[51] In consequence, her accounts, though generally considered to belong to the broad genre of advice literature, are definitely less prescriptive and more descriptive, personal and emotionally relatable than the works of professional medical practitioners (cf. Rossman Regnaignon, 146).

Less personal and intimate than Gaskell's text but in parts equally emotional, and perfectly in line with the traditional standard of conduct books to promote gender specific behaviour patterns (cf. Dahmer, 31) is the treatise *Strictures on the*

[51] Gaskell, for example, describes her habit of dressing her daughter in warm clothes while keeping her in "*well-aired* rooms" (55, original emphasis). This is a point that is often mentioned by authors of professional advice texts such as Martha Mears, who explains the effect of bad air on children's health (cf. 42). In another passage Gaskell mentioned the way she treated Marianne when she showed signs of an illness: "We heard a cough like a dog's bark: (She had had a cold in her head, and had seemed pale, and languid all day.) We gave her 24 drops of Ipec: wine, and Sam & Mr Partington both came. They said we had done quite rightly" (68). The difference to professional advice literature lies in the fact that, on one hand, the mention of medical treatment is rare and appears more like an 'extra', and, on the other hand, that the correctness of Gaskell's treatment of her daughter has still to be confirmed by professionals (such as Mr Partington).

Modern System of Female Education: On the Prevailing System of Education, Manners, and Habits of Women of Rank and Fortune (1799), by the evangelical author Hannah More.[52] Since she focusses on female education, it is to be supposed that her (intended) addressees were mainly women and, presumably, predominantly mothers. At first, though, it does not seem as if children were the primary subjects of her concern; instead of focussing on childhood education, the first pages of her preface centre around the state of education and 'manners' of the adult English woman (cf. xi). However, she quickly proceeds to explaining general Christian duties, concentrating on the task of religious education and the responsibilities of the parents regarding this issue. In contrast to other British female authors of advice texts mentioned here, More shows an even more explicit religious bias.[53] She especially demands that her arguments should be judged according to "divine law which is the only infallible rule of judgement" (xvii) and is unwilling to recognise other than spiritual censure:"[I]f on such an appeal her [the author's/More's] views and principles shall be found censurable for their rigour, absurd in their requisitions, or preposterous in their restrictions, she [the author] will have no right to complain

[52] According to Sally Shuttleworth, the evangelical perception of childhood, proclaimed by Hannah More and other authors, was "oppos[ed] to Romantic visions of childhood innocence" (38), instead supporting the image of a child on which "original sin" (ibid.) had left a decided mark (cf. ibid.).

[53] Hannah More was the fourth daughter of a schoolmaster, born in 1745 in a small parish in the vicinity of Bristol. Her father is said to have been originally of Presbyterian faith but later converted to the Church of England. More's education was quite thorough, and she later became a teacher in her elder sister's school (cf. "Hannah More – A Short Biography" in: More, Hanna. *Stories for the Young. Or, Cheap, Repository Tracts: Entertaining, Moral, and Religious*. N.p.: Miniature Masterpieces, 2017 [1795-1797], npag.). After an unsuccessful engagement, Hannah More dedicated herself to her literary career and became a member of the Bluestocking group, a society of women who "met to further literary pursuits" (ibid.). In 1775 she started her career as a playwright and several of her plays were staged throughout the following years until the death of the famous actor David Garrick, who was also More's close friend, convinced her that "the theatre was both morally wrong and not where her ambitions now lay" (ibid.). She befriended several well-known authors like Horace Walpole, became a strong supporter of the abolitionist movement and "contributed much to the running of the newly found Abolition Society including, in February 1788, her publication of Slavery, a Poem [sic] which has long been recognised as one of the most important poems of the abolition period. The poem dramatically described a mistreated, enslaved female separated from her children and severely questioned Britain's role in the slave trade" (ibid.). Other authors of advice texts, such as Isabella Beeton or Elizabeth Gaskell, also invoke religion; however, their focus is less spiritual and more practical, concerned with all matters of household questions or everyday problems. According to Gorham, such a shift in the focus of parenting advice in particular was quite typical from the earlier years of the nineteenth century towards the latter decades (cf. 66). From 1782 onwards, Hannah More published more and more religious works, and in the year 1787 she first met "the 'Clapham Sect' (a group of wealthy evangelical Christians […]). The Group was strongly opposed to the slave trade" (cf. "Hannah More – A Short Biography" in: More, Hanna. *Stories for the Young. Or, Cheap, Repository Tracts: Entertaining, Moral, and Religious*. N.p.: Miniature Masterpieces, 2017 [1795-1797]). During the 1790s her writings became almost purely evangelical, "cover[ing] moral, religious and political topics […] [which were] both for sale or distributed to literate poor people" (ibid.).

of such a verdict" (xvii -xviii). What can also be derived from this statement is the fact that, in her examination of the human condition, More does not intend to focus on the physical symptoms, as Mears does, but on the spiritual appearance and eventual recovery of the soul.

Hannah More generally promotes values which support what was later to become known as the model of the separate spheres, attempting to dissuade women to hark on their "imaginary rights" (23) of public recognition. She aims to improve the practices of (religious) female education because it is her "earnest wish to turn their [British women's] attention to objects calculated to promote their true dignity" (x).[54] She apologises in advance if anyone should suppose her to be over-critical or even hostile in her attitude because she is exposing their faults but insists that she intends to act from the position of a friend and not that of an "enemy" (ibid.). Even though More appears to be humble in the introduction, as befits her self-created image of unassuming and modest femininity, later passages of her text prove that she remains quite self-assured throughout the entirety of her treatise:

> It is at least a comfort to the reader, to feel that honest confidence which results from knowing that he has put himself into *safe hands*; that he has committed himself to an author [meaning herself], whose *known principles are a pledge* that his reader need not be driven to watch himself at every step with anxious circumspection (29, emphasis added).

More evidently places complete trust in her own integrity moral reputation, and spiritual knowledge which she obviously believes to be quite high, and thus indirectly claims to be superior to the reader, a circumstance that she denied in the introduction when she proclaimed at least some openness to readerly criticism. Since her texts were quite popular at the time of their publication and she had some

[54] Just like Mears, and despite her success as female intellectual and author, Hannah More definitely was not an explicit feminist or "supporter of Women's rights. She refused to read Mary Wollstonecraft's Rights for Women [sic]" (cf. "Hannah More – A Short Biography" in: More, Hanna. *Stories for the Young. Or, Cheap, Repository Tracts: Entertaining, Moral, and Religious*. N.p.: Miniature Masterpieces, 2017 [1795-1797]) because, in her opinion, women were not suited for government work because they were generally too unsteady emotionally (cf. ibid.). This seems interesting, since some of her own arguments appear to be heavily influenced by politics, like, for example, her fight against the continuance of the slave trade, or her argumentation against the ideas of the French revolution (cf. ibid.).

supporters of high rank and influence, her self-confident manner can be regarded as somewhat justified, or at least explicable.[55]

However, amateur advice did not always have a spiritual focus: In some cases, advice manuals were more revolving around every-day human relations but with a less personal and intimate and a more practical focus than diaries or letters. A text which roughly belongs to the category of conduct books but does not fulfil Dahmer's criteria of being solely dedicated to providing advice for one specific group of persons of roughly the same gender, age and social status bears the telling name *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, by Maurice Colin, lady (within the volume only mentioned as M.C.), first published in 1893, considerably later than Gregory's or Gisborne's works and therefore bears strong resemblances to what Kenlon terms etiquette books (cf. 2). Besides advice on the correct conduct of businessmen, sportsmen, society hostesses, husbands and wives, the book includes a section that provides guidance in the management of the offspring and the correct way children should treat their parents. The intention of the volume is, in its own words, to act "as a guide in every-day conduct in all matters, and at the same time as a mentor in the important affairs of life" (iii). In contrast to John Gregory's text, whose addressees were fixed, this conduct book intends to speak to a much broader audience, at least as far as gender, profession, age and interests are concerned. The author herself mentions the variety of addressees in her preface:[56]

> As a preceptor for young and old alike, it [the book] will be found invaluable, giving as it does the rules to be observed by children in their conduct towards their parents, and the duties of parents to raise their children. It goes into the etiquette of entertaining and visiting thoroughly, and will be found most useful either to the inexperienced hostess or the visitor unaccustomed to society (M.C. iii-iv).

The structure as well as the language of M.C.'s conduct book appear much simpler and uniform than in the case of the previously discussed examples, because the respective chapters of the volume are somewhat parallelly structured, and each

[55] One of these supporters was Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London, who shared her interest in the Abolitionist movement and aversion against the teachings of the French Revolution (cf. "Hannah More – A Short Biography" in: More, Hanna. *Stories for the Young. Or, Cheap, Repository Tracts: Entertaining, Moral, and Religious*. N.p.: Miniature Masterpieces, 2017 [1795-1797]).

[56] Because of its subject matters and the social contexts of the time, it has to be assumed, though, that the text was intended for the middle classes and the great majority of its readership was to be found, as was the case for most conduct books of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, among the same social group, in more or less comparable situations of life (cf. Dahmer, 27).

chapter heading is followed by the incomplete sentence: “It is the correct thing” (M.C., 9, 15, 21, etc.). This phrase is uniformly followed by a text of which each paragraph names one aspect that should be considered correct conduct in the situation which is named in the chapter heading, finishing the incomplete sentence at the start of the chapter. An example denoting the text’s domestic bias would be the following passage: “It is the correct thing [new line] to be as conscious, considerate, affable, and entertaining at home as in society” (M.C., 9). This is the layout of approximately the first half of every chapter; the second half is quite similar but focusses on the negative rather than the positive kinds of conduct: “It is not the correct thing [new line] to suppose that only the rich can have happy or agreeable homes” (ibid., 12). The purpose of this style and structure appears to be a simplification of the content to make it more accessible for a broader audience, which, according to the author, is to include children as well as adults and people of a more advanced age, which again underlines the didactic purpose (cf. iii).

Explicitly ‘household-centred’ and practical amateur advice did share even less characteristics with the typical conduct book than the simpler structured volume by M.C.; so-called household manuals were published frequently by housewives and occasionally by men, or by a group of authors who were not medically trained but nevertheless considered themselves to have some authority as far as household management and child-rearing were concerned. On the one hand, their texts were commonly more inclusive than the works of their professional medical colleagues and did not focus specifically on medicinal aspects, although those elements could influence some of the arguments; on the other hand, they were also less personal and intimate and more practical than diaries or letters. Instead, this category of advice literature tended to cover more every-day topics, consisting of educational advice as well as “children’s diet and medicine, daily activities, and the prevention of household accidents”, emphasising the idea of “the mother’s moral responsibility to manage these practical aspects” (Wagner, “Men of Sensibility”, 308). Because of their more practical and less overtly moral and emotional aim, as well as their tendency to focus on more than one group of addressees, such texts do not always fit entirely into the category of conduct books (cf. Dahmer, 31). However, they can doubtlessly be called amateur advice since they lacked an author with professional, officially recognised and measurable

expertise, but provided a great amount of counsel on a wide variety of different, usually non-spiritual and household-related topics (cf. Dahmer, 25). *Cassell's Household Guide: being a Complete Encyclopaedia of Domestic and Social Economy and forming a Guide to every Department of Practical Life*, first published in 1869 by Cassell, Petter and Galpin, includes, as the title already suggests, advice on almost everything that could be placed in remote connection to the household, as, for example, chapters on "Animals kept for Pleasure" (21), "Card Games" (261), the treatment of various diseases such as "Biliousness" (334) and recipes for dishes such as "Fish Soups" (260). The volume also contains advice concerning children and parenting, from recommendations on the right clothing for older children (cf. 88) and for newly born infants (cf. 33) to ideas for their diet (cf. 314) and exercise (cf. 242). Texts such as *Cassell's* were often referred to as "systematic household books", which intended to convey "the highest principles of morality" and highlighted specifically "the importance of the physical and the emotional aspects of everyday mothering" (Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 802) with a clear emphasis on practicability and everyday habits. With this focus they differed from the medical advice as well as moralistic texts and personal accounts which were on the market at the same time, but their respective success proves that all types of amateur and medical advice texts had, indeed, an audience (cf. ibid., 801).

Instead of being downgraded or devalued in comparison to the more prestigious professional public duties of the husband, the care of the household was often praised in practical guides as extremely important since the household as an institution was considered vital for the functioning of society as a whole: *Cassell's Household Guide*, for example, describes this social unit as

> that most necessary and most important of all human Institutions, THE HOUSEHOLD. It is there that the fruits of man's labour are ultimately enjoyed; there that women find her chief sphere of duty, as the helpmate of man; there that the coming generation is being trained for the duties of life (1, original emphasis).

By pointing out the importance of their duties, advice manuals could contribute to a strengthened sense of self-worth of women as housekeepers and homemakers (cf. Åström, 114), highlighting the difference between men as "producers and providers" and women "as consumers [in this case of advice literature]" (Dyer,

218), but also put them under a considerable amount of pressure to live up to expectations.

Clearly, advice literature like *Cassel's Household Guide* did not primarily address upper-class families since the duty of "judicious […] husband[ry]" (*Cassel's*, 1) is quite frequently stressed, strongly echoing the middle-class ideals of industry and economy; typically, upper-class housewives would rarely have cared for this kind of advice, nor were the working classes able (and willing) to pay for the reminder to be careful with their money. Like so many other examples from all types of advice literature, household manuals were principally aimed at a middle-class audience (cf. Åström, 116).[57] The middle classes were a rapidly growing part of the population which could still appreciate advice as to "how to obtain economically the necessities of the household" (*Cassel's*, 1) while also being able to afford "the necessity of increased recreation, and longer and more frequent migration into purer atmospheres-desiderata" (ibid.). Thus, household guides often presented an idealized image of domestic family life as a desired standard and promoted an image of the home as a place that is under "all the benign influences that flow there from, as health, good spirits, equability of temper, clearness of head, prudence in enterprise, happiness in the home circle, and the esteem of one's neighbours" (ibid.). Most real families would probably be unable to live up to this picture of family harmony and, as a result, struggle under their respective obligations (cf. Åström, 114).

In contrast to medical advice texts, the recommendations in *Cassell's Household Guide*, although also touching on medical topics, were sufficiently simple, free from the often-used medical jargon or pretension of professional texts in order "[t]o supply, in plain, practical and exhaustive manner, this information, which otherwise must be ineffectively obtained by long and wearisome experience, is the object of THE HOUSEHOLD GUIDE" (*Cassel's*, 1, original emphasis). To supply the medical advice given in the guide with more credibility and professionalism, "contribut[ions] by medical men of eminence" (2) would be inserted into the work in order to counteract occasional distrust in the reliability of

[57] They could also occasionally address servants who had to run the household for their employers. See *Hints to Domestic Servants: Addressed More Particularly To Male And Female Servants Connected With The Nobility, Gentry, and Clergy* (1854) by a Butler in a Gentleman's family (anonymous). Despite its practical-sounding title, this work would fall more into the category of conduct books, though, because it focusses strongly on spiritual comportment.

the provided advice (cf. *Cassel's*, 7-8). Despite all understanding of the suspicions of doctors such as, for example, Thomas Bull (cf. 3), *The Household Guide* declares the advantages of domestic medicine while remaining "respectful" (8) to the medical profession. The guide does indeed promote, more than some doctors would have liked, "a more hands-on involvement [of the parents] in everyday childcare procedures" (Wagner "Victorian Nursery", 802).

Even more well-known and a little more personal than *Cassel's Household Guide* is Mrs *Beeton's Book of Household Management* from 1861, which has gained recognition as one of the most prominent examples of Victorian advice literature, as the continual re-publishing of the book indicates. Caroline J. Smith also mentions *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* as one of the works which have notably influenced the development of advice literature until the 21st century (cf. 675-76). Beeton's work can be described as very comprehensive and detailed in its coverage of a wide variety of topics (cf. ibid.). Just as the slightly younger *Cassel's Household Guide*, Isabella Beeton concerns herself with almost every aspect of daily family life, mainly providing recipes and exemplary menus to be used by the lady of the house; again, similarly to the *Household Guide*, her main focus is more on practical matters and less on moral aspects of living, which is reflected in the extended list of possible addressees listed in the subtitle of her volume:[58]

> Comprising Information for the Mistress, Housekeeper, Cook, Kitchen-Maid, Butler, Footman, Coachman, Valet, Upper and Under House-Maids, Lady's Maid, Maid-Of-All-Work, Laundry-Maid, Nurse and Nurse-Maid, Monthly, Wet, And Sick Nurses, Etc. Etc. Also, Sanitary, Medical, & Legal Memoranda with a History of the Origin, Properties, And Uses of All Things Connected with Home Life and Comfort (Beeton, npag.).

With the inclusion of every kind of servant that a household could offer, even addressing the most important male representatives of the serving classes, e.g. the butler, Beeton stresses that her work is relevant to the majority of establishments:[59] from the lower-middle-class family home whose mistress can only afford to employ

[58] Even if morality and correct behaviour are sometimes addressed, as for example in the chapter on "The Mistress" (cf. Beeton, 7), neither Mrs Beeton's advice text nor *Cassel's Household Guide* belong to the text type conduct book (cf. Dahmer, 31).

[59] Hyams describes the position of the butler as "the highest-ranking servant in the house" (48). His office included the supervision of every male member of the staff (cf. ibid.). His importance had to be reflected in his bearing, which ideally should be "respectful – but never subservient" (ibid.), also towards his employer.

a maid-of all-work and probably has to try out most of the recipes herself to the large upper-class domicile, in which this volume would most likely have been used by the housekeeper, or the lady's maid.[60]

Very early on, Mrs Beeton's household manual establishes the specific place of each member of the establishment – leaving no doubt about the role of women as the primary occupants of the domestic sphere. Even though *Mrs Beeton's Book* also mentions the duties of a few male servants who have a function in running the household, it is evident that this advice text is, again, making women its main addressees; the number of pages dedicated to the means to acquire culinary skills exceeds by far the space devoted to the tasks of male servants. In fact, the title appears to be a little misleading when it suggests that there would be an entire section that solely exists for the purpose of instructing the butler or the footman.[61] Throughout the whole text, women are often directly appealed to, and the reader does not have to look far to find some pieces of advice which explicitly describe the woman's station: "Nothing lovelier can be found/In Woman, than to study household good" (Milton, in: Beeton, npag). The master of the house, though, is not

[60] Concerning the hierarchy of servants in upper- to middle-class households, Hyams explains that "despite all the drawbacks, even a low-ranking post in a big country house is regarded as a better job prospect than being a live-in servant for a middle-class family in the city" (14). The reasons for these differences were, for once, the fact that servants were ranked according to the status of their employer, and it was, therefore, more prestigious to be associated with, and part of, an upper-class household (cf. ibid.). Being one of a smaller group of servants (or even the only one) in a "smaller home" (ibid.) usually meant less pay, more work and "very cramped conditions" (ibid.). The informed reader of Mrs Beeton's guide is consequently aware of the fact that her work was meant to be read by a variety of people from different social backgrounds. In Mrs Beeton's own words, the housekeeper is "SECOND IN COMMAND" (33), functioning as the "representative of the mistress" (ibid., original emphasis). Commenting on the employment of servants in a more general way, Gorham adds that employing servants in a domestic context was normal in the life of middle-class Victorians: "Indeed, contemporaries used 'servant keeping' as the chief distinction between the middle and upper classes and those beneath them. It was assumed that middle-class families would employ as many servants as the family income would allow. The generally accepted pattern called for more than one servant. Without two or three servants it was assumed to be difficult, if not impossible, to create the formal life style that gentility demanded" (9). However, this categorisation based solely on monetary means was, according to Gorham, problematic for some who identified as belonging to gentility but could not manage to reflect this status economically because the ideal mostly represented the standard of the upper middle classes (cf. 10). "Yet, throughout the nineteenth century, while the middle and upper classes together comprised a quarter of the population, the great majority of middle-class people clustered at the lower levels of this upper quarter. As a result, while the standards and expectations for the class as a whole were created by its most affluent members, there was no way that the majority of middle-class people could afford to achieve them" (ibid.).

[61] The closest the volume gets to this is maybe in the chapter "Domestic Servants". This section, even though it does not directly address the servants, at least provides rather detailed descriptions of their respective duties and the criteria of their employment, which could, of course, also be useful to the lady of the house, for example while hiring and setting up an establishment (cf. Beeton, 392-477).

addressed at all, which transmits the typically Victorian message that the housefather, the master, has nothing to do with practical household matters, which are reserved for wife and servants. The section addressing the position and duty of the housewife features, consequently, among the most important parts of the volume, as is indicated by its placement directly at the beginning of the guide. Chapter one – "THE MISTRESS" – starts with a Bible quotation listing female duties and maternal virtues (cf. Beeton, 7) and thus introduces religious moral undertones, which are, however, less explicit throughout the remainder of the text.

As must be expected from such an extensive, female-centred manual, Mrs Beeton's counsel covers almost all contemporarily discussed, popular child-related topics: breastfeeding, the employment of nurses – especially wet nurses, children's diet, the proper amount of exercise – both for the pregnant woman and for the child, as well as the right environment for growing up, and symptoms and remedies of common children's diseases. In her chapter "The Rearing, Management, and Diseases of Infancy and Childhood" (ibid., 478), Isabella Beeton openly discusses the purpose of her work, which is mainly to instruct and help inexperienced young wives to cope with all situations they could encounter in their life; besides cooking, or at least organising meals, these tasks would, of course, include the duty of bearing and raising children. Beeton argues: "[N]o sensible woman, in her novitiate of a parent, would refuse the admonitions of art [advice in the form of medical advice, advice from midwives or fellow mothers], or the teachings of experience, to consummate her duties of nurse" (ibid.). The use of advice literature is here described as sensible and civilized, contributing to the intended addressee's portrayal as a modest but practical middle-class woman (cf. Wagner, "Victorian Nursery", 802), a similar description to that of the 'ideal wife' in Cobbett's text (cf. 89).

3. "Willing slave(s) of the rich"? Social and economic hierarchies and the middle-class ideal

The social landscape of nineteenth-century Britain was strictly hierarchical, society being divided into different classes that shaped almost every aspect in life (cf. Pool, 33). The most widely recognised, large groups within this social hierarchy were the

upper class, the middle class and the working class. These social classes were not always easily defined because within these groups there were internal differences that created a separate hierarchy within one and the same group. Members of the upper class, for example, belonged either to the royalty – the highest rank on the social scale –, the nobility, or the gentry. The gentry was socially the lowest, or least distinguished segment of the upper class, and the group which was easiest accessible for the rising middle classes (cf. ibid., 38). The number of aristocratic titles became larger the lower the rank of the title, because the top places in the hierarchy were the most exclusive (cf. ibid., 37):

> Below the peerage came the baronets and knights, who were much more numerous in nineteenth-century English fiction and were much less influential, at least at a national level, in English society. [...] They [the baronets] constituted the upper reaches of that somewhat amorphous group called the gentry, and while they might sit in the House of Commons, they were more often preoccupied with local 'country' affairs. At the bottom of the titled ranks was knighthood. Knighthood was not hereditary, perhaps one reason it lacked some of the grandeur of a baronetcy (ibid., 37-38).

There was, indeed, nothing remarkable about knights taking up the respectable, but still monetary, profession of "doctors or lawyers" (ibid., 38). The fact that some knights were awarded their rank exactly because of their achievements in one or the other professional field hinted at the idea that they were socially very close to the middle class (cf. ibid.).

The lower as well as middle and upper class as well were bound to their own hierarchy, which at first sight featured fewer social rules and rituals but was nevertheless strict enough, because nobody wanted to descend on the social ladder: Of course, "[p]rogress into a higher class necessitated mastery of various social rituals, speech patterns, and even habits of spending" (ibid., 47). The economic and social changes taking place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, causing the weakening of the upper class's internal structures, also affected the hierarchical composition of the middle and lower classes (cf. ibid. 46). In the lower segment of society, it was theoretically 'easier' to rise in the hierarchy since the personal position was less determined by birth and more by economic assets: "[T]he road to success and fortune" (ibid., 240) was thus in theory more generally accessible in the middle and lower classes. This development even increased over the course of the long nineteenth century:

> The changes in English society in the 1800s altered [the] somewhat static society. To begin with industry and manufacturing created new sources of wealth that could compete with land […]. […] Meanwhile, a lower middle class […] popped up to serve in the counting houses and the great bureaucracies of government, such as the educational system. […] In effect, these vast and rapid changes meant that status was more and more what you yourself could make it (ibid., 46-47).

Most members of the middle class certainly had the great advantage of being born into a relatively secure economic environment that could ensure them a certain level of education and a better start into their professional working life. Without this benefit, the theoretically possible rise into a better social position remained a dream that was difficult to realise (cf. ibid., 240-241).

Arrangements for the working-life and domestic sphere for both wealthy and poorer households were governed by specific sets of rules. Of course, the distinctions of wealth and class (as well as gender) influenced the respective nature of these regulations (cf. ibid. 46-47). Certain classes had specific rules: Manual labour as well as most manual activities that resembled actual work had to be delegated if a person desired to be accepted as a 'lady' or a 'gentleman' (cf. ibid., 47), because these actions could almost unmistakably mark a person as lower middle or working class. Some of these 'social codes' were relatively new developments, mirroring the social shifts of the century, which included the increasing need to verify one's standing in a society in which structures were slowly changing and even starting to break up (cf. ibid.). Other rules remained relatively stable: Some of them were valid at the end of the eighteenth century and usually, despite all social change, continued to be held as truths by the majority of society well into the twentieth century (ibid., 240). For example, Gisborne's idea that the female body and mind are "particularly suited to the sphere in which women were intended to move" (21) primarily refers to the model of the separate spheres (cf. Van Osselaer & Pasture, 9), which determined a distinction between male and female tasks, but it equally applies to the differences in higher and lower tasks for women, which were in both cases defined by the principle of "maternal love and toil" (Strange, 24). Strange also supports the idea that the common rule of the "sexual division of labour" (83), which bound women to their home and men to their professional working surroundings, was defined even more strongly in those social groups in which money had to be earned, because especially here "space was

limited and men spend long hours in work and, supposedly, commercial forms of leisure" (ibid.). Economic changes caused this split to widen and working sphere and domestic surroundings to function almost separately from each other (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 7). Living arrangements and household organization were, of course, dependent on the respective social circumstances of every family according to their background. Gossage notes that household-arrangements became "increasingly class specific" (138) because economic pressures shaped the internal structure of the family. The growth of the working class due to the expansion of towns, especially in the middle of the nineteenth century, deeply affected the way families lived together:[62] The necessity to live "with kin in the same building" (Gossage, 135), possibly resulting from the lack of economic resources, dates from the same time. These "co-residents" (ibid., 126) could be unmarried siblings but very often were "a widowed parent or in-law" (ibid, 127).

The division between working and social space became a more and more central issue of household formation during the long nineteenth century. Because of the spatial divides of the male and female workplaces, most husbands depending financially on their profession, especially in the case of lower-class men, were less 'present' in the everyday life of their own household, even though they certainly were still a necessary part of it because of their duty as main breadwinner (cf. ibid.). Besides the more clear-cut separation between working and domestic spaces, divisions and rules within the spatial arrangements of the household itself became increasingly important as well. The discrepancies in the spatial structures of the family home unmistakably highlighted social differences between the households. While richer families could divide the space of their home according to the changing demands of fashionable life and were therefore able to separate the children's space, rooms dedicated to leisure, workspace and representative areas like salons, dining rooms and drawing rooms, poorer families "lived overwhelmingly in one room, making the literally named 'living room' the locus of family space" (Strange, 86). In his text *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Habermas explains that the formation of especially and exclusively private spaces was a phenomenon

[62] Industrialisation created "households dependent on urban activities rather than farming for survival" (Gossage, 84) and families that often enough had to rely on the earnings of not just the father but almost every other family member.

which, though it began earlier, is characteristic of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with the emergence of the middle classes as strong supporters of the predominantly bourgeois way of life that put special emphasis on domesticity and private family life:

> The 'public' character of the extended family's parlour, in which the lady of the house at the side of its master performed the representative functions before the domestic servants and neighbo[u]rs, was replaced by the conjugal family's living room into which the spouses with their smaller children retired from the personnel (45).

Of course, as Habermas stresses, a certain mass of "capital" (47) was needed to maintain this distinctively private sphere.[63] And even though Habermas's study does not, as Eibach accedes, directly acknowledge the amount of influence "emotions and gender" (350) had on this rise of the bourgeoise material culture, the connection still has to be recognised.

For many Victorian fathers, earning money was also essential for their status as figures of authority and representatives of the patriarchy (cf. Strange, 50-51). What is often neglected, though, when the concept of patriarchy is addressed, is the fact that, as Strange puts it, "men were just as bound to their obligations as cattle were for slaughter" (ibid., 64). Most of them did not choose their status but were born into it and tied to it by duty and sometimes even attachment (ibid.). But, of course, the male status was a significant part of the average man's worldview; being

[63] Related to the spatial arrangements and the crowded environment of a poorer home was the problem of disease and child-mortality. Child and infant mortality were a very real source of anxiety for parents during the long nineteenth century (cf. Gossage, 152), and reasons for this high death rate were, among the insufficient provision of medical care, especially among the impecunious population, "the poor quality of the water supply" (ibid.) in some towns. *Cassell's Household Guide* from 1869, for example, mentions that "[e]pidemics of typhoid happen so often, and on such a huge scale, in connection with palpable faults and flaws in the water supply of towns and villages, that the head of the Medical Department of the Privy Council thinks the time has come for making water companies responsible in damages to the sufferers or their survivors" (216). Such epidemics usually affected most those families who were in no position to afford medical assistance or pay for the necessary instruments to make their home sanitary (ibid.). The cramped living conditions mentioned by Gossage (cf. 139) did nothing to reduce the risk of spreading disease among the members of a household, but also among the entire community. In her advice book *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861), Isabella Beeton mentions the dangerous living conditions in the context of a description of ideal upbringing of children. She expresses her surprise at the circumstance that, despite all the odds, some children of poorer background should turn out to be healthy (cf. 479). Besides the commonly used argument (in advice literature) that most members of the working classes are generally more robust than other classes (cf. Mears, 52), Beeton offers no additional explanation for this phenomenon. A possible reason might be that Beeton did not know the exact percentage of child mortality, which was rather high, but the equally high number of offspring could disguise this fact to some extent and create the impression of a higher survival rate.

unemployed or impoverished for different reasons diminished their status considerably and "dependency" (ibid., 77) was not always easy to accept (ibid.).[64] Alcoholism was a serious problem especially in the context of unemployment but also in the case of formerly independent families from the middle or upper class who had 'fallen upon hard times'. However, particularly male, but also female members of the working class were commonly regarded as being more susceptible to the dangers of alcohol dependency and, consequently, bearing a considerable share of the blame in the case of their family's misery (cf. Mears, 63 & Strange, 125).[65] Of course, this prejudice disregarded the interdependency of the problems of unemployment, general misery and feeling of failure. The church and other charity organisations attempted to compensate the often-inadequate help of the government to some extent (cf. Hillel, 146), but they could, in most cases, only achieve a temporary or locally restricted improvement.[66] Moreover, this 'unofficial' relief was not provided without restrictions or judgement: Some authors of advice literature, like Hannah More, for example, took a critical position towards what they considered lax provision of relief, fearing a demise of general morality (cf. 48).[67] This pressure was often increased by male feelings of failure and frequently led to an "increase in domestic violence, shame and family breakdown" (Strange, 51 & cf. Adams, 516). Acts were passed to control domestic violence, for example the Offences against the Person Act (1828), the Act for the better Prevention of Aggravated Assaults upon Women and Children (1853) and the Divorce Act or Matrimonial Causes Act (1857) (cf. Sheppard, 213), but these measures were obviously unable to prevent domestic violence altogether since economic factors remained largely unaffected.[68]

Advice texts, such as *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* and William Cobbett's advice, often promoted simpler, less costly lifestyles without extravagance and luxury (cf. M.C., 12), sometimes even commending poorer

[64] Gorham further elaborates on the so-called "gospel of work" (3) that was part of the backbone of the ideology of the middle classes in Victorian times, upholding such qualities as "energy and uprightness" (ibid.), "thrift, order [and] punctuality" (ibid.).
[65] For more information, see chapter 3.6.1.1 (female alcoholism) as well as 3.6.2 (male alcoholism).
[66] For more information, see chapter 3.3.1.
[67] See above.
[68] Referring to: Matrimonial Causes Act (1857). vlexJustis. Your World of Legal Intelligence United Kingdom. Anno Regni VICTORI, Britanniarum Regina, Vicesimo & Vicesimo Primo. An Act to amend the Law relating to Divorce and Matrimonial Causes in England. C A P. LXXXV. Matrimonial Causes Act 1857 - UK Non-devolved - Legislation - VLEX 808408569.Accessed 22nd of January 2025.

people on their 'idyllic' and harmonious family life (cf. Cobbett, 251, 254, 259).[69] By contrast, more affluent families, especially if they belonged to the higher social classes, were commonly criticised for a tendency towards luxurious lifestyles as well as a condescending attitude towards financially strained families. Middle-class households who tried to emulate an upper-class way of living were oftentimes duly reprimanded for "being the willing slave of the rich and the titled part of the community" (ibid., 47). *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* supports this perspective: "It is not the correct thing to suppose that only the rich can have happy or agreeable homes. It is often in very simple households that the finest manners are found, and consequently the greatest happiness is found in them also" (M.C., 12). This idea stands in the tradition of evangelically inspired advice texts that despised luxury and considered simple middle-class lifestyles to be representative of the highest moral standard (cf. More, 3). It is highly unlikely that the authors, usually of middle-class background themselves, actually refer to the extreme frugality and hardship of un-romanticised working-class lifestyles. Advice to bear in mind that "[i]t is the correct thing […] of the [family] circle to remember that a simple meal may be made as delightful a gathering as a set dinner party, if all come to it with the intention of making it so" (M.C., 12) was probably not directed at those lower-class families who struggled to avert starvation (cf. Strange, 52). However, the tendency to romanticize and idealise poverty and the lack of opportunities (to buy luxuries and potentially fall into temptation) remains one of the key characteristics of middle-class domestic propaganda.

4. Parent-child relationship in the long 19th century through the lens of advice literature

Regarding child-rearing, it can be observed that many practices remained more or less the same over a longer period of time (cf. Pollock, 268 & Opitz-Belakhal, 273), particularly during the long nineteenth century, which saw a general emphasis on morality, order and selflessness in the function parents had to fulfil for their

[69] Even if Cobbett mentions that the financially more restricted mother had to make concessions in her mothering practice, for example by using a cradle, which Cobbett usually does not recommend: "The *cradle* is in poor families necessary; because necessity compels the mother to get as much time as she can for her work, and a child can rock the cradle" (259, original emphasis).

offspring – especially in the case of female children – with the parent figuring as educator, mentor, companion and gift-giver (cf. Gorham, 48-49). Nevertheless, parent-child relationship during the long nineteenth century naturally underwent some changes, especially due to economic and scientific developments, which characterised the decades to some extent. Childhood, as a special period in an individual's life, increased in importance since the eighteenth century, and Gorham notes that the emphasis on childhood "as a distinct and separate period" (65) grew considerably from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century and over the decades of the Victorian age. Gossage observes that the "pattern" (9) and "the timing of family formation" (9) changed over the course of time. Economic developments were partly responsible for this development, and the emergence of "industrial capitalism" (ibid.) changed the situation of many families, thus manipulating patterns of parental behaviour (cf. ibid.).

Advice literature naturally reflected some of these issues and concerns, even though the genre was generally more conservative, encouraging the readership to counteract such trends if the development in question was thought to be harmful, or embrace it if the issue was deemed beneficial.[70] The focus of the image of parent-child relationships in advice literature shifted slightly from the eighteenth to the

[70] Martha Mears, for example, was determined to discourage musical education for girls because she was of the opinion that it increased vanity and thus had an adverse influence on female morality (cf. 33). For more information see chapter 3.5.2 on Girls' Education. Gorham comments on such opinions, which were frequently expressed in advice literature, by stating that even though art and music were seen as belonging to a middle-class girl's curriculum, they were "warned against developing tendencies to approach the study of art or music in a professional way" (104). Although art and music were traditionally part of the basic as well as the advanced education of girls and young women, there were many critics of the attention that was paid to these subjects as well as of the way art and music were commonly taught. Especially those authors of advice texts who were influenced by evangelicalism were quite severe in their views on modern or fashionable influences on subjects. Martha Mears already stated in the context of what she says about pregnancy that modern music, especially if consumed frequently and within a larger company, should generally be considered disadvantageous for female development (cf. 33). Fashionable music, often originating outside Great Britain, performed by foreign musicians and taught by foreign teachers, lacked, in Mears' opinion, "purity and simplicity" (ibid.). The evangelical writer Hannah More supports Mears' opinion; according to her point of view, "excessive cultivation of the arts" (55) could pose a direct danger to the young girl's moral code by encouraging vices such as "vanity, [?] selfishness, and inconsideration" (ibid., 56). Education, according to More, should strive to destroy these vices and not cultivate them (cf. ibid.). Consequently, all teachers of art and music should select the content of their respective subjects in accordance with this principle and they should be aware of the idea that "the great business of education [is] to implant ideas, to communicate knowledge, to form a good taste and a sound judgement" (ibid.). The 'wrong' selection of music or art to be taught to children and young adults could, therefore, have serious consequences, since, according to More, the bad influence of the ideas that they transmit could make pupils unable "to resist evil propensities" (ibid.) and cause them to develop questionable habits.

nineteenth century and over the course of the Victorian era, as mentioned in chapter 2. Earlier examples, at least in the case of amateur advice, tended to prioritise "the child's moral and spiritual welfare", in the context of which "physical care" (Gorham, 66) and practical routines had only a subordinate position. This changed in the later part of the century when medical knowledge became a little more widespread and scientific and psychological advancement changed, if not the general moral tone, the focus of advice manuals, which "even when they emanated from evangelical sources, tended to be secular in tone" (ibid.). A suitable example for this shift would be Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) on the one hand and *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* (1893) on the other. While in terms of content and moral expression they are far from contradicting each other, an open invocation of God and religion happens only rarely in the latter example. Domesticity, domestic happiness and family togetherness were universally promoted concepts which were presented as going hand in hand with the arrival of children in the life of a couple. William Cobbett, for instance, states: "'Little children,' says the Scripture, 'are like arrows in the hands of the giant, and blessed is the man that hath his quiver full of them'; a beautiful figure to describe, in forcible terms, the support, the power, which a father derives from being surrounded by a family." (225)

Given the variety and diversity of human beings in character as well as physical disposition, it is evident that the reasons for having or not having children might vary and undergo transformation as well, even among contemporaries. However, certain trends regarding ideas and behavioural patterns are certainly discernible. Social, economic, and emotional reasons were in most cases included in parents' deliberations, even if, in general, raising children was the most matter-of-fact business for a married couple during the whole of the long nineteenth century. Linda Pollock concludes in her studies of parents' diaries – presumably from middle-class backgrounds considering both literacy rates and the emotional and moral bias of the texts – from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century that

> there have been very few changes in parental care and child life from the 16th to the 19th century in the home, apart from social changes and technological improvements. Nearly all children were wanted, such developmental stages as weaning and teething aroused interest and concern and parents revealed anxiety and distress at the illness or death of a child. Parents, although they

> may have found their offspring troublesome at times, did seem to enjoy the company of their children (268).

Pollock emphasises that most authors of the diaries used in her study were fond of their children and were happy when they were born (cf. 205-207).[71] This observation can be said to corroborate the overall trend, at least among the intellectual and wealthy middle classes towards the end of the eighteenth century, which "called on parents to improve their general knowledge of children" and to "observe children's development" (Moret Petrini, 314), building on Rousseau's ideas of childhood. A large part of the diarists in Pollock's study "enjoyed spending time with [their] offspring" (211) and took pleasure in their children's vivacity (ibid., 210). Feeling delight at their child's first attempts at talking was one of the aspects that was frequently recorded during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and apparently there was an increase in emotion felt by the parents at this milestone in the child's development (cf. ibid., 228). A suitable example from the field of advice literature is Elizabeth Gaskell's Diary (1835) which overtly exhibits her deep affection for her daughter and her absorbing interest in the child's development, which she is, apparently, closely involved with (cf. "My Diary", 50). Of course, given the time when the text was written, it would have been expected of her to become a mother and a refusal to bear children or show maternal affection would have been considered very much outside the norm and not at all feminine, especially so since, as a middle-class lady, some parental involvement would have been considered the standard.[72] These contemporary ideals are frequently reflected in Gaskell's thinking and behaviour, however, this does not prove that the affection was not genuine.

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[71] Family historian Linda Pollock's study, presented in her work *Forgotten Children. Parent-child relations from 1500-1900* originates in her dissertation "financed by a Social Science Research Council grant and presented to the University of St Andrews in July 1981" (viii). Though it is not the most recent study, it has provided interesting insights into the topic that complemented my work very well. Her argument is that "selective use of material" (66) such as advice texts and personal documents has in the past led to a misrepresentation of parent-child relationships and pictured parents as unnecessarily cruel by leaving out important contextual information. In her chapter "The thesis re-examined: a criticism of the literature" she attempts to re-work, for example, Philippe Ariès' famous thesis presented in his book *L'Enfant et la Vie Familiale sous l'Ancien Règime* which proposes that "there was no *concept* of childhood during the middle ages" (2). For her study, Pollock used 144 American and 236 British Diaries, 98 of which were child-diaries, and 36 autobiographies.

[72] In Isabella Beeton's opinion, for example, maternal feelings are inherent in every woman without exception (cf. 478).

However, "fundamental and social change" (139), as Gossage notes, was one of the reasons why reproduction was limited in one family.[73] "[T]he decline was due to falling marriage rates; but […] after 1871, it was the net decline in fertility within marriage that was more important" (ibid., 140).[74] Some scholars also noted that this trend could be partially due to the change of women's age at the time they married:

> Certain women married young and continued to bear children until a relatively advanced age: a pattern we can qualify as 'traditional'. Other women married later and discontinued their childbearing activity early. Their family sizes would have been reduced to something approaching 'modern' levels, both by later marriage and by fertility control within marriage (ibid., 150).[75]

In parallel to this geographic observation, a related development was detectable in the different social spheres which indicated that "bourgeois fertility began to fall before that of working-class women" (ibid., 158 & 171).[76] In his advice manual from 1829, the middle-class moralist William Cobbett debates the advantages and disadvantages – within all social ranks – of establishing a family, acknowledging economic considerations which could be put forward in favour of (shared labour and security of succession) but also against (additional cost) having children. He proceeds to ask the (obviously rhetorical) question "*it is better to remain single*?" (209, original emphasis), which he immediately answers negatively.

Since Cobbett is an ardent promoter of domesticity, it is logical that he should be in favour of family formation, and this is also reflected in his answer: "If you should say this, it is my business to show that you are in error [to choose a childless state deliberately]. For, in the first place, it is against nature to suppose that children

[73] The more researchers approach the end of the nineteenth century, the more the trend to propagating fertility control becomes visible (cf. Gossage, 140).

[74] Gorham references this trend in family size by stating that after 1871 there was a "decrease in child mortality, and by the 1890s infant mortality as well showed a decrease" (15). She also adds the interesting fact that the likelihood for Victorian children to lose one or both parents was considerable because "life expectancy was lower than it is today" (ibid.). However, the fact that "middle-class Victorians married relatively late" (ibid.) was part of the picture as well.

[75] This tendency was more or less pronounced, depending on socio-economic and geographical conditions; within farming communities, the trend of falling fertility rates arrived considerably later than within cities and towns (cf. ibid., 157), probably because traditions, among them traditional family structures including young marriages and larger family sizes, lingered longer in rural regions (cf. ibid.).

[76] It is indeed possible that some urban working-class families felt the need to limit "the strain on fragile family economics that was represented by additional babies" (Gossage, 174). However, other families of the same class, especially if they depended on a collective income, which was often the case in farming communities, "required a large family labour force" (ibid., 175). In these cases, having more family members could be seen as an investment in the future (cf. ibid., 175).

can cease to be born" (ibid.). In several places in his advice text, Cobbett uses the argument of 'natural parenthood' and the idea that it is a proof of egotism to refuse and actively act against it. The author underlines his argumentation with an illustrative example:

> [I]f you meet with a girl who *'is not fond of children',* not to marry her *by any means*. Some few there are who even make a boast that they 'cannot bear children,' that is, cannot *endure* them. I never knew a man that was good for *much* who had a dislike to little children; and I never knew a woman of that taste who was good for any thing [sic] at all. I have seen a few such in the course of my life, and I have never wished to see one of them a second time (179, original emphasis).

As the above passage suggests, it is seen as a sign of genuine disagreeableness and an asocial, unpleasant disposition to refuse to have children. Cobbett's statement already presupposes that in the question of whether to have children or not financial motives were not the only relevant factor. Besides economic considerations, of course, there also were other reasons that accounted for the wish to have a family: The first and perhaps most obvious one would be that in the past, until perhaps roughly the middle of the twentieth century, having children within marriage was almost an obligation, a duty that had to be fulfilled because it mirrored the collective moral system of society: The rules of "respectability" (Ruggles, 131) demanded marriage and children – most of all from women, but also from men, because within marriage and in their positions as parents, the required social gender roles were at once reflected and fixed at the same time (cf. Tosh, 36).

In the bourgeoise mindset, parental affection was a natural outcome of the domestic ideology, which was less common in the upper ranks of life. William Cobbett notes a difference in affection and a stronger tendency towards artificiality, vainglory, and egotism among parents of higher social status and in comfortable financial circumstances, while less fortunate families, according to his observation, exhibit a far more 'natural' care for their offspring. He advises to

> observe, as I so frequently have, with delight, the excessive fondness of the labouring people for their children. Let him observe with what pride they dress them out on a Sunday, with means deducted from their own scanty meals. Let him observe the husband, who has toiled all the week like a horse, nursing the baby, while the wife is preparing the bit of dinner (99).

This simple state of togetherness, selflessness and cooperation is depicted by him as a model for all to follow. Moreover, Cobbett asserts that the presence of children, especially once they have reached the age when they can be of assistance to their parents and tread into their footsteps, smooths over some of life's troubles and can help rekindle marital fondness: "When old age approaches, and the parties have become endeared to each other by a long series of joint cares and interests, and *when children have come and bound them together by the strongest ties that nature has in store*; at this age the features and the person are of less consequence" (133, emphasis added). According to Cobbett, affection for children is a natural sentiment and dislike or neglect is a sign of degeneration. Even though with the advance of the century the separation between workspace and domestic space grew even stricter (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 7), the ideal of "family time" (Strange, 87) spent together was steadily gaining in importance in the public perception of flawless family life. This middle-class Victorian ideology was also propagated by means of pictures, stories, and advertisements, which spread values in the context of middle- and lower-class settings (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 2). Customs that required the participation of all family members, such as celebrating Christmas together, were portrayed as particularly useful to create a bond between parents and children, and even the long absent working-class, or middle-class professional father is pictured as being "located at the heart of family dynamic" (Strange, 86) during these special times.

The presence of the parents in their children's life was considered important not only for the formation and maintenance of affection but also for the creation of respect for the elders as substitutes for society's leaders. Whether it concerned female or male children, respect for parents is an issue that also features prominently in advice literature. Addressing the children, the author of *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct,* for example, puts special emphasis on the importance of respect as a result of the elder's superior knowledge and life-experience: children should "[a]ccept their parents' judgement as worthy of respect, if only because they have travelled so much further on in life and necessarily know more of its pitfalls and snares" (M.C., 29-30). William Cobbett exhibits a similar way of thinking when he states that "a happy man […] [is] useful to all about you, and an honour to those from whom you sprang" (12). This passage is taken from Cobbett's first chapter,

his epistle to a fictional 'Youth', among all of his addressees the person who is yet closest to childhood. In these passages, Cobbett himself takes on a parental role and provides advice as a father figure. In his opinion, honouring the parents through correct behaviour becomes a point which is central to personal happiness and a condition for contentment in life. Thankfulness and humility are, according to Cobbett, naturally linked to genuine feelings of respect and honour for parents, and in order to achieve this sentiment, his young audience should remember that "you have *no right* to any earthly existence" (13, original emphasis).

Everybody's Book of Good Conduct extends the topic of respect to parental figures; however, the reason and the context are slightly different. The position of parents as teachers (for life) and figures of trust is usually pointed out in relation to this: "It is the correct thing […] [t]o remember if you are a parent, that to your children you stand fast in the place of *God* and afterwards in that of their nearest and *dearest of friends*. If they cannot come to you in childhood with perfect confidence in your *judgement, justice and mercy*, to whom are they to go?" (M.C., 28, emphasis added). Building on these ideas, the manual stresses the importance of harmony within the family, which should, ideally, make itself felt in every situation, public as well as private. In order to fulfil this goal, each member of the family should strive to treat the others with as much respect as they could and ignore small shortcomings – this part of the advice was especially dedicated to children, daughters as well as sons (cf. ibid., 27-30). The daughter is reminded that she should

> give her mother the deference due to her. It is undeniable that the young sometimes possess qualities the elders have not […]. A girl may be a better housekeeper than her mother, a better accountant, or more accomplished; but if she exhibits her talents in such a way as to imply a contempt for her mother, it will only make onlookers dislike her, in spite of her ability (ibid. 27-28).

The same advice is given to sons, only in a gendered male context:

> It is the correct thing […] [a]t your father's dinner-table, to let him speak and tell his own tales, without interruption. If your generation is much more enlightened than his, it will not justify you in showing him any disrespect; and perhaps for all you know, the guests may really prefer his conversation (ibid., 30).

Such principles were, of course, part of the daughters' and the sons' education in every middle-class household which strove to be viewed as respectable. Harmony, respect, affection and domestic togetherness were considered the cornerstones of

ideal bourgeoise respectability, and these ideals were supposed to pre-exist the arrival of the children and be already present during the period of pregnancy.

4.1 Pregnancy, early infancy, and the feminine ideal – social and economic issues

During the eighteenth century, most medical aspects of pregnancy were still shrouded in mystery, and in most cases "it was impossible to have a certain diagnosis" (Hanson, 1) of whether the pregnancy was developing in a normal way or not. Even the advice which most doctors of that time could provide was generally not reliable or, at least, "could offer no certainty" (ibid.). Nevertheless, it was usual for women who suspected themselves to be pregnant to seek advice either from experienced female relatives, midwives, or from doctors (ibid.), and these advice-giving fractions often came to disagree on issues concerning the pregnancy (cf. Hanson, 11). Another new focus of pregnancy-related discussions that arose in the first half of the nineteenth century brought together medical and social discourse around childbearing and made it public in so-called "medico-social text[s]" (ibid., 51). These works dealt mainly with the problem of combining medical issues with arguments taken from philosophy and sociology, which "includ[ed] marriage and family structure" (ibid.).

The high pressure on women, especially women of lower-class background, created through the need of frequent pregnancies, took its toll upon "the mother's comfort, health" as well as "her life" (Owen, 20). "[C]onstant pregnancy" (Pool, 187) was a problem that not only affected lower-class women but also wives of comparatively high social status and was probably partly due to "[t]he fact that the law for many years basically guaranteed a man access to his wife's body whether she desired it or not" (ibid). Even for richer women frequent pregnancy usually meant constant "fatigue […]" (ibid.), the possibility to injure her health for a lifetime, and probably even "dying in childbirth" (ibid. & cf. Dodge, npag.).[77]

[77] The overall high mortality rates which manifested themselves especially in this part of the population (cf. Åström, 116 & 120) seemed to support this kind of argumentation, at least at a first glance. Some authors of advice literature, such as Martha Mears, for example provided their readership with counsel that was completely unrealistic for a working woman to fulfil. Mears strongly advocates a change of setting and location for a pregnant woman if her current abode should happen to be exposed to bad air (cf. 42). It was, of course, easier for middle- and upper-class women to heed advice such as "[l]et no puddles be near your dwelling" (ibid.) and simply move to a new house or have the offending puddle removed by using their financial resources. Kenlon confirms in the context of conduct books that the "assumption that the only women that matter are those who are economically comfortable, white, heterosexual and without disability of any kind" (6) was so widespread as to be able to call it almost universal.

However, society depended on reproduction and, therefore, pregnancies, especially those of upper and middle-class women, because of their supposedly higher likelihood to produce 'respectable' citizens, had to be protected: "Giving birth to healthy children […] became a class issue with the emergency of the middle classes" (Åström, 117). Because much depended on the normal development of their pregnancies, middle-class women tended to consult doctors more and more during the course of the nineteenth century (cf. Åström, 120). Hanson argues that the doctors in "their rhetoric, if not in their clinical practice, became almost indistinguishable from […] contemporary midwives" (Hanson, 11) because of medical half-knowledge, and this phenomenon is also reflected in advice literature concerning pregnancy.

While there were divergences in focus and method, a usually undisputed importance was generally accredited to "[r]espectability" (ibid.) and "delicacy" (Hanson, 11), which were highly praised and universally valued attributes for anyone, even professionals, who attempted to give advice in the context of pregnancy, and it is therefore not surprising that piety and religious arguments were often mentioned in one breath with medical advice based on knowledge "still in its infancy" (Åström, 116). Amateur advice on pregnancy and childbearing usually sought to improve young women's moral conscience with respect to pregnancy and childbearing (cf. ibid.). In his *An Enquiry Into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1798) Gisborne likewise proclaims the importance of "delicacy and feeling" (32) as one of the general assets of women, which consequently has to be protected and cherished (cf. ibid.). But professional advice as well tended to stress the mind and its improvement during pregnancy: Even though the advice provided by midwife Martha Mears includes practical descriptions of symptoms and their correct treatment during pregnancy and the post-partum period, delicacy and modesty are still dominant issues in her whole work. For example, at the start of her second essay, dealing with the first period of pregnancy and "the uterine system" (ibid., 7), Mears declares: "To attempt to paint them [the functions of the uterine system] by any strength or simplicity of description would be equally useless and *indelicate*. Such essays answer no purpose but to offend the chaste eye, and to light up a blush on the cheek of *modesty*" (8, emphasis added); her actual descriptions of the body and its symptoms are extremely short and remain rather vague. While Mears' statements against the restrictiveness of female dress during pregnancy (cf. ibid.,

17) might appear liberal in the light of Mary Wollstonecraft's principles, it is rather misleading to interpret them as such: "[Mears'] combination of rationality and bodily liberation would make [her] sound like a disciple of Wollstonecraft, were it not for the fact that while the literal corsets are cast off, the mind-forged manacles remain" (Gilroy, 21). It remains to say that, although Mears' argumentation is not completely one-sided and shows some surprising turns, the basis of her perspective was nothing out of the ordinary for her contemporaries. Over the century, more and more doctors as well published their treatises on the topic of pregnancy and childbearing (cf. Hanson, 11), and "feelings of delicacy" (Bull, 3) were still highly approved of and considered necessary to be addressed, even by professional men, for the sake of gently raised married females and, therefore, remained somewhat vague as well (cf. Hanson, 1).

While medical science progressed in the further course of the nineteenth century (cf. Åström, 116), the topic of pregnancy remained no less difficult: Conception and pregnancy inevitably are part of the process of becoming a mother, which in itself presented a problem to the prudish Victorian mind (cf. Hanson, 55). Pool explains that this "dreary asexuality" (187) was actually only introduced in the Victorian period and had constituted less of a problem in the decades prior; the reason for the gradual shift in customs was evangelicalism, which also looked askance at the "gaily colored and tight fitting" (ibid.) garments that had been in fashion in the regency era (cf. ibid.). Gorham argues that this ideal of female asexuality actually created certain contradictory "tensions" (87) within the perception of femininity because "[if] [t]he ideal of feminine purity is implicitly asexual […] how, then, could it be reconciled with the active sexuality that would inevitably be included in the duties of wife and mother?" (ibid.). Gorham continues to explain that the only solution for contemporaries was to "focus […] on the femininity of the daughter rather than on the adult woman. Much more successfully than her mother, a young girl could represent the quintessential angel in the house" (ibid.). The expression 'the angel in the house', originally taken from the eponymous poem by Coventry Patmore (1854 & 1856) (cf. Coffey, 163), began to emerge most clearly after Queen Victoria's ascension to the throne in 1837 and coined the image that came to be associated most strikingly with domestic womanhood and middle-class values: "The domestic 'angel', the avatar of middle-

class Victorian womanhood, embodied purity, virtue, and selflessness" (Langland, 113).

Victorian middle-class ideals forbade everything that could give rise to immorality, which was often connected to a degenerate upper-class lifestyle. Coffey points out the circular logic of the bourgeois ideal of femininity: "Eine Frau ist bürgerlich, weil sie tugendhaft ist, aber gleichzeitig ist sie tugendhaft, weil sie bürgerlich ist" (164).[78] However, the question whether something was generally improper seemed sometimes a little unsettled as well: While it was considered proper, even necessary, for a woman to marry and bear children, the process of conception was a much-avoided topic since "motherhood could not coexist with virginity" but, in spite of this fact, "mothers as an ideal were nevertheless associated with sexual purity" (Holmes, 37). Hanson also reflects on the idea of many Victorian scholars that "especially during pregnancy […] her [the mother's] purity needs to be demonstrated, not least to the anxious male" (59).[79] In accordance with this custom, the physician Thomas Bull writes in his advice text (1837) that although medical care is extremely necessary for pregnant women, it is still "natural […] and commendabl[e]" that "delicacy" sometimes "prevents a full disclosure of [her] circumstances" (3) and "causes her to shrink from making any communication to another about it" (ibid., 100). Besides Bull, the authors of *Cassell's Household Guide*, for instance, seem to consider it entirely normal that any young woman should expect to have a family of a size which goes considerably beyond that of one child (cf. 178), but also mention that while "there should be no concealment of symptoms from one's medical adviser", the "scruples" felt by the mother-to-be are "misplaced" but "honourable" on accounts of "the so called 'delicacy' of the subject involved" (8). A similar way of thinking can also be found in the treatise *The Functions and Disorders of Reproductive Organs* (1857) by William Acton, who proclaims that women were mostly passive in their reproductive function and that, where this point is concerned, there was no real difference between women and "the females among animals" (213). He also describes one of his female patients as "the perfect ideal of an English wife and mother, kind, considerate, self-sacrificing, and sensible, so pure-hearted as to be utterly ignorant of and averse to any sensual

[78] "A woman belongs to the bourgeoisie because she is respectable and virtuous, but at the same time is she respectable and virtuous because she belongs to the bourgeoisie" (Coffey, 164).
[79] William Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs*, 1857.

indulgence" since she feels nothing but love "of a Platonic kind" (165) for her husband.[80]

Pregnancy brought about other problems besides the Victorian double standard on female sensuality:[81] The proper amount of exercise and work that was permissible for pregnant women was a highly contested topic (cf. Mears, 65); its controversiality indicates the high sense of importance which was attached to the proper comportment during pregnancy, especially because either too much or too little exercise was considered harmful and even potentially deadly to the unborn child. Since having children was regarded as fundamental to the proper structure of the family as well as to the state (cf. Adams, 511), behaving in a way that ensured that the unborn child would not suffer any adverse consequences became a matter of great import to the mother, her household as well as society (ibid.). Consequently, Hanson describes pregnancy as "a social function [which is] […] laden with social and economic meanings", and the way people dealt with pregnancy often reflects the "economic […] and ideological […]" (ibid., 37) standard of the society around them and the state's wish for stabilization and a secure social order (cf. ibid.). In his treatise *Domestic Medicine* (1769), William Buchan already establishes the immense importance of infants and the preservation of their lives for society's sake (cf. vi.) and, in a concerned tone, notes that more pregnancies occur among the lower classes because higher-born women tend to be more often infertile than those of lower status (cf. 667). He claims that "inactivity", most often practiced among the leisured classes, very often results in "[w]eak nerves", which can develop into "nervous diseases" (ibid., 67.). Thomas Bull confirms this statement and tries to give an explanation:

[80] It is also interesting to note that Thomas Bull, whenever referring to a mother-to-be, always speaks of her as "a married woman" (116). Of course, unmarried as well as married women could become pregnant, but, even though the chapter deals only with medical and practical advice and not with morality, the highly estimated "respectability" (Hanson, 11) evidently prevents the norm-abiding author from addressing both (cf. Bull, 116-118). This circumstance, again, highlights that Victorian moral ideals manifested themselves in every aspect of contemporary life, even in the most sober and, for Victorian standards, scientific context (cf. Hanson, 11). These images of female apathy were usually only applied to upper- and middle-class women. Stereotypical lower-class women were often regarded as "sexually wild and dangerous" (Guzzi-Heep, 295).

[81] Gorham mentions a related double standard that was closely connected to the image of Victorian girls, especially from the middle class, as sexually pure: In public opinion, the one true destiny for such girls was obviously marriage, however, girls were not supposed to "*seek* marriage" (53), because that could be regarded as immodest (cf. ibid), despite the fact that spinsterhood could severely diminish her status in the community (cf. ibid.). Advice literature was usually very indirect and "allusive" (Gorham, 85) when it came to matters of female sexuality (cf. ibid.).

> Delicacy of constitution, connected with habits of indulgence, may give rise to a state of health producing miscarriage. In high and *fashionable life*, among those who use *little exercise*, live luxuriously, and sleep in soft warm beds, there is often a *weak condition* of the vessels produced, which conveys the blood of the parent for the nourishment of the child, And the increased impetus and force given to the circulating fluid, induced by these habits, detaches one or more of these vessels, so that the supply necessary for the growth of the child is cut off, and it withers, dies, and is expelled (123).

It is, however, not difficult to spot the uncertain scientific basis of Bull's argumentation, which on the one hand warns of too much exercise (cf. 121) and on the other hand gives the lack thereof as a cause of death for the unborn without any clear explanation. In her advice text, the midwife Martha Mears recognizes the diversity of opinions and states in this context that even though some well-known doctor's advice against any exercise in the earlier days of pregnancy, which should be increased as time advances, she herself would not do so (cf. 66). The clientele of those professional medical men of high renown who spread these notions belonged to the upper classes, or "the fashionable world" (ibid.), and these "unfortunate" (ibid.) modern ladies listening to advice *à la mode* were, as Mears thinks, in high danger of succumbing to their "vanity or conceit" (ibid., 67) and listen rather to counsel given by well-known names and high positions than to the more simple and easier "dictates of nature" (ibid., 66). It is her opinion that pretension and arrogance, so common among the highest ranks of society, often prevent health to flourish: "In everything which respects the preservation of life, the instinct of the brute species is more unerring than the *fanciful speculations* of man" (ibid., 67, emphasis added).

In accordance with Bull's medical theories, Mears also supposes idleness and lethargy, presented as side effects of excessive luxury, to be decisive factors which could potentially be extremely harmful to pregnancy. In her own words: "From what has been said on the subject of exercise, ladies of fortune will easily perceive, that luxury is not a more fatal enemy than indolence" (70). One extremely damaging consequence of especially the combination of luxury and indolence would be an appetite that could increase weight to an unhealthy extent, especially with women who already possess "the natural disposition to fulness" (ibid.). Self-control is at all times essential, according to Mears, but during pregnancy it becomes even more important because fulness would commonly result in "languid" (ibid.) behaviour and the dreaded habit of "inactivity" (ibid.). The lack of discipline that is given as

reason for these faults would, according to Mears, eventually cause a number of complaints that were likely to lead to "dangerous labours" (ibid.) and maybe even "abortion" (ibid.), the same result Bull foresees.[82] Mears' conclusion is therefore: "[P]regnant ladies must not only avoid all excesses of the table, but must also resist the soft allurements of lazy unnerving indulgence" (ibid.). Exercise is regarded by Mears as an absolutely necessary element to counteract the dangerous temptation of laziness. If, however, a woman is not used to frequent activity, she should start slowly and let her body get used to unusual exertion, because otherwise her efforts would be just as harmful to her unborn child as immobility and indulgence (cf. ibid., 71). In this context, Mears blames the helpers and attendants of the pregnant woman as well, who should advice against an unhealthy diet or at least refrain from encouraging indulgences in extravagant snacks due to their prejudice and ignorance (cf. ibid. 93-94). An almost normal amount of exercise would, according to the author, be permissible until "the increase of the bulk" (ibid.) starts to hinder movement and nature itself demands that "they gradually lessen the exercise" (ibid.).[83] Mears presents the opinion that "[t]he delicacy of our sex is a sufficient check upon all immoderate, or violent exertions" (67). This advice recommending middle-class rationality and moderation unfortunately could not be followed by women who are less fortunate "in point of affluence" (ibid., 68). However, according to Mears, 'nature' cares for this circumstance as well, since working women are usually "abundantly compensated by a large stock of health" (ibid.). A bit further into the nineteenth century, *Cassell's Household Guide* from 1869 addresses the class differences in the light of women's behaviour during their pregnancy in quite a similar manner. When, at a first glance, the *Household Guide* superficially appears to be a little bit more understanding towards the predicaments of a pregnant working woman, the argumentation remains the same in all essential points: "It would be just as injurious for the labourer's wife to give up her daily

[82] One of the complaints that was brought about by a too luxurious appetite, as Mears describes it in her text, are problems dealing with the digestive system (cf. 80-81). Especially costiveness, but also headache and fever are mentioned as result of "sedentary, inactive habits" (ibid., 81). Even though she condemns these lazy habits, Mears does not fail to give advice as to the alleviation of these complaints and prescribes some simple medicines (cf. ibid.).

[83] In the early seventeenth century, the French midwife Louise Bourgeois, the first woman of her profession to publish an advice text, utters a similar opinion: "I used to marvel at village woman, up and about until the day they gave birth […]. But when I started to think about the reason why this was the case, I realized that they had been accustomed to this kind of exercise from their youth and that their ligaments had been relaxed and stretched since childhood […], and that by dint of hard work these women became robust" (118).

work and exercise, as for the lady to take to sweeping her own carpets or cooking the dinner. Habit becomes second nature. We know" (*Cassell's*, 10). While the main intention of this statement is to explain that exercise, in whatever form, is necessary for a pregnant woman, the writers of the guide also position themselves firmly as guardians of the established social structure (cf. Hanson, 37): Nothing needs to be changed; everything is fine as it is and if "labour and exertion are parts of her [the woman's] existence" (*Cassell's*, 10), human effort should not change what God has determined (cf. ibid.). "Divine will" (Gisborne,16), which supposedly defines the roles of the sexes, in this argumentation also establishes the position within society by providing working-class women naturally with "a stronger state of body" (*Cassell's*, 10). The general picture of femininity which emerges is that of an overly robust working woman, a self-indulgent and weak upper-class lady and a resilient but nevertheless delicate and feminine middle-class woman – again a clear hint at the common double standards in gender-specific behaviour.[84]

Regarding laziness, inactivity and a lack of self-control not only women came under attack, but upper-class men's indolence was criticised as well, since their often enough hedonistic lifestyle was seen as a danger to their ability to father healthy children. William Buchan in *Domestic Medicine,* for example, includes this reprimand: "The poor man who labours all day, and at night lies down contended with his humble fare, can boast a numerous offspring, while his pampered lord, sunk in ease and luxury, often languishes without an heir to his ample fortunes"

[84] The possibility that working-class women, as well, might be delicate and suffer from weaker health is utterly ignored here. On the contrary, Mears continues her argument with the statement that miscarriages among the working classes are almost non-existent and that, therefore, arguments against a pregnant working woman's constant employment (at least during the first part of pregnancy) are utterly untenable (cf. 67). A reduction of the workload would only be necessary if the pregnancy is already very far advanced and, since pregnant working-class women "require no indulgence" (ibid.) because "[…] the womb partake[s] of the general vigour and activity of the whole frame […] [and] expels its burden in due time with much ease" (ibid.). Since this uncomplicated kind of pregnancy and uncomplicated way of giving birth would generally be called something really desirable, it remains to be asked why the vigorous exercise should not be recommended to every woman in order to partake of the advantages of rigorous work and exercise and be rewarded by an untroubled period of confinement. Mears' answer to this question is as simple as it is strange for modern ears: In her argumentation, working woman are inherently built differently and are able to boast of a much stronger constitution than the healthiest upper-class lady could ever achieve; for one, hard work is healthy, for the other, invariably poisonous (cf. ibid.). Whether this difference in vitality is due to genetic make-up or just entirely to habit and upbringing is not specified by Mears. The latter, however, has certainly a strong forming influence upon the working woman's body and, as Mears opines, is the reason why pregnant women of lower status "need not be cautioned against the adverse consequences of […] any over-exertion in lifting or carrying heavy weights […]" (ibid., 69).

(Buchan, 76). The luxurious habit of going to bed late and sleeping late as well is, according to this line of argument, beneficial to neither the mother-to-be, nor the father-to-be and certainly not so for the child itself. William Cobbett reminds the father "to set an example of early rising, sobriety, and application to something or other" (283), echoing the middle-class ideal of "healthful, and manly pleasures" (305) going hand in hand with "industry" as necessary factor for "*health*, that most precious possession, without which there is nothing else worth possessing" (292, original emphasis). He criticises male habits of staying out too long at night in search for entertainment: "The *morning air* is the most wholesome and strengthening: even in crowded cities, men might do pretty well with the aid of the morning air; but, how are they to rise early, if they go to bed *late*?" (ibid., original emphasis) Children growing up to be strong and robust adults would in their turn be more likely to reproduce healthy offspring than the 'puny' and indulged child of noble but weak parents.

While not all writers who noticed the trend of fewer and less healthy babies being born to upper-class families (cf. Buchan, 76) feared a social collapse, there were nevertheless some concerns involved, especially among those who benefitted from high society births: "It was *accoucheurs*, not unnaturally, who were most concerned with the question of barrenness among the wealthy: this was, after all, the class on which their living depended" (Hanson, 38). Due to the insufficient medical foundation, their arguments mostly climaxed in the usual "warning against over-indulgence and 'high living'" (ibid.); however, Hanson argues that it would actually be hard to prove that there was really a wide disparity between lower- and higher-class fertility (cf. 39). According to Hanson, it is more probable that the reason why an absence of pregnancies might be more noticeable among people of higher status is the circumstance that the lack of an heir was a central problem to many higher-class families and these problems were certainly much more a topic of discussion among the affluent population than the fertility concerns of poorer people (cf. ibid.). The same argument applies to weaker infants and unhealthy pregnancies among working-class women, who often could not afford to call in a physician or even live in the 'correct' environment: Inhaling sanitary air as well as preserving a correct body hygiene was considered a female duty during pregnancy as it was afterwards her motherly task to prevent her children from accumulating

dirt. In this respect, lower-class people were generally considered to be lacking.[85] Lack of "cleanliness" (Buchan, 78) is held by Buchan as a common fault among "peasants in most countries" (ibid.), and he warns that it not only affects their health but also promotes "indolence and a dirty disposition" (ibid.).[86] Having 'correct' parental prerequisites, physically as well as morally, was important to the question whether one should 'have the right' to bear and educate children, and often enough people were not thought to be fit for that role (cf. Pooley, 26). While, on the one hand, writing in favour of the rights of pregnant women in poorer status, Robert Dale Owen, on the other hand, includes in his work *Moral Physiology; or, a Brief and Plain Treatise on the Population Question* (1832) the idea that parenthood is not a fitting role for everybody since it would not comply with morality to transmit "grievous hereditary diseases; perhaps that worst of diseases, insanity" (21). In *Domestic Medicine*, Buchan complains about the fatal effects of "intemperance" (76), a fault also often associated with working-class men (cf. Strange, 6): "Nothing tends so much to […] shorten the lives of children, as the intemperance of parents" (Buchan, 76).[87]

The often-mentioned concept of maternal sacrifice (cf. Gisborne, 17; Holmes & Nelson, 1) belonged inseparably to the moral code of a mother before as well as after giving birth (cf. ibid.) and this idea is also reflected in advice literature. Advice texts, therefore, were not coming short on the topic of maternal misbehaviour during pregnancy (cf. Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 801), and authors of such advice often appear to be quite dogmatic about it: For example, in *Hints to Mothers* from 1837, Thomas Bull writes that if a mother chooses to ignore her doctor's advice it becomes "an act of disobedience [through which] she may blast every hope of success [by the death of the unborn]" (139). Åström describes the presentation of pregnancy by authors such as Bull as difficult to prospective mothers, because the emphasis is clearly laid on the "constant struggle, where one momentary lapse of concentration can ruin a child" (114). Bull explicitly states that

[85] The working classes, from the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution onwards, had the reputation of fertility, but not the best image when it came to parenthood and care of their offspring, before as well as after birth: Many understood them to "be raising the nation's children inadequately" (Pooley, 26).

[86] Gorham confirms the fact that "[c]leanliness, plenty of exposure to fresh air, and simplicity of diet were advocated both for their health giving properties, and for their moral significance" (67).

[87] In this context, morality was a widely interpretable topic, and the state, without the possibility to prevent pregnancies, had to remove children from unsatisfactory care after they had been born (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 6).

a mother's weaknesses could actively "kill […] her unborn child" (139), and *Cassell's Household Guide* (1869) includes similar advice even if less strongly expressed: "When a woman is about to become a mother, she ought to remember that another life of health and delicacy is dependent upon the care she can take of herself" (10). Thomas Graham (1829) also confirms this argumentation by stating: "By a weakly father, a robust child may often be produced, provided the mother has a sound and vigorous body. On the other hand, the strongest man will rarely obtain a lively healthy child, from a mother who is weak and sickly" (5-6). The mother's constitution is presented as far more important not only for a successful pregnancy but also for the child's later constitution than the father's disposition (ibid.). Thus far more pressure is laid on *her* obligation to preserve her health (cf. Adams, 511). To this argumentation *Cassell's* guide adds the recommendation and reprimand: "[R]est the prescribed nine days [after giving birth] […]. [T]he rash and indecently early rising from childbed is not from a sense of duty or necessity, but simply out of bravado" (10). Vanity, according to Gisborne and Hannah More a traditionally female fault (cf. Gisborne, 34 & More, 58), has no part to play when the ever-present idea of female sacrifice (cf. Gisborne, 17; Holmes & Nelson, 1) should ensure that the health of the mother is preserved in order to provide for her child (cf. *Cassell's*, 10).

Because the state of pregnancy shows "the intwined lives of a mother and child in the most delicate of all possible conditions" (Mears, 102), fear of becoming the instrument of killing their own flesh and blood might well cause women to depend to a heightened extent on their doctor's ideas of "prudence and perseverance" (Bull, 117) but also on contemporary advice literature and end in "the mother's total immersion in the child's care" (Åström, 116) even before birth.[88] Rossman Regnainon confirms this assumption:

[88] Sally Shuttleworth supports this by mentioning an article of the medical student James Crichton Brown published in the *Journal of Mental Science* in April 1860 (cf. 37). In his article "Psychical Diseases of Early Life", Crichton Browne recounters, drawing on the experiences of another medical practitioner, one case in which in which the uncontrolled anxiety of the mother-to-be caused her children to suffer from physical handicap during their life: "Whiteman narrates the case of a lady, who, during five pregnancies experienced dread lest her offspring should suffer from blindness" (294). The woman in question finally "gave birth to five babies with different forms of eye defects" (Shuttleworth, 37). Crichton Browne also provides fewer specific examples from history to prove his theory of maternal impressions: "During the French Revolution, and the Irish Rebellion, it was observed, that those women who were subjected to anxiety and alarm afterwards produced children liable to spasms, convulsions and madness" (294).

> The maternal subjectivity that emerges from this genre [advice literature] may or may not follow the doctor's orders, but the uptake profile is entirely motivated by worry: worry about their decision, worry about following other advice, worry about her child's life and death and morals, worry – ultimately – about her ability to be a good mother (146).

Deepfelt anxiety and uneasiness were not just worrisome side effects of the consumption of advice literature but could eventually lead to severe psychological problems that might harm the body as well. Even some contemporary midwives, as Mears, for example, were convinced that it was very well possible for some woman to "be alarmed at the advice here [in her book] given" (44) and admit that uncontrolled aberrations of the mind could strongly affect not only the child's later mental and moral progress, but also the course of pregnancy (cf. 27). Gilroy notes that Mears "shifts the emphasis from the unborn infant to the management of the female body" (20) and focuses in as much detail as possible on the bodily symptoms caused especially by negative emotions. One of Bull's pieces of advice as well mentions the "perfect quiet of body and mind" (100) as immensely important to a successful pregnancy because

> [v]iolent emotions are capable of disturbing the organs of the body, and so producing miscarriage. It is notorious that our physical condition is affected by the state of the mind. In the peculiarly sensitive condition of the pregnant female, any extraordinary excitement, or depression, especially when produced suddenly, may therefore give rise to the evil of which I am speaking (122).

With this prescription, Bull settles himself firmly within the group of contemporaries who thought emotions, especially during pregnancy, extremely dangerous (cf. Åström, 116). Buchan arguably confirms Bull's statement: "How the mind affects the body, will, in all probability, ever remain a secret. It is sufficient for us to know, that there is established a reciprocal influence between the mental and corporeal parts; whatever injures the one, disorders the other" (86). *Cassell's Household Guide*, too, informs the female readership that as a pregnant woman "all she does will inevitably affect her child, and that mentally as well as physically" (10).

Fear, in Mears' opinion, could count among one of the most common reasons for many calamities that could befall a woman during this sensitive period because exactly these "preposterous ideas of danger […] will often produce the very evils

to which they are so tremblingly alive" (27). The midwife explains that the psychological effects of fear could have a very direct impact on the bodily functions "chill[ing] all the vital parts, weaken[ing] the stomach, obstruct[ing] the circulation, prevent[ing] the perspirable matter from escaping through the pores, and clog[ing] the fine machinery of the whole frame" (ibid., 27-28). The results would be immediate and fatal: "Langour, debility, and disease are the consequences; the difficulty of childbirth is increased; and a puny, or distorted infant is sometimes brought forth – the victim of its mother's terror" (ibid., 28). In order to circumvent these terrible circumstances all members of the woman's immediate environment should work together to "expose its [the anxious thought's] folly, its absurdity, and groundlessness" (ibid.). Serenity and composure, instead, are factors which could guarantee a successful pregnancy. She explains that this procedure was already well-known in ancient Greece where the husbands (!)[89]

> took care to keep them [their pregnant wives] in tranquillity and perpetual cheerfulness, by sweet and innocent amusements, to the end, that, from the mother's womb, the fruit might receive no impressions but what were [sic] pleasing, mild, and agreeable to order. The justness of the principle on which they proceeded is fully confirmed by the history of the whole human race, and certainly deserves the serious attention of parents, to whom, it is therefore hoped, the following detail will not appear tedious and uninteresting (ibid).

These elaborations of someone who, after all, has not studied the medical arts in the context of a university degree, might appear somewhat exaggerated or even slightly ridiculous; however, even prominent physicians like Thomas Graham appear to be aware of the danger of constantly nourished anxiety and sometimes even tried to warn their readership of extreme "[v]exation of mind [which] is a grand cause of disease, and of premature death" (8). Due to the extreme rhetoric used in these cases one can imagine that the effect of advice literature on the pregnant woman was not always as "cheerful […]" (Graham, 7) as the doctor ordered. Instead, frequent, or even extensive reading, especially of professional advice literature, was prone to "create a climate of danger and fear" (Rossman Regaignon, 151). Thomas Graham, too, observes that generally "[a] constant serenity, sustained by a well-grounded faith and hope, or cheerfulness, arising from a good conscience, is the most healthful of all the affections of the mind" (7). And while there is certainly some

[89] Many midwives' manuals were borrowing their advice from "ancient Greek medical models" (Hobby "Gender Science", 146).

truth in this statement, he fails to point out the adverse effects of the "constant struggle" (Åström, 114) of enforced "cheerfulness" (Graham, 7) in order to avoid "unregulated emotions" (Hansson, 32). Of course, women's fear for their own and their child's health was intensified by publications, since, as even Buchan acknowledges:

> The constant dread of some future evil, by dwelling upon the mind, often occasions the very evil itself. […]. This, for example, is often the case with women in child-bed. Many of those who die in that situation, are impressed with the notion of their death, a long time before it happens; and here is reason to believe that this impression is often the cause of it. […] Thus the sex often fall a sacrifice to their own imagination, when there would be no danger, did they apprehend none (86-87).

In Buchan's argumentation, women's imagination should be guarded from the hurtful influence of "tattling gossips who are continually buzzing in their ears the misfortunes of others" (87).

Besides fear and anxiety, melancholy and anger rank among the more prominent serious mental problems that could affect a woman during pregnancy, according to Martha Mears. In the case of the first affliction, it would be the most important duty of the husband to reassure and mollify his wife (cf. 29). It is interesting to note that Mears' advice text is the first to mention a male helper, apart from the attending doctor. The midwife accompanies this suggestion with a rather strict sounding remark which is perhaps meant to remonstrate against unsatisfactory or neglectful husbands. Mears states her opinion that "[t]his is the time to prove the sincerity of his love, and to show himself worthy of the choiciest blessings of heaven" (ibid.). While melancholy is depicted as an issue that leaves the mother in need of help and should evoke severe pity in her surroundings, anger is another matter altogether. Anger is portrayed in Mears' text as an emotion that is purely due to uncontrolled temper and one of the consequences of the selfish indulgence of feelings (cf. ibid., 30) and a lack of "bodily self-discipline" (Gilroy, 20). Here, the mother is clearly at fault, even more so because anger is described as more dangerous than "melancholy, and even despair" (Mears, 30), having an effect "like a tempest, break[ing] it [the constitution] down at once, - [sic] shivering the nervous system - swell[ing] the torrent of blood, - [sic] tear[ing] the frail texture of the veins, - [sic]" which "with apoplectic suddenness hurries its wretched victim to the grave"

(ibid.). These descriptions appear a little over-dramatic and so does Mears' account of the "outward symptoms" (ibid.) of this emotion.

Closely connected to 'unwanted' emotions was the subject of "female insanity" (Hanson, 24) during pregnancy, a widely-believed semi-professional argument still used by nineteenth-century professionals to demonstrate the heightened likelihood of pregnant women committing what were deemed great follies during this special time:[90] The descriptions of the extent of this insanity ranged from heightened "sensibility" (ibid., 25) over "maternal impressions" (ibid., 28) to actual psychosis (cf. ibid, 29-31).[91] The idea that women were especially associated with sensibility was nothing new even during the eighteenth century (cf. Hanson, 25) and neither was the belief that during pregnancy women were particularly susceptible to extreme emotions; however, the later eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries brought with them "the new emphasis […] on the need for the pregnant woman to control her emotional state" (ibid., 28). Several novels of the late eighteenth century also put the problem into focus: Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, indirectly please in *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) that women should rely on their reason and not allow feelings to overcome them, especially during pregnancy: The extreme "rage" and "despair" (32) the unfortunate

[90] Tales about women unable to cope with excessive emotions and sensibility and therefore becoming insane were circulating already during the eighteenth century (cf. Hanson, 28). However, the discussion of "female insanity" (Hanson, 24) did not have the same claim on scientific and medical knowledge which the supporters of the theory had in the nineteenth century. Gorham explains that during the Victorian period, many medical practitioners were of the opinion that female insanity was connected to female sexuality, a potential risk starting with menstruation (cf. 88-90). The only secure preventive methods would be lessened "stimulation" (87), self-control and "rigorous conformity to the Victorian ideal of femininity (ibid., 89).

[91] Especially towards the end of the nineteenth century, discussions about the inherent 'sickness' of women, stemming from their reproductive organs, especially their ovaries, dominated the medical scene (cf. Ehrenreich & English, 120-127). According to their recommendation, "women had to concentrate all their energy downward toward the womb. All other activity should be slowed down or stopped during peak periods of uterine energy demand […] Pregnancy was another period requiring intense mental vacuity. One theory had the brain and the pregnant uterus competing not only for energy but for a material substance – phosphates […]. Every mental effort of the mother-to-be could deprive the unborn child of some vital nutrient, or would so overtax the woman's own system that she would be driven to insanity" (127). Such theories, however, had very obvious hunches that made them highly questionable in terms of logic alone: "There was a contradiction in the romantic ideal of femininity which medicine had worked so hard to construct. Medicine had insisted that woman was sick *and* that her life centred on the reproductive function. But these are contradictory propositions. If you are sick enough, you cannot reproduce. The female role in reproduction requires stamina, and if you count in all the activities of child-raising and running a house, it requires full blown energetic health. Sickness and reproductivity, the twin pillars of nineteenth-century femininity, could not stand together" (Ehrenreich & English 134, original emphasis).

character Jemima experiences during her illegitimate pregnancy make her situation all the more hazardous and cause her decision to perform an abortion and lead to a prolonged illness (cf. ibid., 29-32). Likewise, in *The Young Philosopher* (1798) by Charlotte Smith and in Amelia Opie's novel *Adeline Mowbray, or The Mother and Daughter* (1805) "warnings of the dangers posed by unregulated emotions" (ibid., 32) are frequently inserted. In these tales, over-sensitivity is shown through the depiction of excessive weeping or fainting, as in Opie's text, where the heroine's child is born dead after an attack of fainting (cf. Opie, 162) which had been caused by the realization that her child, being illegitimate, would be branded a 'bastard' (ibid.).

The question whether or not pregnancy was to be regarded as a disease affecting the mental capabilities of the victims was also a prominent topic in non-fictional texts of that period. Especially in professional medical advice texts, the mother is often presented "as a creature of emotions, peculiarly susceptible to feeling because of her pregnant state" (Hanson, 32), which in itself "imply[es] [a] potential loss of reason" (ibid., 33). For Buchan, for instance, the pregnant woman is a difficult, emotional patient, like any other sick person, whom one has to soothe (87). The midwife Martha Mears also declares that the first physical signs of pregnancy could influence the mind and, especially in the case of "women of delicate and nervous habits" (8), cause fits of fainting or hysterics (cf. ibid.). While hysterics are, in Mears' opinion, not exclusively linked to the state of pregnancy, they still appear to underline the feminine stereotype since the author mentions that women who already showed a tendency of fainting or weak nerves could exhibit "aggravate[d] […] symptoms" (102) during pregnancy. Mears also proclaims the idea that the health of the mind is even more important than the health of the body because the mind has a much stronger influence on the body than vice versa (cf. ibid., 26). She warns of the dangerous effects of "fancy" (ibid.), especially for pregnant women, because "the very temper and character of the child" (ibid.) depends to a heightened extent upon motherly emotions. Because she supports the idea that "the body necessarily suffers with the mind" (15), it is for her a common circumstance that pregnancy could potentially cause an "increase of sensibility […] in a woman of very irritable frame and temper" (ibid.) and "aggravate her former complaints or weaknesses" (ibid.).

Nevertheless, Mears presents these accompanying signs of pregnancy not directly as a form of illness of the mind but more as a time of trial, testing the woman's firmness of character (cf. ibid.). Even the famous female weakness is, in her opinion, commonly emphasized too much in contemporary medical discourse. Mears opines that "[w]hat physicians term irritability, at that time, is but an increased sensibility of the womb, after it has received its precious deposit" (ibid., 6). She obviously regards the pregnant female, who has no record of severe previous illnesses, as potentially "timid" (ibid., 4) but not as likely to become mentally ill. By contrast, she firmly condemns the practice of calling the first symptoms of conception "the diseases of pregnancy" (ibid.); according to her perception, it is rather a condition which

> […] brings her [the woman] nearer to the perfection of her being: [sic] and, instead of disease, affords a much stronger presumption of health and security. […] Cast your eye abroad in the season of love, when each plant tends to re-produce itself by its flowers and its fruit, -- [sic] when the birds of song redouble their melody […]. [T]ell me if you can suppose that nature is less attentive to her darling object, woman, when preparing her for the greatest purpose of perpetuating the human species (ibid. 4-5).

Even if this flowery description is hardly of any practical medical worth, it might benefit the pregnant woman more to think of herself as nature's "darling object" (ibid.) instead of a sick and probably mentally endangered person. Mears concludes this part of her observations with the warning that people should be careful to distinguish between the "various symptoms of temporary indisposition, or of *fancied* disease" (ibid., 25) and "the *real* disorders to which pregnant women are particularly liable" (ibid.). It was, indeed, only at the course of the nineteenth century that "insanity of pregnancy" (Hanson, 58) came to be seen as not just an unhealthy overflow of emotions but as an actual derangement: As Hanson explains, many scholars "painted [a] picture of women as creatures whose mental and moral faculties were subordinate to their reproductive system" (ibid.), even comparing women in their childbearing to animals (cf. Hanson, 59). In the middle of the nineteenth century, as well, novels were picking up the topic of insanity during pregnancy: Ellen Wood's novel *East Lynne* (1861), one of the fictional texts discussed in this thesis, features the character of the highly strung Lady Isabel who suffers from nervous attacks while being pregnant with her first child and later

plagues her husband with jealousy while under the influence of post-partum illness (cf. Hanson, 70).

Inspired by these various forms of possible 'dangers', it comes as no great surprise that authors of advice literature usually had quite concrete ideas of how the daily life and especially the leisure time of a woman during pregnancy should ideally be designed. A general consensus promoted the shunning of all too passionate and exciting kinds of entertainment which might stimulate undesirable emotions. Reading should not be "for enjoyment but for edification" (Åström, 123) – an idea which is also promoted by Thomas Bull (cf. 20) and Martha Mears who, for example, agrees with Bull that a pregnant woman should "fill up the moments of leisure with *innocent* recreations" (33, emphasis added). However, even Mears apparently realises the fact that such 'innocent' occupations, fulfilling their purpose of not being meant to excite the emotions, almost invariably tend to be "dull" (ibid.). Therefore, a pregnant woman should, if possible, divert herself through a "change of scene" (ibid.), reading books of "rational delight" (ibid.), inviting "agreeable company" (ibid.), or listening to music which, however, should be free of eccentricity, lavishness or a great profusion of sounds (cf. ibid., 36).[92] Mears strongly advises against visits of the theatre or even the opera as places of entertainment which are, in her opinion, wholly unsuited for pregnant women since they cater too much to the predominantly decadent taste of upper-class life (cf. ibid, 33).[93] Mears' middle-class bias becomes apparent in her perception of the plays and operas preferred by the aristocracy with their proclamation of a fashionable, decadent, lifestyle as too extravagant, often too immoral and also too public for a pregnant woman who should, even more than usual, ensure her stay within the

[92] Mears dedicates a lot of space to the discussion of the right kind of music, advocating melodies that are characterised by "purity and simplicity" (ibid., 33), as extremely helpful for pregnant women in an irritable state. The fashionable "hurly-burly of sounds" (ibid.) often produced by "foreign minstrels" (ibid.) and favoured by the rich and famous more for its novelty and artistry than for its quality, completely ruins any sense for true music, as Mears opines.

[93] In his advice to his daughters, John Gregory agrees with Mears that public entertainment holds certain dangers, especially so for women: While he acknowledges the attractiveness of such events as the theatre or the opera, he also proclaims his observation that "there are few English comedies a lady can see without a shock to delicacy. You will not readily suspect the comments gentlemen make on your behaviour on such occasions. Men are often best acquainted with the most worthless of your sex, and from them too readily form their judgement of the rest. A virtuous girl often hears very indelicate things with her countenance nowise embarrassed, because, in truth, she does not understand them" (46).

private, sheltered sphere.[94] Moreover, public concerts might expose the delicate woman to mixed, probably even vulgar, company (cf. ibid., 36).[95] The musical performance should, additionally, take place during daytime, since nightly entertainment is to be avoided as much as possible because of its extravagance but also because a lack of air in tight spaces and unregulated consumption of luxury food (cf. ibid., 46 & 53). A more detailed description of the breakdown of the whole body follows, clearly intended to leave an unmistakably didactic message: "These considerations may have weight with such pregnant ladies as are too much the votaries of fashion to pay any regard to my former dissuasive against their frequenting theatres, operas, balls or concerts" (ibid., 46). True to the model of the separate spheres, privacy, indoors as well as outdoors is evidently the most secure way of ensuring a healthy pregnancy, according to Mears. As Gilroy affirms, Mears' advice always "takes place within the parameters of the new-style sentimental family" (20).

Not only during the regular nine months of pregnancy but also during the terminal period of giving birth was it considered to be vital to retain an overall calm state of mind and surrender to the will of the administering authorities. Mears confirms the assumption that a resigned spiritual attitude would support the birthing process: "Women should be informed, that the best state of mind they can be in at the time of labour, is that of submission to the necessities of their situation" (124). The mention of submission and passivity as models for ideal feminine behaviour does, indeed, not sound very new, considering the conventionally expected demeanour of the wife in front of her husband and within the domestic sphere (cf. Adams, 504). The consequences of disregarding these rules follow immediately, at least in the case of rebellious or hysterical behaviour during childbirth – and so does the reward should the submissive patient follow the orders. Mears states that "if

[94] The idea that solitude is better for sensitive spirits (like those of the pregnant woman) than rooms full of crowded people also recalls romantic ideas in which nature is more to be trusted than the fickleness of men (cf. 37.). Yet, it is clearly not Mears' intention to solely rhapsodise over nature but to convey her "fullest conviction" (ibid., 39) that "the health of mankind in general, and of pregnant women in particular" (ibid.) depends upon the interaction with – and the reliance upon nature.

[95] Gorham explains the concept and perception of 'vulgarity' in a little more detail, mentioning the fact that, though it was in use during the eighteenth century, it became more pronounced during the nineteenth because of the industrial boom and the connected social upward mobility which was regarded in a rather critical light by many contemporaries: "The concept of gentility [the opposite of vulgarity] was a legacy of the social structure that had characterised the eighteenth century. Its continued importance in the Victorian period attests to the fact that the middle-class endorsement of social mobility had not been entirely triumphant" (6-7).

they are resigned to their pains, it is impossible for them to do wrong" (124-125). The most likely outcome would, consequently, be a successful birth that should be less stressful than it would have been had she struggled against the will of her benefactors: "Instead, therefore, of despairing, and thinking they are abandoned in the hour of their distress, all women should believe, and find comfort in the recollection, that they are at those times under the peculiar care of Providence" (ibid., 125).

Authors of advice literature, such as Mears, occasionally direct some instructive remarks to close family members, but it was usual for some outsiders of special positions, such as midwives, nurses and, of course, physicians, to take over the role as helpers on site. According to *Cassell's Household Guide*, the employment of helping and ministering persons, in order to cheer up the mother-to-be, was indeed allowed. However, the reader also receives the impression that the addressed women are warned not to trust strangers too much. Because of the 'delicacy' of these affairs, the *Household Guide* includes advice that is directly addressed to the nurse herself: "The great thing for the nurse to observe […] is to keep the mother's mind free from excitement or anxiety, and to preserve as much quiet in the house as possible" (10). However, the importance of the doctor's presence and advice is clearly emphasised again; Rossman Regaignon even observes that, especially in the case of Thomas Bull's advice text, "[t]here is, therefore, never a moment when following the doctor's orders does not seem both necessary and urgent" (151). Here, Bull states concludingly:

> I have finished what was purposed, and presented the married female with that information for direction and relief in those little ailments and discomforts which frequently arise during pregnancy, for which she does not think it necessary to consult her medical adviser, and yet from which she will not unfrequently go on suffering for weeks, rather than speak of them (ibid).

Thomas Bull, called in his own work physician-accoucheur to the Finsbury Midwifery Institution, firmly states in *Hints to Mothers* that in the delicate situation of pregnancy women should "find it necessary to consult their medical advisers" (ibid.) and by all means "counteract the ill-advised suggestions of ignorant persons during the period of confinement" (ibid.). The repeated emphasis laid on the superiority of professional advice obviously implies that "mothers are always on the verge of doing it wrong" (Rossman Regaignon, 151).

Professional aid, providing security, stability and advice concerning the correct eating habits was also deemed to positively influence the quality and quantity of the mother's lactation (cf. *Cassell's*, 84), which was thought crucial for the health of the new-born. Mears supports the idea that the choice of food is to a very great extent connected to the quality and the amount of the milk, and, while she does not mention the influence of emotions, she emphasizes the impact of regular living habits for the proper nourishment of the new-born (cf. 155). Martha Mears, too, is convinced that body contact between mother and child at the earliest permissible time after birth would be beneficial to both the child's as well as the mother's health (cf. 140). Besides promoting physical recovery from the exertions of delivery and facilitating the normal habits of married life, the close contact of mother and child at this crucial time is, in Mears' opinion, the surest way to establish an intimate relationship between them. Apart from all other reasons, the most important one is given in the last part of the sentence, when Mears describes the formation of the mother-child bond brought forth by close body contact:

> Here, […], I must observe, that nothing else can so effectually promote her [the mother's] recovery from childbed, the future establishment of good health, the exquisite sense of wedded joys, the capacity of bearing more children, and the certainty of receiving from them the *most endearing returns of affection* (ibid., emphasis added).

The midwife describes this bonding-process in highly emotional terms and mentions the assumption that the "sweet and thrilling sensations" caused by the bonding are not only the first expressions of motherly love, but also the first signs that the mother is willing to fulfil her maternal duty (cf. ibid.). Closely related to this subject was the topic of nursing, often regarded as the most 'natural' way to maintain body contact: Mears utters the theory that many women, especially women of fashion, shrink from the task of breast-feeding because of its resembling the way animals feed their offspring; in order to disassociate themselves from any kind of supposedly bestial behaviour, they would leave this obligation in the hands of others, thus neglecting, in Mears' point of view, one of the most important maternal responsibilities (cf. ibid.).

William Cobbett supports Mears' idea that nursing is not only a sign of maternal commitment but also the best possible nurture for the infant and a sign of sacrificial love for child and husband alike:

> No mother ever suffered more than my wife did from suckling her children. How many times have I seen her, when the child was beginning to draw, bite her lips while the tears ran down her cheeks! Yet, having endured this, the smiles came and dried up the tears; and the little thing that had caused the pain received abundant kisses as its punishment. […] […] [W]ould not this endearing thought [his affection for her] have been wanting, if I had seen the baby at a breast that I had hired and *paid for* (229, original emphasis).

Cobbett argues that being unwilling to sacrifice comfort and health for the child's best nutrition dehumanises a mother, because, as he argues, even animals are willing to sacrifice themselves for their offspring. It was a common assumption that, if the willingness to nurse the own child as the "supreme sign of maternal commitment" (Gilroy, 22) is not present, the mother should be severely reprimanded: "[T]hose unfeeling mothers who fail to nurse appear unnatural, uncivilised, and perversely un-English" (ibid., 23).[96] Gorman elaborates on the growing tendency of advice literature to condemn lack of maternal dedication to the office of motherhood:

> The influence of the new outlook [on childhood] rendered suspect certain child-rearing practices that had been followed by middle-class and upper-class families for centuries. For instance, the practice of employing wet-nurses came under increasing attack, as both unhealthy and psychologically damaging to the child (17).

Gilroy even argues that the attempt to frame mothers as 'slaves' of their children and their maternal duty, strongly recognisable in Mears' writings for instance, 'unmasks' the midwife as being solely concerned with luring mothers into the desired 'submissive' behaviour and create "docile maternal bodies" (23). The tendency of trying to introduce a lifestyle more in accordance with nature does not

[96] The most important duty of every patriotic woman would be the bearing of children to provide the nation with new citizens who, ideally, were physically as well as morally adhering to the desired standards. It was considered a well-known fact that "[r]eproduction was also a basic requirement for a sound nation" (Adams, 519). This statement served as a "logical justification […] for state intervention in marriage and family practices" (Adams, 520). The midwife Martha Mears stands for exactly these opinions. Her text *The Pupil of Nature; Or, Candid Advice to the Fair Sex* she propagates a certain ideal of domesticity that depends on the fulfilment of duty, and this duty is not just private but to some extent public as the duty of an English citizen (cf. 140). After closer observation it appears as if there is an even deeper political background to Mears' apparently simple, domestic text. Since the date of its publication in the year 1797 falls into a time of deeply felt antagonism between the English and the French, Englishness and English femininity are naturally presented as superior to "the indelicate, unfeminine behaviour of French women" (Gilroy, 24), whose lax morality and loose manners were commonly said to be one of the roots of the French Revolution (cf. ibid.). As a contrast to these 'undignified' foreign ways, English women as dutiful citizens had to exhibit their Englishness by showing "suitable restraint" (ibid.) and "sobriety" (Mears, 51) in all situations. As Gilroy explains, "women were a national and natural resource, they had to be rationally managed in the interests of productivity, and of a domestic ideology that kept women in the home" (ibid.).

change this perspective and, according to Gilroy must be viewed rather as a fashionable way of writing than anything else (cf. 22-23).[97]

In Victorian imagery and literature, the common attitude towards nursing and the employment of nurses was usually comparatively close to its presentation in Mears' earlier treatise. Many novels, short stories and educational pamphlets contained equivalent "touching representation of breastfeeding" (Wagner, "Men of Sensibility" 130) as exhibition of 'natural motherhood', as readers knew from late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century predecessors. Shuttleworth opines that this general promotion of maternal nursing, "becom[ing] a staple in Victorian childcare manuals" (177), was still echoing Rousseau's principles of natural education in its core (cf. ibid.), which remained popular and supported the rise of 'fashionable' maternal commitment in the Victorian ideology (cf. Wagner, "Men of Sensibility", 131). Elizabeth Campbell Denlinger mentions the idea that with British Romanticism, the practice of breast-feeding became popular even in privileged circles of the upper class, suddenly eager to adopt practices of middle-class domesticity (158-160). Queen Victoria's mother was, according to Campbell Denlinger, "the first parent of a British princess to nurse her own child", doing so from motives of "[r]omantic enthusiasm for motherhood" (158) which was also often advocated in advice literature with its commonly middle-class bias. One of these texts, Isabella Beeton's highly popular work on *Household Management* (1861) for example, comments on the justification of the employment of nurses to replace the mother in feeding the child. Similar to Mears, but maybe slightly more sympathetically, Beeton acknowledges that there might be cases in which a 'mother-substitute' is necessary to care for the child, but this measure should only be taken in emergencies and exceptional situations:

> Again, every woman is not gifted with the same physical ability for the harassing duties of a mother; and though Nature, as a general rule, has endowed all female creation with the attributes necessary to that most beautiful and, at the same time, holiest function, - the healthy rearing of their offspring, - the cases are sufficiently numerous to establish the exception, where the mother is either physically or socially incapacitated from undertaking those pleasing duties herself (Beeton, 478).

[97] This does not seem at all uncommon if one keeps in mind the fact that Martha Mears' text falls exactly into the period of first-wave Romanticism and the "broader trend[s] […] of national consensus in the aftermath of the French Revolution" (Gilroy, 25).

A normally functioning maternal body, however, should be well-equipped for the nursing task (cf. 479), because maternal instincts are 'natural' and therefore follow 'naturally' upon the time of birth as "a direct intelligence of Nature" (478), rendering the duty of nursing inherently "pleasing" (ibid.) and holy. Just as Martha Mears and William Cobbett, Isabella Beeton is deeply distrustful of the process of leaving a very intimate task in the hands of a stranger who is not working for moral but for economic benefit (cf. 149 & 41). In addition to materialistic motifs, the discrepancy of social position, according to Beeton, is very likely to cause a disparity of thought and custom as well (cf. 478-479). It is implied here that, due to these distinctions, servants are usually unable to completely comprehend their employees' or the doctor's arguments regarding healthy food and "pure air" (ibid., 479) as well as issues concerning breastfeeding.[98]

A rather significant difference between Mears' text and Beeton's advice manual is the acceptance of helpers during the first time of motherhood, especially the suckling period. While Mears strongly dislikes artificial milk, or any other device that could stand between the 'natural' contact between mother and child, Beeton remarks concerning artificial food: "The advantages to the mother of early accustoming the child to artificial food is as considerable to herself as beneficial to her infant" (495). She proceeds to describe the advantages in more detail. She also is in favour of a device called the breast pump and states that "[e]very mother should be provided" (ibid., 492) with these contraptions. This development is emblematic for the changes that took place in the concept of motherhood and the advice provided in manuals from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, showcasing that, even though sentimentality was still an issue, "motherhood was undergoing 'modernization'" (Gorham, 65) and practices and advice concerning them were moving from containing strong religious or philosophical undertones towards a proclamation or at least an acceptance of scientific, professional

[98] Even though there are many similarities to Mears' admonitions, Isabella Beeton generally exhibits a little less distrust of entertainment for the newly-made mother: "As regards exercise and amusement, we would certainly neither prohibit a mother's dancing, going to the theatre, nor even from attending an assembly" (cf. 492).[98] Mears' earlier mentioned arguments against all kinds of public entertainment as producing passions of all kind during pregnancy (cf. Mears, 33), however, would usually also be considered valid for the period of nursing, since it was a common argument in advice literature that 'unsuitable emotions' also affect the quality of the milk (cf. *Cassell's*, 86). Beeton's openness towards more extensive amusement lets her appear slightly less rigidly evangelical in her assumptions than the late-eighteenth-century midwife.

mothering (cf. ibid., 66). Thus, the formation of 'knowledge' about pregnancy became one more way to justify male authority since professionalism and medical science were still predominantly in the hands of men.

4.2 Family togetherness and the domestic ideology: Dynamics within the home

Sacrifice and the fulfilment of duty are integral parts of parenthood to this day and even more so in the contemporary imagination of eighteenth and nineteenth-century authors of advice literature. In Thomas Gisborne's advice manual *Enquiry into the duties of the female sex* (1798), the author declares: "Of all the duties incumbent on mankind, there are none which recommend themselves more powerfully to natural reason than those of the parent" (376). Gisborne also asserts his opinion that the Bible clearly determines these duties, and the way domestic tasks should be divided between the sexes (cf. 376). In the passage mentioned by Gisborne, St. Paul clearly speaks of the man's tasks: "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim, 5:8); consequently, those who do not want to fit their roles would be marked as outcasts. Gisborne speaks of the "Divine will" (16) as determining the duties of the female sex as well (cf. ibid., 16); in his argumentation the quality of the wife or the daughter is measured according to her domestic performance (cf. ibid., 16-17). In her advice text from 1799, Hannah More confirms this assessment when she states

> [w]omen are also from their domestic habits, […] secured from the difficulties and temptations to which men are exposed in the tumult of a bustling world. Their lives are more uniform, less agitated by the passions, the businesses, the contentions, the shock of opinions and of interests which convulse the world. If we have denied them the talents which might lead them to excel as lawyers, they are preserved from the peril of having their principles warped by that too indiscriminate defence of right and wrong, to which the professors of the law are exposed. If we should question their title to eminence as mathematicians, they are happily exempt from the danger to which men devoted to that science are said to be liable. […] *And let the weaker sex take comfort, that in their very exemptions from privileges, which they are sometimes disposed to envy, consists their security and their happiness*. (35-36, emphasis added).

Within the home, and therefore under the supervision of the mother, the children are to be prepared for their future callings in life, which mirror more or less those of their parents: Ideally, the parents' influence, particularly the mother's, is both

spiritual and physical (cf. Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 802). Female education was for a long period of time the topic of many discussions, especially with regard to the suitability of the subjects taught and the amount of learning that should be installed. Many examples of advice literature, for instance, did not always support educational practices of schools, finishing schools for young ladies in particular; for many middle-class authors these seminaries were the epitome of upper-class fashion and lifestyle which they quite often deplored. More, for example, criticizes harshly the 'worldly' focus of girls' seminaries. She describes her experiences with society ladies who are 'products' of the educational efforts of these finishing schools and comes to the conclusion that the result is less than satisfactory (cf. 61-62):

> But I may safely appeal to the observation of mankind, whether they do not meet with swarms of youthful females, issuing from boarding schools, […] who are introduced into the world, under the broad universal title of accomplished young ladies, of all of whom it cannot very truly and correctly be pronounced, that they illustrate the definition by a completeness which leaves nothing to be added, and a perfection which leaves nothing to be desired (ibid.).

More's point of criticism lies in the fact that the excessive desire for accomplishments of all kinds inevitably ends in a neglect of the really important aspects of female education. The so-called 'perfection' of the ladies' education is deceiving, according to More, because it only affects the superficial side of life – their outer appearance, their conduct within society and their performances when they happen to be exposed to the public in order to show off their talents (cf. ibid.).This kind of superficial focus on 'vain' accomplishments was usually seen as a special characteristic of upper-class female education; particularly middle-class educationalists, often with a strong religious background, used to condemn upper-class educational practices as shallow or even dangerous to the mind of the young generation because they would encourage vanity and selfishness (cf. ibid., 58). More, as well as many of her contemporaries, is firmly of the opinion that "most worth and virtue are to be found in the middle station" (63), and that these virtues should be preserved. Middle-class women traditionally would, as More asserts, surpass both upper- and lower-class females with regard "to religious knowledge and to practical industry" (ibid.). This basically implies that they were supposed to be less frivolous than their richer or poorer fellow women. However, at this point

in her argumentation, More ventures even further, stating that these highly valued characteristics of the middle class are in acute danger, not at least due to the disastrous effect of ladies' seminaries:

> [t]his phrenzy of accomplishments, unhappily, is no longer restricted within the usual limits of rank and fortune; the middle orders have caught the contagion, and it rages with increasing violence, from the elegantly dressed but slenderly portioned curate's daughter, to the equally fashionable daughter of the little tradesman, and of the more opulent, but not more judicious farmer (62).

The upper-class customs of fashionable dress and elegant conduct are, in the author's opinion, even more misplaced here, because neither middle-class budgets nor the bourgeoise mindset should allow such extravagancies. Schools for middle-class girls were mimicking upper-class finishing schools and thus allowing inappropriate habits such as "unlucky pretensions to elegance" (ibid.) to spread among the female population.[99]

Girls educated in these establishments knew that their future would primarily circle around their status as wife of a man occupying a certain position, and that fulfilling their duty they had to be representative of this position; this idea was more important the higher up the rank: "The aristocratic wife ha[d] a major role to play in the organization of how the house is run, yet she [was] […] far too busy with her many varied duties to have anything like we[…] [would] recognize as a normal relationship with her children" (Hyams, 45). Female upper- and upper-middle-class education was shaped accordingly, however, not without inciting criticism. In Hannah More's opinion, this undesirable development of female education causes young girls to produce a tendency towards superficial 'career' plans which would basically just consist in making "showy acquaintances" (ibid., 63) that could enable them to marry advantageously and continue the legacy of superficiality with their daughters (cf. ibid.). This 'gold digger' mentality is highly deplored by the author,

[99] According to Gorham, it was not very common for upper- or upper middle-class girls to be sent to a boarding school, especially during the earlier phases of the Victorian period, usually remaining at home and being educated by their governess (cf. 22). The period spent at school often functioned as a "rite-de-passage" (ibid.), marking the transition from child- to adulthood. In the later years of the Victorian era, education for girls began to change, in Gorham's opinion not because of a new perception on gender equality but because of "a new definition of the purpose of middle-class girls' education" (24). Debates held in the 1860s led to new kinds of girls' schools being founded which included a much broader range of educational topics (cf. ibid., 24-26). However, the schools still taught "lady-like" (ibid., 26) behaviour.

who firmly believes that those ladies pursuing this course of action lack the necessary depth of quality that should be indispensable for a good wife and future mother (cf. ibid.).[100] The modern girls of More's account (as a reminder: her text is from 1799) care less for female amiability and become more like men in their comportment (cf. 67-68). She states: "These self-complacent heroines made us ready to regret their softer predecessors, who had aimed only at pleasing the other sex, while these aspiring fair ones struggled for the bolder renown of rivalling them" (68). More is determined in her conviction that this development harms the educational system and ultimately, of course, the women themselves. She explains that "[t]he project failed; for whereas the former had sued for admiration, the latter challenged, seized, compelled it" (ibid.). Whereas in the old way, women remained in the domestic sphere and looked to their superiors for finding their self-esteem, the new development tempts women to leave the private sphere and seek recognition in public as men were used to do and "the proper female goals in life, which are to please men and bear children" (Ross, "Female Education", 84) are neglected. Advice texts from the later nineteenth century sometimes feature similar ideas as their predecessors. For example, *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* (1893) includes a passage that advises the female readership to make life as agreeable as possible for their husbands, even if it means to forego of some personal pleasures, because the sacrifice will be rewarded with a harmonious household (cf. M.C., 23-24). Again, the maintenance of domestic harmony and family togetherness is presented as the primary goal in every marriage, for which the woman as the 'homemaker' is principally responsible. The proper fulfilment of duty is viewed as the right method to ensure respect between the parents themselves as well as between parents and children, which, in turn, has familial harmony as its result (cf. ibid., 27-30).

From the late eighteenth to the second half of the nineteenth century, the ideal of domestic harmony steadily gained a stronger foothold. Tine Van Osselaer and

[100] According to More, this new way of education has even one more side-effect: Those girls who fail to realise their 'misplaced' ambition and find themselves unable to catch a rich and high-ranking husband usually choose the next best option, which would be becoming a teacher (cf. ibid. & cf. Gorham, 28). Due to their unfitting education, however, which, according to More, consisted less in practicality and more in pretension (cf. ibid., 62), their accomplishments are in no way sufficient to educate other young women properly (cf. ibid., 63). This vicious circle leads, in More's perspective, to an "abundant multiplication of superficial wives, and of incompetent and illiterate governesses" (ibid.), who are let loose on society, free to commit even more harm.

Patrick Pasture comment on the fact that the historical approach towards analysing domestic ideals usually couples "the success of the domestic ideology […] to the rise of capitalism and urban industrialisation" (8). Therefore, it is not surprising that the term 'ideal of domesticity' is usually mentioned in one breath with the Victorian era as a time when even more than in previous periods "intensified gender ideology […] [was] accompanied [by] these socio-economic changes" (ibid., 9), seeking reaffirmation and security in traditional and idealised concepts within the privacy of the home that formed a contrast to the capitalistic public sphere (cf. Habermas, 3). The traditional and, especially in the later nineteenth century, sentimentalised vision of family and parental roles, would be derived from the idea that the family in its patriarchal state was the norm and any deviation unnatural (cf. Adams, 511). The idea of the "natural family" (ibid.) developed into an idealised version of the traditional state of the family, and, therefore, the "Victorian ideal of domesticity" (Homes & Nelson, 1) was soon regarded as "the foundation of society and all social institutions" (Adams, 511). Accordingly, the distinction between the genders and their role allocation "were also to be considered inviolable" (ibid., 512).

Educating children for this ideal of domestic harmony consequently required their training in their respective, gender specific duties, both spiritually as well as physically. This dual training of children is, according to *Cassell's Household Guide*, extremely valuable to society (cf. 1), since it was supposed to confirm the existing social structure by strengthening the function of domesticity: "It is here [within the home], then, if anywhere, that the secret of man's material well-being should be sought out and its principles carried out into constant practice" (ibid.). In this passage, the domestic education of children is presented as central to humanity because it was supposed to form the foundation of social stability. According to this model, as Gorham explains, "the middle-class wife" should be "a cultured lady of leisure who was also a careful mother and a solicitous wife" (10) in order to maintain the required balance between the genders and between the classes. However, this ideal might have been very hard to live up to because of the realities of middle-class household management:

> [T]he majority of Victorian middle-class women could not have been cultured ladies of leisure: the majority had to manage a household with, at best, one maid-of-all-work […]. This would have necessitated their doing a considerable amount of child-care, cleaning and cooking. Because gentility implied that its possessor did not do manual labour, wives in upwardly-mobile

> middle-class households could have difficulty achieving a balance between performing the physical work of the household and creating gentility (ibid., 11).

Several passages taken from *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* confirm and illustrate the high ideal household management had to live up to: "As with the COMMANDER OF AN ARMY, or the leader of any enterprise, so is it with the mistress of a house. Her spirit will be seen through the whole establishment" (Beeton, 7, original emphasis). The passage mirrors the ideal that, within her own sphere of course, the woman can potentially be as important to the system as a high-ranking member of the military. Such a statement was meant to instil in the (female) readership the awareness of the 'honour' to fulfil such a duty. Naturally, it has to be assumed by the readership that, to be worthy of such an honour, the person fulfilling such a position has to be properly trained. Manuals like Mrs Beeton's guide were obviously meant to support this domestic training and the consequent creation of a domestic atmosphere of respectability (cf. Ruggles, 131). In Beeton's own words, her work is supposed to preclude disharmony and domestic instability by "prevent[ing] the discomfort and suffering which I had seen brought upon men and women by household mismanagement" (3).

The term 'domesticity', usually closely attached to bourgeois ideals, did, indeed, have its strongest influence on the middle classes, which does not mean, however, that other groups were not touched by its effects (cf. Van Osselaer & Pasture, 12). It might be more difficult for a working-class family to conform strictly to the ideal of domesticity, but, at least officially, it remained a goal to be aspired to, often finding its first manifestations in the "new family-oriented definition of […] family rites" (ibid.) such as Christmas (cf. Strange, 114); these rituals could, for a certain amount of time, provide […] a foil to everyday drudgery". (ibid., 117). The celebrations of such rituals of "togetherness" (Strange, 88) where the members of private and public sphere met, were at the very core of the domestic ideology, because they presented the structure of the family as right and functioning (cf. ibid., 14). Stressing the importance of domestic rituals as a central element of domestic harmony, *Cassell's Household Guide* recommends the useful habit of the bedtime visit. According to this prescribed custom, parents should visit their children's beds before retiring for the night (cf. *Cassell's*, 143). Even though these visits are mentioned to have practical as well as safety reasons

(cf. ibid.), *Cassell's* guide sets the advice in an overall framework that idealises domestic togetherness and familial affection.[101] The traditional meeting times of the family "simultaneously strengthen[ed] group identity and heighten[ed] [the] individuals' role and responsibility" (ibid., 115). This image of togetherness, all family members fulfilling the tasks of their designated place, central to the ideal of domestic harmony, is, for instance also reflected in William Cobbett's text when he advises the readership of his manual, especially husbands and fathers, not to undervalue the time spent together with his family and be active also in a domestic context, since this would prevent alienation of the spouses as well as alienation of father and children: "And, in short, what must that man be made of, who does not prefer sitting by his own fire-side with his wife and children, reading to them, or hearing them read, to hearing the gabble and balderdash of a club or a pot-house company!" (175) Although the bourgeoise model celebrated the family as a unity, togetherness was a goal that was in reality not easy to be achieved (cf. Strange, 87), since, as Cobbett also acknowledges, "[m]en must frequently be from home at all hours of the day and night. Sailors, soldiers, merchants, all men out of the common track of labour, and even some in the very lowest walks, are sometimes compelled by their affairs, or by circumstances, to be from their homes" (176).

In order to let no doubt about its firm moral standpoint enter the reader's mind, the guide proclaims at the very beginning of the work:

> In an age when, owing to the spread of education and the consequent growth of intelligence and of competition, the affairs of human life are becoming in every department more intricate and complicated, no apology can be needed to set out accurately, and in something like scientific order, the laws which govern, and the rules which should regulate, that most necessary and most important of all human institutions, THE HOUSEHOLD (1).

While outside of the home is chaos (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 5), inside should be order, "prudence" (*Cassell's*, 1) and moderation (cf. ibid.). With the woman as his "helpmate" (ibid.), the man should enjoy domestic tranquillity and safety in his home (ibid.). Parents, as the *Household Guide* prescribes, should be firm in establishing this cherished order in their home and use the time of "golden opportunity" (143), when their children are young, to "convey […] the right

[101] The author(s) of the guide mention that a visiting the bed of the children after they have already fallen asleep, could serve the purpose of "ensuring that whether the little ones are sufficiently covered, and that no draughts arc felt from open windows and doors" (143).

impressions to the plastic infant mind" (ibid.). In concordance with the ideal of domesticity, the place of the mother was the private sphere, her home (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 5), a place of far more than just material importance. The ideological function of the home was mainly "sheltering" (ibid.) its inhabitants from "the brutalities of the outside world" (ibid.) and furnishing them with a sense of security that only a united family could provide (cf. ibid.). The mother was the guardian of this sacrosanct space, and, consequently, her leaving the private sphere, was seen as "threatening" (ibid.). This threat did not only affect herself but her family as well and, in extreme cases, also the social order which asked of her to remain at home, leave the public sphere to men, and refrain from challenging traditional gender roles (cf. ibid., 8).[102]

In order to prevent such later 'deviations' at an early stage, parental strictness was supposed to be indispensable in order to acquaint their children as early as possible with the hierarchies of their environment and their place within the social order and thus prevent later 'rebellion': "[T]ime is gained in imparting true principles of obedience, which might be too long delayed if deterred till the age of more advanced reason" (ibid.). *Cassell's Household Guide* also provides conventional Victorian parents with practical ideas and suggestions how they should proceed in this important task of rearing a socially conform next generation

[102] In his work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Jürgen Habermas explains the meaning and the connotation of the word 'public' in some detail: it could be used to depict the "open[ness] to public traffic" (cf. 2), especially in the context of buildings, but it quite often also denotes "a powerful display of representation […] [which] contains an element of public recognition" (ibid.). Habermas goes on to specify that "[t]here is a shift in meaning again when we say that someone has made a name for himself, has a public reputation. The notion of such personal prestige or renown originated in epochs other than that of 'polite society'" (ibid.). He describes the formation of a specifically public sphere within a community as a phenomenon that "goes back to various historical phases" (1). According to him, the public sphere "was a part of 'civil society,' which […] established itself as the realm of commodity exchange" (cf. 3). During the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, the "bourgeois public sphere" (43) rose to special importance and in its wake came the popularity of "domestic drama[s]" (ibid.), highlighting the significance that middle-classes ascribed to the values of the "patriarchal conjugal family" (ibid.). During this time especially the lifestyles of the upper class and the nobility on one hand, and the middle class on the other hand diverged even further: The first still upheld a more 'public' way of living: "To be sure, the urban nobility, especially that of the French capital which set the standards for the rest of Europe, still kept an open 'house' and despised the bourgeois family life turned in on itself. The continuity of the family line, one with the inheritance of privileges, was sufficiently guaranteed by the name alone; not even a common household was required of the spouses who frequently enough lived each in his or her own *hôtel* and who in some cases met one another more often in the extrafamilial sphere of the *salon* than in the circle of their own family" (44). The tendency, however, was towards a growing "privatization" (ibid.) of the family and especially the British gentry was quite quick in adapting this way of life (cf. ibid.)

as “loving, responsible, virtuous” (Holmes, 39) guardians: In accordance with the generally praised virtues of modesty and economy (cf. *Cassell's*, 33), parents were advised to furnish the nursery with “[s]mall iron bedsteads” (110) which should be plain with little ornaments (ibid.). To stimulate the children’s intellect and emotions, the walls could be embellished with “[p]ictures, illustrative of Scripture subjects, domestic animals, and familiar scenes” (ibid.): everything is done to emphasise the “domestic ideology” (Van Osselaer & Pasture, 8) often depicted in Victorian novels: Here, the portrayal of family rituals usually presented the required role allocation (cf. Strange, 14) and “seeped with sentimentality” (ibid.). In their study “The Empire of the Father”, Broughton and Rogers describe how nineteenth century art, as well, contributed to spreading such ideals as family togetherness, and how the depiction of each family member’s activities, often sentimentalised, prescribed male, female and infantile behaviour: The mother preparing the meal or caring for the children, the father proudly observing the scene from a sometimes more distanced position, usually still carrying attributes of his professional life in the work place, and the children, mirroring either father (boys) or mother (girls) in their respective play (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 2). These patterns not only reflected the transmission of the specifically gendered hierarchies, but they also established the parents as model figures for their offspring. Such pictures served the ideological goal of “strengthening the domestic ties and making family life – in an appropriately respectable, white, British family – a realistic affiliation for the servants of the empire” (ibid., 4).[103]

Even though the concepts of sentimentalised domesticity and the family as a stronghold (cf. Strange, 15) were almost invariably praised in advice manuals from all decades of the long nineteenth century, reality nevertheless peeped through on several occasions: Spatial and social divisions within the home are sometimes taken for granted and/or advertised as ‘fashionable’ or ‘civilised’, and, even though the upper-class practice of handing the education and care of children entirely over to servants is more than once criticised, the justifiability of their general presence remains largely unquestioned by any kind of advice literature (cf. Graham, 41). One very apt piece of evidence for the fact that the idealised picture of domestic

[103] Broughton and Rogers are referring to a painting by Frederick Daniel Hardy that depicts a soldier’s family who has probably served in the Crimean War (cf. 4). In this context the depiction of the idealistic family gains an even more complex meaning.

togetherness (cf. ibid.) was not always put into practice would be the way in which *Cassell's Household Guide* advises parents against allowing their children to misuse formal rooms as their playground: "The custom, which is gradually gaining ground, of converting the breakfast room […] of suburban villas into day-nurseries, is very objectionable" (110). Instead of this co-use of bigger apartments, the ideal nursery, according to the guide, should be rather small, sparsely furnished (to avoid the danger of accidents) and, above all, far removed from the space the master and mistress of the house occupy (cf. ibid.). Pool supports the evidence from the *Household Guide* by emphasising the fact that as much as the location visible for guests, the "area for public entertainment" (190), was separated from the private space, so much was the children's space separated from the parents' territory (cf. ibid., 191). Only when the children grew up and were thought to be too old for the nursery, they moved into the parent's sphere of the house and received "their own bedrooms which would typically be over the bedrooms of their parents" (ibid.). This fact still suggested that their status was, though above the servants who usually slept under the roof (cf. ibid., 192), lesser than their parents – the further away from the representative rooms a person slept the lesser was their social importance. Pollock confirms that a common Victorian childhood of upper- and upper-middle-class children of socially ambitious parents was "spen[t] most of [the] time in a nursery separate from [the] parents" (260). Gorham supports this statement, again emphasizing the connection between the layout of the home and the social status: "Members of a household were divided into groups between which barriers were established; the division between children and other members of the household was no less rigid than that between servants and employers" (9). One can conclude that the *Guide* is obviously addressing wealthier upper middle-class households which could incorporate a substantial number of servants (cf. ibid.). Yet, the fashionable standard of upper-and upper-middle class life was hard to keep up for the majority of those families who considered themselves as middle class, aspiring to gentility, and this conflict was naturally present in the situation, appearance and layout of the 'perfect home': "A lower-middle class family could not afford a house suitable for the establishment of a genteel life style. True gentility required sufficient space to maintain the formality that characterised the ideal pattern" (ibid., 10) and the nursery was one such status-revealing elements: While a suitable establishment

would boast a whole "separate nursery wing for the children" (ibid.), less well-off families had to make do with just a separate room (cf. ibid.).

Interestingly, it was the amount of space that was put *between* parents and their children that indicated status, implicating traces of an aristocratic ideal, less dominated by the concepts of family togetherness promoted by bourgeoise moralists (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 2). Gorham confirms this circumstance: "[I]n an upper middle-class family in which a nurse and assistant nursery maids were employed and in which a separate nursery wing was provided for the children, contact between parents and children had to be limited" (17). For instance, in her comments on the duties of upper and under nursemaids for "families of distinction", Isabella Beeton describes the nursery tract as "an establishment kept apart from the rest of the family" (462). One can conclude that the general view of childhood might have undergone important changes in the early nineteenth century and the Victorian era, however, in families with ambitions to move up the social ladder and aspire for a lifestyle dominated by the standards of the crème de la crème of society, children's lives were still strictly separated from the 'adult world' and children "saw their parents only in a formal setting for brief periods" (Gorham, 17). William Cobbett, an ardent promoter of domestic togetherness and family union, harshly criticises this fashionable habit and warns especially

> young men in the middle rank of life, […] to be more particular, in their case, with regard to the care due to very young children, for here *servants* come in; and many are but too prone to think, that when they have handed their children over to well-paid and able servants, they have *done their duty by them*, than which there can hardly be a more mischievous error. The children of the poorer people are, in general, much fonder of their parents than those of the rich are of theirs: this fondness is reciprocal; and the cause is, that the children of the former have, from their very birth, had a greater share than those of the latter—of the personal attention, and of the never-ceasing endearments of their parents (254, original emphasis).

According to Cobbett, vanity, a desire to climb the social ladder, the wish to keep up appearances or laziness and all reasons which cause distance and estrangement between the spouses and the children ought to be obliterated or at least reduced in order to reintroduce domestic happiness and family togetherness, because otherwise parental duties remain unfulfilled. Cobbett's argumentation is obviously not without flaws, since poorer parents, in contrast to the comfortably established

couple, had not only to forego the luxury of servants, they also commonly had much less leisure time to spend on 'family togetherness'.

Yet, a larger fortune did not guarantee more 'leisure time' either; the domestic position of women belonging to the wealthy upper classes was special insofar as they usually were less preoccupied with household and child-care concerns but instead frequently focused on their social, or even public, duties. Their rank gave them more possibilities to move within their social circles without being restricted to their home. Since it was not unusual in upper-class circles that "[l]adies were not confined to domestic matters and succeeded in preserving their room for manoeuvre in the public sphere through court and fashionable life" (Goujon, 70), child-care was not their primary concern and children had to be delegated to the nurse. Although these arrangements were common in most wealthy families, they did not necessarily imply a continuous disinterest of the parents in their children: Pollock, for example, argues that "[e]ven though the children did not have a great deal of contact with their parents, the latter were not indifferent to their offspring but ensured that the children had facilities and time for play" (260).

Despite this circumstance, middle-class moralists remained sceptical and suspicious; Hannah More, for example, dedicates some time to lecturing rich upper-class ladies on the special responsibility tied to their social status. While More even calls this exclusive responsibility "the talent" (1.) of upper-class women, she emphasises that this privilege could be used very effectively or in a very negative way, "when one considers the variety of mischiefs which an ill-directed influence has been shown to produce" (1-2). There are, as More admits, also "beneficial effects to be expected from the same powerful force when exerted in its true direction" (ibid.). It is More's argument that "women of rank and fortune" (1) often have more impact on the public than they are sometimes aware of and are thus able to affect not only their social circle but, in some cases, even politics and public relations by promoting "female principles" (ibid.). If More's approach to emphasise this power even in fields that went beyond the bounds of domesticity has hitherto appeared to be almost liberal, this passage induces the readership to recall the fact that More is still fully supporting the existing ideology of the separate spheres: When she advises women to use their indirect power (gained by exerting influence over men, who hold the direct power) in a wise way, she means that women "ought

to feel where their true importance lies" (2-3). Women's 'true importance', according to More, is still positioned within the field of domesticity and motherhood, because these are fundamental causes. Upper-class women were, in More's reasoning, in more danger to lose sight of this ideal because of their further reaching opportunities and the manifold temptations of a life full of entertainment. The act of using their power "to no higher purpose than the gratification of vanity or the indulgence of pleasure, is the degrading triumph of […] fair victims to luxury, caprice, and despotism" (3). In *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, John Gregory displays a similar opinion towards the dangers of luxury and specifies that especially "the luxury of eating" (34) bears uncanny dangers for the female image: "It is a despicable selfish vice in men, but in your sex it is beyond expression indelicate and disgusting" (ibid. 32). The reason for this drastic judgement is that all kinds of immoderate behaviour (cf. ibid. 32-34) were thought to hint at insufficient self-control and unchecked desires which would point towards a lack of moral fortitude.[104] As was mentioned many times in different contexts and by different authors, the exhibition of passions of any kind, if not brought under strict control, was deemed highly unfeminine (cf. Gilroy, 24).[105] Instead, selflessness and sacrifice were considered specifically female virtues (cf. Pedersen, 110). Gisborne, for example, states that one of the most valued female duties through centuries and varieties of cultures was to

> stand […] dripping and famished before her husband, while he devours, stretched at ease, the produce of her exertions, [to] wait […] his tardy permission without a word or a look of impatience; and [to] feed […] with the humblest gratitude, and the shortest intermission of labour, on the scraps and offals he disdains (17).

Female sacrifice is clearly the virtue to measure her worth, and even though Gisborne admits that this treatment of a wife is going to extremes, the principle is apparently still accepted. A display of selfish behaviour would consequently appear in a highly unfeminine light to a contemporary readership. Accordingly, it is not to be wondered that Gregory criticises conduct that would lead his daughters to

[104] The entertainment of gaming is equally abhorred by Gregory, because it "leads to all the selfish and turbulent passions" (48) and is, therefore, a particularly objectionable vice in women (cf. ibid.). As Dahmer explains, control over emotions, passions and (inexplicitly) desires was presented as something inherently positive in conduct books (cf. 212).

[105] For more information on the promotion of feminine behaviour and the critique on upper-class luxury, see chapter 3.5.2.

practice manners condemned as unfeminine by their associates, who were, like their father, middle class, cherishing middle-class values (cf. Thiel, 134) and condemning upper-class luxuries.

Not only the temptations of upper-class luxury could pose a possible danger to the domestic ideal, but simple economic reasons could also be a cause for the 'breaking of domestic rules'. A fatal change in the economic situation of a family could also result in a reversal, or at least a certain insecurity, in the realm of prescribed gender roles (cf. Van Osselaer & Pasture, 9). Although usually a very ardent supporter of ideal domestic togetherness, William Cobbett acknowledges that in some circumstances, mothers had to be part of the working force which helps to maintain the social standard of the family. Cobbett is not even referring exclusively to working-class women when he states that if the husband

> has not had to get his bread by farming or trade; and, in all probability, his wife has had the leisure to practise those acquirements which she possessed at the time of her marriage. But, can this be the case with the farmer or the tradesman's wife? She has to *help to earn* a provision for her children; or, at the least, to help to earn a store for sickness or old age. She, therefore, ought to be qualified to begin, at once, to assist her husband in his earnings: the way in which she can most efficiently assist, is by taking care of his property (123, original emphasis).

With this statement, Cobbett proves to be quite practical and less fixed on idealistic representation. However, one should keep in mind that, read in the context of his advice manual, the author still primarily promotes domestic education only, and women should "assist" to take "care" of the property primarily in their function as housekeeper (cf. ibid.).

Towards the end of the long nineteenth century idealised domestic arrangements were becoming increasingly problematic (cf. Adams, 513) due to the general modernisation of society. Of course, even before the mid – late Victorian times there had been women who ventured beyond the boundaries of 'the home'; however, these were often enough special and singular cases often undertaken under the call of the evangelical revival which did not significantly challenge contemporary ideologies, or, at least, did not present an important threat to them (cf. Van Osselaer & Pasture, 9). Some women leaving their home and dedicating themselves and their workforce to public concerns did so especially "in the name of Christian ideals" (ibid.), thus making them acceptable exceptions of the "separate

sphere model" (ibid). In the later parts of the nineteenth century, a certain "ambivalence about family and independence" (Adams, 501) was spreading among women: The ideal of domesticity was "[n]o longer [seen as] sacred" (Holmes & Nelson, 1) but as a concept that held women under extreme pressure "by the competing demands of public and private spheres" (ibid.). The suffrage movement as well as the emerging concept of the New Woman introduced hitherto less prominent thoughts among a larger audience (cf. Ross, "Female Education", 76, 80-82). The idea of "individualism" (Adams, 515) proclaimed "women's right to self-determination" (ibid.), which clashed with the ideal of maternal sacrifice (Gisborne, 17; cf. Kenlon, 108) and the idea of "the mother's moral responsibility" (Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 803). A leader in counteracting these modern ideas was the "pro-family movement" (Adams, 502); among the members of this society the development of feminist ideas was regarded as a "threat […] to family stability" (ibid., 513) and thus causing what "was seen by some as a 'crisis of the family'" (ibid., 504). Even though it was not the goal of most feminist movements to eliminate the whole ideal of family and motherhood entirely (cf. ibid., 505), it seemed for most members of the "pro-family movement" (ibid., 502) as if "women's abandonment of their family roles and their abrogation of gender differences" (ibid., 527) was negating the status of the mother in its entirety (cf. ibid). According to members of the pro-family movement, the crisis was furthered by societal developments: Industrialization and the demand for more female workforces – especially as the century progressed – as well as the sinking marriage rate due to easier access to divorce, caused "middle-class women's lives [to] change […] in ways that created a disjuncture between the reality and the ideal of family life" (ibid.). The idealisation of the home and the traditional gender roles was a way of fending off these drastic changes (ibid.).

4.2.1 Moral authority, educator and sentimental nurturer: the mother-child bond

The concept of motherhood is still laden with social, emotional, and ideological connotations that are often controversial and contradictory; this problem has lingered within most western societies for centuries, even though the perspectives on the idea of motherhood, the mother-child relationship and motherly authority

have undergone severe changes over time. As briefly addressed in the chapter on "Pregnancy", from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the concept of motherhood promoted in manuals indicated the ongoing "'modernization'" (Gorham, 65) of maternal ideals and practices which were departing more and more from the strongly religious or philosophical overtones towards so-called professional mothering based at least in part on scientific or pseudo-scientific progress (cf. ibid., 66). However, motherhood remained a state, or, depending on the perspective, a profession, that had to be perfected. In her late eighteenth-century advice book *The Pupil of Nature; or, Candid Advice to the Fair Sex* (1797) Martha Mears already describes the process of becoming a mother as "the perfection of her [the woman's] being" (4). This observation obviously manifests the idea that the soul and the very being of the woman is defined by her role as mother. Mears' idealized description of the first moments of motherhood, shortly after giving birth, compares the woman's newly won status as mother after the struggles of pregnancy to the dutiful and heroic behaviour of a soldier who has won his battle. "How delightful to the ear is the shout of victory at the close of a dreadful conflict!" (Mears, 129).

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but especially in the Victorian period, motherhood came to be regarded as a form of existence which was inseparable from femininity and "[t]he ideological constructs of femininity, womanhood and womanliness were all defined through the maternal function of biological females" (Pykett, *Sensation Novel*, 50). Mears' mid-Victorian successor, Isabella Beeton, similarly idealises the mother's bond with her child: "To the anxious mother, the first voice of her child is, doubtless, the sweetest music she ever heard" (481). The establishment and maintenance of the famous mother-child bond is pictured as the woman's "pride and delight" (478). Pride is presented here as an entirely positive emotion because it connects the mother even more closely with her child.[106] Mears discloses a similar opinion in describing the mother's achievements as almost as valuable to society as the afore mentioned achievements of men, if not more useful to the community and more emotionally rewarding: "Yet how far more rapturous are the emotions felt at the moment of having become a

[106] In *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, pride is displayed in a similarly positive light, again in relation to the affirmation of the bond between parents and children: "It is the correct thing […] for a parent to show pride in his children; Not to do so is to be unnatural" (M.C., 29).

mother" (129). The woman, in these advice texts, is made for the profession of the mother, which, instead of being a risk for her physical and psychological fitness, strengthens her "health and security" (ibid.).[107] In *Advice to Young Men And (Incidentally) to Young Women in the Middle and Higher Ranks of Life*, William Cobbett agrees to this idea and underlines his argumentation with the description of an incident in which a mother exhibited an extraordinary amount of maternal feeling and willingness to sacrifice for her offspring by throwing herself in front of a carriage (cf. 179). He explains that actions such as this are the core of maternity:

> Bravery, disinterestedness, and maternal affection surpassing these, it is impossible to imagine. The mother was going right in amongst the feet of these powerful and wild horses, and amongst the wheels of the wagons. She had no thought for herself; no feeling of fear for her own life; her shriek was the sound of inexpressible joy; joy too great for her to support herself under. Perhaps ninety-nine mothers out of every hundred would have acted the same part, under similar circumstances. There are, comparatively, very few women not replete with maternal love (ibid.).

Once again, the 'naturalness' of maternal feeling and ability for sacrifice in women is emphasised. *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* also specifically stresses the idea that "the mother's love for her offspring seems to be born with the child" (478); the bond between mother and child becomes "a direct intelligence of Nature" (Beeton, 477) – a force that is so strong that is almost unnecessary to teach even the most inexperienced mother (cf. ibid.). The deep initial connection between mother and child would make any instruction unnecessary; however, the author also stresses the value of "teachings" and "admonitions" (ibid.) for mothers. Parenting advice in particular "simultaneously flattered [the mother] as the primary determinate of the future adult and doubted as a source of spontaneous authority in infant care" (Macvarish, 1182). Consequently, even though Beeton emphasises maternal "instinct" (487) which appears to offset any need for artificial knowledge, the advantage of good advice literature is – in her argumentation – that it completes this 'natural' instinctive maternal wisdom by adding experience. William Cobbett describes feelings and talents connected to or developed during motherhood as far superior to any artificial achievement or ambition:

[107] This seems a little contradictory since Mears has just described the journey through pregnancy as "a dreadful conflict" (129) and "a long and dangerous voyage" (ibid.).

> Music, indeed! Give *me a mother singing to her clean and fat and rosy baby*, and making the house ring with her extravagant and hyperbolical encomiums on it. That is the music which is 'the food of love;' and *not the formal, pedantic noises, an affectation of skill* in which is now-a-days the ruin of half the young couples in the middle rank of life (99, emphasis added).

Modern education of the middle and upper classes leads, according to Cobbett, away from the natural duties of motherhood and towards pretension and vanity.[108]

In her diary Elizabeth Gaskell agrees with Gisborne, Mears and Beeton in calling motherhood the true destiny of women. Closely observing her own emotional reaction towards her daughter's development, she remarks: "How all a woman's life, at least so it seems to me now, ought to have a reference to the period when she will be fulfilling one of her greatest & [sic] highest duties, those of a mother" (ibid., 53). The fact that she herself wants to capture and preserve this impactful phase of her life on paper leads her to believe that every other woman must experience similar sensations. Her insertion "at least so it seems to me now" shows that she is partly aware of the subjectiveness of her views in this matter. However, her choice of the word "ought" points towards her opinion that such feelings should be 'normal' in every woman and that the absence of such an emotional reaction might be an indicator of negligence or carelessness on the mother's part. Like Mears, Gisborne, Isabella Beeton, and so many others, Gaskell is evidently of the opinion that motherhood is "the perfection of her [the woman's] being" (Mears, 4). Accordingly, Gaskell relates in the main points with the ideas of the above-mentioned authors, while, at the same time, also emphasising the huge responsibility she is feeling as a mother: "And you too my dearest little girl [her daughter Marianne], if when you read this, you trace back any evil, or unhappy feeling to my mismanagement in your childhood forgive me love!" (50) She later confesses as well: "But though I keep laying down rules, I fear I have not sufficiently attended to them, though I hope I have been conscientious hitherto in discharging my duty to her" (ibid., 52). Maternal insecurities are apparently lurking behind the idealised bliss, reflecting the idea that many addressees of advice texts were expected to believe themselves to be uninformed and unsophisticated,

[108] a point with which the evangelical author Hannah More in her manual *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, where she frequently utters her dislike of vanity and vain entertainment, would whole-heartedly agree (cf. 10).

according to the widespread belief in female irrationality (cf. Rossman Regaignon, 146).

It was a widely acknowledged rule that the mother's own observations were not to be relied on, and this assumption was commonly seized on by advice texts in which counsel was often provided in an incongruous way, making the reader question her own perception. One example for contradictory advice is given by Thomas Bull in relation to the practice of sea-bathing: Bull opines, on the one hand, that sea-bathing is "even more conductive to the health of the child than the fresh water plunge bath" (120). On the other hand, he also declares that "[i]ts employment [the method of sea-bathing], however, requires much caution, and great mischief is sometimes committed by its indiscriminate use" (121). Statements like these put the mother in a difficult situation, because she is expected to make a "careful judgment of ambiguous evidence" (Rossman Regaignon, 152); ultimately, the mother is meant to ask her own conscience whether she herself had not just committed, or was about to commit, just such a 'mischief' as referred to in Bull's text. The advice clearly leaves the mother in need of "clear[er] guidelines" (ibid.) which are obviously easiest obtained from the doctor himself (cf. ibid.). Bull indeed proceeds to give clearer instructions, but his authority and the mother's dependence on his authority are already firmly established at this point, invariably leading to the intended "readerly passivity" (ibid.). As in the case of pregnancy, the consumption of this kind of "[r]eading will take the maternal audience from the one pole to the other: from dangerous ignorance not to independence, but to docility" (Rossman Regaignon, 146), which was regarded as a highly desirable condition for social stability (cf. Grenby, 17).[109]

As a model of idealised docile femininity, the mother had an important role to play in the educational process (cf. ibid.) which acquainted especially her daughters with this 'female virtue' and instructed the older girls in the appropriate feminine tasks such as needlework and household management (cf. Gisborne, 18). However, despite the emphasis on paternal educational authority, in particular for boys (cf. Schneider, 43), it was still often the mother's task to give the younger children a basic education in reading and writing as well (cf. ibid.). She was

[109] This 'docility' of a widespread audience was also beneficial for the authors' purses because it guaranteed them a constant demand for the work of their pen and consequently a continuous income (cf. Rossman Regaignon, 146).

generally able to accomplish this fairly basic task, often having herself received little other education, because serious academic subjects, such as Greek and Latin, which were frequently taught at public schools for boys or by clergymen and private tutors, were usually not to be found on girls' curricula (cf. Pool, 125). During the eighteenth century, Mary Wollstonecraft had already introduced the critique on a kind of education in which "the [female] mind ultimately shapes itself to the body" (Gilroy, 26), but nevertheless this way of thought was decisive for shaping female education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and thus also affected the advice literature of that time (cf. ibid.). Because of the wide range of sub-topics that female education had within society, many authors of advice literature included the proper management of female education, intending to guide parents, especially mothers, through the pitfalls that could befall them. In her work *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* Hannah More clearly states that women need education, in particular education of the kind that especially corrects those faults that, in her opinion, are characteristic of women (cf. x).[110] The text makes clear that, in her opinion, the entire woman, her body as well as her mind, has to be formed to reach a better, or more accepted, version of herself, which cannot be guaranteed by common contemporary education:

> IT [sic] is a singular injustice which is often exercised towards women, first to give them a most defective Education, and then to expect from them the most undeviating purity of conduct; — [sic] to train them in such a manner as shall lay them open to the most dangerous faults, and then to censure them for not proving faultless (ix).

Yet, More's evangelical criticism of educational practices is definitely not indicative of revolutionary tendencies, since she remains of the opinion that the aim of female education should be to produce well-behaved girls who are accepted within their social circle (cf. ibid.).[111] In consequence, the 'basic' education for a

[110] More admits, though, that it is very well possible that "many errors are here ascribed to women which by no means belong to them exclusively, and that it has seemed to confine to the sex those faults which are common to the species: but this is in some measure unavoidable" (x).

[111] Even though his advice manual was written more than two decades after More's, William Cobbett agrees with More's assessment of the state of female education and also proclaims the uselessness of fashionable accomplishments. He asserts that "I do not know, nor can I form an idea of, a more unfortunate being than a girl with a mere boarding-school education, and without a fortune to enable her to keep a servant, when married. Of what use are her accomplishments? Of what use her music, her drawing, and her romantic epistles? If she be good in her nature, the first little faint cry of her first baby drives all the tunes and all the landscapes and all the Clarissa Harlowes out of her head for ever" (121). The fact that the 'goodness' of her 'nature' is immediately tied to her motherly

girl of at least middle-class status who would like to be called 'accomplished' for quite some time only consisted of "a superficial training in showy 'accomplishments': a smattering of French, music and drawing, and fancy needlework. Their acquaintance with more solid subjects like history and geography is assumed to have been meagre" (21).[112]

Mothers who supervised this overtly shallow education of girls were often criticised for supporting vanity and superficiality; yet a too thorough, or too manly, education was also problematised. Even contemporaries obviously shared this opinion: The education of both sexes was, for example, criticised by Thomas Love Peacock, who made them a subject of satire (cf. Draper, 458). Especially female education among the upper classes with its emphasis on 'superficial' accomplishments was often the subject of strong caricature in Peacock's novels, such as *Nightmare Abbey* (1818). The practices of rearing children "to no higher ethical ideal than money" (ibid., 459) and social status is, for example, seen very critically in Peacock's novel *Melincourt* (1817), and the process of marrying them off accordingly is satirically described as "being disposed of by [the parents]" (ibid., 460). As already mentioned above, girls' education was much more limited regarding the subjects than the studies which were thought proper for boys (cf. Martin, 335); however, "[a]s the 19th century neared its end, there was a broadening of the curriculum for girls to include the more academic subjects" (Pollock, 248).[113]

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instinct is interesting to note and once again reflects the common acceptance of the assumption that motherhood, as Martha Mears puts it, was indeed the "perfection of her [the woman's] being" (4). Cobbett continues his argumentation with the idea that, if all goes its right and proper way in the development of the young woman, her so-called accomplishments will be supplanted with the concerns of family life. He provides an example of a case in which exactly this happened and "[a]ll the music and all the drawing, and all the plays and romances were gone to the winds! The husband and baby had fairly supplanted them" (121).

[112] However, Gorham also mentions that this rather insufficient education was not representative of every middle- or upper middle-class girl during the Victorian period: Especially in the first half of the nineteenth century, some intellectual families set great store by their daughters' education, teaching them "to write, in the middle years of childhood, in a polished, adult style, and read books that would, in the twentieth century, be considered unsuitable for children" (21).

[113] Any development that allowed a girl's curriculum to include a broader field of subjects, including maybe topics that could also be found in male education, was regarded by the authors of advice literature with the utmost suspicion, if it was not downright condemned as being both impractical and immoral. Hannah More, however, is of the firm opinion that nature itself rejects 'unnaturally' manly behaviour patterns in the female sex and, therefore, the 'project' of girl's education adapting more to masculine concepts is bound to have no future. Female education ideally should encompass both knowledge and manners, a goal which, as More laments, is not always met in a contemporary girl's upbringing: "[W]e have to educate not only rational but accountable beings […] and, remembering this should we not be solicitous to let them our daughters learn of the well-taught, and

The fact that the mother's duty as educator was a rather tricky and impactful one is also addressed by William Cobbett who states that no "duty [is] so sacred as that imposed on a mother to be the teacher of her daughters" (309) and underlines the continuity of such guidelines that were perpetually used in advice literature from the early to the late nineteenth century. Pollock explains as well that some mothers who undertook most educational tasks themselves mention in their diaries that the experience was rather "overwhelm[ing]" (249), because these duties had to be combined with the wifely task of managing the household.[114] Naturally, these arrangements only applied to the lower and the less affluent middle classes, since upper-class families usually employed their own tutor for the boys as well as a governess for the girls. Older girls of richer households were usually the charge of the mother as well (cf. Goujon, 73), although she might not herself take up the task of teaching them, and the subjects of the education changed and became more refined. Generally, especially when the children were still at a younger age, the principle of "open and familiar emotion and direct childcare" (Grenby, 17), or at least the resemblance of it, became the more fashionable practice during the late eighteenth century (cf. ibid.). Pollock confirms, by using material from nineteenth century diarists, that education at home, undertaken by the parents themselves, was, at least for "the elementary stages" (247) nothing out of the common. Even if they did not themselves educate, mothers, for example, were usually eager to choose the "elitist boarding school" (Goujon, 73) for the girls or selected the most fitting governess who usually stayed on as a member of the household until the marriage of her charges (ibid. & cf. Gorham, 20).

In spite of this reality, middle-class advice literature commonly assumed the opinion that the general management of the household should deserve the mother's unshared attention, thus promoting the improvement of female virtue. One task of the mother, according to the *Household Guide*, is the home-made fabrication of babies' and children's clothing (cf. 33). The possibility of buying or commissioning clothes is not even mentioned; instead, all advantages of clothes made by the hands

associate with the well-bred?" (69) While More's mentioning of rationality clearly refers to the factual, the knowledge-related part of education, her referral to manners and accountability obviously alludes to the conscientious, ethical side of a girl's instruction.

[114] Gorham adds the fact that because of educational reforms that broadened (at least to some degree) the curriculum of girls, middle-class mothers in later Victorian Britain had to be much more accomplished than their predecessors – more and more subjects were requested (cf. 73).

of the mother herself are listed in detail.[115] The first benefit concerns household economy, since self-made clothes could be obtained at comparatively "small cost" (ibid.). Economical household management, or as the *Household Guide* calls it, the employment of "good sense and discretion" (*Cassell's*, 33), is in itself presented as almost a housewifely virtue. These excellent qualities should, according to the guide, prompt every mother to design her children's clothing to be, above all, modest and simple (cf. ibid.). If done correctly, this modesty in dress should set a positive example for the next generation and form the child's mind with regard to its future: The importance of "the unconscious child's toilette" (ibid.) is enhanced from being a simple – and often necessary – way of practising economy to the status of a moral statement and didactic experience for the young and unlearned human being (ibid.). Parental vanity or ostentation with regard to children's dress evokes Martha Mears' strongest criticism, not only because vanity in itself is described as wrong but also for reasons of practicality and safety of the child, and one item which she therefore declares should be banned for ever from the child's wardrobe are pins of every kind, commonly used to fasten accessories or fashionable trim (cf. 153). The midwife most sharply condemns all misplaced interest in vanity and declares, especially concerning medical men who support parental focus on outer appearances and potentially hazard the child's safety: "That hand should be amputated, which thus dares to offer violence to the works of nature" (ibid.).[116]

In every part of society, the idea of the mother-child bond was so well-established that it was common to connect the good image of the mother with the moral, or even physical state of her children. Hannah More asserts the idea that

> […] if we are responsible for the use of influence in the case of those over whom we have no definite right; [sic] in the case of our children we [mothers]

[115] In the Victorian era stores to buy clothes were, of course, not the norm. Those who could afford it usually employed a clothmaker. Generally, clothes were valued much higher and lasted much longer than today, in the age of fast production. Sally Shuttleworth notes an interesting trend in relation to children's dress and child-rearing: She observes that the much earlier practise of dressing children, regardless of their gender, in "sexless" (196) clothes "continued even into the early twentieth century" (197) and was rather strangely opposed to the habits of "Victorian child-rearing, where the increasing desire to differentiate between the male and female child with reference to behaviour in the early years" (ibid., 196).

[116] Particularly the head should be free from any danger or restriction, however pretty or practical it might seem at first glance because "nature will soon furnish the head with a far better covering, even the thin cap becomes in a short while unnecessary" (Mears, 153). Even worse that restrictive clothing of the head would be the employment of practices that could alter its natural form. According to Mears it was the custom among some (fashionable) doctors to "attempt to mould the heads of new-born infants, under the pretence of giving them a more beautiful form" (ibid.).

> are responsible for the exercise of acknowledged power: a power wide in its extent, indefinite in its effects, and inestimable in its importance. On YOU, [sic] depend in no small degree the principles of the whole rising generation (52, original emphasis).

The mother could use the possibility to influence her children by setting an example through her own lifestyle, through her words and actions either for the good or for the bad, and this influence often started with lessons on everyday life and applied to all social classes. More especially emphasizes the need of the mother to influence her children spiritually, thereby also fulfilling her duty as a Christian (cf. ibid., 52-53). Through her good example the mother should "quench the fiery darts of the wicked" (ibid., 53) and make sure that her children would keep her as model figure for all their thoughts and opinions. The idea that children reflect the mother was accepted as a part of instinctive and 'natural' maternity. William Cobbett, for example, illustrates this way of thinking when he gives advice to the young father concerning the proper treatment of the mother, his wife. According to this author there is a simple rule:

> It is an old saying, 'Praise the child, and you make love to the mother;' and it is surprising how far this will go. To a fond mother you can do nothing so pleasing as to praise the baby, and, the younger it is, the more she values the compliment. Say fine things to her, and take no notice of her baby, and she will despise you (181).

In this way of arguing, mothers *themselves* habitually regard their children not only as a reflection, but as an extension of their own self, though in an even more perfect form and as a result of their own labours and influence for which they want open and official recognition. However, Cobbett also suggests that the mother's model conduct will invariably leave an impression on the children's mind. Regarding the virtues of economy and modesty, he describes his own wife's behaviour prior to their marriage, when he just returned from the army, and the deep effect the story had on his children's attitude and their regard of their mother:

> I found my little girl [his fiancé] a *servant of all work* (and hard work it was), at *five pounds a year*, in the house of a CAPTAIN BRISAC; and, without hardly saying a word about the matter, she put into my hands *the whole of my hundred and fifty guineas unbroken*! Need I tell the reader what my feelings were? Need I tell kind-hearted English parents what effect this anecdote *must* have produced on the minds of our children? (96-97, original emphasis).

In the context of advice literature for Victorian mothers, Åström already notices: "[T]he mother is responsible for every aspect of the child's physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing" (114). Every misstep of the mother in the direction of "superfluities and luxuries" (*Cassell's*, 33) could have a fatal effect on the child's character and later cause them to develop tendencies towards hardly respectable "gaudy and showy" (ibid.) frivolities, or even worse, questionable moral values. Especially the daughter's comportment within society would naturally reflect the mother's effort put into her child's upbringing, regardless of whether it was only a financial effort; it was deemed obligatory and natural that a true maternal role model would turn them into "good wives, good mothers, good society ladies and good housekeepers" (Goujon, 73). Even busy upper-class mothers were usually under some social pressure to pay attention to these aspects of their daughters' upbringing (cf. Gorham, 101), since it was later the mother's task to accompany her daughters to various "balls and masquerades" (Pollock, 456), showing off their special qualities to society and, of course, future husbands. Especially among the middle classes who were supposed to 'know better' than to mimic the superficiality of their social superiors, materialistic maternal figures, who put too much weight on the 'outer' representativeness of their children were considered vain themselves and therefore raising their children without constraining their inherent vanity (cf. Jarrar, 69). As a mirror of the mother, the offspring would most certainly "become spoiled, disobedient and moody" (ibid.). Elizabeth Gaskell utters similar ideas in her diary, recognizing that her daughter Marianne "runs some little danger of being spoilt" ("My Diary", 69). She also identifies the cause of this circumstance: "[N]early every one in the house pets her, and she is full of caprices, and sometimes gives way to sad little fits of passion, if she is a little bit affronted by the most trifling thing" (ibid.). However, Gaskell does not blame her own maternal influence exclusively but also notes that the conduct of the nurse might be partly responsible, because Elizabeth (the nurse) shows too much pity with her (cf. ibid.). In accordance with the ideas proclaimed in *Cassell's* guide she acknowledges the need to do something about this flaw in her daughter's behaviour: "This I know is wrong, though I am not sure if I act upon my knowledge" (ibid.). This insecurity concerning her own realisation of the maternal role model is precisely what allowed household and parenting manuals like *Cassell's* to gain a widespread readership. They teach the insecure mother to use "good sense and discretion" (33) and rear their children

according to the principles of "simplicity" (ibid.). Apparently, Gaskell struggled a little in trying to interpret similar recommendations.

Humbleness and economy are pictured as crucial housewifely virtues regardless of social class (cf. *Cassell's*, 33); John Gregory, for instance, presents economy as a matter which is "entirely a woman's province" (42) and an issue which is indicative of the woman's mindset. According to Gregory, the way economy is practised can highlight "both good sense and taste in a woman" (ibid.) but also potentially showcase a 'sloppy' attitude towards life. A large fortune is, in Gregory's opinion, no justification for a disregard of economy – practising economy, again, becomes more a matter of morality than a financial necessity (cf. ibid.) just as the admonitions in *Cassell's* guide indicate. But there was also a reverse side to the issue which demanded the mother to tread a fine line between 'prudence' and 'miserly' neglect of husband and children: False husbandry, such as neglecting to buy extra meat for the offspring (cf. *Cassell's*, 343) and a too tightly kept purse are not ideal either, according to the *Household Guide* (cf. ibid.). In *Candid Advice for the fair Sex*, Martha Mears already includes similar counsel: No expense should be spared, for example, regarding the quality of the food, which has to be first rate in order to ensure health and growth (cf. 52).[117] Most practices were, of course, hardly viable for a lower-class family: Families who sometimes had to ask themselves how to "shield their children from hunger" (Strange, 76) could by no means even consider adding a daily portion of meat to their diet, which the guide deems necessary especially "in our climate" (*Cassell's*, 343) and "in the confined atmosphere of town life" (ibid.).[118] Since the *Household Guide* continues with the assumption that a good diet produces not only physically but also morally and intellectually healthy children (cf. *Cassell's*, 343), the logical consequence of this assumption would be that most poorer mothers could soon give up the hope of raising their children to become conscientious and righteous citizens:[119] The general

[117] However, Mears condemns a too frequent consumption of meat, not for economic reasons but out of concern for the health of the mother and the child (cf. 52).

[118] It may be true that inhabitants of an unhealthy industrial town in the mid-nineteenth century were in need of particularly strengthening food, but the majority of such a town's population, usually belonging to the working class, was unable to afford it: Strange explains that in some cases the simplest portions of food provided for the children, "were at the expense of [the] parents who, in all probability, did go hungry" (76).

[119] It comes, therefore, as no great surprise that working-class mothers, and fathers, for that matter, "were [generally] understood to be raising the nation's children inadequately" (Pooley, 26). Mrs

living conditions of low-income neighbourhoods, according to Isabella Beeton, "at first sight , would seem to set the laws of sanitary provision at defiance, and make it appear a perfect *waste of time* to insist on pure air and exercise as indispensable necessities of life, and especially as regards infantine existence" (479, emphasis added).[120] Beeton's rhetoric suggests that the futility to admonish poorer mothers with regard to living conditions does not only concern their hopeless economic situation but also their general 'fitness' to form a functioning mother-child bond.

The difficulty of supposed maternal role models to strike the right balance in parenting is also exemplified through the fact that, while any form of neglect was abhorred, too much care was officially regarded as not essentially beneficial either, even if the care was provided with the best of intentions. Pampering should never be tolerated and especially the early diet of the children is deemed morally as well as physically forming by some authors of advice literature. Too much food (even if used for medical purposes), or food that is given too early, could, as Martha Mears states, harm the small body, and the parents, in most cases the mother, have to exercise self-control to act correctly and even be able to deny the continued demands of their offspring: "Your [the mother's] eagerness to supply the child with food or with physic is equally unnecessary and dangerous. Nature has taken due care of him [the child] in both these respects" (148). This counsel particularly referred to the treatment of babies; however, older children were generally not excluded from the rule which forbade exaggerated or needless care. Mears emphasises the importance of "[t]emperance" (155) in the context of children's diet even after they are weened. Instead, they should be taken outside as much as possible and "drink as it were from the pure sources of heaven" (157). The authors of *Cassell's Household Guide*, as well, warn the mother of "pampering the appetite of children by the giving of sweetmeats" (314). Contrary to a modern reader's assumption, this recommendation does not arise out of concern for the state of the

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Beeton in her *Book of Household Management* from 1861, appears to be of this opinion as well: "It has justly been said – we think by Hood – that the children of the poor are not brought up, but *dragged* up" (479 original emphasis). The circumstances of growing up, regarding diet, air, and exercise, are described by her to be obviously "abnormal […]" (ibid.), and, though she does not explicitly say it, present the parents, especially the mother, as rather negligent, untidy and generally less concerned about their children's welfare.

[120] John Gregory as well comments on the importance of air, especially in combination with exercise because they promote "vigour" (40). By contrast, excessive rides in closed carriages are not only considered unhealthy but also a kind of "luxury" (ibid.) that might spoil the character. Deborah Gorman confirms the fact that for most authors of advice literature good air and exercise were "essential" (70) for children's health.

young child's teeth, but out of the consideration for the child's appetite as well as its obedient character which both should on no account be spoiled (cf. ibid.).[121] Apparently, eating habits and psychological as well as moral health were thought to be closely related since, according to the *Household Guide*, the "most vigorous, the most moral, and the most intellectual races of mankind" (ibid., 343) are created through prudent dieting. A dutiful mother, willing to put her own needs behind those of her children (cf. Gisborne, 17; cf. Holmes & Nelson, 1), could hardly wish for more. William Cobbett corroborates the assumption concerning the bad effects of 'pampering': He asserts that "no parent can be sure that his child will not be compelled to labour hard for its daily bread: and then, how vast is the difference between one who has been pampered with sweets and one who has been reared on plain food and simple drink!" (278). Cobbett also deems that children should learn their future duties as soon as possible. With respect to boys who are allowed to go idle and usually get their way with their parents, he admonishes "a youth thus pampered is worth nothing as a person to be employed in business" (ibid.). The fact that Cobbett mentions business indicates that the future of a child and the connected duties, in this case the future of the boy as breadwinner, should always be an important consideration not just for the father but also for the mother.

In relation to the warning of the bad effects of pampering, lessons on the correct behaviour of the mother also invariably involved the counsel to preserve a "methodical manner" (*Cassell's*, 142) as well as complete discipline and self-control in every-day life.[122] In this context, *Cassell's Household Guide* again refers to the topic of the maternal function as role model: From the earliest childhood onwards, the child's habits should conform to the rules of "order and punctuality" (ibid., 11), reflected in the mother's own discipline, which was supposed to demand respect from her offspring (cf. Gorham, 47). *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*,

[121] Sugar itself, according to the *Household Guide*, "is not an unhealthy food" (*Cassell's*, 314.) and "[t]he notion that sugar has the effect of decaying teeth is not well founded" (ibid.).

[122] Gilroy acknowledges that although maternal discipline was considered central to the correct educational development of the child, this "technology of motherhood" (26) was actually counterproductive to the "proper maternal authority" (ibid.). Gilroy states that "in disciplining the maternal body and behaviour it actually depletes maternal agency" (ibid.) because mothers were depicted as weaker and more dependent on their own sensibility than was actually the case (cf. ibid.). Gilroy explains the preoccupation of advice literature with the restrictions of motherhood with the political situation and the "widespread anxieties about gender in revolution and counter revolution" (ibid.). During almost every period of the long nineteenth century, there has been a more or less obvious unease about women and their position as mothers within the domestic sphere. A certain over-emphasis of female sensibility and assumption of the congenital maternal instinct in every woman (cf. ibid.) was to prevent these anxieties from spreading.

for example, declares that the early disregard of rules will lead to "trouble" (ibid., 142) in the long run, a development that can only be prevented through the early imprinting of proper values, which cannot happen without the strictest discipline of the mother (cf. ibid.). Martha Mears firmly agrees to this rule, when she proclaims the setting of "proper" (156) mealtimes to be absolutely indispensable. When dealing with teething babies, the full self-control and discipline of the mother is demanded once again: "The domestic treatment of it [the teething] will consist in the most careful regulation of the mother's living" (ibid., 84). According to the *Household Guide*, lax rules or inconsequent behaviour (also with the servants, should there be any) will always have consequences and in the long run impede daily life (ibid., 142). Martha Mears confirms that children who grow up being used to regular rules in every aspect of their daily life have "nothing to fear from that old enemy to health and beauty" (160).[123] A lack of order and method can also have a derogatory influence on the family's sleeping schedule. Allowing the small infant to sleep when and where it wants is counted among the fatal mistakes of "inexperience […]" (ibid.) because it sentences the mother, as well as the father, to extremely uncomfortable nights (cf. ibid.). The *Household Guide* stresses the fact that, with "a little firmness at the outset" (142), both parents' rest might have been saved. However, it is the duty of the mother to get up and pacify the child to spare the father any further inconveniences (cf. ibid.). The mother's suffering, although she is the one to get up, is clearly portrayed as less important than the father's discomfort, thus reminding the readership once again of the patriarchal structure of the family (cf. Adams, 511). Mears is a little less specific regarding the topic of sleeping discipline. The only condition she specifies is the referral to "judicious management" (158), which should gently guide the child towards the habit of sleeping only at night, which "is the proper time of rest pointed out by nature" (ibid.).[124]

[123] With the "old enemy" Martha Mears is referring to the smallpox, which would, according to her argumentation, be kept at bay if the mother observed strict discipline in her emotional and child-care habits (cf. 160).

[124] Mears only partly supports this argument: She agrees that "[a] new born [sic] infant wants no contrivances to make him sleep. Nature lulls him into sweet repose, without the help of a cradle, or opiate" (158). Since she stands generally against excessive 'pampering' this view does not seem surprising. However, she makes no statement whatsoever concerning the restriction of the sleeping habits of the infant. On the contrary, she assures her readership that "[s]o strong a propensity [as sleep] must at first be indulged by day as well as by night" (ibid.). In her way of argumentation, nature teaches discipline naturally and this 'natural' teaching should only be intruded in if absolutely

Maternal discipline naturally also included body and household hygiene, and exactly these points or, to be precise, the lack of observance of these aspects, were stereotypically associated with some distinct symptoms of unhealthiness, imprudence and laziness. Mears mentions that every "impurity" (152) in the dress, particularly of younger children, could cause serious health problems. Cleanliness inseparably belonged to the subject of maternal discipline and moral comportment and is, therefore, equally thoroughly explored by the *Household Guide* with an extremely detailed and even technical description of the washing and drying process (cf. 11), which echoes Graham's advice on the importance of clean clothes and well-washed bodies for a child's health and well-being (cf. 47). But dirtiness was not only pointing towards a lack of body hygiene as well as an insanitary environment, it was also seen as an indication for a morally lax mind; Buchan confirms this idea when he speaks of "indolence and a dirty disposition" (78) and attributes these faults to the usual result of the natural inclinations of the lower classes (cf. ibid.), a supposition which is supported by Mears (cf. 42). William Cobbett, furthermore, names cleanliness as an important attribute for women and mentions it in the chapter "Letter to a Lover" as one of the characteristics a man should look out for in his future wife (cf. 114). While giving this advice, Cobbett exhibits once again the double standard of nineteenth-century society with its different moral standards for men and women, stating

> [m]en may be careless as to their own persons; they may, from the nature of their business, or from their want of time to adhere to neatness in dress, be slovenly in their own dress and habits; but, they do not relish this in their wives, who must still have charms; and charms and filth do not go together (ibid.).[125]

It is not only the lack of outer 'charm', however, that Cobbett deems to be an effect of dirtiness, but a sign of a "slip-shod" woman who will exhibit the same tendencies as a mother. Statements such as this reveal the growing influence of the middle-class contempt of stereotypical lower- as well as upper-class laziness and the self-

necessary; these ideas indeed remind very much of Rousseau's thoughts on education and his ideas of children as beings "of nature" (Shuttleworth, 5).

[125] William Cobbett acknowledges the fact that women readers might think him too hard on them and assures them that it is not his aim to be offensive but to warn them of the workings of the male mind, who will recoil when they see "*grime*" (112, original emphasis).

perception of the middle class as morally superior (cf. Grenby, 17; cf. Wagner, "Men of Sensibility", 171 & cf. González Mínguez, 29-30).

Besides cleanliness and sleep, the right amount of exercise for children was also an often-debated topic in advice literature. As with most other issues, "[t]emperance" (Mears, 155) and "judicious" (ibid., 158) behaviour should determine the correct amount of children's exercise at every age. Even though exercise should be parentally supervised, continual activities outside are deemed absolutely indispensable by Mears: "Brisk, lively, and frequent exercise will then be of the greatest service to him [the child]; and you [the mother] run no risk of laying the foundation of any disease, or of destroying any part of that admirable symmetry in the human frame" (ibid., 159). Again, the ideology of nature's guidance creeps into the midwife's argumentation. Instead of letting the child grow up in an artificial environment – as, for example the city with its reputation of bad air (cf. ibid. 42) – time spent within nature should be considered the best condition for a young human being to grow up "in health and beauty alike" (ibid., 159). Cobbett supports the idea that childhood spent in the country is better, more carefree and healthier than childhood spent in towns, especially in bigger cities. He provides his own experience as example and presents himself as a model for other parents by stating that

> [t]he first thing that I did, when the fourth child had come, was to *get into the country*, and so far as to render a going backward and forward to London, at short intervals, quite out of the question. Thus was *health*, the greatest of all things, provided for, as far as I was able to make the provision (283, original emphasis).[126]

Any child who grows up in such a healthy environment, with daily exercise and healthy food, will not, as Mears opines, be liable to succumb to any illness (cf. 159), and a mother should, therefore, always make sure that these conditions for her child's healthy development are met perfectly.[127] William Cobbett's advice emphatically underlines Mears' statement; he asserts that

[126] Cobbett's description of his circumstances hints at the fact that material considerations were not entirely irrelevant since money was not available in abundance, but that he nevertheless was willing to sacrifice as much as possible for the health of his children – again an example of parental readiness to make sacrifices.

[127] Gorham confirms that the ideal home, especially after the industrial boom, was located outside of the urban centres such as the "country house" (9) and the "suburban villa" (ibid.).

> [b]esides sweet air, children want exercise. Even when they are babies in arms, they want tossing and pulling about, and want talking and singing to. They should be put upon their feet by slow degrees, according to the strength of their legs; and this is a matter which a good mother will attend to with incessant care (280).

What transpires rather obviously from these argumentations is the idea that maternal sacrifice is one of the key ingredients of maternal practice.[128]

As is revealed from these admonitions, maternal indolence, the neglect of motherly duties in ensuring cleanliness, exercise and the correct environment were pictured as commonly leading to disease. Therefore, one of the most important tasks of the mother is the prevention and, if that is not possible, the conscientious and dutiful treatment of the children's diseases. The *Household Guide* is very firm in declaring most of these illnesses to be "the result of our own imprudence or misfortune" (83). Because "[t]he organization of an infant is a very sensitive one" (ibid.), there are many opportunities for a mother to stray fatally from the path of discipline and succumb to improper knowledge (cf. ibid.). The *Guide* continues to list a variety of circumstances which might jeopardize a child's health and which could impact the maternal conscience if she chose to ignore them (even if these circumstances were often out of her reach): "[The child is] capable of being injured by many things, especially by improper food, by bad air, by cold, and by heat. In large towns it is very difficult to rear children; in Liverpool, for example, one child in every four dies before attaining the age of twelve months" (83).[129] Gorham mentions that the emphasis on order in routine, frequently supplied in child-rearing advice, is an example for the private sphere, mirroring the professional standards and routine of the public sphere (cf. 67-68):

> [O]rderliness and attention to detail, were advocated as qualities necessary for success in the public world of business and the professions; that they were also seen as necessary for success in mothering illustrates the extent to which

[128] As is noticeable in other passages of Cobbett's advice text as well, the author also promotes Rousseau's methods in rearing children especially where physical exercise is concerned. He admonishes the parent that "it is your duty, now, to provide for their taking of that exercise, when they begin to be what are called *boys* and *girls*, in a way that shall tend to give them the greatest degree of pleasure, accompanied with the smallest risk of pain: in other words, *to make their lives as pleasant as you possibly can*. I have always admired the sentiment of ROUSSEAU upon this subject" (281, original emphasis).

[129] The stress put on hygienic habits, such as sufficient ventilation, reflects, as Macvarish notes, "a growing anxiety about the reproduction of social bonds and the maintenance of social order in a rapidly changing world" (1182). The middle class was to be strengthened, according to the rhetoric of advice texts in order to maintain the social equilibrium (cf. ibid.).

> the Victorian conception of the nature of the private sphere mirrored its conception of the public sphere (ibid.).

Standing for themselves, a lack of 'orderliness and attention to detail' appears to be regarded as potential cause of health problems; however, the tone in which this information is given does not seem suitable to ease a mother's fears but, instead, rather provides her with new reasons for anxiety (cf. Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 805). As in the context of pregnancy, these emphasised accounts of the dangers of everyday life are meant to prevent "misguided mothering" (ibid., 803) through "convey[ing] a warning" (ibid., 805). True to this purpose, *Cassell's Household Guide* continues to warn its readership: "It would be well if people would regard the constitution of a child with great consideration and care" (83).

Generosity and consideration for servants and other people of lower status was often presented as an essential virtue of the good housewife and mother. Especially in advice literature, the position of the housewife played an important role in this case because the commonly accepted picture of a mother as 'caring' and 'nurturing' placed special responsibilities on this function, particularly when fellow mothers were concerned. Martha Mears' message obviously indicates that mothers should at all times be considerate and compassionate to their whole environment but first of all to each other. The bond of motherhood, as Mears implicitly tells the reader, is stronger even than class distinctions and should outweigh pride; being harsh to a servant is condemnable, but if this servant happens to be a mother, the housewife's harshness becomes a crime (cf. ibid. 70). In order to prevent abuse, Mears provides definite instructions in her text as to how a good wife and mother should behave herself towards her female servants: "Your tasks should be moderate, and your pay liberal. The example of others is no reason for your continuing a practice inconsistent with humanity. It is a sort of domestic slave-trade, the abolition of which will do equal honour to your heart and your understanding" (ibid.). In Mears' advice text, a good, compassionate and caring disposition is pictured as elementary to the correct fulfilment and understanding of a mother's duties.

4.2.2 "Left to the care of servants!" – Nurses

Gisborne describes the female mind as being superior to the male mind in so far as it possesses the power to minister to the afflicted and sooth the worries of the head

of the household with her "endearing smile" (22) and generally spread "cheerfulness" (ibid.) within the family. Gisborne emphasises that "fortitude is not to be sought merely on the rampart, on the deck, on the field of battle" (ibid., 27), which would hardly suit the supposed female 'predestination' for the private sphere. Instead, womanly fortitude has to be displayed in the female ability to "nurse" others and primarily "her own offspring" (378). Becoming a nurse was considered one of the few professions that reflected the woman's maternal instinct and was thus regarded to be especially suited as female occupation. Of course, Gisborne's statement would eventually raise questions concerning the employment of nurses and, in the further course of time, governesses and all other servants in childcare. Gorham comments on the practice of employing nurses, emphasising that even though childhood gained in importance throughout the nineteenth century, "it was still considered appropriate and usual for middle-class families who could afford them to employ domestics to look after their children" (17). Delegating child-care duties might clash with the bourgeoise ideal of sacrifice and the emotional bond, however, it was also a marker of social status and recognised as such by most socially aspiring middle-class families (cf. ibid.). In the context of the mother-child bond, the figure of the nurse at first sight appears to be more an outsider, a tool, a servant without much emotional connection and potentially too strong materialistic motives (cf. Cobbett, 260). Although the moral justification for their employment was highly debated throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, for such reasons as were already under discussion, nurses, nevertheless, appear to have been a fixed component of family life. *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, as well as most other titles mentioned in this text, speak of the figure of the nurse sometimes critically, but always include her in some of their counsel and admonitions. Even William Cobbett, who emphatically opposes servants in childcare, admits that "when they [servants] must come at last, when they must be had even to assist in taking care of children, let them be *assistants* in the most strict sense of the word" (255, original emphasis). In his Treatise on *Domestic Medicine* William Buchan similarly elaborates on the topic since he considers himself to have considerable knowledge due to his "extensive practice among infants, in a large branch of the Foundling Hospital, were [he] had an opportunity not only of treating the diseases incident to childhood, but likewise trying different plans of nursing and observing their effects" (vi). Here, Buchan even highlights the importance of good

nurses for state and society, mainly in replacing the parents of orphaned children. He also mentions that "[w]henever I had it in my power to place the children under the care of proper nurses, to instruct these nurses in their duty, and to be satisfied that they performed it, very few of them [of the children] died" (ibid.). Buchan, essentially, declares himself the representative of patriarchal authority within a group of 'substitute mothers', the nurses (cf. ibid.). Since the foundation of the family during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rested upon the concept of patriarchy, it appears only logical that this model would be mirrored in every other social structure, even institutional and educational ones (cf. Adams, 511). If appointed by Buchan, the doctor is the man of authority, the nurses behave and the children thrive; however, some nurses, when left to their own devices without the proper authority to observe and control them, might put gain over the well-being of their charges (cf. vi.). Even though Buchan is not as strict as Cobbett in his promotion of exclusive parental care, he still emphasises the parents' duties to invest some energy in choosing the right person and place to care for their children (cf. ibid.). It is parental neglect if, because of the "distance of place, and other unavoidable circumstances", the offspring is "left to the sole care of mercenary nurses" (ibid.). The supposed advantage of less experienced and untrained nurses was the cheapness of their services as well as sometimes their good "intentions" (Gorham, 29). However, it was part of the ideal of female sacrifice that a mother should shy away from no inconvenience, even if it were high expenses, to get the best possible care for her child (cf. ibid., 17; Holmes & Nelson, 1), since "[g]ood and correct nursing is indispensable to future health and strength" (*Cassell's*, 10).[130]

According to Buchan and even in the critical eyes of other contemporaries, the figure of the nurse had one kind of potential which could lift her up in status to come at least close to the mother. Isabella Beeton's text lays open what quality, in her point of view, is the only attribute that can make a nurse a good nurse, that makes her care effective: The nurse, as a woman, could potentially be a mother herself and, therefore, is 'naturally' capable of maternal instinct. Beeton already stated in her introduction to the chapter on "Rearing, Management, and Diseases of Infancy and Childhood" (478) that motherly love slumbers in every woman; it is,

[130] According to Gorham, women, especially women of the Victorian period, were acquainted with the duty of "self-abnegation" (79) from a very early age on since it was part of their parents' – primarily their mother's – education (cf. ibid.).

in her words, “a direct intelligence of Nature” (ibid.). “[T]he memory of motherly feeling” (ibid., 484), therefore, could have a similar effect on the infantile charge. Of course, since the nurse is not the mother of the child in question and there is no direct mother-child bond, she must try harder than the mother to achieve a similar result. Beeton goes even further by implying that it is the duty of every good nurse to work hard for this connection – one example is the inherent interpretation of the baby’s cry: While a mother “will very soon teach herself to interpret them [the cries] with an accuracy equal to language” (ibid., 487), a nurse should nevertheless exert herself in every degree to accomplish a comparable outcome. Her instincts will always be more artificial than the natural knowledge of the mother; yet, this lack could be made up by the nurse’s advantage in experience (cf. ibid. 486). An artificial mother-child bond, for the period of nursing and childcare, is, according to Beeton, nothing that is inherently bad, or morally unjustified; she explains: “Yet, though Nature is unquestionably the best nurse, Art [sic] makes an admirable foster-mother” (478). Cobbett, however, opposes this way of thinking:

> I shall be told, perhaps, by some careless father, or some play-haunting mother, that female servants are *women*, and have the tender feelings of women. Very true; and, in general, as good and kind in their *nature* as the mother herself. But they are not the *mothers* of your children, and it is not in nature that they should have the care and anxiety adequate to the necessity of the case (255, original emphasis).

Nurses, consequently, remained controversial figures whose conduct was, as it appears, closely scrutinised by middle-class moralists and critically observed by professional medical men, both of whom not infrequently included warnings of a nurse’s misbehaviour in their advice texts. Thomas Graham gives an account of one case in which a child “cried incessantly, whom neither motion, music, nor the breasts could pacify for one moment” (41-42). His proper solution for this trouble, which was, of course, the nurse’s fault, follows straight away: “[U]pon a strict search [he] found that the bed in which he [the child] lay, his clothes, and body, were all nasty, but the instant he was washed and clean dressed, he fell into a sweet sleep” (42). Mears confirms that a nurse who has a lax way of following rules, through her own neglectful or unhygienic habits, is a danger to her youthful charge (cf.160). It follows that mothers should be especially careful in observing a nurse’s cleanliness, and on no account rely on them alone but always use their own judgement to arrange the child’s environment, since their child’s life might depend

on it. Maintaining his disapproving attitude towards nurses, Cobbett also underlines the danger to the child's physical and mental safety and mentions "instances of deformed bodies, of crooked limbs, of idiocy, or of deplorable imbecility, proceeding solely from young children being left to the care of servants!" (255). This rather drastic warning is evidently meant to cause shock and parental anxiety, which Cobbett uses to further the principles of the domestic ideal of parental sacrifice. Even the less moralistic and scrupulous *Cassell's Household Guide* contains the statement that nurses, especially too many of them at once, were liable to disturb the young child's "tranquil[ity]" (242) and generally subject the baby to exercises which are "totally unfitted to the tender organism of infancy" (ibid.).[131] Notably nurses from rural regions were viewed with suspicion due to their affinity with less 'civilised' practices, and the mother who consulted them was deemed very unwise (cf. 10). But also nurses from the cities frequently failed to escape the common stereotypes according to which they were thought to be "dirty, often drunken, women who took up nursing because they could find no other work" (Gorham, 29). Because of all these reasons, the authors of *Cassell's* guide urge "that every village will be supplied with a trained and certificated nurse" (10), which would not only be a benefit for the inhabitants' comfort but also lower the child mortality rate (cf. ibid.). For reasons such as these the character of the 'bad nurse' or 'bad surrogate mother figure' was popular in sensation fiction of the later nineteenth century, a genre that shares many characteristics with common advice literature, and also tends to view the character of the mother who, without dire need, employs a nurse, from a rather negative angle (cf. Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 805).[132]

Even in those households in which the employment of a nurse and other caretakers is regarded as a matter of course (cf. *Cassell's*, 10), nurses should still be

[131] Elizabeth Gaskell appears to have been educated according to similar principles: "I have somewhere read that a child gets bad habits, first by being irritated and then by finding that crying causes the irritation to cease. I think this is very true. I think it is the duty of every mother to sacrifice a good deal rather than have her child unnecessarily irritated" ("My Diary", 52). As a middle-class mother, Gaskell had no problems affording a nurse for her two daughters (cf. ibid., 63); however, true to the middle-class ideal of maternal affection, she was also a very involved mother who was sometimes even jealous of the affection her daughters had for their servants (cf. ibid., 66) and loved to teach them many basic matters, such as the alphabet, herself (cf. ibid., 70).

[132] An example in literature is Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, in which the protagonist leaves her young son in the hands of her alcoholic and incompetent father, who functions as a surrogate mother through the first years of the child's life. It is striking that here it is a man who undertakes this traditionally female function.

given clear instructions by the parents, most notably the mother, since the household, whether large or not, is still her realm (cf. Van Osselaer & Pasture, 7): "[I]t is advisable to have it clearly understood that the babe is not to be nursed on the lap when asleep" (*Cassell's*, 142), because otherwise the child might develop "bad habit[s]" (ibid.) and even wake the parents when the nurse is not there (cf. ibid.). The list of requirements for a good nurse to keep the child well cared for appears strongly reminiscent of the catalogue of qualities a good mother was supposed to embody: She should be emotionally steady, virtuous, strong and healthy as well as "temperate" (cf. Mears, 159). Gilroy confirms that in both Mears and Buchan's texts, when it comes to the topic of maternal sacrifice, the nurse is meant to tread in the mother's footsteps as well (cf. 22) and Isabella Beeton indirectly supports this idea: In the context of the child-care procedure directly after the birth, the author explains that it is the business of every good nurse to understand all the little signs and small details that come to a mother naturally through instinct (cf. 487).

Due to this closeness in method and purpose, nurses and other educational representatives such as governesses and schoolteachers as well as the parents had "rival claims" (Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 805) on the way children were educated. Governesses, in contrast to schoolteachers, lived with the family and often remained with them for quite a substantial amount of time – sometimes until her charges, if she initially had any male pupils, reached the age for school and leave home, or even, as in the majority of cases, until her female charges were introduced into society – the so called 'coming out' (cf. Pool, 224). Although her place within the household was thus very often a long standing one, her influence was not necessarily very valued and her position as neither a servant, nor a member of the family made her a singularly isolated figure (cf. ibid., 225). As Pool states, "[m]any women hated the work" (ibid.) and the way their authority with the children was often sabotaged by their mistresses – a perfect literary example for such a situation would be the suffering of the governess Agnes Grey under her two fallacious mistresses in Anne Brontë's eponymous novel. In Victorian sensation fiction or in cautionary tales as well, it is often the mother who "undercuts the advice" (ibid.) of the governess, thus ignoring the voice of reason: Such tales of "misguided mothering" (Wagner, "Victorian Nursery", 803), also "convey[ed] a warning" (ibid., 805) of the consequences if the mother should fail to listen to

advice. In this way, both sensation novels and advice texts profited from the fear arising in the "most protected parts of the Victorian household" (ibid.).

4.2.3 Custody debates, the bad mother, or, "weakness clothed in terrors"

While discussing examples of stereotypically 'bad' or 'lacking' motherhood, the topic of 'sacrifice' (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 1), or better the omission of sacrifice, invariably returns. Despite a supposedly more factual basis, even writers of medical advice literature, like William Buchan in *Domestic Medicine*, frequently use the fallen mother, unwilling to make sacrifices for her children, as a negative example for the depravities of which mothers could be capable (cf. 78). Thomas Graham mentions in this context that "[w]hen affection fails even in this first trial [new motherhood], great reason have we to forebode the absence of that disposition to submit to personal sacrifices, which will be found indispensably necessary to the performance of the subsequent duties of a parent" (41). Primarily women, who were assumed to be generally weaker and designed to calm rather than to excite violent emotions, should beware not to become "a tygress [sic]" at home, ruling their households with "a rod of iron" (Mears, 31).[133] Their emotions once unleashed could turn into every direction and leave behind all ideas of prudence and modesty, becoming entirely 'unwomanly' and "unnatural" (ibid., 126). Mears' "whole program" of female self-control is, as Gilroy confirms, "designed to corset women" (22) into the desired form set up by contemporary conventions. In consequence, the violent mother, described poetically by Mears as "weakness clothed in terrors" (Mears, 31), is thoroughly selfish, indulging only her own whims and passions, is unable to take care of others and to control her own emotions which could lead her even deeper into depravity.

William Cobbett, as well, warns of 'querulous women', female "[p]ertinacity" (127) and melancholy. Especially the latter he condemns very harshly, but he also provides advice for its prevention which, not surprisingly considering Cobbett's advocation of domestic motherhood, consist in having "[b]oth arms full of children" (ibid.). Cobbett proclaims this method to be "a pretty efficient remedy in most cases" (ibid.) which, if not effective enough, could be

[133] While too dominant and violent women were not yet 'fallen' in the strictest sense of the word, they were more likely to be in the future (cf. Mears, 133).

enhanced by "a little real trouble, a little genuine affliction" (ibid.) so to give the melancholic mother a taste of 'reality'. The author of *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* from 1893 also warns against bad-tempered behaviour and instead implores her female readership to remember

> that your rule is the rule of love. You may be, and should be absolute despot, so long as your husband thinks you the most *charming woman* in the world. When you begin to *rule in any other way*, you may *lose your sovereignty* altogether, for you have stepped *out of your place* (22, emphasis added).

Cobbett agrees to this idea and describes the husband of a 'habitually bad tempered' and dominant woman as "[a] husband thus under command, is the most contemptible of God's creatures" (184). Her dominance, usually linked to masculine behaviour, is emasculating the husband and thus, according to Cobbett, breaking the family apart. The selfish woman, being unable or unwilling to repress her inappropriate disposition, according to Mears, does not only reflect badly upon her morality but also potentially cause illness for herself and her child, particularly affecting the baby's body if she is pregnant or nursing: "It is not only probable, but certain, that they [the passions] occasion flesh marks – that they sometimes distort the features of the child, - alter its shape, - derange its limps, and disorganize the very structure of its brain" (59). Thus, the unfortunate child would bear the mark of the mother's misconduct for life as a personification of the 'ugliness' of uncontrolled passions. In order to strengthen the deterring effect even further, Mears continues to describe the pitiful offspring of such 'too passionate' mothers as "[i]diots, monsters" and "partially discoloured and deformed infants" (ibid.).[134]

A lack of self-control with regard to instincts and desires frequently ranked in the same category as unrestrained passion. Mears states in her advice text that uncontrolled "longings" (59) could have a similarly adverse effect upon the mother and the child's health as unrestrained passions. She defines these "longings" as "vehement desires, the gratification of which would give much pleasure, and their

[134] Female sexuality was commonly considered one form of misguided, overpowering female passion, in particular in its uncontrolled from the extreme of prostitution (cf. Pykett, *Improper*, 63). Especially in the mid-Victorian decades these issues became central to public debate under the title of 'the social evil' (cf. ibid.). However, there were also voices who questioned the motive for prostitution, considering it not primarily an act of uncontrolled passions but rather and economic necessity, and exposing the marriage practices of the time as frighteningly similar to common prostitution (cf. ibid.). The topic of the "purchased wife" (ibid.) was often taken up in sensation novels and thus shed a light on the manifold and often contradictory perspectives on 'proper' femininity.

disappointment occasion proportional pain" (ibid.). Mears proclaims the opinion that "[a] woman of sense and delicacy is incapable of abusing such indulgence" (63). In her line of argumentation, mothers who fail to check their desires (even if they are not in the strictest sense criminal, such as the over-indulgence of alcohol) are invariably lacking common sense as well as common decency. Especially the assumption of insufficient respectability apparently allows for the inference of a lack of decency which is always coupled with inadequate morality. Hannah More strongly supports the argument that respectability and propriety are essential to any woman who wishes to be an accepted member of society and rear an equally respectable next generation (cf. 7). As More suggests, indecent or improper behaviour always defeminises a woman and finally leads her to become "disgusting" (ibid., 6) in the eyes of the beholder. In order to illustrate this, More references Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which the famous poet includes a description of the perfect mother: "Those thousand decencies which daily flow/From all her words and actions mixed with love/And sweet compliance" (Milton, 194). 'Indecent' mothers represent the opposite of the figure described by Milton and put their own personal needs before the needs of their family, forcing their children to be brandmarked as potentially equally indecent in the eyes of the public.

In the case of the indecency of drunkenness, Mears highlights the anti-maternal effect of this 'selfish stimulation': "We have known mothers sell their children's clothes, the food that they should have eaten, and afterward even the infants themselves, in order to purchase the accursed draught" (59). The concept of alcoholism as addiction only entered social consciousness in the later part of the nineteenth century, and throughout the eighteenth century, the Regency era and the early Victorian period, "habitual drunkenness" (Hyman, 452) was regarded rather as a character flaw than as an addiction (cf. ibid.). In fact, drunkenness for social reasons was quite common: "Everyone drank: fine ladies and factory workers, rich and poor" (ibid.), and especially in the upper classes where socialising was part of the daily routine, drinking became an indispensable part of life (cf. ibid.). Mears, as a late eighteenth-century middle-class reformist, implores all mothers and mothers-to-be to cherish "the restraint of temperance and sobriety" (51) as one of the highest motherly virtues. "[A]ll excesses of the table" (ibid.) should be shunned because

they might eventually lead to a continually "depraved taste" (ibid.).[135] The horrific descriptions of maternal alcoholism are meant to disgust even the most hardened person, because here the ideal of female sacrifice (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 1) is twisted and turned into selfishness. In Victorian 'child rescuer' poems, for example, such topics are frequently addressed as well:[136] Millie Sanderson's poem "Our Fire Baby" (1884), for instance, includes the urgent appeal to the adult audience to have pity and rescue the innocent young being. The supposedly 'natural' maternal emotions of the reader are presented as inherent reaction to the unnatural mother's intemperance. Themes such as "fragility and vulnerability" (Hillel, 156) are directly approached, and, thus, the need of adult, especially motherly, support for the child and the inadequateness of the neglectful mother's behaviour are underlined once again: "The construction of an 'ideal' mother who has special affection for the child reinforces the correctness of removing an orphaned or neglected child from a less than ideal situation" (ibid., 158) and justifies in this way the removal of the child from its biological mother into foster care. Cobbett speaks in similar terms about the alcoholic woman "who tips off the liquor with an appetite, and exclaims *'good! good!'* by a smack of her lips" (91, original emphasis). According to Cobbett, her moral weakness and lack of self-control make her "fit for nothing but a brothel" (ibid.), which was thought to be a place that supports similar moral deficiencies.[137]

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[135] James Crichton Browne, at the time of this statement still a medical student, confirms Mears' ideas: "Our last division of the influences, connected with the past history of the parents, exerted at conception, treats of the previous habits and modes of life of the progenitors. Those who, having been born with a good constitution, have lived in accordance with, and in obedience to, natural laws, may expect to produce children free from infirmity; but those who have violated natural laws, may expect that, on the punishment, proportional to the offence, will inevitably be visited upon them and their descendants. Those who have perpetrated self-abuse, who have given themselves up to licentiousness, lust, and passion, to the vice of intemperance, to the pleasures of the table, or to any nervous excitement in excess, must suffer themselves from their want of self control, and must entail upon their progeny numerous and grievous ills – none more numerous and grievous than psychical disorders. The intemperate parent will transmit to his children a heritage of disease, and will inflict upon them ills innumerable" (290). Furthermore, Mears explicitly states that the evil of having an alcoholic mother was much more likely to arise among the working classes because this would be the only luxury they could afford with an exceptionally small salary (cf. ibid.). As strange as this logic appears, Mears is, however, correct in her assumption that "the use of strong liquors [quite often leads] to miscarriages, the fevers, the death of so many poor married women in London and other populous towns" (ibid.). The fact that Mears calls alcohol "the drink of Deamons [sic], - [sic] the liquid fire of hell" (ibid., 51-52) is therefore not quite groundless, even if it appears poetically exaggerated.

[136] Evangelical 'child rescuers' published magazines full of essays and poems that should awaken an adult's consciousness of the dreary situation of abandoned or neglected children (cf. Hillel, 146-147).

[137] Cobbett concedes that there may be cases in which women are allowed to drink mild forms of alcohol, but these are few: "There may be cases, amongst the *hard*-labouring women, such as

As can be deduced from these examples of 'lacking motherhood', advice texts, especially moralising evangelical treatises, rarely mention female selfishness as an isolated fault, but rather name it in combination with other, sometimes equally stereotypical female character flaws such as vanity, conceit and the desire to follow the rules of the fashionable world. Hannah More, for example, explains that vanity and selfishness are inherently connected and form a concrete danger particularly for women (cf. 58). Mothers, in her opinion, act selfishly if they fail to give their daughters an example of unassuming conduct, free from any vain motives. The flaw of vanity has to "uniformly […] be controlled, as an active, a restless, a growing principle" (ibid., 60), and mothers have to be constantly alert that it does not take command of their daughters, destroying their chances for happiness at a more advanced age when vain beauty and appearances are no longer valuable: "When admirers fall away, and flatterers become mute, the mind will be driven to retire into itself" (ibid.). A bad mother fails to make her daughter aware of the fact that following the dictates of fashion, selfishness, and vanity throughout her youth, although they might seem pleasant and rewarding at first, will only make her life miserable in the long run (cf. ibid.).

Besides a leaning towards passion, indecency and vanity, laziness and inactivity were usually regarded as strong signs for a selfish maternal disposition as well. According to Hannah More, the author of *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, "the mere levity, carelessness, and inattention (to say no worse) of some of those ladies, who are looked up to as standards in the fashionable world" (10) causes more harm than would be commonly expected. Some of those society ladies were even unaware of the fact that their conduct could possibly provoke censure, but this, as More states, does not excuse them:

> I am persuaded, if many a one, who is now disseminating unintended mischief, under the dangerous notion that there is no harm in any thing short of positive vice; and under the false colours of that indolent humility, 'What good can I do?' [sic] could be brought to see in its collected force the annual aggregate of the random evil she is daily doing […], she would start from her self complacent [sic] dream (ibid.).

reapers, for instance, especially when they have children at the breast; there may be cases, where very *hard-working* women may stand in need of a little *good* beer; beer, which, if taken in immoderate quantities, would produce intoxication" (91, original emphasis). It is apparently supposed that the state of female intoxication would invariably make her promiscuous.

The ‘sins’ which are committed out of laziness and inattention also encompass gossiping, which, besides “diminishing the good impressions of young men” (10-11), makes the lady in question appear silly and unlikable by all others (cf. ibid.). Especially with the first argument More makes it appear evident why mothers should be careful not to give their daughters a bad example if they want to see them married at one point in time. Other flaws that fall into More’s category of inattention are too much “worldly prudence and self-love” (ibid.). Those faults, according to More, count as indolence because the negligent woman who commits them is too lazy and self-absorbed to think of the consequences of her own actions (cf. ibid.).

William Cobbett supports the assumption that a lazy woman can never be called a good mother and goes so far as to call her laziness “a curse” (101) to her whole environment. Laziness, according to Cobbett, does not only concern the person herself and her household management, it also affects the rearing of children and the image the children receive of their mother – the model function of the mother is ineffective: “If she [the housewife] be lazy, there will be lazy servants, and, which is a great deal worse, children habitually lazy: every thing, however necessary to be done, will be put off to the last moment: then it will be done badly, and, in many cases, not at all” (ibid.).[138] The author of *Everybody’s Book of Good Conduct* appears to agree with Cobbett and More’s disapproval of carelessness and negligent behaviour in everyday life, exemplified here by the author’s comment on the correct way of clothing: “It is not the correct thing […] to be careless in dress at home anymore than when abroad. The dress should be appropriate to the occasion” (M.C., 12-13). The true meaning of this statement implies that neglecting neatness in private is not only an indicator of vanity but also an expression of laziness and indolence. In the next paragraph, the author adds a small, indirect explanation of the supposed consequences of this kind of behaviour: “It is not the correct thing […] to be indifferent and selfish in small matters. Coldness and carelessness destroy the charm of home life” (ibid.). In consequence, the choice of

[138] In Cobbett’s way of thinking, laziness is a fault that does not only occur in women. However, in women it is, according to him, far more “disgusting” (91) that in men. A direct reason for this distinction is not given. It is only implied that female laziness is more ‘unnatural’ and more far-reaching in its domestic consequences, which, considering the function of the man as breadwinner, appears doubtful. Yet, the main reason appears to be the idea that a lazy women is, by definition, a “mawkish wife, and a cold-hearted mother” (105), while male laziness does not affect the emotionality of the home, apparently, due to the father’s public function that is less dependent on emotions anyway.

dress is regarded as important, not just as an every-day commodity, but as an indicator of the state of family life, socially, physically and morally.[139]

Even though they were not as notorious as alcoholic mothers, politically interested mothers or figures like the New Woman, appearing predominantly towards the end of the nineteenth century, did not comply with the ideas of the perfect motherly woman either. Martha Mears, for instance, deliberately "occludes any sense of the contemporary political scene" (Gilroy, 24) in her work, except for a minor reference to *Age of Reason* by Thomas Paine, which apparently did not hold her interest long enough for her to read it (cf. Mears, 157). Making politics the central topic of discussion was considered a far too 'public' affair for any 'true' women to get involved in; "the politics of the counter-revolution" (ibid., 25), which Mears favours instead, were therefore mainly concerned with the 'reasonable' control that women should practise over their own emotions, which should ultimately ensure that "maternity [is perceived] as a controlled domestic spectacle" (ibid.). Hannah More agrees with Mears, stating that women who are actively engaged in politics "wander […] almost as far from the limits prescribed to her sex, as a female Machiavel or warlike Thalestis" (7). More associates such women with the undesirable characteristics of "fierceness and bigotry" (ibid.), which are "particularly ungraceful in a female" (ibid.). Amelia Opie's didactic novel *Adeline Mowbray: The Mother and Daughter* (1805) as well represents a clear warning of the dangers of female immersion in politics and the consequent neglect of their motherly duties (cf. Gilroy, 26). The female protagonist's mother supports the ideas of the American Revolution, which her daughter in her turn accepts as her own. Because of this she encourages the advances of a man who supports similar notions but turns out to be the worst partner (cf. ibid.). Opie thus continues the tradition of women authors who clearly distance themselves from female involvement in politics (cf. ibid.). Gorham states that negative stereotypes of women absorbed with affairs not directly connected to children, husband and home grew even more prominent in Victorian times: "Ill-ordered domesticity, in any rank of middle- or upper-class life, was thought to lead to bad mothering. Such parental neglect could, it was believed, take many damaging forms" (55), such as immodesty or

[139] In *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, John Gregory also warns of misuse of dress: "A fine woman shows her charms to most advantage, when she seems most to conceal" (ibid.).

promiscuity. Later, these clichés mingled with the negative assumptions about the aforementioned 'New Woman': Although it is relatively hard to define what exactly the typical New Woman would have looked like (cf. Ross, "Female Education", 76), it is clear that she would not have been the most conformist of characters. Ross defines her in this way: "a female who read voraciously, spoke her mind without reservation, dressed in less restrictive clothes or smoked; it also could refer to a woman who engaged in more defiant and threatening practices such as cohabiting and bearing children out of wedlock" (ibid.).

According to advice literature, it was alarmingly easy for "misguided mothering" (Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 803) to cause the downfall of the daughter (cf. ibid.). The mothers of girls who chose to take the path of the New Woman were said to have failed miserably in their mission as moral authorities (cf. Holmes, 41) to teach their girls the way of true femininity (cf. Van Osselaer & Pasture, 10) and "domestic motherhood" (ibid., 9). As Wagner specifies:

> While a mother should not at any time stop her involvement in her children's lives, it is too late – as the narrator [of sensation fiction] frequently reiterates in a sepulchral tone – to try to gain any influence over older children if crucial moments in their babyhood have been missed ("Victorian Nursery" 812).

The general opinion was that for such girls it would be difficult, if not impossible, to attempt to live up to the ideal of "a loving, responsible, virtuous mother" (Holmes, 39) themselves; if such neglected daughters became mothers, their children would have no moral authority figure to look up to. This circumstance was not only a private drama but also deemed a catastrophe for society (cf. Van Osselaer & Pasture, 10). In consequence, the plots of Victorian sensation fiction, encouraged by parenting advice and "cautionary tales" (ibid), often used scenarios like these: Possessing a strong didactic purpose, the tales "cultivated mothers' sense of unease" (ibid.). As frequently proclaimed by the authors of these stories, the type of the "misinformed mother" (ibid.) is as big a problem as the unkind and deliberately neglectful mother (cf. ibid.) because, regardless of intention, the mistakes made by both have the same evil consequences for vulnerable daughters. Harsh condemnations like these helped to create the ideal of the always informed and ever "attentive mother" (Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 814), never straying from the domestic path, which heavily influenced mid-Victorian popular fiction (cf. ibid.) as well. The thus established pressure on young and inexperienced mothers (cf. ibid.,

801) was increased by the omnipresence of "childrearing advice" (ibid., 814), which was often even inserted into novels.[140]

Due to the ideological relevance of motherhood, late-nineteenth-century mothers, especially if they belonged to the wealthy upper classes, often had more authority than has been supposed: They could, under certain circumstances, "even act as heads of the household" (Goujon, 70), a title usually reserved for the father. In the case of their husband's death, it became more common for the 'respectable' widow to "receive […] official guardianship of their children" (ibid.). Moreover, it was more and more often the case that, in a question of child-custody, the 'innocent' mother would win the right of keeping the child (ibid.) while it was uncommon, and in some cases even legally impossible, for "pre-Victorian judges to interfere with a father's absolute paternal authority" (ibid.).[141] Custody cases prior to 1839 show that the position of the father took precedence even over the position of the state: "It was not legally impossible for the Court of Chancery to act in *parens patriae*, but it was highly improbable. Paternal custody right was maintained by a reluctance to interfere with the private matters of the family, which were thought best governed by the father" (Berry, 33). The reason for these decisions was the legal reality that the authority of the father was so absolute that wife as well as children were considered "property of the husband" (Broughton & Rogers, 9). Legally, this authority could not be reduced or taken away even by the law itself. Rachel Grevlin describes the situation also in the context of divorce: "[I]n order to maintain parental rights, the mother would also have to prove cruelty towards her children – and more often than not, divorced women lost all access towards her children" (1061). These extreme limitations to possible maternal custody were modified in some way in the first half of the nineteenth century even though motherhood was still considered "secondary" (Berry, 33) to fatherhood.

[140] However, there were some groups of mothers who actively opposed not only the intimidating purpose of sensation fiction, but also the professional, often male-dominated, advice taken from advice magazines: Some of those, on the surface conventional, Victorian mothers "were actively writing back to the domineering professional discourse" (cf. Wagner, "Victorian Nursery", 807). In keeping "Baby Diaries" (ibid.) and even writing their own advice manuals, they intended to prove the value of first-hand motherly experience in contrast to intellectual, culturally more approved, professional advice (cf. ibid.). Although some mothers challenged male authority to a small degree by publishing their own mothering advice, these women were in little danger of losing their status as mothers or their standing among their peers, since their overall goal of correctly educating and nursing their children (cf. Holmes, 37 & cf. Wagner, "Victorian Nursery" 807-808) represented no great danger to the patriarchal system.

[141] For further information on the Infant Custody Act from 1839, see chapter 3.2.

The Infant and Child Custody Bill of 1839 was primarily the outcome of the custody dispute around Lady Caroline Norton, who for the first time challenged the exclusivity of paternal rights and to some extent exposed the fact that while women might be held in high regard as "moral guides of the coming generation" (Pykett, *Improper*, 56), they were virtually left without any kind of legal protection.[142] According to Norton's argumentation, "depriving innocent mothers of child custody" (Gruner, 315) is to be reckoned among the gravest injustices done to women. The public attention of this and other court cases was caused by the fact that the mothers' good conduct and the repeated severe misconduct of the husband was known to the public (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 9). Although morality was technically on the side of the mothers, courts were unable to give them the right of custody; the law even allowed "violent and philandering fathers […] [to] succeed […] in depriving devoted mothers of any contact with their children" (ibid.). The slightly improved legal situation "empowered the courts to award the mother access to, or custody of, her children under the age of seven in the event of divorce or separation if she was deemed the innocent party in the marital breakdown" (Grevlin, 1061). Of course, the reform of the custody practices only partially bettered the situation for women; it did not bring financial equality or give the mother the right of custody if she could not prove beyond any doubt that her husband had committed a severe offence as the cause of the separation.[143] Holmes and Nelson clarify that

[142] Apart from that, Norton argues in accordance with traditional gender expectations, proclaiming that "[m]aternity is woman's natural calling" (Gruner, 315). The primary function of women remained that of the 'nurturer' and consequently, despite some changes, the mother still would have to be able to prove that she was a good mother who was able to raise her child in conformity with the standard values – legally she had to prove her innocence in the case of a break-up (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 9) because this issue was thought to give the court the necessary information about her moral disposition. If she failed to do so, the mother "was deemed automatically to forfeit the care of her children" (Pykett, *Improper*, 56).

[143] It was only in 1882 with the Married Women's Property Act that the mother's ability to care for her children independently received a more secure legal foundation (cf. Broughton and Rogers, 9); however, complete equality in front of the law was not given until the year 1923. The reason for the delay was the idea that equality of legal status "would weaken the authority of the father within his family" (ibid.).
See also: Married Women's Property Act 1882 (legislation.gov.uk). https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/45-46/75/enacted. Accessed 17.03.2023.
In his advice manual directed primarily at young men, husbands and fathers, William Cobbett acknowledges the precarious situation of women at least to a small extent: "When we consider what a young woman gives up on her wedding day; she makes a surrender, an absolute surrender, of her liberty, for the joint lives of the parties; she gives the husband the absolute right of causing her to live in what place, and in what manner and what society" (npag.). Given his patriarchal bias, Cobbett does not seek to reform this situation, but at least recognises the gravity of the legal, social and emotional position of women who were about to become wives and mothers.

> [a]t the very beginning of the Victorian period, the Infant Custody Bill of 1839 had designated maternal adultery as a bar to the custody of children. Social and legal convention dictated that mothers adhere to a high standard of […] morality or risk losing their children (6)

The new custody bill occasioned several controversies and evoked especially the debate regarding the figure of the woman as 'split character', divided in her duties as wife on the one hand and as mother on the other hand: "[T]he wife had to be recast in legal terms as primarily a mother. Earlier legal decisions involving women always took the married couple to be the primary building block of society" (Gruner, 307).[144] These decisions in part uncovered a "deep anxiety about wifehood and motherhood" and ultimately determined "maternity [...] [as] their [women's] only source of political power" (ibid.). Joris accedes that "women's 'silent partnership' in business only became obvious through inheritance or divorce" (367) and a similar observation could be made concerning the mother's right on her children. Berry confirms that, in the context of the custody debates, the perception of "women's role in the family shifted from an all-important emphasis on wifedom and its financial implications to a critical consideration for the sentimental tentacles of motherhood" (33). Consequently, sentimental conceptions of maternal influence and the law had to be combined somehow, laying the foundations of the maternal ideology, so popular in Victorian society. The debates around the custody rights revealed another social paradox: "either maternity is natural and naturally moral – which the 'fallen' or adulterous mothers of the debates seem to disprove – or it is a role performable by others" (Gruner, 316), an idea which also clashed to some extent with the idealised perception of the superiority of biological motherhood in childcare, for example advocated by Cobbett (cf. 255).

The exclusive right of the father regarding children's custody remained to be challenged as the nineteenth century progressed (cf. Berry, 34), partly because of the incompleteness of the earlier custody bill. In her study of the custodial law and the debates surrounding it, even after 1839, Berry mentions William Forsyth and his *A Treatise on the Law Relating to the Custody of Infants in Cases of Difference between Parents or Guardians* (1850), a text which reveals the author's intense

[144] Moreover, the perspective on 'the child' shifted as well, from viewing progeny exclusively as property to "'the rights of children'" (Berry, 37).

scepticism concerning the prevailing legal situation (cf. ibid.). Forsyth judges the conditions to be still "extremely harsh" (Forsyth, 11) on mothers and infants:

> [P]rovided only that he was cautious enough not to bring his children into actual contact with pollution, and did not physically ill treat them, he had the entire control over and disposition of them, and might embitter the life of the mother by depriving her of the society of her offspring (12).

The limited rights of the mother in the 1839 custody act were consequently extended in the 1873 Act which "permitted the mother to ask for access to, and in certain instances custody of, her children up to sixteen years of age" (Berry, 35). However, the official right of custody and the legal privilege to name anyone as guardian in case of death, remained with the father until the 1886 Guardian of Infants Act made it possible for a mother to be named as guardian in the case of the father's death, again only "provided there was no question concerning her suitability" (ibid.).[145]

The often mentioned 'inadequate morals', considered an unconquerable bar to the right of custody or even the right of regular visitation, especially if the child happened to be under the age of seven (cf. Pykett, *Improper*, 56) were seen as primary cause of the infant's corruption. The mentioned misconduct could be any kind of behaviour known to the judge that did not adhere to "the construction of iconic maternity" (Holmes & Nelson, 1); adultery, for example, was certainly counted among the worst types of unfeminine behaviour, but it was by no means the most uncommon one (cf. Holmes, 40-41). The mother's bad influence was perceived as too strong a risk to allow for the formation of the otherwise highly praised mother-child bond. In his chapter "Letter to a Husband", William Cobbett appears to agree to this line of argumentation and – in very strong words – condemns especially unchaste behaviour in women (cf. 200). Particularly a mother's immorality is here regarded as compromising the good name of her children, through her "infidelity […] fix[ing] the brand of shame on the cheeks of [the] parents, [the] children, and on those of all who ever called [her] friend" (ibid.). As showcased by these argumentations, the mother's influence on her offspring was deemed to be even stronger than that of the father, primarily at a young age: "She

[145] The newly emerging, more critical view of the father's exclusive rights to his children made way not only for an (albeit incomplete) re-evaluation of the value of motherhood, but also of the state, which emerges as a godlike entity "to take ultimate responsibility over the family" (Berry, 37).

was to serve as a moral guide and exemplar, while the father's role was more passive. Thus, her misconduct necessarily 'contaminated' the children, while his did not" (Holmes, 41). This extreme collapse of the maternal figure as "moral, spiritual and practical guide" (Gorman, 48) would, according to Cobbett, cause the children to be in an extreme social and emotional dilemma: "They are commanded to honour their father and their mother; but not such a mother as this, who, on the contrary, has no claim to any thing [sic] from them but hatred, abhorrence, and execration. It is she who has broken the ties of nature" (202).

However, there were other types of 'misbehaviour' besides adultery which could prove fatal for women desiring to gain custody of their children: In the later part of the nineteenth century, Annie Besant, for instance, lost the right to take care of her daughter because she represented "radical" social ideas such as "advocacy of atheism and birth control" (Anderson, "Child Custody", 13). Though Besant represents a rather extreme example, female education in general became an even more controversial topic, and it was the mother's duty to shield her daughter from the desire for 'too much education' and thus from becoming one of the dangerous species of the New Women, who were also frequently made fun of in satires and newspaper illustrations (cf. Ross, "Female Education", 80). Especially towards the end of the nineteenth century, when feminist thoughts began to spread, traditional mothers were supposed to view their daughter's "quest for knowledge" (Pedersen, 106) as perilous to the child's "destiny as a wealthy and marriable girl" (ibid.), while the daughters in their turn often "saw no contradiction between marriage and the life of the mind" (ibid.).[146] Towards the end and the turn of the century, controversies reached a new peak: "If the cultural record of the time is to be believed, 'the revolt of the daughters' was the plague of the nineties, as young women faced down their mothers over education and opportunities, latch-keys and liberty" (Pedersen, 105). Mothers who were opposed to their daughters' wish for further education and desired nothing more than their "conform[ing] to the rituals

[146] Education was a dangerous issue for the position of motherhood: Many thinkers of this time "considered education not only perilous to mental and physical health for women, but also hazardous to healthy female sexuality, motherhood and the propagation of the species" (Ross, "Female Education", 79). Gorham confirms this by mentioning that also towards the end of the Victorian period, "any information about sexuality was believed to be inherently dangerous, and there was a belief that a girl should only be told of such matters in order to protect her from […] learn[ing] about them from evil sources" (92).

of [their] class" (Pedersen, 106) were in many cases disappointed and often faced serious friction within the family, sometimes even having to fall back on the means of "parental and moral blackmail" (ibid. 107) by drawing on their daughter's duty towards her parents (cf. ibid.).

4.2.4 The role of the father: Breadwinner and embodiment of masculinity?

While femininity and motherhood during the long nineteenth century, particularly during the Victorian age, continue to be topics that are widely discussed among scholars, especially in the context of domesticity and family structure, fatherhood has received comparatively little attention. As R. W. Connell argues in her study *Masculinities*, ideas such as 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are "remarkably elusive and difficult to define" (3). This phenomenon is also reflected in academic discussions of motherhood and fatherhood. Both concepts were in the past seen as inseparably 'wedded' with the respective gender they represented, and even though in modern society gender starts to become a much more fluid category, masculinity and fatherhood as well as femininity and motherhood still tend to be aligned in common perception. While the position of the mother has been deemed interesting, complex, and full of controversial assumptions about femininity in general, the role of the father is usually presented as much more straightforward. To some extent, the stronger focus on motherhood is a consequence of the research interests of feminist scholars. Moreover, historical research in the field of fatherhood in the nineteenth century has turned out to be more difficult than one might assume and certainly more complicated than researching nineteenth-century motherhood: According to women's studies expert Trev Lynn Broughton and cultural historian Helen Rogers, apart from fictional evidence and some biographical accounts that were most likely subjective, reliable information about the reality of fatherhood is not easily accessible (cf. 6). They explain that

> [c]ompounding the problem is the fact that most of the classic accounts of the Victorian filial relationship are upper middle-class in provenance and, outside of that class or beyond the imperial metropole, we know very little about the experiences and expectations of being or having a father (ibid.).

This difficult situation led to a somewhat one-sided presentation of nineteenth-century fatherhood in cultural memory: The Victorian father tends to be portrayed as the patriarch, the uncontested figure of authority who, despite his elevated

position in the household, did not have much business in the domestic sphere, which was the responsibility of the housewife (cf. ibid., 1).[147] Even though this image of family dynamics is not wrong as such, it neglects the complexity of nineteenth-century fatherhood(s), "the diversity of paternal roles from protector to playmate and guide, nurturer and teacher" (ibid.).

Being a pillar of patriarchal structures, the authority of the father remained a firmly established concept well into the twentieth century; still, despite its public importance, it already began to shake during the Victorian age. R. W. Connell states that "the character of gender itself […] [is] historically changing and politically fraught" (3). This explains why it could happen that masculinity in general and fatherhood in particular could be at the height of their power while deteriorating at the same time. Maurits refers to exactly this social development when he states that "[d]ue to the developing modernization of society, the connection between manly authority and the household was weakened, and the idea that a man had a special vocation in the estate of the household lost its importance" (59) as the old role allocation also underwent gradual changes (cf. ibid.). Broughton and Rogers confirm this idea, stating that due to economic changes during the nineteenth century which divided workplace and household even more strictly, fathers were trapped in a spiral that slowly, and at first almost not perceptibly, lessened their authority: "As the cultural resonance of the paternal role declined, and as feminist challenges to male power increased, the custom of automatically yielding to the paterfamilias as the head of the household waned" (7). Yet, despite this development, the authority of the father long remained undisputed, even though the gradual changes within society and economy prepared the way for its eventual descent. During the whole long nineteenth century, each member of the family had a specific designated place, defined and protected by social norms and customs which were to strengthen the image of the family as a "domestic sanctuary" (Nudelman, 198) and – by doing so – protect the stability of the social system in

[147] Gorham describes the employed middle class of the Victorian era as "a result of industrial capitalism [and] […] predominantly urban in character" (3). The ideal figures of masculinity that belonged to it inseparably "were engaged in entrepreneurial, managerial and professional occupations. At the highest level of the class were men engaged in substantial business enterprises, in the liberal professions and in public administration. The lowest levels included a greatly increased number of clerks, and those employed in the minor retail trades" (ibid.).

which the figure of the father as head of the household had a special place of authority (cf. Schneider, 34).

Even though he was meant to possess the highest authority within the family, the father's domestic duties were not necessarily less heavy than those of the mother. Individual competence and abilities often clashed with fatherly ideals which patriarchy imposed upon the head of the household. Strange states in the context of nineteenth century lower-middle-class fatherhood: "[T]he competing priorities of [the] mothers and fathers illustrate cultural assumptions about mother's preoccupation with children and domestic life while fathers prioritised selfish concerns and misjudged childcare matters" (167). According to Gisborne's *Enquiry into the duties of the female sex* (1798), nature, or God himself, has divided the duties of the male and the female part of the family (cf. 19) as follows:

> To man, on whom the culture of the soil, the erection of dwellings, and, in general, those operations of industry, and those measures of defen[c]e, which include difficult and dangerous exertion, were ultimately to devolve, He has imparted the strength of limb, and the robustness of constitution, requisite for the persevering endurance of toil (20).

This was the foundation for all the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century values and norms that a father had to imprint on his son, if the latter were to become a valuable male member of society. The title of 'breadwinner' already suggests that "the wants of children" (ibid., 376) were seen as a typically male concern, at least regarding the financial side.[148] Gisborne mentions that the duties ascribed to the father, the male head of the family, include "the task of making a reasonable provision for the future wants of children" (376), and, according to William

[148] Another kind of proof for the importance of the presence of the breadwinner within the family is provided by the medical professional L. Forbes Winslow, whose field of expertise were cases of mental illnesses, often connected to criminal cases of his time. In his work *Recollections of forty years; being an account at first hand of some famous criminal lunacy cases, English and American; together with facsimile letters, notes, and other data concerning them*, published in 1910, he mentions, for example, the case of a mother who begs the Queen for permission of her husband's return, since he, though accused of being insane, has to care for his children: "I have taken the great liberty of writing to your Majesty to make an appeal on behalf of my husband, the Rev. Henry John Dodwell, who is detained during your Majesty's pleasure at Broadmoor Lunatic Asylum. […] the long and happy married life we have lived, his uniform kindness to his children and myself, his calmness and perseverance for five years under the irritating difficulties experienced in endeavouring to obtain redress for the wrongs that had been done to him, is not to me consistent with his being branded as a lunatic. And as the eminent medical men who have examined him are divided in opinion, I humbly and earnestly pray that your Majesty will give him the benefit of the doubt and liberate him, so that he may return to protect our four children and release me from the helpless position I am in, and save me from my only resource, the workhouse" (123-124).

Cobbett, it is the husband's duty to make these provisions for the upkeep of children even before children have been conceived. He explains that while,

> [l]egally speaking, we have a right to do what we please with our own property, which, however, is not our own, unless it exceed our debts. And, morally speaking, we, at the moment of our marriage, contract a debt with the naturally to be expected fruit of it; and, therefore […] the scale of expense should, at the beginning, be as low as that of which a due attention to rank in life will admit! (153)

This excerpt from the chapter "Letter to a Husband" from Cobbett's 1829 advice manual for men is meant to ensure that husbands understand the 'natural' connection between their own existence and the arrival of children. The author adds that not only is it the husband who is liable to regulate his own habits of spending but also those of his wife, whose behaviour has, just as the children who are about to arrive, become subject of his direct financial and emotional responsibility (cf. ibid.). According to the midwife Martha Mears as well, the father's duty of caring and providing for his child should already start before the actual birth, right after conception, and should mainly manifest itself in the proper care for the mother-to-be:

> How sweet the duty that now calls him to sooth every care [of the pregnant woman], - to share in and lessen pain by tender sympathy, - to raise the depressed spirits, - to pour a kind of day light into the mind, - to swell the heart with rapture, - and give the most sanitary impulse to the genial current of life! What delightful emotion must that man feel, who dries the tear as it steals down the cheek of beauty, - who anticipates in silent wish, - and shelters from each rude blast the tender buds of mutual affection (29).

Taking diligent care of the mother, and later the child, should, as Mears firmly declares, on no account be considered male weakness in the face of "female tyranny" (32), but should be seen as the fulfilment of a manly responsibility which showcases 'virtuous masculinity'. Mears conjures up a typical middle-class picture of the ideal father, the image of 'a knight in shining armour', as the very soul of manliness. This perception also surfaces when she addresses the father-to-be himself in an urgent appeal: "[attentive behaviour towards the mother] is displaying on your part an amiableness and generosity of soul, which cannot fail to secure the most lasting returns of gratitude, love and admiration" (29). William Cobbett goes even further than Mears by drawing on the idea of a supposed emotional dependency of the wife on her husband. In his argumentation, a man's love is more

passionate prior to marriage and cools off during the matrimonial years, while the wife's love for her husband increases (cf. 164). Cobbett, therefore, advises that the man should use this position of emotional superiority wisely and be considerate of the fact that new motherhood might necessarily provoke a shift in the woman's love for and loyalty to her husband, because there is now another person who requires her attention (cf. ibid.). His statement also reminds of the common assumption that womanly emotion was inherently tied up with motherhood and care for other beings and, according to Cobbett, men should remember this fact to maintain domestic harmony (cf. ibid.).

Like Mears, *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* also assures the male readership that a generous treatment of wife and children is nothing that could potentially undermine the father's male status. On the contrary, the author argues that kind behaviour can reaffirm male authority and states "[i]t is not the correct thing […] for the head of the household who can permit himself expensive wines and cigars, to grudge his wife and daughters sweets and flowers and pretty clothes" (M.C., 12-13).[149] The author even denounces male 'rudeness' towards women as a fault which ultimately backfires and hurts their own reputation because it is to be considered "a sign of ill breeding" (ibid., 18).[150] Obviously, the author of the conduct book, utilising examples of positive, caring, male behaviour (cf. 17), emphasises the image of the father as 'good' and 'just' authority.[151] By associating male care for wife and child with the preservation of paternal authority and the duty of providing for the family the danger of 'unfittingly feminine' emotionality is averted. Especially in the nineteenth century, the masculine fear of being seen as too weak and effeminate in the eyes of society became a very real problem that left its mark on many men and their families (cf. Tosh, 21). In conduct books and advice texts in general, as Kenlon confirms, "gender" tends to be presented as "a performance" with a strict set of "delicate" "rules" (9). Cobbett as well addresses

[149] It is interesting to note the difference in the choice of luxury goods dependent on the gender of the person who consumes them: Men are supposed to enjoy alcohol and smoking while women primarily concern themselves with "pretty things" (cf. M.C., 12-13).

[150] In this line of argumentation, the man's unfeeling behaviour is ultimately directed at himself because the woman is, by marriage, part of his own identity and it is his own stupidity that makes him fail to recognize this fact.

[151] "It is the correct thing […] [t]o be watchful of her comfort; small attentions win gratitude, and of gratitude love is sometimes born; by it it is certainly retained. To guard her; Not as a slave, by tyranny and harshness, but like a jewel, with care and forethought" (M.C., 17).

this insecurity in his "Letter to a Husband", emphasising his idea that "[b]eing fond of little children argues no *effeminacy* in a man, but, as far as my observation has gone, the contrary" (180, original emphasis). Cobbett's argument denotes that fondness of children and open exhibition of this love underlines the emphatically masculine image of the 'protector' (cf. ibid.) – his message is evidently protective of the domestic ideal and its gender roles.

Even if it was somewhat unrealistic, the picture of a perfectly happy and harmonious family was presented as a goal that every respectable family had to aspire to; a family without its male head was regarded as inherently incomplete and invariably unhappy. In this context, Broughton and Rogers argue that the idealised image of domestic togetherness which included the father also became very popular in Victorian genre painting (cf. 2). These pictures usually celebrated simplistic domesticity and family togetherness, particularly in lower-class backgrounds, conveying the clear message that, as long as the family is complete and every member in its designated place, domestic happiness and security are assured. By focusing on one particular painting, Broughton and Rogers explain how these images replicate middle-class Victorian values, particularly including paternal ideals, and such praised virtues as humility and simplicity within a middle- and lower-class setting (cf. ibid.). The painting in question, *The Volunteers* (1860) by Frederick Daniel Hardy, shows a simple domestic interior with playing children at the centre, the mother laying the table for the family meal at the right-hand side and father and grandfather sitting in the centre of the nearer background, watching the children at play.[152] According to Broughton and Rogers, the painting includes several interesting features which shed a light on the common perception of ideal fatherhood. First of all, the placement of the father "within the action" (ibid.) of the whole scene "seems to emit a reassuring message about divisions of labour and lines of command: grandfather, smoking the comfortable pipe of retirement, yields centre stage to his son, home from service in the Guards, who watches protectively over the youngsters" (ibid.). This description already reveals various facts about the concept of the 'model' father: First, the father is always the head of the household who transmits his authority only to his son. Second, the father watches over his offspring and takes pride in their behaviour since they reflect his own position (the

[152] For reference see: Hardy, Frederick Daniel. *The Volunteers*, 1860. York Museums Trust, York Art Gallery.

father in question is a soldier and the children are playing a war-game; they are, consequently treading in his footsteps).[153] Broughton and Rogers confirm this idea: "The ease with which he [the father] has recruited his little 'volunteers' implies that his sons will sign up only too gaily for the version of authority, citizenship and patriotism which their father embodies" (3).[154] Third, the placement of the father in the midst of his family, enjoying togetherness with his offspring, while still bearing the attributes of his professional life – in this case his uniform and an "almost regal demeanour" (ibid., 2) – is meant to exhibit the ideal balance of professional and private life, of work and leisure. Moreover, "[t]he carefully distinguished heights of the children imply that, though intermittent, this father's returns to the bosom of his family have been consistent enough to produce a regular and abundant progeny" (ibid., 3). The father in this picture is very much present, and not at all the "absent father" (Strange, 4) of less idealistic depictions. The tidy appearance of the house, its inhabitants, and the reference to the upcoming meal suggest a financially carefree situation (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 3). Apparently, the father's pay is sufficient to enable him to support a family comfortably; he can thus fulfil his duty

[153] Of course, play often went hand in hand with education and was frequently used as a subtle way of introducing grown-up ideas or ways of life to children in order for them to remember those concepts and follow similar ideas during the later parts of their lives: In the nineteenth century young boys were traditionally brought up to play with toy-soldiers and other semi-warlike artefacts while girls played with dolls (Pollock, 238-239), practising female accomplishments. Gorham elaborates on the topic of gender-related play and education, noting that "[t]here were toys designed for children of both sexes: for example, the Noah's Ark, popular as a Sunday school, toy was designed with both boys and girls in mind, but toys like model railways or dolls were made for one sex or the other. If she had brothers, a girl might play with their toys, but these would still be seen as boys' toys" (18). Thomas Gisborne gives his account of the picture of female perfection which, in his words, "prevailed in the last age" (18): Besides the sciences of "pickling and preserving" (18), the perfectly educated woman had to be instructed in "cross-stitch and embroidery" (18), thus limiting her sphere of understanding to needlework and some culinary skills (cf. Gisborne, 18). In his opinion, this very limited view of female education did improve with time to the point when the major part of society acknowledged that "the intellectual powers of women are not restricted to the arts of the housekeeper and the se[a]m[…]stress" (18). However, Gisborne himself draws back on this: In his opinion, each sex has its own tasks and should stick to those (cf. 19). John Gregory confirms Gisborne's idea: He considers "needlework, knitting, and suchlike" (41) to have no "intrinsic value" (ibid.) in themselves. Instead, it is the indirect value of the behaviour patterns and characteristics that their performance teaches young girls which makes them ultimately useful (cf. ibid.). Those indirect teachings would be, for example, to improve and refine judgement as well as the ability to pass time in a respectable and pleasurable way without "getting abroad in search of amusement" (42) and leaving their designated sphere.

[154] Broughton and Rogers add at this point that the depiction of the children as small soldiers mirroring their father might have an even more practical and, from a modern perspective, sinister background than can be spotted at a superficial glance: "[T]he number of married soldiers per company allowed living quarters and other benefits for their families was strictly curtailed: soldiers who married 'off strength' found their ability to support a family severely compromised. Attempts to boost recruitment at around this time by admitting into the company a number of boys from the age of fifteen, often as drummer boys, may suggest a more urgent material injunction behind these apparently carefree romps" (3).

as breadwinner and provider, even though historical facts might cast some doubt on this 'romanticised' portrayal.[155] The pride that the father feels for his children, especially for his sons, following his example in their choice of play, is presented by the volume *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* (1893) as a very positive emotion that is entirely natural for a parent to experience (cf. M.C., 29). According to the author, this pride is usually the result of "the blood-tie" (ibid.) between parents and children and therefore a sign of their strong bond (cf. ibid.).

Besides the many prescribed character traits and aspects of spiritual disposition, we can also observe explicit outer markers that served as indicators of the father's authority. One of these important societal symbols of fatherhood, manliness and the continuance of duty was the father's name, both the first name and the family name. The father's first name as well as the last name (or, in some cases, the title) were usually passed on to the eldest son and already transferred some of his authority. The transference of the first name bestowed a certain part of the father's power on the son once the child was named – Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée calls this phenomenon the "father-to-son-model" (90). With the name came a lot of expectation, particularly for the son to follow the father's footsteps (cf. Pedersen, 114); logically, this specific model was especially important in upper-class families, in particular families that were in possession of one or more great landed estates. In these cases, of course, the last name, especially the title, was even more important than the continuance of the first name. Primogeniture guaranteed that the estates and everything that belonged to them were directly transferred from father to eldest son in order to preserve them in their entirety (cf. Pool, 90). Having sons was therefore of immense importance to most rich families, most of all to those who had titles and/or estates, since, typically, so-called entails ensured that daughters could not inherit (cf. ibid). The "father-to-son-model" (Brejon de Lavergnée, 90) was in these cases not just a custom or a legal formality, but a way of preserving heritage by keeping the estates alive and functioning, and, at the same time, also a binding reminder of the power of patriarchy (cf. Pool, 92).[156] Of course, entails could also become an uncertain procedure because, should the family fail in having sons or should the only son die, a total stranger could become owner of title

[155] See above.
[156] Broughton and Roger add in this context that this strong re-affirmation of possibly threatened male authority potentially led to a "ratcheting-up of filial rebellion" (7).

and estate (cf. ibid.): “Family pride” (ibid., 91), as well as economic reasons, thus demanded the birth of at least one son. The German word “Hausvater”, often used in a similar context as the expression ‘breadwinner’, or its literal English translation ‘housefather’, stressed the male position in the realm of domesticity (cf. Schneider, 34). The term directly links the position of the father with the home, even more than the phrase “breadwinner” does, and circumscribes the father’s “special position of authority and command towards all members of the living community called ‘home’” (ibid.). One social expression of this authority was the custom that it was usually the task of the father to enter the new born child’s name into the birth register (cf. Brejon de Lavergnée, 85) and thus become officially the person responsible for the start of the child’s legal existence. But even if the figure of patriarchal authority were not the biological father, or the husband of a member of the household, the title of “Hausvater” would nevertheless both signify and ensure his dominance over others (cf. Maurits, 59) as well as his duty to support and protect those persons under him from all those “discomforts” (Schneider, 35) they might endure in the outside world (ibid.). Part of the extended community that was still called ‘family’ in a wider sense were also “servants and apprentices” (Broughton and Rogers, 8), and the authority of the father had to be respected not just by his biological children (cf. ibid.). As Broughton and Rogers explain, “[p]arenting itself was considered independent of the fact of biological parenthood” (ibid.). However, this arrangement did not remain stagnant:

> With the relative demise of agriculture and the emergence of other forms of wealth – capital, credit, wages, the circulation of money, etc. emphasis shifted from lineage as a stable and recognizable criterion to kinship as a dynamic group, defined by changing social relationships (Guzzi-Heeb, 292).

In short, the need for emotional connections grew in public importance. In the course of the Victorian era, fatherhood and its field of authority remained a much-debated topic that evolved slowly into an understanding of “parental rights and responsibilities [which] were associated more and more with biological paternity within legally formalized marriage, as non-legalized unions were culturally proscribed” (Broughton and Rogers, 9).

Since the son was supposed to be the father’s image and his successor, also in a middle-class context, the importance of sons for the whole family, especially for fathers, could be openly reflected in a special interest which the father took in

this child: Grenby confirms the fact that a father was often portrayed as incorporating "the role of gatekeeper [to the child's wilder nature] as much as educator, testing his son's fitness to enter the cultured, civilized world of the well-furnished house" (23). Broughton and Rogers also support the idea that this popular image of the father as educator was one of the more central reasons why a father's presence in the domestic context was necessary for a perfect example of domesticity (cf. 4). "[I]nstill[ing] [the] virtues of self-control and deference in their children, especially sons" (ibid., 7) was also a way to re-affirm male authority in the home.[157] William Cobbett, himself a father, also takes the role of a paternal guide and teacher to a fictional boy in the chapter 'To a Youth' of his advice manual and counsels him to become a 'proper man', for example, by avoiding luxury and extravagant spending, both faults that were typically more associated with female weaknesses (cf. 18-19). A central argument in connection to this advice is, as maintained by Cobbett, the approval from other men, the acceptance among peers and the establishment of a respectable masculine image: "Men are estimated by other *men* according to their capacity and willingness to be in some way or other *useful*" (20, original emphasis). Ideas like usefulness, industry and self-control are, again, of pivotal importance in this passage.

Of course, usually the picture of the father in the role of the active educator only became a reality in middle-class households (cf. Martin, 329). In a working-class family the father had to work, and what little time remained was usually not spent on teaching the children, although it was occasionally demanded of him to exert his authority and punish his children for offenses committed during the day.[158] In an upper-class context, the father typically remained the educator and active role model only on paper; Broughton and Rogers confirm this, stating that "in the higher classes the intimate day-to-day practices of nursing, nurturing and education were contracted to others – wetnurses, tutors, governesses – at no cost to the respectability or status of the parents, even when the child was placed away from home" (8). The middle-class ideas of respectability and the fulfilment of duty applied to upper-class families only in a more distant manner. Officially, the upper-

[157] Broughton and Rogers add in this context that this strong re-affirmation of possibly threatened male authority potentially led to a "ratcheting-up of filial rebellion" (7).
[158] Since in many cases the working-class children themselves had to work in factories or as servants in other families, their employer became the person who had most authority over them – their working environment became their new 'family' to some extent (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 8).

class father was still head of the household, figure of authority, 'breadwinner', as well as teacher and model figure for his children, especially his sons, even if these duties were only fulfilled superficially, or not at all.

Connected to education of primarily the sons was the idea of discipline: While the mother had the authority to reprimand their children for their offenses, it was usually the father who dealt out the punishment, especially if the offender was a son and the chastisement in question was corporeal punishment. This does not necessarily imply that the respective roles in the process of punishment could never be exchanged, but the general tendency gave the father here the executive role (cf. ibid.);[159] his position as disciplinary figure was deeply intertwined with the abovementioned idea of the father as "gatekeeper" (Grenby, 23). Disciplining, according to Victorian discourse, meant protecting the children from bad outside influences and was consequently an "expression of love" (Jarrar, 62). Here, the father had to be a "guardsman" (Broughton & Rogers, 4) who acted on "the need to shield the children – as he would shield the nation [as a soldier fighting for his country] – from harm. As well as having the legal right to punish members of his household, he was expected to protect them from danger" (ibid.). This kind of authority was, of course, very easily abused because individual methods of punishment, the relevance and justification of it as well as the perspective and cultural and religious background could differ to a very great extent. Broughton and Rogers support this by stating that "what 'danger' [for the punished children] meant, and equally what fatherly protection meant, were ideologically circumscribed and contested" (ibid.); not punishing children, however, was regarded as an act of painfully neglecting parental duty (cf. Jarrar, 64).[160]

In Victorian society, education of boys was a serious matter which was, therefore, usually left to the decisive authority of the head of the family, the role model for his sons from early childhood on (cf. Pedersen, 114).[161] However, boy's schools as well were supposed to mirror this paternal authority: "Victorian

[159] Usually, while the children were younger, the mother would take over some of the actions that later would be more likely to be performed by the father, as for example the punishment (including corporeal chastisement) of smaller children. When the children grew older the dealing out of punishment became more gender-specific since, as already stated, the father was expected to be the role model for his sons, while the mother was supposed to do the same for her daughter.
[160] For further information, see chapter 4.3
[161] Generally, girls were less likely to be sent away to school than boys were: If there was a question whether the girl or the boy was to be sent away to enter an educational institution, the decision would usually fall for the son of the house (cf. Pollock, 249).

manliness was […] of an often crudely didactic kind" (Tosh, 32) which aptly describes the schools' (and the state's) general guidelines.[162] Without the direct supervision of the parents, some schools, although not all of them, used exaggerated punishment which could "at times amount to definite cruelty" (Pollock, 269) in order to force their pupils to a stronger discipline. In his advice text, William Cobbett especially addresses fathers to be careful of schools, which are, according to him, potentially dangerous not only because of their possible cruelty but because of the moral danger they pose, besides being entirely useless in their educational value. He rhetorically asks

> What need had we of *schools*? What need of *teachers*? What need of *scolding* and *force*, to induce children to read, write, and love books? What need of *cards, dice*, or of any *games*, to *'kill time*;' but, in fact, to implant in the infant heart a love of gaming, one of the most destructive of all human vices? (292).

In Cobbett's mind, schools are a breeding ground for all dangers that could enter a child's life, including the promotion of cruelty and inhumane behaviour towards animals and other humans (cf. 294).[163] Particularly where boys are concerned, it is, according to Cobbett, the father's duty to prevent this bad influence, and fathers

[162] Despite this overall goal, public schools, for example, were often under discussion when it came to the development of 'proper' masculine ideals (cf. Tosh, 48). Schools pictured in the popular literature of the nineteenth century are in the majority of cases described as dreary places in which children were constantly mistreated, but, while this certainly could be the case, it was not always that way (cf. Pool, 125). Public schools were, as Pool chooses to call it, "at the top of the ladder" (ibid.) and not at all "open to all" (ibid.) as the name would suggest and as they were once meant to be: "The public schools were nonprofit institutions founded with money left by generous donors to teach the local lads in the town of Eton or Harrow or wherever Latin and Greek grammar" (ibid.). Socially the role of these places changed immensely (ibid.): From charity institutions, they rose to the status of the highest ranking upper-class boarding schools, housing only the sons of the most prestigious families; the social importance of these establishments was therefore not to be neglected, even though in literature public schools were not too often featured (ibid.) perhaps because there was less social drama to be found in these places. Schools for the poorer population were not as common at the beginning of the nineteenth century because at that time "[t]here was no national school system" (Pool, 125). At first it was not thought to be necessary: "[T]he poor were apprenticed at an early age or went to work in the fields, and the rich had a governess for their daughter and a clergyman tutor for their son until he went away to Eton or Oxford" (ibid.), which is perhaps the reason why in the early nineteenth century there is very little first-hand evidence that many parents, even wealthy ones, sent their children to school: Pollock mentions that it was indeed unusual for diarists to mention the reason for sending their sons away to school: Only two parents make note of it and explain that "companionship" (248) and practising obedience were some of the causes, and the second reason was not even mentioned in the context of a girl sent away to boarding school (ibid.).

[163] Cobbett elaborates on the subject of cruelty: "*cruelty* is always accompanied with *cowardice*, and also with *perfidy*, when that is called for by the circumstances of the case; and that *habitual* acts of cruelty to other creatures, will, nine times out of ten, produce, when the power is possessed, cruelty to human beings" (296, original emphasis).

who still send their boys to school receive harsh criticism from him: "And, are you to permit all this, and still call yourself a father!" (309)

If they followed William Cobbett's advice or not, most fathers would keep an eye on the way especially their male offspring was educated, and it was indeed not at all unusual not only in middle-class but also in upper-class families of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century that family portraits featured a father supervising the reading of his son (cf. Grenby, 17). Grenby states that such depictions of "parental solicitude" (ibid.) gained more and more supporters because they carried the meaning of "wilderness […] tamed by the World" (ibid) – the civilization of the parent taking over the still savage mind of the child and thus "all images of children reading retained a heavy symbolism and were often intended to perform specific ideological work" (ibid.).[164] Cobbett confirms the idea that, at least in a bourgeoise context, paternal supervision of their sons' education was thought to be of special importance and the absence of it, leading to a sloppy and incomplete education of the boy, was greatly deplored. Cobbett writes that "[i]t is true, that we do […] too often see men have great wealth, high titles, and boundless power heaped upon them, who can hardly write ten lines together correctly" (44.). The central problem is, according to Cobbett, the parent's deficient ability to discern useful from unnecessary education (cf. ibid.).[165] Not being able or lacking the will to fulfil those manly duties could be dangerous for the masculine reputation, at least in the eyes of most authors of advice literature (cf. Mears, 29; More, 29). Particularly in Victorian times, the father's involvement in the house and in household affairs became a more prominent topic.

Victorian fathers have often been described in hindsight as "patriarchal machine[s]" (Pedersen, 98) who ruled their families unconditionally, were feared

[164] The fact that "children's literature gradually evolved from books of instruction to books of delight" (Grenby, 1) and since the seventeenth century the canon of literature that was used on a younger audience (whether specifically designed for them or not) grew as well (cf. Grenby, 3). Grenby also mentions the difficulties of defining the term 'children's literature' because of the diversity of texts that were actually read by children: Definitely only part of the texts used for juvenile instruction were specifically designed for children; on the one hand, some educational texts were just classics read by both adults and children and some, on the other hand were "religious texts" (2) which would generally not be subsumed under the term 'literature' (ibid.).

[165] According to Cobbett, "[p]arents must have an uncommon portion of solid sense to counterbalance their natural affection sufficiently to make them competent judges in such a case [their offspring's education]" (44), which implies that parents should be aware of their dilemma and never decide their child's fate with either too much ambition or too much sentimental indulgence in mind.

by their wives and children, especially their daughters, purposefully constraining them by limiting their possibilities for self-development (ibid.). Broughton and Rogers explain that these pictures are stuck in today's image of the 'Victorian father' because they are derived from popular fictional literary texts of the time which shape our modern idea of Victorian realities even though they might sometimes neglect the context that these texts were produced in (cf. 5). Broughton and Rogers cite popular examples of this development, for example texts by Virginia Woolf, Samuel Butler, Edmund Grosse and John Galsworthy, who "set the paterfamilias in amber, preserving him as an antediluvian specimen of Victorianism" (ibid.). The reason for this phenomenon is, indeed, not particularly hard to find: "Psychoanalytically, these authors are 'storytelling sons and daughters', using the resources of narrative to work toward a 'kernel of childhood material', an 'explanatory origin which will make sense of themselves as subjects" (ibid.).[166] Certainly, many of the stereotypes derived from these texts had their foundation in truth. Broughton and Rogers corroborate this when they state: "To suggest that the despotism of Victorian fathers has been subject to a kind of cultural amplification is not of course to argue that they lacked power *vis-à-vis* their dependants […], not deny that some fathers abused that power" (6). However, there are, indeed, some first-hand accounts which appear to point into a different direction; Elizabeth Gaskell's diary features several passages which include descriptions of husband and wife parenting their young daughter hand-in-hand. Considering the fact that their child was quite young as well as a female, her husband's involvement appears remarkable to some extent. While making decisions, Gaskell always uses the pronoun "we" to indicate that they indeed decided together (cf. "My Diary", 65) or even mentions that "William and I agree in not caring for this" (ibid., 67). Moreover, Gaskell appears to be very glad that her daughters, especially her younger child, seem to have a very close emotional relationship with their father: "She [her daughter Meta] is very bright and […] affectionate; particularly to her Papa and Elizabeth [the nurse]; little, saucy girl she prefers them both to her Mama" (ibid., 66). There is only one occasion in which Gaskell admits being criticised by her husband concerning a parenting matter: "William says he fears I excite her [Marianne's] sensibilities too much; I hope not,

[166] See also Sadoff, D. *Monsters of Affection: Dickens, Eliot, and Brontë on Fatherhood*.

for I should dread it as much as he can do" (ibid., 68). Even though the matter in question does not sound particularly serious, it can still serve an example of the father, as head of the household, exercising his authority.

A paternal misuse of power was certainly part of reality, but it was not the entire reality: As Pedersen explains, the figure of the despot who was unjust towards his children and other members of the household also had its positive counterpart. There were fathers who supported their daughters' wish for education and "[s]ome daughters, it seems, came to feminism with their father's blessing" (99). Wealthy Victorian fathers could open the door to a more self-determined life for their daughters by providing them with more than just the standard education (cf. Pedersen, 108-109) and later even offering them their "patronage" (ibid, 109), for example in a career in writing. Yet, it was often for their father's sake that young women influenced by the early feminist movement still held on to many truly Victorian ideas, like the "ideal of 'selflessness'" (ibid., 110), thus accepting their father' authority (cf. ibid., 114).[167] Pedersen concedes that such liberal fathers were a minority in the Victorian era and could only open their daughters' way to more liberty because they belonged to a class that gave them the position and the money to do so (cf. 114). However, it should still be at least acknowledged that such open-minded fathers existed. Moreover, it should be noted that, as various

[167] Heather Williams, in her description of the life of Charlotte Brontë, presents her own opinion of this famous father-daughter dynamic: "I position Charlotte as a daughter tending to her father's needs while also, rather than instead of, actively pursuing a successful literary career and taking part in public intellectual discourses of the day" ("Unwed Daughters", 56). Williams argues that, while Charlotte Brontë's life, especially the later part when she alone takes care of her aging father, has often been presented as corresponding to the Victorian stereotype of the angel in the house (cf. 55), it did by no means exclusively adhere to this concept. Charlotte had received a thorough education that later enabled her to pursue her career, and even though she still adhered to a certain extent to the Victorian ideals of 'selflessness' and 'female sacrifice' by caring for her father (cf. Pedersen, 110 & Gorham, 79), she did not abandon her writing just for him. It has also to be noted that her career was fostered by her father's efforts in his daughters' education: There were many misleading and "[l]urid tales of Patrick […] [Brontë's] severity as a father, again promoted by Mrs Gaskell, unwisely directed by the vengeful tales of a nurse sacked from the Brontës' employ. However, more reliable sources paint a more appropriate picture of the Brontës' childhood; [sic] a picture in accord with the early fostering of lively minds and incipient genius. One well-known story in particular, told by Patrick himself in a letter to Gaskell, demonstrates not only the children's precocity, but also Patrick's enthusiastic involvement in their personal and intellectual development" (Sellars, 12). In this context, Charlotte's taking care of her father could also be seen as an act of gratitude for her father's engagement and interest in his daughters' future. Jane Sellars describes that Patrick, a single father whose wife had died rather early (cf. ibid.), foresaw which chances would be open to his daughters and that a career in teaching would probably be the most realistic solution (cf. 13). Becoming a teacher, however, requires a good intellectual basis which Patrick was determined to provide them with, even though the high cost of a good boarding school was not easily afforded (cf. ibid.).

autobiographies confirm, "fathers were marginally more likely than mothers to support their daughters' efforts to break out of conventional female roles" (ibid). Partially confirming this argument, Strange adds that fathers were more likely to discover and enjoy their own "nurturing" (99) skills while caring for daughters then they did in caring for boys (ibid.), perhaps because caring for boys or at least showing too much affection in a male-male relationship, even if it was between father and son, could still be seen as 'unmasculine' (cf. Tosh, 44). Advice literature, of course, did not touch too much on the topic of fatherly education of daughters, although some works warned the parents, especially the mothers, to be careful in selecting the kind of education a young girl received (cf. More, 56). Fathers encouraging any feminist ideals was definitely not what authors such as Mears, More or Beeton had in mind. Nevertheless, the relationship between father and daughter often remained special, even when the daughter had reached the stage of adulthood or was in the process of growing up (cf. Williams, "Unwed Daughters, 56).

As mentioned before, advice for mothers was much more popular and widespread than advice for fathers;[168] nevertheless, some texts that were at first sight addressed only to women included some sections which were meant to speak to men as well. The Victorian advice text *Cassell's Household Guide*, for example, also includes small excerpts that could serve as advice for the male sex (cf. 75) because they directly address the man's financial duty as breadwinner. Since most of the text's readership belonged to the middle class (cf. Åström, 114), the likelihood of finding "[financially] dependent famil[ies]" (*Cassell's*, 75) among the readership was comparatively high, and "the rising cost of marriage" (Tosh, 107) also had a "deterrent effect" (ibid.) upon many young men.[169] Therefore, the advice

[168] Broughton and Rogers explain that this is probably due to the shifting household dynamics from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century: Even though also during the eighteenth century, the designated place of women and mothers was principally, if not exclusively the private, domestic sphere, and the male field of activity was primarily the public, household manuals from the eighteenth century were, according to Broughton and Rogers, often addressed to the head of the household, the father, because it was their field of authority to pay the wages, as well as punish and reward dependent persons such as children and servants (or even the wife) (cf. 7). This arrangement changed during the Victorian age, when the absence of the father from home and all domestic matters (Strange, 4, see also chapter 4.2) became much more common.

[169] "[D]ependent famil[ies]" (*Cassell's*, 75) here means those families that do not live independently from their income but those in which the father has to take up work in order to afford having a family.

manual incorporated what today almost appears as an advertisement for life-insurance:

> No investment, in either a savings bank or a friendly society, will answer the same purpose – the essential peculiarity of a life policy being that the amount contracted for is paid at *death*, whenever that event shall happen […]. So that a young man with a fixed income derived from a profession or other source, need not be deterred from marriage on account of it being impossible for him to make due provision for his wife and family (ibid, original emphasis).

This promotion of life policies also includes several important aspects connected to Victorian fatherhood: The first and most obvious point is, again, the portrayal of the father as provider and breadwinner (Strange, 51). Since insecurity of the family's provision after the father's death could prevent a financially dependent man from even contemplating marriage and fatherhood, this aspect of family life is elevated into a role of central importance: Strange confirms that fear of "failure in fathering" (ibid. & cf. Gorham, 3), whether caused by unemployment or death, was a problem that also concerned the middle class and was by no means "exclusive to working-class men" (ibid.).[170] Cobbett's advice text seems to support this fact since he in various instances urges young men to be eager and steady at their place of employment and not to indulge in luxuries and extravagances, not only because of the moral impact but also because of the unnecessary expense (cf. 20-21). The virtues that he advises a young man to practise – sobriety, industriousness and knowledge (cf. ibid.) – are not only presented as serving the isolated individual but are meant to ensure that the young man will in time dutifully fulfil the task of a breadwinner.

"[T]he male world of employment" (Schneider, 35) and finance was so emphatically masculine that any male inadequacy in this world signified to a certain

[170] In fact, the promotion of marriage and the smoothing of financial barriers were not aimed at working-class families at all. (This argument is supported by the fact that the main target group of *Cassell's Household Guide* was the middle class.) Broughton and Rogers explain that, due to the loss of popularity that traditional family life experienced in the latter half of the nineteenth century, marriage needed to be promoted especially in these spheres (cf. 7). The working class, on the other hand, developed somewhat differently from the middle class: In the earlier parts of the nineteenth century, it was absolutely necessary that both the mother and the father worked for the upkeep of the family; the common lifestyle of a nuclear family according to the concept of the separate spheres was, therefore, quite impossible. According to Broughton and Rogers, this changed in the second half of the Victorian era, when it became normal for working-class families to consider the father at least the main earner (cf. 8): "At the very least, this [different development within different classes] should alert us to the possibility of multiple, even divergent histories of fatherhood in the period" (ibid.),

extent shame and defeat: The Victorian "emphasis on patriarchy" (Tosh, 5) did not tolerate failure or weaknesses in society's fathers – the father's themselves were imprinted on this role and as a consequence often felt humiliated if they could not fulfil it for whatever reasons (cf. Strange, 53-55). William Cobbett utters a similar statement in his advice manual, which was meant as a warning for young men:

> A man, oppressed with pecuniary cares and dangers, must be next to a miracle, if he have his mind in a state fit for intellectual labours; to say nothing of the temptations, arising from such distress, to abandon good principles, to suppress useful opinions and useful facts; and, in short, to become *a disgrace to his kindred, and an evil to his country,* instead of being an honour to the former and a blessing to the latter (54, emphasis added).

Cobbett goes so far as to state that in most middle-class circles where the risk of starvation is less real than in working-class families, the "*shame of poverty*" (57, original emphasis) is an even graver issue because, in order to prevent this shame from being attached to their family and their own persons, men risk their own health and moral integrity to avoid being called poor in front of society.[171] One such example would be, according to Cobbett, the necessity to have expensive wine at the dinner table, even if it is not needed. In comparatively emotional terms, Cobbett deplores not only the man but also the woman who depends on luxuries such as

> the carriage, the servants, the wine, (oh, that fatal wine!) the spirits, the decanters, the glasses, all the table apparatus, the dress, the horses, the dinners, the parties, all must be kept up; not so much because he or she who keeps or gives them, has any pleasure arising therefrom, as because not to keep and give them, would give rise to a suspicion of *the want of means* so to give and keep (58, original emphasis).

Not only did public opinion further such feelings, but legislature basically confirmed the righteousness of this point of view, especially in a working-class context.[172]

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[171] Even though Cobbett has quite strong opinions on the subject of the public perception of poverty, he does not necessarily share this view himself, partly because of his religious conviction: "There is no shame belonging to poverty, which frequently arises from the virtues of the impoverished parties. Not so frequently, indeed, as from vice, folly, and indiscretion; but still very frequently. And as the Scripture tells us, that we are not to 'despise the poor *because* he is poor'; so we ought not to honour the rich because he is rich" (59, original emphasis).

[172] The Poor Law Amendment Act, also called 'the New Poor Law', from 1834 laid down that in the case of a failure in the task of paternal provision, the father's authority was reduced drastically (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 12).

The advertisement for life-security in *Cassell's Household Guide* mentioned above is meant to be a relief for men, admittedly predominantly for men with a middle-class background, who feared suffering from just such anxieties of "failing" (cf. Strange, 55), having their authority and status reduced, legally as well as unofficially. By subscribing to a life insurance, the duty of preventing "their children's deprivation" (ibid., 56) could still be fulfilled in the case of the father's untimely death. Broughton and Rogers confirm the seriousness and the complex social impact of this problem: "If the ability to provide for a family could be construed as qualifying a man for citizenship, so failure to maintain his household could strip him of social status" (10). This point became increasingly important after the year 1834 and the passing of the 'Poor Law Amendment Act'.[173] In actual practice, the act determined that "a man who could not or would not provide for his family had failed the first test of manhood" (Broughton & Rogers, 11). In the wake of the Poor Law Amendment Act, many critical voices uttered the suspicion that the situation of poorer families might get worse after the passing of the act because of the heightened power of individual overseers. In the commissioners' report from 1834, which was mentioned above, some of these critical comments are included as well: According to the account, the central argument of the critics was the idea that, no matter what their father did, "the children must not suffer for it."[174] An unnamed person in a southern district even replied to a critical comment of an overseer (who probably was of the opinion that the given relief was too high): "The answer given by the magistrates, when a man's bad conduct is urged by the overseer against his relief, is, 'We cannot help that; his wife and family are not to suffer because the man has done wrong.'"[175] As understandable as these voices no doubt

[173]The act, as an Amendment to the previously existing Poor Law, specified that commissioners now had much more power to determine who was worthy of help and who was not; additionally, article 52 explains that the "Commissioners [are] to regulate the Relief to able-bodied Paupers and their Families out of the Workhouse: Relief contrary to their Regulations to be disallowed." Text taken from: Poor Law (Amendment) Act 1834 - full text (educationengland.uk). Accessed 3rd of February 2022.

[174] Text taken from: *Poor Law Commissioners' Report of 1834. Copy of the Report Made in 1834 by the Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty*. London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1905 [1834].

[175] See above.

are, we can still detect the overall assumption that, in most cases, the father has failed to provide the children with the security they deserved.[176]

The second point the security advertisement from *Cassell's Household Guide* touches on is marriage: Young men were expected to marry, and everything that was keeping them from taking this step was deemed evil and had to be removed. In Victorian society, "code[s] which affirm […] masculinity" (Tosh, 31) were specially valued, and marriage and fatherhood were obvious ways of affirming the male status; after all, the family and the household were the man's "ultimate location[s] of authority" (ibid., 36), where his manliness was only rarely challenged (cf. ibid.). Making marriage easier for young men was, therefore, also a good course to ensure the male hold over women and keep them in their place (cf. ibid., 30). Marriage was the only legal environment in which paternal authority could be fully realized, and this legal authority also extended to his wife: "The rights and duties of the father were considered synonymous and co-extensive with those of the husband, while the legal powerlessness of the mother was the collar of her lack of separate identity as a spouse" (Broughton & Rogers, 9).[177] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Infant Custody Act or 'Custody of Infants Act' for the first time restricted paternal authority to a certain extent and gave mothers, always provided they were seen as innocent in the cause of the separation of the spouses, the right to claim custody of their younger children.[178] In the wake of this legal development, many critical voices protested that the act "would undermine the institution of marriage by bringing disharmony into the home and dividing parental authority, so that filial esteem for both parents would be diminished" (ibid.). In other words, the critics thought the unquestioned authority of the father to be the decisive factor that kept a good marriage alive.

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[176] It was, however, quite common, especially in middle-class Victorian circles, that unmarried adult daughters would help their fathers in their need, thus affirming the model of submission and female sacrifice: "A loss of financial status was not the only situation in which the daughter could play a special role in the relationship to her father. She could, for example, be of special importance if he were ill" (41).

[177] At this point, Broughton and Rogers add that knowledge about the exact legal division of authority between the partners was not as widely spread as may have been assumed (cf. 9). The court cases before 1839 that featured a challenge to the legal rights of the father suggest that in many of the cases neither the lawyers nor their clients were aware of the full extent of the father's legal authority (cf. ibid.).

[178] For more information on the Infant Custody Act, see chapter 3.2.
1839: 2 & 3 Victoria c.54: Custody of Infants | The Statutes Project https://statutes.org.uk/site/the-statutes/nineteenth-century/1839-2-3-victoria-c-54-custody-of-infants/ Accessed 1.03.2023.

The promotion of marriage was also inherently connected to the presentation of dutiful British citizenship. Especially in mid-Victorian times, the picture of an ideal citizen of the empire, spread by all kinds of "[r]eformist rhetoric" (ibid., 3), included a fixed marital status as well as a subsequent good-sized family (cf. ibid.). It was a common assumption, primarily among middle-class moralists, that the state of a man's private life reflected the state of the country, and his attitude towards his family members mirrored his behaviour as a citizen. Consequently, if a man fulfilled his tasks as breadwinner and figure of authority dutifully, he would be more likely to also be a loyal and law-abiding subject of the British empire, harbouring no rebellious or dangerous thoughts, while a man of unstable income, unstable connections, and unmarried status might pose a danger (cf. ibid.). The mere presence of a healthy wife and well-fed children seemed to ensure that a man was trustworthy, loyal, and willing to fulfil his duties to his country. In this context, Broughton and Rogers mention the idea that the state of a man's life, being almost identical with the state of his family, was indeed often used for British political propaganda: "And in so far as the state could intervene in the life of the household by calling him to serve his queen and country, it had a duty, the rhetoric held, to recognize him as a full citizen" (ibid.). Accordingly, being a good father also meant acting in line with the government's wishes – thus, a strong ideological connection between fatherhood and "political discourse" (ibid.) was created.[179] But not only the fathers and their moral disposition were the target of political propaganda, the children were so as well: Marriage usually meant having children and thus, in the eyes of propagandistic rhetoric, new citizens who would in their turn support the social and political system if they dutifully followed in their father's footsteps.[180] Especially children growing up under the authority of a loyal British father were therefore thought of as one of the most secure signs of a stable social and political environment. Broughton and Rogers support the idea that an idealised presentation of British families with a 'safe' number of offspring and no substantial financial worries "were seen as fundamental to the precarious integrity of the nation as

[179] Broughton and Strange draw this connection primarily in the context of the recruitment of new soldiers in the aftermath of the Crimean War (1854-56), which "had exposed as contingent and insufficient the model of valour and self-sacrifice that underpinned Britain's sense of itself as a righteous military power, a model further shaken by the so-called Indian Mutiny of 1857" (4).

[180] In the late eighteenth century, William Buchan already established his ideas about the immense importance of children and the preservation of their lives for society (vi.).

family" (4). This explanation sheds light on the above-mentioned advertisement in *Cassell's Household Guide* which sought to enable young men to be able to marry as soon as possible without having to worry about their financial ability of fulfilling their duty:[181] Politics, society and the popular opinion all wanted men to marry and have children because it was seen as necessary to avoid the degeneration of society. A system populated by too many unmarried young men and too many instable families without dutiful fathers as figures of authority could, according to common belief, be the source of severe political and social problems, perhaps even leading to the collapse of the whole social system (cf. ibid., 7).

Connected to the potential failure of men to fulfil their reproductive role and the related fear of social collapse was the dread of feminization, which became even stronger in Victorian times (cf. Tosh, 22) and promoted a "sharper, more aggressive edge" (ibid.) to masculinity.[182] This emphasis can be regarded as a side effect of the "elusive[ness]" (Connell, 3) of gender; Connell explains, drawing on theories of Sigmund Freud, "masculine and feminine currents coexisted in everyone" (9), which causes the process of defining masculinity to become difficult since "adult masculinity had to be a complex, and in some ways precarious, construction" (ibid.). Broughton and Rogers suggest that an escalation of anxieties related to the idea of masculine feminisation was due to the shifting power dynamics within the home.[183] Changes in the work culture in the wake of industrialisation and the consequent removal of the father from the home as his primary field of activity gave the mother a strong position of authority within the domestic sphere – a position that in some cases might have been as strong as or even stronger than the authority of the father, who, at least officially, remained the head of the household (cf. ibid., 7). This loss of actual authority in a place that was deemed by right his to rule might have caused some fears of losing authority altogether:

> Forced into second place in the oversight of the household by the imperative economic activity outside it, their power gradually curtailed, fathers, it has been suggested, found themselves correspondingly short-changed in the

[182] Gorham confirms the idea that "[t]he Victorians frequently spoke of the way in which males were 'hardened' by their exposure to the rough and tumble of the outside world, but they also believed that, should a woman be so exposed, she too would be hardened. Thus, women were told that they must remain within the domestic sphere" (6).

[183] This development was already mentioned in the context of the transformation of the audience of advice literature, chapter 2.

> cultural market-place in favour of ideologies and discourses of motherhood (ibid.).

This development came gradually and slowly, and the shifting relations within the household might not have been a reality for all Victorian families, especially during the early years of the Victorian era (cf. ibid.). However, this cultural drift did indeed affect the overall trends of family formation and social formation in general. Some Victorian fathers, who were more perceptibly affected by this transition than maybe other men, might therefore have a logical basis for their anxieties about loss of authority and increasing feminisation from their privileged point of view.

"[F]ear of the feminine within" (Tosh, 22) might well draw a young man, suffering from the anxiety of being thought "degenerate and effeminate" (ibid.) into the supposedly safe haven of marriage where there was no suspicion about his manliness (cf. ibid., 44-45).[184] In the context of male vanity in matters of dress and decoration – a stereotypically feminine fault – William Cobbett writes that "that women, however personally vain they may be themselves, *despise personal vanity in men*" (20, original emphasis) and, in his role as paternal advisor, promotes masculine "industry, laborious study, frugality" (21). Despite Cobbett's admonitions, the anxiety connected to supposedly feminine ways of expression grew stronger as the century progressed. In this context, another approach to the male anxiety of feminisation is suggested by Broughton and Rogers: In order to counteract this fear, men were increasingly driven away from marriage and the female-dominated presence of the home towards more explicitly masculine activities which excluded any female influence (cf. 7). The consequences of this male aversion to entering the traditional 'safe haven' of domesticity were the spreading popularity of "prolonged bachelorhood and the freedoms afforded by the burgeoning homosocial worlds of city club-life and imperial culture" (ibid.). Even as early as 1829, Cobbett condemns club life as a danger for domestic masculinity:

> Drinking clubs, smoking clubs, singing clubs, clubs of odd-fellows, whist clubs, sotting clubs: these are inexcusable, they are censurable, they are at

[184] Nancy Armstrong confirms that new developments in Victorian culture concerning female knowledge and sexuality that were regarded as troubling by supporters of middle-class respectability strengthened the fear of feminisation that was, for instance, depicted in Victorian Gothic novels such as *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Dracula*: "When women take on this new form of power, men are feminized. No longer heads of household, men cannot ensure that cultural reproduction and biological reproduction are one and the same" ("Victorian Novel", 187-188). As Armstrong's statement shows, fatherhood was strongly affected by this cultural shift.

> once foolish and wicked, even in single men; what must they be, then, in *husbands*; and how are they to answer, not only to their wives, but to their children, for this profligate abandonment of their homes; this breach of their solemn vow made to the former, this evil example to the latter? (170, original emphasis)

The inherent undomestic attitude which is exhibited in men only frequenting all-male companionship in their free time is presented as a breach of loyalty and as a sign of cowardice.

Middle-class pro-family propaganda was, like the life-insurance advertisement in *Cassell's Household Guide*, intended to counteract the trend of bachelorhood and club-life and its consequent shift of ideals. Creating a family had to be made both financially possible and attractive in order to ensure the maintenance of middle-class values of domesticity and the traditional role allocation within the family. The manly ideal was propagated within society as a whole: "Victorian manliness was an elite cultural form of an often crudely didactic kind" (Tosh, 32). Broughton and Rogers argue in a similar way, stating "faced with the uncertainties of the competitive market-place and the anxieties and pessimisms engendered by the new sciences and secularism, Victorian fathers, by way of compensation, renewed their efforts to [ensure their authority with their family]" (7). Maurits confirms that in every class of society and in nearly all communities of almost every conviction and denomination "[k]eeping one's household in order" was regarded as "an important mark of manliness" (65) at the time; it was seen as the duty of a father to transmit these codes to his sons and "prepare […] [them] for a more competitive and demanding arena" (Tosh, 35) than their sisters would supposedly enter (cf. ibid.). Instead of being doted on, boys had to follow their fathers in the performance of "'man' tasks" (Strange, 99).[185]

The conservation of male "respectability" (Ruggles, 131) is another concern which is implicitly introduced in the advertisement of *Cassell's Household Guide* (cf. 34): Tosh explains that, especially among the group of men who had to work for their living, there was a "growing gulf" (64) between those who followed the

[185] Uneasiness about a growing feminization was also a topic where religion was concerned: Too much 'softening' of boys and young men by religious devotion, which kept them from practising other, more 'manly' activities, was also sometimes seen as dangerous (cf. Schneider, 45) and resulted in the publication of many sermons dedicated to the cause of "demonstrat[ing] religion also as a man's matter" (ibid.), ensuring that young men did not lose their 'respectability' in the course of publicly exhibiting their religious devotion.

rules of a conventional and more domestic lifestyle and those who did not do so. In consequence, there was a decisive clash between "'respectable' and 'rough'" (ibid.); security within marriage and fatherhood could also be an incentive to keep young men "respectable" (ibid.), and, within the lower and middle classes, regular work and the often praised virtue of 'industry' belonged to this concept of "respectability" (Ruggles, 131); it was therefore a point that contributed to the man's value and self-worth (cf. Strange, 55) and, in consequence, a central aspect of middle-class family life. Literature and art as well promoted the picture of the 'respectable' family man who was characterised by sobriety, financial security, independence, and a trustworthy and responsible behaviour (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 3). *Cassell's* guide stands for a similar attitude when it recommends women to respect their husband's repose because he "possibly [has] to encounter a hard day's work the following morning" (142). *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, for example, advises the housewife to keep her home agreeable and relaxing for her husband (cf. 21). The author also utters the subtle warning that, if these conditions are not met, the husband might turn his attentions elsewhere, disrupting the ideal of domesticity (cf. ibid.). Here, the wife would, in the author's opinion, be partly to blame for her husband's wrongdoing and thus deprive her children of a model father figure. Strange expresses a similar idea: "'Respectability' provided a framework for explaining and outlining the dynamic of domestic life" (125) by determining the way a father could spend his free time and reenforce the "togetherness" (ibid.) of the family as a whole. The privileged but separated status of the father, which sometimes made him an "exotic creature […]" (ibid., 87) within the home, could be the reason why children were, as Strange explains, more likely to feel "confusion over [their] father's character" (143). His public life tended to make the prototypical nineteenth-century father an "absent father" (ibid., 4), but this absence presumably made memories of children spending time with their fathers even more special (ibid., 143).

The absence of the father did not have to be a bad sign at all, provided he stayed 'respectable' in everything he did during his absence and was still fulfilling his duty. To put it more directly: The father's absence had to serve the purpose of family togetherness, and it had to be justified by the father fulfilling his duty as breadwinner, either directly through his work or through his social presence and position in public life if he were a gentleman of leisure. The only more honourable

justification was the even greater need of the country – the 'bigger' family whose need had to be put before that of the individual. In the service of the country, the "absent father" (ibid., 4) would not only keep his respectability but earn glory in the eyes of society. Broughton and Rogers corroborate that absence ultimately was one of the key elements of 'respectable' fatherhood: "The father must be absent enough to provide, to represent his family in public settings, to support his country's mission abroad, and to afford the mother her ascribed role as primary influence and educator" (4). If considered in more detail, the advertisement in *Cassell's Household Guide* promotes a way for the father-to-be to ensure not only the continuous fulfilment of his duty as provider, but to ensure that this duty continues to be fulfilled during his perpetual absence in death. Ideally, of course, presence and absence had to be balanced in order to perform the 'prefect picture' of a family. Participation in family life "and benefit from […] the domestic rituals, duties and pleasures […] [was] understood [to be] as formative of personal, civic – and civilian – virtue" (ibid.). When it came down to the essentials of 'respectable' fatherhood, however, absence coupled with fulfilling one's duty was seen as far more important than continuous presence for selfish reasons.

The opposite of this domestic respectability was "the world of drunkards and gamblers" (Schneider, 36); this lifestyle was incompatible with the idealised picture of "togetherness" (Strange, 125) because it separated the members of the family instead of furthering communion within the group:[186] Cobbett dedicates a substantial amount of his writings to the promotion of male respectability and the prevention of vices such as drink and gambling in all spheres. To his extreme disgust such 'gentlemanly' vices have become almost respectable in certain well-to-do circles because they constitute a sign of wealth and good living. Here, he admonishes, gambling, called "*speculation*" (22, original emphasis), is thought necessary for good conversation in society. According to Cobbett, this development should be considered highly dangerous, leading to a degeneration of the family, depriving them of money as well as moral backbone (cf. ibid.). In extreme cases,

[186] In the second volume of the popular series *The Mysteries of London* [1844-46] by William Reynolds the fatal influence of alcohol upon every member of the community is depicted in a very flowery way: "And where the grave-yard is heaped up with mouldering bones—and where disease and death prevail in all their most hideous shapes—and where misery is most keenly felt, and poverty is most pinching—and where the wails of hapless children ascend to heaven in vain appeal against the cruelty of inhuman parents—and where crime is most diabolical,—there are thy triumphs—there are thy victories!" (Reynolds, npag)

this behaviour could lead to the break-up of the family, a desolate and often impoverished wife and lonely children whose care society and the state had to pay for in the end, however inadequately (cf. Strange, 50).[187] In a similar vein, Cobbett comments on the vain and unsubstantial gratification that gambling provides as opposed to the genuine and lasting contentment of a man at home: "No gambler was ever yet a happy man, and very few gamblers have escaped being miserable" (34). Domestic togetherness and personal happiness are pictured as closely intertwined. The same criticism is uttered in the context of drinking and bad company in public houses where "tavern-haunters, the gay companions, […] herd together to do little but *talk*, and […] are so fond of talk that they go from home to get at it. The conversation amongst such persons has nothing of instruction in it, and is generally of a vicious tendency" (36, original emphasis).[188] The anti-domestic leaning implied in Cobbett's picture is also to be deplored in unmarried men because it leads their thoughts away from seeking respectability and domesticity at a later age.[189]

But not only personal domestic happiness was thought to be a frequent casualty of the vices of gambling and drinking. The abandonment of woman (whether bound by marriage or not) and child damaged the expected image of respectability and, even though it occurred quite frequently, was hushed up as much as possible by families who wanted their men to appear respectable in the eyes of society.[190] Cobbett, however, apparently regards it as his duty to acquaint his

[187] Broughton and Rogers add that the financial ruin of the father, followed most probably by his moral and physical deterioration, in most cases led the whole family straight to the workhouse "where families were generally separated into male, female and children's wards" (11), which meant dissolving the structural and emotional unity of the family. Many critics and members of the Anti-Poor Law association spoke out about this arrangement, calling it "unchristian and inhumane" (ibid.) as well as a "measure designed to criminalize the poor" (ibid.).

[188] Besides bad male company, the "*society of prostitutes*" (36, original emphasis) is also mentioned by Cobbett as only one step further from idleness and "*indecent talk*" (ibid.). In this opinion, these weaknesses are connected.

[189] According to Cobbett, parents have the duty to prevent their sons from falling into the trap unrespectability because "[f]ond mothers and fathers are but too apt to be over-lenient to such offenders; and, as long as youth lasts and fortune smiles, the punishment is deferred; but, it comes at last; it is sure to come; and the gay and dissolute youth is a dejected and miserable man. After the early part of a life spent in illicit indulgences, a man is *unworthy* of being the husband of a virtuous woman; and, if he have anything like justice in him, how is he to reprove, in his children, vices in which he himself so long indulged?" (36)

[190] In poor working-class circles, social appearance was less important than in the middle or upper classes, whereas financial problems were, of course, much more likely than in any other part of society; families relied more on the man's wages, whose shrinking from his responsibilities could even mean death for mother and child (cf. Strange, 50). The related problems of continued absence

advice-seeking readership with the knowledge that this abandonment of all care for wife and children has consequences which get progressively harder to conceal because the unrespectable behaviour of the husband could spread like a disease and contaminate the whole household (cf. 172). Cobbett asks, "[a]nd does the husband who thus abandons his wife and children imagine that she will not, in some degree at least, follow his example? If he do, he is very much deceived. If she imitate him even in drinking, he has no great reason to complain" (ibid.): The fall of the father, in consequence, increases the likelihood of the fall of the mother. It is interesting to note that, in this passage at least, the famous double standard that tended to judge male and female behaviour along different lines, is not as prominent. It appears as if here the man is not excused from moral transgressions that would be termed inexcusable in a woman. Of course, it is evident that Cobbett still adheres to the belief that within the structural hierarchies of the home the man was the head and the most important role model whose failure had to be judged all the more harshly because of the 'betrayal' of the standard of his superior position.[191] The process of

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and drunkenness connected with miserable living conditions turned these weaknesses into stereotypes connected with the working class (cf. Schneider, 36). The commissioner's report from 1834 seems to support this popular perception of 'lazy' and 'irresponsible' working-class fathers: "At Dent, in the same neighbourhood, 'relief to the able-bodied is afforded by payments of a weekly or monthly sum in the name of a pension, the amount of which is regulated according to the number of a man's family, after the rate of two shillings a head per week: poor people, especially those who have become pensioners, marry early, more frequently under twenty years of age than above; they are induced to this, *no doubt, from a reliance upon relief from the poor rate*. Instances have been numerous in which this had been known to be the case, and in a majority of cases relief is applied for on the birth of the *first* child: the most profligate and dissolute are amongst this class, and if they get a little extra pay at any time**,** *they spend it in drinking, leaving their families to be maintained by the township*" [emphasis added]. Text taken from: Part One, section one. *Poor Law Commissioners' Report of 1834. Copy of the Report Made in 1834 by the Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty*. London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1905 [1834].) In the report of overseer Isaac Rogers from Harlow in Essex it is mentioned explicitly in the context of a case that "[w]e [the parish board] have to maintain the family if the man is idle." Idleness was a fault that was usually, if not exclusively, mentioned in the context of alcoholism and sometimes even served as a synonym.

[191] In other instances, William Cobbett's double standard where male and female relationships are concerned is very clearly recognisable. One such sequence deals with the topic of marriage and re-marriage after the death of the first partner. Cobbett recognises the need for the man to re-marry because the children cannot grow up without a mother, but he does not acknowledge the need for the widow to look for another partner to help her rear her children (cf. 221). Cobbett's choice of words is highly subjective, emotional and in parts rather insulting, likening the remarriage of the widow to prostitution: "Where there are *children*, indeed, it is the duty of the husband to provide, in certain cases, against *step-fathers*, who are very prone not to be the most just and affectionate parents. It is an unhappy circumstance, when a dying father is compelled to have fears of this sort. There is seldom *an apology* to be offered for a mother that will hazard the happiness of her children by a second marriage. The *law* allows it, to be sure; but there is, as Prior says, 'something beyond the letter of the law.' I know what ticklish ground I am treading on here; but, though it is *as lawful*

concealing the husband and father's failure and betrayal in front of the eyes of the public is, according to Cobbett, despicable because "it is weak, and even criminally selfish, to sacrifice the rest of your family, in order to keep from the world the knowledge of that, which, if known, would, in your view of the matter, bring shame on yourself" (329). A father's public appearance should not be allowed to take precedence over domestic togetherness.[192]

The advancement of industrialisation and the related promotion of the virtue of 'industry', especially among the rising middle classes caused a re-thinking of the hitherto accepted social function of drinking and alcohol in upper as well as lower social circles: "Where once drink had been a tool used to pacify and manage workers [...], now it was an evil to be eradicated, a foe of orderly productive life" (Hyman, 453). The great majority of factory owners belonged to the middle classes and so the word that drinking was opposed to a respectable social life, according to the rules of Protestantism, spread (cf. ibid.). The "temperance movement" was indeed "socially and economically useful to its middle-class leaders" (ibid.), and its power was not in the least due to the support from the Church and moral writers, such as authors of advice literature. In many nineteenth-century texts published by 'child rescuers' the type of the 'drunken father' was used as well (cf. Hillel, 158);[193] even more common as a stereotype, but otherwise similar to the drunken and neglectful mother, the alcoholic father was a perfect example for the desolate state of the home – far removed from the idealised middle-class "image of a happy family" (ibid., 153). As in the case of the drunken mother, the father, degenerated by drink, and his cruel treatment of childhood innocence, is presented as the perfect reason for taking the child away from such an environment, even though the family was usually regarded as sacrosanct (cf. ibid., 158).[194] Cobbett pictures his own person as exemplary when he states that his own children "heard no talk from *fools*

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for a woman to take a second husband as for a man to take a second wife, the cases are different, and widely different, in the eye of morality and of reason; for, as adultery in the wife is a greater offence than adultery in the husband; as it is more gross, as it includes *prostitution*; so a second marriage in the woman is more gross than in the man, argues great deficiency in that *delicacy*, that *innate* modesty, which, after all, is the *great charm*, the charm of charms, in the female sex" (ibid., original emphasis).

[192] Again, Cobbett's double standard becomes apparent, which causes him to excuse the breaking-up of the family when the woman has committed an act of adultery and is from that moment on not fit to be a mother anymore (cf. 205), while the father is selfish if he gives up the duties of a father (cf. 329).

[193] For further information on the Child Rescuers association, see chapter 4.3.1) of this thesis.

[194] For further information on the problem of the 'drunken mother' see chapter 3.6.1.1 of this thesis.

or *drinkers*" (297, original emphasis), which could have compromised their innocence, at home. A father who fails to ensure his offspring's safety in this regard is, according to Cobbett, more a "beast" (30) than a man, which, again, supports the assumption that good fatherhood was thought to be the 'natural' state, whereas undomestic demeanour would be considered unnatural and dehumanising.

In public perception, the problem of domestic violence against women and children was linked to the fault of male drunkenness. Since the wife and the children were under complete subjection to the head of the household according to the law, the legal possibilities of protest were shockingly few (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 9); in order to change this situation, the law had to be changed, and, as in the case of the Infant Custody Act, many critical voices uttered concerns that a change of the law would weaken paternal authority in general and eventually lead to a mass break-up of marriages, altogether depriving the children of their home (cf. ibid.). While the acuteness of the problem of domestic violence was recognised even by critics, actual legal changes were only carried out hesitantly and with extreme discrimination between the social classes; as in the case of drunkenness, violence was mistakenly thought to be primarily a working-class problem: "While male legislators in Britain were reluctant to impede the paternal rights of their own class, they proved much readier to intervene in the family affairs of lower-class men" (ibid.).[195] However, in popular literature of the early and mid-Victorian period, particularly in realist and sensational fiction, the stereotype of the drunken father was a frequently used component that underlined a more or less subtle social and economic critique that was not always limited to the working class (cf. Levine, 87).[196]

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[195] The stereotype that associated drunkenness primarily with the lower classes and made it into a hereditary problem which was "bred in the bone" (Hyman, 453) also originates in industrialisation, and the middle-class factory owners' need for 'industrious' workers (cf. ibid.). This partly revealed a social paradox: Workers were needed in a sober state to work enough to satisfy their employers, but at the same time their class was believed to be unable to rid themselves entirely of the tendency to drink. This prejudice was needed to maintain the idea that "[c]lass was at one malleable and static" (Hyman, 454). The middle classes wanted to rise up in the social ranks, but the same development was denied to the lower classes.

[196] For further information see chapters 4.2 and 4.3. A very well-known example for a novel commenting on the problems of male violence and alcoholism in connection to children that are neglected and/or led astray by the bad influence of their often-intoxicated father, would be Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* [1848]. It is interesting to note that the drunken, abusive father depicted in this novel does not belong to the lower classes at all but lives according to upper-class standards. With the creation of the character of Jenny Wren, Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) also explores the topic of paternal alcoholism, this time with a less socially elevated background.

Advice literature occasionally addresses male misconduct including alcoholism and neglect, mistreatment, family abandonment as well as the refusal to acknowledge a child born out of wedlock, usually avoiding being 'indelicate' or explicit. As early as the late eighteenth century, Mears complains in emotional tones about the latter kinds of male misconduct, calling the deliberate denial of "the sincerity of thy [the insincere father's] vows" (29) the shameful deed of a "cruel monster" (ibid.). According to Mears, severe punishment, either in this or in the next world, surely follows because "it is the voice of nature that makes thee [the father] tremble at the ravings of a distracted mother, and the cries of infant blood!" (30) Such a father has neglected all of his duties and should, at least in Mears' opinion, be treated like an outcast. Naturally, this was not always the case, and the veil of respectability was often used to cover up faults, if not those of the unfortunate mother, at least those of the person who should be the head of the household. Schneider also explains that because "[t]hese characterizations bear aspects of the male counter world" (36) the bourgeoisie was very eager "to distance itself from [the respective parts of society]" (ibid.) by presenting themselves "as morally superior" (ibid.). Moral superiority in this context implied at least the appearance of a domestically blameless life (ibid). The figure of this inadequate father had to be replaced by a real father figure to restore the rightful order of the family – in such texts it was frequently the "benevolent founder of the [charitable] organization or his representatives" (ibid.) that took over this part.

Hannah More agrees with Mears' statements concerning male misconduct insofar as she asserts the idea that "libertine" (27) behaviour in men should at all times be deplored and not admired (cf. ibid.). In her text she speaks less about the fault of drunkenness than about male promiscuousness; she proclaims it to be a paradox and highly objectionable that exactly this frivolous male comportment is more admired than abhorred by society in general and by women as well (cf. 26-27):

> But how shall it be reconciled with the decisions of principle, that delicate women should receive with complacency the successful libertine, who has been detected by the wretched father or the injured husband in a criminal commerce, the discovery of which has too justly banished the unhappy partner of his crime from virtuous society? (ibid., 27)

Hannah More appears to be outraged by the fact that male adultery is generally not considered particularly shameful while female adultery is treated as a horrible crime. The author does not question that adultery should be considered a grave social and moral offense, especially when committed by women, but still calls into question the predominant concept of masculinity, especially of upper-class masculinity (cf. ibid.). True to her evangelical tendencies, she focuses on 'religious masculinity' and stresses that a true Christian man should follow the Christian doctrine especially in the pursuit of his male duties (cf. ibid.). 'Religious masculinity', according to More, is not regarded very highly in contemporary society, particularly where male characters of higher rank are concerned (cf. ibid.). In her opinion, society has become too superficial, and especially rich women tend to value status, appearance, fashionable attire and bravery or daringness higher than a moral mindset, even though they should absolutely prefer the latter also for the sake of their children's moral and physical wellbeing (cf. ibid.). The presence of a "popular libertine" (28), as she describes it, "sull[ies] the sanctity of virtue" (ibid.) and, even if there is no question of open adultery, the mere circumstance that such a man is allowed to roam freely should be considered highly dangerous (cf. ibid.).[197]

The libertine, consequently, represents everything that a respectable man, according to the evangelical bourgeoise ideal, should not be and thus proves to be a threat to the stability of society. William Cobbett appears to agree with More's ideas insofar as he in most cases of infidelity sees the man being primarily at fault and the woman, even if she should commit an act of infidelity, only secondarily. He reasons from the standpoint that the man disregards his superiority, his function of being the wiser part of the family and a role model (cf. 90). Moreover, Cobbett asserts "[i]t is his neglect, his flagrant disregard, his frosty indifference, his foul example" (ibid.) that often drive women away from the morally approved path. The author *of Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* appears to agree, emphatically reminding the male part of her readership to behave in a morally approved way in women's, especially in their wife's, company: "It is not the correct thing […] to seek amusements elsewhere [away from home] […] [and] use language which you

[197] John Gregory, the author of *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters,* shares a similar opinion about 'rakish' behaviour in men and is eager to make his daughters aware of a rake's unfitness for the role of husband and father: "A rake is always a suspicious husband, because he has only known the most worthless of your sex. He likewise entails the worst diseases on his wife and children, if he has the misfortune to have any" (91).

would not care for her to adopt. Remember that the purest snow cannot help being tarred if touched with pitch" (18-20). These warning statements contain some points that fit perfectly with the image of ideal fatherhood: First, this echoes the issue of the father's absence for amusements' sake, the abandonment of domestic togetherness as a danger for social structures (cf. Strange, 4 & Tosh, 129). Second, the use of bad language marks the man as the person in the family circle that is most likely to become morally tainted and, by using his male superiority and his paternal authority, this taint would very quickly influence the female part of the family which, though considered to be morally superior, is 'weaker' and more easily influenced.[198]

4.3 Parent and child in a spiritual and philosophical context

4.3.1 Religion in Britain during the long nineteenth century and its impact

During the long nineteenth century, religion had a great impact on a substantial part of everyday life and on social representation in Great Britain. Both family structures and social structures were supposed to interlace with some version of Christian morality. Gorham mentions that

> [r]eligious belief was a central feature of Victorian middle-class life. It was, moreover, an essential feature of family life. Middle-class Victorians attended services on Sunday, but just as important, both for maintaining religious belief and for strengthening family solidarity, were such rituals as family prayers and bible readings, customs that were observed in many middle-class households (18-19).

Hermann Ferdinand Uhden (1812-1888), whose work on the state of the contemporary Anglican church was translated into English in 1844, comments on this "co-operation" (43) between church and "religious domestic life" (ibid.):[199] According to his observations, the families in which religious education is held high are likely to produce new members of the clergy (cf. ibid.). Gorham elaborates on

[198] A perfect example for the fact that since the eighteenth century women were thought to be inherently morally superior to men, though in greater danger of losing or damaging this morality is John Gregory in his *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*: "There is a native dignity in ingenuous modesty to be expected in your sex, which is your natural protection from the familiarities of the men" (34).

[199] Hermann Ferdinand Uhden was a Lutheran theologist who was sent to England by the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm IV in 1841 to study and document religious life in England. I. u., "Uhden, Hermann Ferdinand" in: Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie 39 (1895), 143-145 [online version]; http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd128165251.html#abccontent. Accessed 18th of June 2026.

this idea by stating that religious education was a serious matter even in those families for which faith was more about the "outward form" (19) than deep-rooted spirituality, starting inside the family circle and later continuing in schools or by other instructors: "[R]eligious instruction began as soon as a child could talk. Children were taught the fundamental beliefs of Christianity both directly and indirectly. Even if it did not deal explicitly with religion, much of the literature designed expressly for children was suffused with it" (ibid.). The family structure was "generally […] bound up with religion" (Adams, 510), because nature was seen as God's creation, families and their structure were naturally his work, and his order within the family was consequently supposed to be "binding on everyone" (ibid.). With the rise of the nuclear family and middle-class ideology, especially in the Protestant tradition, came the conception of "[t]he Christian home" as "an idealized and isolated place" (Van Osselaer & Maurits, 436). Consequently, all practices of a good Christian family were supposed to be governed by the will of God and according to the rules of the scripture (cf. ibid., 511). Parental duties were essentially part of the picture of a good Christian person (cf. Gisborne, 377), because the family and each family member's fixed position within this structure were a point of special interest for all Christian denominations (cf. Maurits, 58) and the Anglican Church was no exception to this rule. Gorham notices a change from the early towards the late nineteenth century in the way religious topics were conveyed to children, from very explicit and direct instruction towards a more 'child-like', modified form of religious teaching, indirectly mirroring the trend of advancing secularisation (cf. 78).[200]

[200] "In the first half of the nineteenth century, it was considered perfectly acceptable to expose even very young children to pictures of the meaning of evil, the punishment of Hell and the dangers of dying in a state of sin. […] Later on in the century it was suggested that a gentler form of Christianity should be presented to very young children" (Gorham, 78). Some writers even warned against the dangers of forcing young children to read too much from the scriptures (cf. ibid.). The Bible was published in abbreviated and modified form, specifically directed at children, catering towards their smaller span of attention, which mirrored this trend An example for the gentler kind of Christian instruction would be Mrs Trimmer's *An Abridgement of Scripture History; Consisting of Lessons selected from the Old Testament for the use of Schools and Families*, of which several editions were published in London around 1830. The comparably harsher side of religious education is reflected, for example, in *A Series of Original Hymns, Illustrative of Passages from the Scriptures*, published in 1800 by the Scottish Sabbath School and tract Depository. Within the volume there are hymns that illustrate the graveness of sin and punishment: "But all in vain; — that guilty race/Was sunk beneath the wave/; Nor swiftest speed, nor loftiest place/ Avail'd from death to save" (12). Gorham notes that later advice texts, whether advice to parents or to adolescent girls, were much less explicitly religious in their recommendations about the practices of worship and devotion: "Instead,

In stricter Protestant families, the influence of religion on parents affected domestic family life in even more direct ways, starting with courtship, and continuing with family planning, the raising of children, their education and later the arrangement of suitable marriages for one's offspring.[201] In his notes on the Anglican church in the first half of the nineteenth century, Uhden notices a decided difference between the customs of founding a family in Catholic Ireland and in Protestant communities of Britain. According to him, Protestants put much more thought into the process and are more prudent in the execution: "[T]he Irish, even while they have the commonest necessities of life to procure, set about rearing a family; while the Englishman, even of the lower class, does not think of a wife until his worldly situation is somewhat secure, and consequently marries later in life" (219). Of course, Uhden, who was a Protestant himself, appears to be somewhat biased towards the supposedly more careful, moderate and 'sensible' approach towards marriage and childrearing which is here ascribed to the Protestants. Whether his observations are true or not cannot be proven. However, John Gregory, in *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, written during the mid-eighteenth century but re-published and re-read during the nineteenth century, also offers his daughters advice concerning their marriages, should he himself die too early to supervise their choices. These pieces of advice allow some insight into the way he, as a parent, perceived the necessity for his offspring to marry and the amount of consideration that should be put into the process. All in all, Gregory's manner appears to confirm Uhden's observations. Although it is true that the author considers marriage the right and proper path for his daughters to take in life, he does not urge them to do so too quickly, without careful thought and before they found a suitable candidate who matches the conditions he promotes in his text (cf. 79-81; cf. Kenlon, 95). Middle-class values such as respectability and industry are evidently prominent components of Gregory's argumentation. However, he considers a shared religious conviction another indispensable requirement for a happy domestic life (cf. 92). If these terms are not met, however, the author admits that he is "not enough of a

it was a pervasive and continuous part of the background of all other advice about how a girl should behave; so essential and so fundamental was it considered to be that it needed little elaboration" (111-112).

[201] The rules even started before the actual conception of the child: "[R]eligious and moral arguments against fertility control […] remained strong" (Gossage, 170), especially in rural regions, where traditions tended to linger longer than anywhere else (ibid.). But fertility control was only one aspect of life that was regulated and ordered by religious rules and arguments.

patriot to wish you to marry, for the good of the public: I wish you to marry for no other reason but to make yourself happy" (81). If his daughters are unable to find a suitable partner, Gregory is certain that he does not wish his children to "ever relinquish the ease and independence of a single life to become the slaves of a fool, or a tyrant's caprice" (82). Even though this opinion sounds surprisingly liberal and rather supportive of women and their choices, one has to bear in mind that during the eighteenth century, men who acted according to the codes of 'sensibility' were, especially among the middle classes, regarded as model figures (cf. Wagner, "Men of Sensibility," 171).[202] Gregory's advice is entirely in accordance with this trend, just as Hannah More's views on the importance of 'religious masculinity' within society appear to be situated in his tradition (cf. More, 27).[203] Moreover, as Kenlon asserts, the eighteenth century saw "the emergence of the companionate marriage" (89), which became highly popular.

Even though there seemed to be a widely accepted consensus regarding Christian morality in family life and child-rearing as well as other everyday matters, the religious landscape of Great Britain during the long nineteenth century was anything but homogenous. Since the Reformation, Protestantism had been the dominant Christian denomination, which, however, was far from being one united group adhering to the same interpretation of scripture and practising the same rituals. Ever since the separation from Catholicism in the sixteenth century and after the English Civil War and Interregnum in the 1640s and 50s, a kind of "religious open market […] emerged" (Bingham, 622).[204] In the decades and centuries following these times, the religious landscape of Great Britain remained highly diverse and, in part, rather conflict-ridden. Instead of one unanimous, allied Christian Church, many Christian subgroups segregated from the official Church of

[202] González Mínguez explains the origins of the cult of sensibility: "Sensibility was an eighteenth-century movement that stressed the importance of emotions and feelings in human relationships. […] From the 1740s onward, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau and others argued that humans possessed an innate moral sensibility which manifested itself through emotions in feelings of sympathy and benevolence for others. […] The culture of sensibility was connected to the rise of the middle classes in the eighteenth century and their concern with the reformation of manners" (29-30).

[203] For more information on Hannah More's idea of 'religious masculinity', see chapter 3.6.2.

[204] Mathew C. Bingham explains in his article "Radical Religion and Laudian Rites: Baptists and the Imposition of Hands in Revolutionary England" that during this time of religious unrest "questions of provenance have been notoriously tricky: from where, exactly, did all of these new theological wares originate? Many scholars have identified puritanism as their principal source. On this reading, the new theological notions advanced by radical religious groups during the period are regarded, in large part, as natural extensions of impulses native to puritanism more generally" (ibid.).

England, sometimes motivated only by small and seemingly negligible differences.[205] Despite the diversity of religious life in nineteenth-century Britain (of course only regarding Protestants) (cf. Uhden, 181), the Church of England was uncontestably the dominant religious community, which, during the first half of the nineteenth century, is hardly ever questioned in its authority over the other sub-groups, as Uhden notes: "[S]carcely a single voice is found to demand a congregational constitution; no endeavours are made for representation in the dispatch of business; nor is a wish expressed for alteration in the mode of appointing the clergymen" (ibid.).

The Anglican Church, of course, was the church of the state, with the monarch as its official head and the archbishop of Canterbury as its spiritual leader, using the Book of Common Prayer as spiritual guidance (cf. Uhden, 175).[206] Prominent Protestant subgroups apart from the Church of England were "[g]roups like Baptists, Quakers, antinomians, and others [which] are frequently characterized as radical puritans—that is, puritans who have adopted positions that are extreme and outside the ordinary but who both assume and extend the basic logic of puritanism itself" (Bingham, 622).[207] Uhden comments on the influence of

[205] During the nineteenth century, Uhden mentions that differences and controversies that originated in the Reformation, in his times about 300 years in the past, were still shaping the spiritual landscape of Great Britain as well as influencing British politics (cf. 171): "A cursory glance at the constitution of England, at her history during the last 300 years, and at the greater part of the political questions, proves that the bias of political relations has been much influenced by religion and the church. The same must be said of social life in England in the present day. This, beyond question, may be traced as far back as the Reformation; and is exemplified by the minute ramifications of society as well as the English character in its collective sense. The predominating national trait is that admixture of zeal and judgment, visible in their habits and tone of thought. But among the members of the Episcopal church, there is clearly a schism even in this. Much that we have already said upon the Liturgy and constitution, as well the attachment of the laity to theses, will apply here" (170-171).

[206] According to Uhden, *The Book of Common Prayer* as well as the liturgy of the Anglican Church were not 'Protestant' enough for many stricter communities (cf. 175). They had been "abolished" (ibid. 182) during the Interregnum (1649-1660) and reinstated in the Restoration period (cf. ibid.).

[207] But, of course, not only Puritanism and the Anglican Church shaped the religious map of nineteenth-century Britain. Other denominations included Calvinism, Methodism, the Baptist and the Lutheran and Reformed Church. There were many kinds of spiritual differences and disagreements between these sub-communities. One form of dissenting was to disagree on the practices of baptism. As Uhden explains in his notes on the Anglican church written in the 1840s, "[t]here [were] three forms of Baptism – public baptism of infants, the same in private and baptism of adults. We will just call our attention to the first, which gave offence to many in former days, and also to those with which the Puseyite doctrines agree" (116). According to the author, what especially displeased many stricter Protestant communities, as for example earlier the Puritans, about the customs and rites of baptism were the remnants of Catholic worship, for instance the sign of the Cross or the practice of kneeling (ibid. 117). Therefore, as Uhden notes, "[t]he Thirtieth Canon also propounds that the sign of the cross is not an essential portion of baptism, and alleges that the recipient has been previously admitted to fellowship in the church; consequently this usage is purified in the Church of England from all papistical error and superstition" (ibid.).

Puritanism in early-mid nineteenth century as follows: "The influence of puritanism [sic] upon life and manners [not upon the liturgy] is also of the greatest moment. It is true that this has not touched the institutions of the church; but the clergy, as private persons, have been greatly affected by it" (171). Uhden opines that much of the religious friction in Britain to his day indeed originates in the antagonism between the Puritans and the Episcopal church, again dating back to England during the Reformation (cf. ibid.). According to the author, the Puritans' aim was, to "oppose a stern and impenetrable demeanour to the demoralizing influences which had crept upon the English people under the Stuart dynasty" (ibid. 171-172). Many traces of these strong puritanic rules and norms had, in Uhden's opinion, still been retained in everyday life in England and Scotland during his time (cf. ibid 172-173).[208]

The followers of Evangelicalism, although it was commonly not regarded as a dissenting group in the narrow sense, disapproved of the established religious discipline of their mother Church; this religious movement emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century as a reaction to the practices of the Anglican Church, which was perceived by many as not strict enough or as having become slack in the course of time. Mandal describes this development in the following terms:

> The good-natured rationalism that characterized the eighteenth-century Church of England was perceived as a failed, if not downright bankrupt, ethical system, particularly by an emerging breed of evangelical Anglicans, who called for Christians to recognize the fallen nature of humanity and seek salvation through grace. At the forefront of this mood lay 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 (5).

The purely "'nominal' Christianity" (ibid.) of the majority of society, which Mandal mentions above, was indeed an issue that was only too real during the century, causing a gap between Christian expectations and ideals on one side and reality on the other. Evangelical protestants strongly promoted such virtues as "thrift, order, punctuality" (Gorham, 3), which fitted perfectly into the stereotypical Victorian

[208] Uhden provides the example of the strict observance of the Sabbath in Scotland, where "travelling on Sunday is not permitted; conveyance even by railway is rare. On the Edinburgh and Glasgow line trains run before morning and after evening services. Even this is deplored by many as a desecration of the Sabbath." (173) The special prominence of the Sabbath in British everyday life is, according to Uhden, dating back to Cromwell's time and remained one of the most important features of religious life, "its extension not being confined either merely to that part of the community which had proved itself so consistently opponent to Episcopacy and Monarchy" (ibid. 175).

middle-class setting and its aura of "energy and uprightness" (ibid.). Due to the fact that most fictional literary texts of the nineteenth century which I will discuss in this thesis had a clear Anglican, or Evangelical Anglican, bias i.e., featuring almost exclusively characters that belonged to the Church of England, I chose to focus my discussion on this denomination, which since the reformation had come to form an essential part of the common perception of 'Britishness'. Moreover, a detailed study of the complexity of the various religious Christian convictions and subgroups that existed in Great Britain during the long nineteenth century and of their often quite complicated relationship to each other is beyond the scope of the present work.[209]

Even though the vast majority of the population of Great Britain in the nineteenth century were Christians – at least on paper – and Christian values and norms officially still dominated social life, the Victorian age, and thus a large part of the long nineteenth century, was, as Charles LaPorte describes it, characterised by an atmosphere of secularisation and spiritual insecurity: "The Victorian era occupies a conspicuous place in any 'triumphalist history' as the age of Darwin, the age of steam, the age of the first self-identified secularists, and so forth" (277). Gorham collaborates this statement, saying that while the lifestyle of middle-class Victorian Britain was still dominated by Christianity, it was only a matter of "outward form" for some and not "the centre of their lives" (19) it was for others.[210] The spiritual insecurity brought about by technological inventions and new ways of thinking could, according to research, have caused the decline in the adherence to Anglican practices and an increase of believers in non-conformist forms of worship (cf. Arnstein et al., 150). This trend, which shaped roughly the last third of the Victorian period, was called the Evangelical revival (cf. Mandal, 5), which also left its imprint in Victorian art (cf. Arnstein et al. 164).[211] The Evangelical revival was also linked to the cult of domesticity, arising as an answer to the secularised

[209] Elizabeth Gaskell, for instance, was Unitarian which shall be briefly thematised in this chapter, because one of her texts, her diary, is relevant for this study.

[210] Daughters growing up in the late Victorian Era, in the wake of the early feminist movement, often found it difficult to conform to their parents' faith (cf. Pedersen, 110). Instead, wealthy young women with feminist tendencies often turned to "public service" (ibid.), since, like religion, it incorporated "the Victorian ideals of 'selflessness'" (ibid.) while also providing them with public work and an active role in life (ibid.).

[211] Gorham adds that Evangelicals could come from different denominations of Protestantism; they did not necessarily belong to one of the dissenting groups but could also be Church of England (cf. 19). She mentions that the "social distinctions" (ibid.) that separated Anglicans from Dissenters did not appear to matter as much to the religiously motivated Evangelicals as the fundamental differences between the "outward observers […] and those who were deeply devout" (ibid.).

harshness of the "world of commerce" (Gorham, 4) which increased its influence during the industrial boom (cf. ibid.):

> By locating Christian values in the home, and capitalist values in the public world of commerce, the Victorians were able to achieve an efficient moral balance. The home became a shelter for religious values in the widest context including the values associated with personal relationships; the world of commerce could thereby be absolved from the necessity of acting on Christian principles. Moreover, its moral barrenness became bearable because the idealisation of the home meant that, at least in theory, some refuge from the harsh public world was possible (ibid.).

This materialist, unspiritual world view created by new inventions and the consequent insecurities concerning faith was nevertheless visible in contemporary statistics: According to Arnstein et al., the nineteenth-century assessors of the religious census saw that "just about half of England's worshippers attended the services of one of the Nonconformist denominations rather than those of the established Church" (ibid.). But this fact was not the only one that hinted at a less pervasive influence of the Anglican church on the population; the religious census also corroborated the trend towards secularisation.[212] To Arnstein at al. this development reveals that even though numbers might still look high, especially from today's perspective, expectations of "middle-class Victorians" (151) were certainly disappointed (cf. ibid.).[213]

[212] The Religious Census caused a shock of another kind as well: the discovery that in England and Wales, with a population of almost 18 million people, only 11 million church or chapel visits occurred on the Sunday that was surveyed. Inasmuch as tabulators believed that a good many of these people had attended more than once, they came up with an estimate of 7,261,000 individuals who had attended religious services one or more times that day (Arnstein et al., 151).

[213] As Arnstein et al. mention, historians of the Victorian era are not entirely in agreement about the actual state of piety in England during this period (cf. ibid.). It is true that the so-called "Evangelical revival" was brought about by an increase in supporters of non-conformist groups such as "Methodists and evangelical Anglicans" (ibid. 151-152); however, the task of evaluating the real numbers of churchgoers brought with it two main difficulties according to Arnstein et al. One would be the fact that "the population grew more rapidly during the first half of the nineteenth century than at any time in British history; thus an absolute growth in the number of denominational adherends or attendants at services could go hand-in-hand with a gradual decline in per capita participation" (ibid., 151). The second conundrum that must be faced is the fact that the availability as well as the accuracy of data from eighteenth-century records is "far less reliable than [the records] for the nineteenth century" (ibid.). This circumstance makes it more difficult to compare the two periods and discover an ongoing trend, even though this contextual information would be crucial for a reliable estimation of the state of religion in the nineteenth century. In order to locate the origin of the structural movements and the spiritual influences of the Victorian age, especially the late eighteenth century with its political conflicts and philosophical innovations was responsible (cf. Collins, 109).

Honest Christianity remained a rather elusive concept that was not always practiced even among the regular attendants of religious services from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries; quite often the opposite was the case. Though misunderstanding Christian teachings was a problem as well, hypocrisy still remains probably one of the most notorious attributes associated with nineteenth-century (especially Victorian) Christianity. Many satirical works, including cartoons as well as literary texts from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries took up this idea of the usually less than perfect representatives of the Church and ridiculed ecclesiastical problems, for example Jane Austen, to name just one of them (cf. Cox, "Satirical", npag.).[214]

Even though, to some extent, the system appeared to favour materialistic thinking among its representatives and potentially lessened the interest in seriously incorporating Christian values such as compassion and generosity into their lives, the church was, despite various criticisms and deficiencies, still a major part of society and an element that was regarded as crucial to the affirmation of the social balance. After the Napoleonic wars, stability and social security were, especially among the wealthier classes, regarded as more important than ever. Irene Collins describes the situation in the following words:

> The date was 1816. Britain had emerged victorious from the long wars against France, but the memory of events in that country over the past 25 to 30 years had left among propertied and peace-loving people a widespread feeling that respect for the church was vital to the maintenance of social order. The

[214] Referencing some of the well-known author's most famous works, Brenda Cox explains further that "Jane Austen humorously satirized many aspects of English life, including the church and clergy. Austen's novels all include clergymen, ranging from the conscientious heroes Henry Tilney, Edward Ferrars, and Edmund Bertram to self-centred Mr Collins, socially ambitious Mr Elton, and gluttonous Dr. Grant. Satirical cartoons of the time, like Austen's portrayals of Collins, Elton, and Grant, illustrate popular perceptions of the clergy and many of the issues facing Austen's Church of England" ("Satirical", 33). Saxton confirms that "[c]onduct books and satires often […] lampoon social dependants and their servile but self-serving attendance on the powerful and wealthy as, ironically, a usurpation of power" (59). It can be noted as a common characteristic of the more satirical novels of manners that they, besides their comic or ridiculous elements and besides their apparently more trifling content, focussing less on dramatic events than more on common social interactions, "carr[y] a moral weight" (Groves, npag.) which belies their light-hearted or even superficial first impression. Groves opines that Jane Austen's novels, for example, are prime examples of the introduction of striking elements of social satire into very brief scenes with apparently minimal effort: it is a fact that politics or more serious social and economic problems are rarely discussed in Austen's texts; however, the small references that the reader can discover, for example in *Persuasion*, "shock us into remembering the less privileged world existing outside the novel" (npag.).

> outbreak of the French Revolution, it was believed, had been largely due to writers such as Voltaire undermining respect for the church (109).[215]

Collins adds that, especially in rural areas in which the population density was lower than in the urban regions, clergymen were a prominent part of the social life in their circles, which were comparatively small and intimate (cf. 110). Their social standing in the community was regarded as important for the upkeep of the order of their local circle since the reputation and the presence of the church in general was seen as important for the welfare of society, preventing revolution and chaos. It is therefore quite logical that the clergymen's presence in the matters and activities of everyday life, even if they were of a purely secular nature, was part of social intercourse: "They were in great demand at card parties, dinner parties and dances, particularly during the war. They were a varied lot of people, providing an unending source of interest for a novelist" (ibid.), which is mirrored, for example by the Reverend Millward's social presence in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë. However, exactly this common clerical presence in non-spiritual entertainment also caused a lot of criticism and gave rise to many stereotypes, some of which had their roots in the truth (cf. Cox, "Satirical", npag.).

Being a member of a recognized social group, such as the Church of England, facilitated baptism as well as burial and all matters in between; childbearing and the process and manner of raising infants were matters which had always been closely connected with religious discourse. A good example for this would probably be the close connection of the profession of the midwife and the Church: Since the Middle Ages, midwives in Britain had to be licensed by the local bishop in order to be officially allowed to practise midwifery (cf. Hobby "Gender, Science", 148). And even though this order was not always followed, and many midwives practised their calling without this license (cf. ibid.), the simple existence of this rule shows that

[215] Collins provides this information in the context of a discussion of Jane Austen's works, which were often seen as rather critical towards the Church of England due to her sometimes quite censorious portrayal of the clergy (cf. 109). Even though Collins admits that Austen's depiction of the members of the church was not always flattering, she proclaims that Jane Austen "had no wish at all to undermine people's respect for the church or their faith in the doctrines it preached. She was a loyal member of the Church of England, attending its services Sunday by Sunday, defending its Prayer Book from criticism and using its approved publications regularly in her private devotions.' Her own faith was to be strong enough to support her all too soon through a distressing illness towards an early death. Nor did she share the opinion that England was on the verge of revolution. In spite of her affection for the Stuarts, and in spite of her father's obligation to hold services annually on January 30th in fearful remembrance of Charles I's beheading, she regarded revolution as a phenomenon peculiar to the French, whom she despised (Letters, No' 145' 321)" (cf. 109-110).

the Church (the Catholic Church and later the Church of England as well) wished to have their say in matters of childbirth and delivery. This was due to several reasons: As already mentioned in chapter 2.2.1, midwives had to be able to perform emergency baptism, "and the accompanying of new mothers when they went to be churched" (ibid.). Because "[t]he midwife's job […] combined the physical and spiritual care of both mother and newborn child" (ibid.), it is not completely surprising that the church wanted to control the form of this 'spiritual care' and avoid any moral missteps of the midwife (cf. ibid.). Many midwives' manuals, therefore, have a moral, if not overtly religious undertone and include the message that "a midwife [should] be God-fearing as well as experienced" (ibid.).[216]

Children being delivered by people adhering to the church's doctrine and raised by parents who were steadfast in the same belief was an important issue according to the domestic ideals of the long nineteenth century. The concept of 'domesticity' plays a key role in this context, since domestic happiness was thought to be one of the most important goals a good Christian person could achieve in this world (cf. Schneider, 35). Several advice texts reflect the religious background of domesticity even though the bulk of the text may not deal with religious topics, at least not explicitly. According to Gorham, this approach was rather typical of Victorian child-care advice: "The prevailing tone of the advice literature simply assumes that religious sanctions ought to be introduced in instilling moral behaviour in all matters" (78). *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* can serve as an example: Though the number of chapters dedicated to recipes is providing a less spiritual picture of the guide's overall content, the introduction to the first chapter on the mistress's duties sets this assumption into proportion.[217] It starts with a Bible verse, describing the ideal housewife who "looketh well to the ways of her household; and eatheth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her" (Proverbs, xxxi. 25–28, qdt. in Beeton, 7). This quote already provides the background and the origin of the ideal

[216] In the seventeenth century, "non-theocentric ways of understanding human existence were appearing" (Hobby "Gender, Science", 148). However, advice texts written by midwives did not completely move away from a religious approach to the topic, even though they also included new medical discoveries (cf. ibid.).

[217] Gorham notices a trend in advice literature from the late eighteenth to the entire nineteenth century: The more the century moved on, the less spiritual and explicitly focussed on religious subjects the texts became (cf. 66). "By the end of the century, child-care advice, even if it emanated from evangelical sources, tended to be secular in tone, and had come to be more concerned with matters of health and with a child's physical environment than earlier in the century" (ibid.).

which is promoted throughout the entire text. It presents the idea that the housewife who adheres to the advice brought forth in the volume will without doubt fulfil the wish of God, be honoured by her children, and loved and respected by her husband. Moreover, her own sense of self-worth will, according to the author's citation from the Bible, be greatly improved since "[s]trength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come" (ibid.). It is true that Beeton does not provide further comments on this religious introduction; rather, she lets it stand for itself at the opening of the section and, consequently, endows it with the functions of a general theme that is ever-present, if sometimes implicitly, in her advice. This impression is strengthened by the fact that towards the end of the first paragraph of the same chapter, Beeton uses a passage taken from the well-known eighteenth-century novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) by Oliver Goldsmith to illustrate the value of women:

> The modest virgin, the prudent wife, and the careful matron, are much more serviceable in life than petticoated philosophers, blustering heroines […]. […] She who makes her husband and her children happy, who reclaims the one from vice and trains up the other to virtue, is a much greater character (Goldsmith npag qdt in: Beeton, 7).

Of course, the use of the fictional text passage taken from a novel which had didactic as well as entertainment value also eases the transition from the heavily spiritual Bible verse to the less spiritual parts of the advice manual.

What was usually acknowledged by the majority of Christian parents, however, was the fact that failure to "instil […] in children the values of Christian goodness that nurture their moral and emotional nature" (Jarrar, 61) meant for the parents to be responsible for their offspring's later ruin or fall from faith and was consequently not to be condoned lightly. In his conduct book, *A Father's Legacy*, Gregory dedicates a very substantial chapter to the religious instruction of his offspring. Right at the start of the respective section, he attempts to clarify why this topic is of importance to him, especially since his intended audience is entirely female. He admits that "the duties of religion, strictly speaking, are equally binding on both sexes" (9); however, he elucidates his emphasis on the impact of religious instruction for girls especially with the proclamation that "certain differences in their natural character and education render some vices in your sex particularly odious" (ibid.). Gregory explains this statement with the hypothesis that women are

naturally superior to men in "delicacy" as well as "modesty" (ibid.; cf. Kenlon, 95) and that this superiority has to be preserved. In the author's opinion, men have fewer moral qualities that should be preserved and guarded and are, consequently, less endangered: "The natural hardness of our [men's] hearts, and strength of our passions, inflamed by the uncontrolled license we are too often indulged with in our youth, are apt to render our manners more dissolute, and make us less acceptable for the finer feelings of the heart" (Gregory, 9). This assumption is supported by Hannah More's idea that women are generally "in possession of more leisure and tranquillity for religious pursuits", because their domestic habits predispose them to spiritual practice whereas men are far more confronted with "temptations" (35).

Because women are, according to Gregory, from very early on more cultivated in those "finer feelings of the heart" (9) their understanding of religion and religious practices is also much more pronounced. For the author, this idea is discernible in several situations of life: Generally, it endows women with a distinct advantage in "the practice of those duties where the heart is chiefly concerned" (ibid. 10), referring to religious rituals as well as "feelings of devotion" (ibid.). In the choice of a husband and during married life religion is, in Gregory's manner of thinking, also extremely helpful since their own religious ideals should usually prevent them from making the wrong choice (cf. ibid., 92). Gregory elaborates on the idea that if his daughters are making their religious principles part of their criteria for the right partner, as he advises them to do, their lives will be safer and more congenial according to the principles of domestic togetherness and harmony which were promoted by most authors of advice literature and gained special importance during Victorian times (cf. Graham, 41).[218] A religious mindset will also, according to Gregory, make a woman more attractive (to the right kind of men), and the opposite is certainly the case should they openly reject religion: "Women are greatly deceived when they think they recommend themselves to our sex by their indifference about religion. Even those men who are themselves unbelievers dislike infidelity in you" (18). The reason for the preference of women with religious inclinations is the assumption that religious devotion would stress the feminine features of a woman's character which include, as Gregory puts it, not only "softness and sensibility of heart" (ibid.) but also humility and all maternal

[218] For more information on the domestic ideal, see chapter 3.3.

qualities. This idea is also alluded to in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant* when the libertine Arthur Huntingdon, a thoroughly bad and worldly husband, mentions that he values his wife's spirituality because it makes her feminine but thinks that she overestimates the importance of religion (cf. *ToWH*, 166).

Gregory also touches upon the idea of suffering as an inherent part of the life of a woman (cf. 92), a concept that is naturally reminiscent of the concepts of female sacrifice, already promulgated by other authors of conduct books such as Thomas Gisborne (cf. Gisborne, 17; Holmes & Nelson, 1).[219] Gregory expands on this idea by stating that trust in religion could greatly diminish the amount of suffering a woman naturally has to experience during her life: "There are many circumstances in your [women's] situation that particularly require the support of religion, to enable you to act in them with spirit and propriety. Your whole life is often a life of suffering" (10). The idea that a woman's life is inherently harder than a man's, at least in a spiritual sense, is explained as the consequence of the more restrictive movements of women within society, their lack of professional opportunities as well as the dictates of modesty which prevent them from "dissipat[ing] [them]selves in pleasure and riot, as men too often do, when under the pressure of misfortunes" (ibid.). For women, the only respectable way to vent feelings of frustration would be to transform them into spiritual zeal and let religion act as their "consolation" (ibid., 11). This idea of silent suffering, "unknown and unpitied" (ibid., 10), is, again, a key characteristic of the concept of female sacrifice according to which hardships, especially if endured for the good of others, in particular the future of their own children, would lead to spiritual compensation and perfection of character (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 1).

Another point in which the practices of religion would be greatly beneficial to his daughters is, according to Gregory, combatting those faults of character that he deems to be especially female: As much as other authors of advice literature (such as More, Gaskell and Mears), he condemns the fault of "vanity" (11). More as well as Gaskell mention this sin as a weakness that must be eroded because of the eternal damage it causes to the young being's soul (cf. More, 61; Gaskell, 69, Jarrar, 65). In Gregory's argumentation, vanity is most often to be found in women

[219] Gorham explains that, especially for girls, lessons in "self-abnegation" (79) were promoted from a very early age onwards in order to practise the "feminine role" (ibid.). In *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* from 1893, for example, the mistress of the house is advised to" surrender […] […] [her] own caprices" (M.C., 22-23) to preserve the necessary "harmony" (ibid.) within the home.

because of their "natural vivacity" (ibid.). This characteristic is presented as leading to weakness and gullibility, it "deceives you [women] under the appearance of innocent pleasure; but […], in reality, wastes your spirit, impairs your health, weakens the superior faculties of your minds, and often sullies your reputations" (ibid.). Religion, from Gregory's point of view, is the perfect shield for this kind of danger because it controls "this dissipation, and range for pleasure, enables you to draw more happiness" (ibid.).

Besides a tendency towards vanity, women were thought to be generally more governed by their emotions than men, who were supposed to be more reasonable; genuine emotional reactions to events were thought to be markers of true femininity (cf. Dahmer, 212). Since Gregory's earlier argumentation already established his opinion that female minds were better equipped to understand and practise religious devotion (cf. 9), his statement that "religion is rather a matter of sentiment than reasoning" (12) emphasises the gendered conception of religion which is present in his text. Along the same lines, Gregory advises his daughters to stick to the more emotional and intuitive practice of religion and avoid intellectual debates since "the important and interesting articles of faith are sufficiently plain" (ibid.). He strongly recommends that they should "never perplex themselves about such as you do not fully understand, but treat them with silent and becoming reverence" (ibid., 13).[220] Unnecessary "controversy" (ibid., 12), however, would only endanger their character (cf. ibid.). Gregory's warning of the "chaos" (ibid.) caused by religious controversy is not only intended to prevent his daughters from entering into the male sphere of public debate and discussion, which would make them appear 'unfeminine' and 'bold' in the eyes of the public and consequently tarnish their reputation. It is also a way to reaffirm their loyalty to Protestantism.[221]

[220] Dahmer explains that silence was very positively connotated, especially in female behaviour, provided it was not used to hide anything unbecoming: For one, it indicated humility, a characteristic that Martha Mears and Hannah More both valued, the latter particularly as a virtue that mothers should teach their children (cf. Mears, 83 & More, 8, 61). Secondly, humility could, as Dahmer discloses, indicate respectable and 'modest' behaviour: "Der Verzicht auf das Sprechen konnte mit sexueller Zurückhaltung oder auch mit dem Verzicht auf (verbale) Lügen gleichgesetzt werden" (412). ["Abstaining from speaking could be interpreted as sexual reserve or the refusal to be (verbally) untruthful" (Dahmer, 412).]

[221] Gregory educated his daughters according to the Anglican doctrine even though he himself belonged to a different denomination of Protestantism (cf. 19). He nevertheless chose to raise his daughters in the Anglican faith for two reasons: First, because by doing so he honoured his late wife's memory since she was an Anglican (cf. ibid.); second, because he considers "the differences between our churches of no real importance" (ibid.). However, such statements as "I [John Gregory]

The parent as an instructor who has his or her own struggles and shortcomings represents also a main theme in Elizabeth Gaskell's diary.[222] In her text, Gaskell describes her struggle through the earlier years of parenthood and ends every section of her text with an imploration of spiritual confirmation and guidance: "But oh Lord I pray thee to lead me right (if it be thy will) and to preserve in me the same strong feeling of my responsibility which I now feel" ("My Diary", 50). Gaskell also refers to parts from the scriptures and relates to them; on February the 7th 1836, probably a Sunday, she writes: "This morning we heard a sermon from the text 'And his mother kept all these sayings in her heart'. Oh! How very, very true it is – and I sometimes think I may find this little journal a great help in recalling the memory of my darling child, if we should lose her" (ibid. 58-59). Here, Gaskell evidently perceives her own situation in connection to Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, who will eventually witness her son's death. While her own daughter is still alive, she utters her fears that her child might die as well and is of the opinion that, as it did for St. Mary, recalling her child's behaviour and development might help her spiritually in accepting her fate. She thus experiences a closeness or spiritual unity and relatability with the saint which is brought about by the condition that they are both mothers.

The question of punishment also frequently turns up in Gaskell's descriptions of parenting. She is evidently very eager to spot the first little hints of misdemeanour and counteract it immediately to prevent her daughter from "catch[ing] up any false ideas" (ibid., 67). Nevertheless, she admits that she and her husband, however unwilling, have "been obliged occasionally to give a slight whipping" (ibid., 68). Even though Gaskell is certainly not a supporter of strong corporeal punishment, she still promotes its effectiveness for moral, educational purposes: "It [the whipping] has been done sorrowfully and gently, and has never failed in making her more obedient, without producing the *least* resentful feeling" (ibid.). It has to be noted, though, that at that time, this kind of corporeal punishment was bound to be considered very slight and full of consideration of the child's

wish you to go no further [sic] than the Scriptures for your religious opinions. Embrace those you find clearly revealed" (13) are evidently meant to lead Gregory's daughters away from practices that were frowned upon as "superstitious" and "popish" (117) by strict Protestants such as Uhden.

[222] Even though Gaskell never intended her diary to be published (cf. Wilson "Introduction", 11) it was not meant for her own use either but, dedicated to her first-born Marianne, it was intended to influence her and help her to cope with challenges similar to those her mother experienced (cf. Gaskell "My Diary", 50).

feelings (cf. Pollock, 269), because too much punishment might, in the parent's eyes, have the opposite effect it was intended to have and estrange parents and children (cf. Gaskell, "My Diary", 68.). Gaskell admits to her insecurities when confronted with the adequacy of her and her husband's actions:

> Meta [her second daughter] was asleep so we were unwilling to provoke the violent crying, which generally ensues when she [her first daughter, Marianne] is taken upstairs; so Wm [her husband, William] gave her a slap on her hand every time she refuses to say it, till at last she said it quite pat (ibid. 65).

Notwithstanding her admittance to making use of it effectively, Gaskell definitely prefers other methods to physical punishment, such as providing her child with the possibility of self-reflection and spiritual remorse:

> We have been puzzled for a punishment. The usual one, putting the little offender into a corner had no effect with her, as she made it into a game to 'I *do* into a corner and be a naughty little girl'; so the last we have tried is putting her into a high chair, from which she cannot get out, and leaving her there (always in the same room with one of us) till some sign of sorrow is shown. This with grave and sorrowful looks on our part has generally had the desired effect (ibid., 61).

Gaskell's attitude towards punishment corresponds to Gorham's description of the changing attitudes towards chastisement, especially physical penalties, throughout the century:

> Even in the early Victorian decades, the outlook that perceived the child as inherently sinful, and which advocated harsh punishment, was being challenged by one that perceived the child's character as naturally good or at least neutral. While these writers also believed that it was the mother's duty to correct the child's passionate tendencies, they suggested that the best way to achieve this goal was through gentleness and the use of reason (77).

When Marianne is a little older, Gaskell describes another method of punishment which she proclaims to be not too hard but still effective: "Our punishment for her is taking her and leaving her alone for five minutes or so, in a *light* room. We tell her the length of that time that she may not think we are influenced by caprice, or that she gains her point (of leaving the room) by crying" ("My Diary", 65). For Gaskell, a very important result of the punishment is the realisation of wrongdoing and its potential outcome as well as the ability to discern between good and evil: "She [Marianne] often talks about the consequences of her conduct. […] I think for so young a child she has a pretty correct idea as to whether actions are right or

wrong" (ibid.). But Gaskell also takes note of incidences in which she feels that her daughters' own, yet underdeveloped, sense of right and wrong does not suffice: "[S]ometimes I have been sorry to see Marianne, without any anger, or apparent bad feeling hurt little Meta, knowing that she hurts her. I think it must be from the love of power, but of course we try to check it. May God bless & preserve them both" (ibid. 69). The 'love of power' Gaskell mentions can well be put into the category of 'vanity' or sins resulting from vanity because both tendencies share the characteristic of egotism – 'putting yourself first'. More argues along similar lines, stating that potential tendencies towards vanity are inherently present in every weakness of character (cf. 61) and it would be an error not to instantly wipe out their roots (cf. 58) because that could lead to the young child's corruption in later years (cf. ibid.). Apparently, Gaskell shares comparable ideas since she immediately recognises the need to "check it" (69). It is important to note here that Gaskell and her husband did not belong to the Anglican Church but were Unitarians, a Christian subgroup who reject the notion of the Trinity as basis of their faith (cf. Wheeler, 26). As Wheeler explains, many of Gaskell's religious allusions in her writings are "shaped by her Unitarianism" (ibid.), which also included the idea "that God is merciful in nature" (ibid.). Because of their Unitarian beliefs, Gaskell as well as her husband opted for an education which was very personal and shaped by their own belief system. William Gaskell, for example, had experience in educating girls, giving "lessons to the Paterson and Winkworth sisters in his Manchester home" (Martin, 326).

Harsher views on children's discipline were often adopted by especially strict Protestant fractions such as the Calvinists, whose whole way of life was controlled by the fear of God's punishment (cf. Jarrar, 62). Child-rearing was, in accordance with the Calvinist view, "a battle of wills between the inherently sinful infant and the parent" (Mechling, 171). According to this way of thinking, severe correctional measures were deemed an "expression of love" (Jarrar, 62) rather than a manifestation of unkindness, and a lack of punishment would even mean indifference to the child's spiritual future and therefore be a sign for a lack of care (cf. ibid.). Broughton and Rogers confirm that "both before the law and within Judaeo-Christian rhetoric" (6), the father had been given the power, or rather the duty, to punish his offspring. Neglecting this task would not only deprive children

of love but also of a "necessary condition for the reform of the individual" (Jarrar, 64) and eventually cause them to lead a life of "selfishness, vanity and disobedience" (ibid., 65), which contradicts the Ten Commandments: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Exo. 20:12). This passage from the Bible speaks of obedience but also of selflessness because bestowing honour on someone else means taking oneself and one's own honour and pride back. It lay within the father's authority not only to enforce this spiritual law but also to interpret it. Naturally, together with this authority came the immense opportunity to "abuse that power" (Jarrar, 65); the individual interpretation of the famous flaw of vanity was indeed highly subjective as well and therefore lent itself to unjust punishment. Nevertheless, perhaps exactly because of that problem, vanity is one of the foremost issues that had to be addressed by Protestant moralists of almost every fraction and subgroup: The battle against this allegedly grave character deficiency already started with the moral education of the parents.

In her treatise, More declares that even extremely devout Protestants are often guilty of an inappropriate leaning towards vanity while most of the time being completely unaware of it (cf. 8). In her opinion, the flaw of vanity as the cause of evil is constantly underrated by society and downplayed as to be "reckoned among the light and venial errors of youth" (58) and not "as a dangerous enemy" (ibid.). Outwardly religious persons, even if they are well-meaning, are likely, according to More, to fall into its traps as well. She explains that vanity "not only mixes itself with all our faults but insinuates itself into all our virtues too; and will, if not checked effectually, rob our best actions of their reward" (61). The weakness of extremely devout persons, according to More, lies in the extremity of their religious devotion which they tend to show off publicly (cf. ibid., 8). She argues: "Even religious violence has human tempers of its own to indulge, and is gratifying itself when it would be thought to be 'working the righteousness of God'" (ibid.). Every excess in religious devotion should therefore be avoided by anyone who intends to practise true humility. Especially mothers, who are supposed to be the first person to teach morality to children, ought to watch their own conduct very carefully: The children might accept the "rebuke of a delicate woman, whose life adorns the doctrines which her conversation defends" (ibid.). In other words, one should not teach morality if one is not prepared to live by the same morals oneself. More

specially refers to female behaviour in this passage, because, due to their responsibilities as maternal figures and the amount of influence they can exert over men (cf. 1), they should adhere to an even higher standard of morality than men. Because of this talent to influence men as well as children, a good woman and true British lady should always use the opportunity "to excite, to encourage, and to cherish every tendency to serious religion. Some of those occasions which are daily presenting themselves to ladies, of contributing to the general good, are almost too minute to be pointed out" (ibid., 9).[223] More presents this task as almost monumental: In her opinion, women are able to save Christianity just by living a simple life and doing their duties as wives and mothers. By influencing people in a small way, in everyday life, women would be able to "preserve […] the ark of the Lord" (54).

Elizabeth Gaskell admits to being tempted to succumb to the faults of pride and vanity herself even in connection to her duty as a mother. She regards this as problematic since she is supposed to be a model figure to her yet inexperienced daughter (cf. "My Diary", 52); these faults, in her opinion, clash with her religious beliefs.[224] In the process of explaining her intention to properly discharge her motherly obligations, she mentions: "Still I sometimes fear there is too much pride in my own heart in attributing her [daughter's] goodness to the success of my plans, when in reality it is owing to her having hitherto had such good health" (ibid.). Gaskell appears to believe that attributing parenting success to herself would mean depriving a greater and higher source, God Himself, of His due credit. It is true that God, or religion, are not mentioned in the passage above, and, taken out of context, Gaskell might seem to be justly acknowledging medical realities and favourable

[223] One of the primary social evils that mostly affects the higher ranks of society is, according to More, "Ridicule [sic]" (14). Especially the witty dialogue of young society ladies that tend to speak in an intentionally witty way about representatives of the Church or even religion itself is deemed by More to be very harmful to the spiritual disposition particularly of young inexperienced men (cf. 15). More mentions this point in order to remind upper-class ladies how much influence they have on the positive or negative development of faith within society. She regrets that "[t]he ladies of ton have certain watchwords, which may be detected as indications of this spirit [the intention to ridicule religion]. The clergy are spoken of under the contemptuous appellation of The Parsons. Some ludicrous association is infallibly combined with every idea of religion" (ibid.). More also intends to underline her argument that female faith in the upper classes is in a very shocking state by supplying more reasons why she is about to censure the modern system of female education severely. If such deplorable circumstances reign among the upper classes, especially among the ladies, it is her opinion that something must have gone wrong in their religious education.

[224] When she was older, Marianne "was attracted to Roman Catholicism" (Wheeler, 30) which Gaskell deplored and which, according to her letters, troubled herself and her husband very much as she endeavoured to change Marianne's continued "uncertainty" (ibid.).

circumstances; however, taking Gaskell's whole text into consideration, any reader can easily discern the idea that Gaskell regards God to be the origin of her daughter's fate in whatever circumstances (cf. Wheeler, 26). Passages like these reveal her mindset quite clearly: "I am sometimes afraid of using expressions of gratitude to God, for fear I should get into the habit of using them, without sufficiently feeling them, but I think there is no danger when I say that I bless & thank my Father and hers, for not taking away the blessing he gave" ("My Diary", 53-54). In acknowledgement of her weaknesses, Gaskell frequently includes small prayers in her text, which sometimes seem almost like a confession. Within these sections she affirms God's superiority and applies to his help in becoming a better role model for her child:

> Lord thou knowest that the 'sin that doth so easily beset me' hath overtaken me once or twice […] – but thou knowest too how bitterly I have repented, and how earnestly I mean to try for the future. Help thou my weaknesses, Oh Lord, and bless my endeavours to conquer myself, and oh above all things may her presence be as holy to me, checking each angry word that might injure the precious soul which thou hast given to this little child (ibid., 60).

This passage certainly reveals Gaskell to be religious on a personal level, because she acknowledges special faults of her own, but also on a more conventional level (cf. Wheeler, 32). Using old-fashioned forms like 'thou' and 'knowest' she puts herself in the tradition of a conventional prayer to be found in any Victorian prayer book, which diminishes, to a certain extent, the individuality of her plea because of its strong adherence to societal customs.[225] Her frequent use of highly emotional

[225] In her article "Editorial Choices and Lived Religion: The Reverend Mr Patrick Brontë's Sunday School Hymn Book and Hymn Sheets for Haworth Children, 1827–1835", Alisa Clapp-Itnyre mentions the growing popularity of hymns and prayers for children in early Victorian England, which were frequently also used for educational purposes (cf. 312-313). She argues that "[i]n the world of hymns, Isaac Watts, famed hymn writer in his own right, wrote the first hymn book to explain difficult theological concepts in simpler language and poetry for children, in his 1715 *Divine and Moral Songs for Children*. Few imitators followed until Jane and Ann Taylor wrote *Hymns for Infant Minds* (1810), where they also used simpler language for children as young as the nursery age. This early in the century, however, most other hymn editors were only gradually realising the usefulness of children's hymn books, let alone hymns focused on children and children's needs" (ibid., 312). Patrick Brontë, reverend of Haworth and father of the Brontë sisters, wrote some hymns and poems himself, partially for the use of the Sunday school that was led by him (cf. ibid.). One example for the rhetoric employed by such religious hymns and poems is included below. It is part of the longer poem "Winter Night Meditations," included in Patrick Brontë's collection of cottage poems, in this case published in *The Works of Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë*, vol. viii, collected by Patrick Brontë himself: "Oh Thou, whose Power resistless fills/The bountless whole, avert those ills/We richly merit: purge away/the sins which on our vitals prey" (214). The poem "The Cottage Maid" in particular serves very explicit didactic purposes by portraying its protagonist as a saintly model figure for girls and arguing against the dangers of vanity: "With tears in her eyes she oft says/

and sentimental language, enhanced through the use of exclamations such as 'oh!' or 'Lord!,' has a similar effect. On the other hand, this style shows that there is more than one parallel between Gaskell and authors of regular advice literature. Martha Mears as well as Hannah More, for example, habitually use emotional, sentimental and spiritualised language in their writing, partly to speak to the reader on more than just a factual level and partly because sentimental fiction, which was highly popular in their time, had left its mark.[226] Emotional language continued to be coupled with religious and domestic texts, because these were thought to be primarily feminine genres (cf. Schneider, 45) and it is therefore hardly to be wondered at that Gaskell makes use of it as well.

Gaskell evidently recognises her tendencies towards pride and vanity in the context of her parenting methods; however, when it comes to outer appearance and beauty, Gaskell's opinions seem to differ to some extent from those of authors such as More and Mears. When Marianne's appearance changes for the better after a long and tedious illness, she declares herself quite pleased: "[A]nd certainly with health, beauty has come; and I confess I think beauty is a desirable thing. True like most other gifts it has its temptations, but still it is a high gift in the influence it irresistibly gives its possessor over others – an influence which may be used for such noble purposes" ("My Diary", 59). Gaskell does not proceed to provide examples of these 'noble purposes' since the passage ends here.[227] Many authors of educational moralising texts, such as More, might consider this step towards acknowledging the desirability of bodily and facial beauty dangerous since the mother could provide her daughter with a bad example, teaching her to put too much thought in her own appearance, which would eventually lead to superficiality and the desire to control and manipulate others by using beauty as a tool (cf. More xv).

'Away with your dances and plays! /The ills that perplex/The half of our sex/Are owing to you, Satan's engines'/ Released from her daily employment,/Intent upon solid enjoyment,/Her time she won't idle,/But reads in her Bible,/And books that divinely enlighten" (230-231).

[226] Sentimental fiction often directly mirrored the contemporary social codes and norms to make the readership identify with the writers and their characters (cf. Ellington, 219), provide them with "moral edification" (ibid.) and sometimes even reflect their inherent desires for "social change" (ibid.).

[227] Gaskell's belief system did not encourage the exaggerated appreciation of appearance and beauty in persons as well as other areas: Wheeler explains, for example, that Gaskell felt "that the beauty of the Anglican rite smacks of sensualism, in contradistinction from the simplicity of Unitarian forms which reflect the rationalism in which her own Unitarian beliefs are grounded" (30).

Though she might become the subject of criticism for her views on beauty considering what authors such as More and Mears argued, Gaskell's assessment of the importance of religious education might have pacified her potential critics. Throughout her whole diary the reader can discover evidence that Gaskell wished her daughters to become religious young women who accepted and were well-versed in their faith (cf. Wheeler, 30). The diary documents the process of Gaskell's tentative approaches to bring her daughters closer to God. She deliberately chooses a slow approach, in regular as well as in religious education: "This love of an earthly parent's approbation we hope in time to lead into a higher feeling" (Gaskell "My Diary", 62). Overall, Gaskell appears to be very careful in her approach to her daughters' religious instruction: According to Gorham, the "awareness of their own mortality" (19) and the "recogni[tion] [of] the need for salvation" (ibid.) were traditionally at the centre of a thorough religious education for the Victorian middle classes, an education which "started as soon as the child could talk" (ibid.). Gaskell is clearly a little more prudent than this: When a close relative of her suddenly dies, she tries to explain this circumstance to her very young daughter without being too religiously explicit for fear the child might not understand her: "I longed to say she [her deceased relative] was 'gone to a house not made with hands eternal, in the heavens.' But I thought I had better not, for to her it would have been unintelligible at present" (ibid., 65). By the time Marianne reached the age for school, Gaskell started talking to her about religious topics, still being very careful in doing so: "I have told her the simple truths I thought she could understand, such as God's goodness and love, His watching over us in the silent hours of the night & c." (cf. ibid. 67). Gaskell also deems it suitable that her daughter starts to visit church almost simultaneously with the beginning of her religious education (cf. ibid.). Gorham mentions that a typical middle-class Victorian religious education would have consisted of more or less directly religious "storybooks" (19) and finally readings of the Bible and other "devotional literature [from which] children imbibed a religious outlook" (ibid.). The central themes that were transmitted were, according to Gorham, "self-sacrifice" and "duty" (ibid). Even though Gaskell appears to be quite content with her daughter's reaction and the results of her teachings, she admits to being confused sometimes, primarily by Marianne's "very *material* questions" (67), which, in her view, clash with the elevated topic. To

counteract this 'banalisation' of a sacred subject, Gaskell commences to teach her daughter about God "in a low tone" (ibid.) to evoke a feeling of awe within her.

Age, according to More, plays a decisive role in the process of moral education because "when once embarked, it will no longer be easy to say to their passions, or even their principles, 'Thus far shall ye go, and no 'further' [sic]." (xv).[228] Consequently, children, as more impressionable human beings, are more likely to stick to the currently accepted moral code if they have been taught to do so at an early age. In More's evangelical perspective, the older the child gets, the more difficult will the moral and religious education become, because the level of 'natural' acceptance is gradually lowered with advancing age.[229] More believes that the blessings of a "pure religion" (3) are not given to every country and the English should be grateful to be in possession of this gift (cf. ibid.). Instead of just ignoring their privilege they [British Ladies] should use it in order to "sav[e] […] their country" by "awaken[ing] the drowsy spirit of religious principle, and […] re-animat[ing] the dormant powers of active piety" (ibid., 4). In other words, it is the duty of every adult to spread religious knowledge and practice by furthering religious education, especially of the younger population. This argument, naturally, brings back the idea of ideal religious parenting and the generally approved way of educating children in religion.[230] Gorham confirms that aspiring Victorian families,

[228] The same argument could be made for almost every other moral misbehaviour that More mentions.

[229] At this point, More adds the description of a social model that directly opposes her ideal of a social structure and religious practice, especially regarding the position of women. Her descriptions leave no doubt that she is referring to Muslim countries, although none are mentioned explicitly: In countries which are under the influence of "the voluptuous prophet of Arabia" (3), women are, as she states, valued only for their outer appearance (ibid.) but otherwise held as "slaves" (ibid.) whose "moral and intellectual degradation increases in direct proportion to the adoration which is paid to mere external charms" (ibid.). This, in her eyes, very undesirable state of society and religion is contrasted by the more enlightened situation British women are facing at home: "But I turn to the bright reverse of this mortifying scene; to a country where our sex enjoys the blessings of liberal instruction, of reasonable laws, of a pure religion, and all the endearing pleasures of an equal, social, virtuous, and delightful intercourse" (ibid.). More's description is doubtlessly extremely exaggerated but is deliberately placed in a way to evoke the impression of the most shocking contrast between the two social and religious models.

[230] According to More, the early 'imprinting' of moral values is especially important for the further religious development of the child. Religious education, from her point of view, cannot be taken seriously enough because well into early adulthood the human being is in need of faithful guidance due to the dangers of illicit company: "This is of so much importance [the early imprinting of powerful religious values], that I have known persons who, having been early accustomed to certain ludicrous combinations [they were not well-educated enough in their faith to withstand any worldly entertainment], were never able to get their minds cleansed from the impurities contracted by this habitual levity, even after thorough reformation in their hearts" (16). Baptism, for her, is the solemn promise that the family is going to fulfil their duty of keeping the child "in the season of youth" (ibid.) safe from "all light associations" (ibid.).

according to the ideal, cherished prayer-time together, not necessarily from religious motives only, but because the prayers became part of the "ceremonial fashion" (9) of wealthy middle-class life, indicating leisure time and consequently status as well (cf. ibid.).

Because of the importance of the parental mission to educate children in the ways of the faith, parents should pay extra attention to the texts that their child is given to read. Bad or philosophically questionable reading could do inexperienced children a lot of harm and, in More's opinion, ruin their chances for true spiritual growth (cf. 33). Especially the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau (which she criticises in more than one different context) are the first texts that must be mentioned as decidedly harmful to the souls of children and young adults:

> The rare mischief of this author consists in his power of seducing by falsehood those who love truth, but whose minds are still wavering, and whose principles are not yet formed. He allures the warmhearted to embrace vice, not because they prefer vice, but because he gives to vice so natural an air of virtue: and ardent and enthusiastic youth, too confidently trusting in their integrity and in their teacher, will be undone, while they fancy they are indulging in the noblest feelings of their nature (ibid.).

Parents must actively forestall the event of their children falling prey to the "exquisite art and inextricable workmanship, spread to entangle innocence and ensnare inexperience" (ibid.). Rousseau, according to More's point of view, tempts young human beings to leave the teachings of Christianity behind because in the philosopher's texts they are "always virtually excluded" (35). Because Christianity is not even mentioned, an untrained readership might conclude that religion is unnecessary or of little importance to an ethical lifestyle; this indirect way of presenting religion as nonessential for someone who wishes to lead a good life is, according to More, a very deceitful way of putting humanity on a pedestal that should rightfully belong to God (cf. ibid.). Jean Jacques Rousseau's teachings, published in his famous work *Emile* include the idea that it is the power of literature "to alter our attitudes and behaviours, for good or for ill" (Mills, "Rousseau", 181). Too much didacticism, the kind of literature advocated by More, has a "corrupting effect […]" even if "well-intentioned" (ibid., 182).[231] According to Rousseau,

[231] Even though Rousseau's texts were highly influential, there were also critical voices, especially among evangelical authors. Hannah More, the author of *Strictures on the modern system of female education* [1799], for example, gives two main reasons why she regards Rousseau's teachings as

"[n]ature wants children to be children before being men. If we want to pervert this order, we shall produce precocious fruits which will be immature and insipid and will not be long in rotting" (Rousseau, 90). "[M]isguided […] moralizing" (ibid.) could indeed result in the child's taking on the opposite values from those that it originally was intended to adopt and instil the very prejudices in a child's brain that the text originally wanted them to abhor (ibid.).

In More's opinion, however, the absence of moralising is evil and parents should beware of this dangerous influence on their children which tempts them to forgo humility before God, indirectly promoting human vanity. 'Intelligent' and well-educated women in particular are advised by More to "set an example of deep humility" (xii-xiii). Ladies of the upper classes were particularly asked to be humble and never ascribe their own fortunate circumstances to their personal merit; on the contrary, they should "devote it to the glory of God" (xiii). A truly housewifely and maternal person would, of course, excel at all domestic scores, and, therefore, even "women who […] [are] distinguished for wit and genius" (ibid.) should ideally possess these domestic virtues.[232] Ethical (or in her case, religiously acceptable) behaviour was often used almost synonymously with the term 'well-mannered', although in reality both concepts could lie far apart. Even though More is aware that ladies of the higher ranks of society often only superficially adopted a so-called 'well-bred shell' (cf. 27), she remains firm in the belief that good manners, morals and knowledge unquestionably should be part of any education that deserves to be

extremely problematic: Firstly, More reproves the author of *Emile* for his use of the genre of the novel, which she views as dangerous in itself (cf. 31). More opines that a genre like the novel is likely to be used in a way that influences the younger generation for the worst because novels tend to be "employed to diffuse destructive politics, deplorable profligacy, and imprudent infidelity" (ibid.). Moreover, she thinks that Rousseau's writings ought to be counted among the main reasons why the genre of the novel was gradually gaining more and more popularity; More, therefore, calls the famous philosopher "the first popular dispenser of this complicated drug [the novel]" (ibid.). Continuing the drug-metaphor, she elaborates on the topic of misguiding younger people through the medium of the novel; a "deleterious infusion" (ibid.) of Rousseau's texts could prove to be "fatal" (ibid., 32) for an innocent human being because, as More suggests, his false messages are disguised as "principles" (ibid.) and for children or inexperienced people these 'false' principles are almost indistinguishable from the 'true' principles (cf. ibid.).

[232] Artistic women should not isolate their knowledge to their art, but, instead, be eager to generally "enrich […] their understandings" (More, xiii). This piece of advice might, in another context, even appear progressive. However, given More's evangelical background, it seems unlikely that the author was in reality promoting female education to reach the same level as men's education. From this list of ideal behaviour patterns, it can be concluded that according to More's perspective, women should be educated intellectually as well as physically, but neither wit nor knowledge could make up for the fact that they had been inadequately taught to practice true humility. It is her principle that everyone aiming at education should do so "acting from higher motives" (xiv).

called ‘accomplished’: “In training them [the daughters], should we not carefully cultivate intellect, implant religion, and cherish modesty?” (69). It was her declared object to make her readers aware of that, once the proper ethical conscience and good manners were accepted by the respective pupil, the wish to acquire suitable knowledge would follow on its own (cf. ibid.). In the same way would good manners very likely “be the natural result of whatever is just in sentiment, and correct in principle” (ibid.).

Giving examples or counterexamples for specific aspects of religious life was a commonly used method to make children accept certain elements of religious practice in a (comparatively) playful way. Illustrations, for example, short stories or short non-fictional texts were supposed to gently guide children to adopt the depicted patterns out of their own free will: Consequently, some parents actively tried to design their lessons of religious instruction in the most “enjoyable” (Pollock, 255) way possible, providing their offspring with easily comprehensible illustrations from the scriptures and giving Sundays an agreeable touch by, for example, incorporating amusing activities or treats (cf. ibid.). Frequently reading religious books and treatises, whether by the child itself, or read to them by the parents, was deemed obligatory in Christian families because it was a means “to encourage childhood piety” (Grenby, 3). Making their children attend church regularly was part of the same idea (cf. Pollock, 254) and being able to read and understand the Bible was thus of immense importance as well.[233]

[233] Exactly this requirement, i.e. parents reading the scriptures to their children or giving them sacred texts to read, led to a very important change in nineteenth-century society: Since school attendance was not obligatory until 1880 (cf. Pool, 127) and a “national school system” (Pool, 125) was still missing in the earlier part of the century, most working-class children were unable to read and therefore unable to fulfil their religious duty of reading the Bible (cf. ibid.). Because most of the parents were hard-working, they lacked the time and skill to read the scripture to their offspring. Pool mentions in this context that “[i]t was not until members of the Church of England became appalled at the thought of lower-class children growing up in godlessness because they could not read the Bible that things changed” (ibid.). The fact that pious apprehension was at the bottom of the school reform proves how much impact religious education and the formation of the individual’s mind had within society. During the Victorian era, schools with an explicit religious objective were quite common; there were, of course, Sunday schools that only took place once a week and focussed more exclusively on religious texts as well as being frequented by children from less affluent or socially aspiring backgrounds and were taught by either vicars or adult but unmarried daughters of religious families (cf. Gorham, 27 & Clapp-Itnyre, 311). There were also religious boarding schools (usually only for girls), which typically “would be managed by a proprietor who was a woman of deep religious conviction” (Gorham, 23). Such schools did not have to adhere to any Protestant denomination, but their purposes were strongly religious and less focussed on other subjects on the curriculum (cf. ibid.). Parents who sent their daughters to such an establishment customarily wished for a more strictly religious education for their child because of their own devoutness (cf. ibid.).

Charity was a basic part of the duties of every good Christian and, consequently, ideal parenthood in the nineteenth century could not be imagined without this virtue. Wheeler, for example, describes Gaskell almost as a model Christian in this regard: "[O]ne gains the impression of a deeply religious woman, whose personal faith in a benevolent God raised her spiritual life above sectarian divisions, and whose conscience led her to act and write in love and *charity* with her neighbours" (31, emphasis added). Gorham calls the virtue of charity one of the key opposites to the lack of religiousness associated with capitalism as a consequence of industrialisation which was feared by many religious British citizens (cf. 4). The evangelical More also mentions the idea that a key feature of charity is rescuing souls who are in peril and, if possible, bringing them back to acknowledge religion once more (cf. 48). Cobbett as well elaborates on charity in the context of his second chapter "Letter to a Young Man", in which he advises a husband and father-to-be to have mercy with less fortunate persons because of his duty as citizen:

> Can you walk many yards in the streets; can you ride a mile in the country; can you go to half-a-dozen cottages; can you, in short, open your eyes, without seeing some human being, some one [sic] born in the same country with yourself, and who, on that account alone, has some claim upon your good wishes and your charity; can you open your eyes without seeing some person to whom even a small portion of your annual savings would convey gladness of heart? (67)

As part of charity, the care and protection of unfortunate children became extremely important in the nineteenth century, as other advisory journals of the time suggest; evangelical 'child rescuers', for example, also published magazines full of essays and poems that were meant to awaken the adults' consciousness of the dreary situation of abandoned or neglected children (cf. Hillel, 146-147), and a feeling of extended parental care.

Religiously motivated authors felt it to be their obligation to speak up for the unfortunate creatures, employing all means they had available in order to move other adults, who were most likely themselves parents, to feel pity; citing or re-working passages from the scriptures (cf. Gavin, "The Child", 10) was one of the most popular methods to achieve this goal. Particularly widespread was the use of passages as: "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 18:3).

Another widely used quote mirrors the idea that children were closer to heaven because they, other than their probably faulty parents, had not yet moved away from the path of righteousness: "But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them [his disciples], Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). Naturally, the idea the authors wanted the Bible passage to convey was the concept of childhood as a time of perfect innocence which was likely to be "corrupted" (Hillel, 150) by adult misbehaviour and the guileful ways of the world. An example for the popularity of the practice of re-using or re-working Bible quotes is a poem by the Reverend H.G. Duffield, at that time chaplain of Newgate prison in London, published in the quarterly paper *Our Waifs and Strays* in 1883: "He [Jesus] said of little children, / 'Suffer them to come to Me, / Nor forbid them, for of such alike / Shall my heavenly kingdom be' / For His sake then would we raise / Help for these His 'Waifs and Strays'" (l. 13-18).[234] Obviously, the message of the original Bible passage is largely kept intact with the addition of the charity work of the labourers of the 'Waifs and Strays' society closely attached to it; their work is basically God's work, since they keep an eye on the creatures that are closest to Jesus (cf. Wood, "Angelic", 119).[235] The home of the middle-class family was, consequently, also subject to this idealisation as the proper place for natural innocence to thrive: The bourgeoise environment was claimed to be especially consequential because it was not only the place of "nurture […] – [of] proper food and clothing and stability"

[234] *Our Waifs and Strays. The Quarterly Paper of the Church of England Central Home of Waifs and Strays.* Issues 1883-1884. Accessed 28.10.2025. The Waifs and Strays.

[235] The abovementioned journal *Our Waifs and Strays. The Quarterly Paper of the Church of England Central Home of Waifs and Strays* was especially dedicated to the cause of guidance of orphaned or abandoned children; besides reports on the opening of new houses [orphanages] and a list of the attending dignitaries to lend the needed prestige to these charitable enterprises, the paper included accounts of visitations to their institutions, stressing the urgency and the need of help for the unfortunate creatures (cf. 2.1). The issue published in January of the year 1883 contains one of these reports written by a certain Mrs N. D'Andvers who makes use of a style that would seem more appropriate to a fictional than to a non-fictional tale or factual recapitulation of experiences: "A small girl opened the door, and after looking at me with earnest enquiry for a full minute she ran away, leaving me standing in the hall. She quickly returned, however, with the matron, a kindly faced young woman, who was only too glad to show me everything she could and tell me all she knew. Both, however, amounted to very little; 'For you see, mam, we're only beginning, and this house isn't the sort of thing children want, though it's better than any of them have been used to'" (ibid.). This style is used perhaps in order to provide more emotional insights and enable the author to move the reader in more ways than were possible if a more factual style had been used. *Our Waifs and Strays. The Quarterly Paper of the Church of England Central Home of Waifs and Strays.* Issues 1883-1884. Accessed 28.10.2025. The Waifs and Strays.

(Hillel, 153) but also of religious education, which was thought to be "crucial to the notion of 'home' in Evangelical writing" (ibid.).

Not only the life, but also the death of one of the innocent children, the protagonists of the 'child rescuers' texts, was presented in a strongly religious context: If their perfect innocence was still preserved and they had not been corrupted by the degenerate adults responsible for their situation, those children went directly to heaven after their death, which, although sad, was also depicted "as a means of preserving innocence and […] thus desirable, allowing the child to remain forever uncorrupted" (Hillel, 155). The child's beauty in death is also a common concept: The child's perfect appearance is emphasised by the state of death, thus "gestur[ing] towards happier conditions beyond" (Wood, "Angelic", 118). The child thus becomes "an angelic emblem" (ibid., 116), depicted as a mirror for all fallible adults and sometimes even as a reflection of Jesus in His childhood, thus personifying the redemptive qualities of children in a state of childhood-innocence by considering child death a benefit for "the guilty adults around them" (Wood, "Angelic", 119). The September 1884 issue of the magazine *Our Waifs and Strays* features the short story "Little Arthur", centring around a six-year-old boy of the same name, which fits very well with the idea that good children share characteristics with Jesus: The little boy is said to be "suffering great pain" (2) without complaining or visible irritation – a good example for a child in the tradition of '*imitatio Christi*'.[236] Naturally, Arthur, although being physically disabled and in pain, still retains the childlike beauty of innocence: "He is dark with big bright eyes, and oh! Such a little white face and hands" (ibid.). His silent suffering and "child-like faith" (ibid.) as well as the adult narrator's incomprehension of the source of his strength seem to emphasize his connection to heaven.[237]

McGillis confirms the idea that this connection of children to the divine (cf. 102) often results in their portrayal as inherently wiser than the more experienced, rational adult; the wise innocence of childhood is thus better equipped to perceive the connection between heaven and earth, between "life and death" (McGillis, 105).

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[236] *Our Waifs and Strays. The Quarterly Paper of the Church of England Central Home of Waifs and Strays.* Issues 1883-1884. Accessed 28.10.2025. The Waifs and Strays.

[237] Gorham mentions that ideals of suffering and self-sacrifice were indeed most often connected to girls, as early examples of 'female sacrifice' (cf. 49). She calls this trope "the girl-as-redeemer" (ibid.), thus emphasising her connection to spirituality and religious devotion by her willingness to suffer (cf. ibid.). Such depictions were also closely related to the cult of domesticity and the ideal of the 'Angel in the House' (cf. ibid.).

In Wordsworth's poem "We are seven" (1798), a young beautiful girl still feels a very strong and natural connection to her deceased siblings, treating their relationship as if the boundary between life and death was no hindrance whatsoever: "But they are dead; those two are dead! / Their spirits are in heaven!" / 'Twas throwing words away; for still / The little Maid would have her will, / And said, "Nay, we are seven!" (ll. 65-69). Here, the adult lyrical I is unable to comprehend this spiritual perspective that the child apparently understands quite easily. In death, the Romantic child usually becomes a model figure for the adult who is no longer able to achieve the goal of an uncorrupted death: These depictions of children's deaths, stressing the spiritual, "etherealized" (Gavin, "The Child", 9) side of the child's nature, were especially popular in Romanticism, whereas in the Victorian period the focus was slightly different, highlighting adults' duty to prevent these miserable untimely deaths – the goal, especially of evangelical writers, was to awaken "social consciousness" (ibid.).

4.3.2 Romantic childhood, the Victorian child, and its successors

Children, or childhood, and Romanticism held a special connection ever since the start of the Romantic period and continued to hold these associations well into the Victorian era. Domines Veliki and Duffy even proclaim "it is generally accepted by scholars that the Romantics invented childhood" even if "the causes and consequences of that 'invention' remain the subject of debate" (4). It is, therefore, not surprising that even unborn children and the state of pregnancy were frequently described in romantic terms by many authors of advice literature. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the midwife Martha Mears, heavily drawing on nature imagery, compares the pregnant woman to a bird flying into its nest during springtime (cf. 37) and further describes her state as blissfully "*lifting*, to use the poet's phrase, your *soul to heaven*" (ibid.). The Victorian Age, as well, was without doubt an epoch of idealisation not only of family but also of childhood and has often even been called 'the age of childhood' (cf. Burkhard, 42) because of the attention this early period of human life received: Newly founded institutions like Kindergarten as well as flourishing new industries like the manufacturing of toys prove this awakened interest in childhood. Children's literature, as well as texts about children, experienced a boom during the mid-nineteenth century, often

featuring a clearly didactic overtone, helped to spread the concept of romantic childhood (cf. Jarrar, 65).

The perception of the child as inherently innocent first came up during Romanticism and, though in a modified form, continued into the Victorian era. The notion was indeed comparatively new compared to earlier eighteenth-century depictions of children as wicked from birth and characterised by "innate depravity" (Richardson, 14), which mirrored their closeness to "original sin" (Burkhard, 42). On the contrary, children were now viewed as being the only creatures on earth who were still able to maintain a state of perfect innocence if they were sheltered, remained uncorrupted by impure adult influence (cf. Hillel, 150). The shift in perception of the moral make-up of the child was, according to Andrew O'Malley, due to the teachings of philosophers like John Locke, who suggested that the child's mind could be regarded as "*tabula rasa*" (4, original emphasis; cf. Houswitschka, 82). The influence of the French Enlightenment philosopher Rousseau cannot be ignored either, because, as Cunningham puts it, the influence of his writings infused the eighteenth-century vision of childhood with a much-needed "degree of sensitivity" that was "lacking in previous centuries" (46).

Hence, Romantics saw it as their duty to raise awareness of the plight of those children who missed this happiness (cf. ibid., 154; cf. Burkhard, 47). One example for the depiction of an innocent child, deprived of adult help and consequently of the joy of experiencing childhood, is William Blake's 1789 poem "The Chimney Sweeper: When my mother died I was very young", in which a young chimney boy tells of his and his fellows' cruel life, mistreated by his father and maltreated by the environment – a fate which is only alleviated in the otherworld. Despite this grim side of childhood that was bemoaned by Romantics, the child-image in their representations perpetuated a hopeful state, especially because of the close relationship to the supernatural. Because of this bond with the supernatural, children were also regarded as being close to nature and the elements. Nature was therefore an important idea in the context of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century poetry and education and was even present in advice literature, which was less poetical and more intended for practical use. Mears emphasises the idea that nature is the best teacher of humankind: "'Follow Nature' is the great lesson which the wisest and best of men have never been tired of repeating. That simple yet important

piece of advice includes, in two words, an admirable summary of human prudence" (1). Nature, consequently, is not only the best emotional but also the first reasonable argument for moral behaviour, especially when childcare is concerned, because through good childcare, adults might retain some of their original innocence and connection to nature. Because of this perspective, Romantic literature often presented the child as the adult's chance for redemption (cf. Jarrar, 76). Mears implies this when she states, "FOLLOW NATURE [sic] – trace her footsteps – listen to her voice – mark well her conduct in all her works" (ibid.). The personification of nature makes 'her' appear almost as a saint or even an angel, gently guiding the misled adult back to the path of righteousness. This might sound like a religious idea and, of course, might be read in this way. However, nature in this case could also be seen more secularly as the purest form in which innocence is reflected. Thus, children, as being supposedly closest to nature (cf. Hillel, 154) are more qualified to "teach you [the adult] to do what is right and to avoid what is dangerous or improper" (Mears, 1). Nature was the only way

> to bring you back from your wanderings, and lead you securely along the delightful paths of truth and happiness. Resign yourself then with confidence to this unerring guide: and if at any time you should be tempted to forsake her, check the fatal impulse by instantly recollecting, that you are not more liable to lose your way even in the darkness of ignorance, than in the twilight of superficial knowledge – in pursuing the meteors of fancy, or the false glare of imposture and pretended science (Mears, 1-2).

Knowledge, in Mears' sense, is nature's wisdom, the information that nature, as teacher, taught her human pupils. In this argumentation, everything that opposes nature will not only hurt the adult pupil, but even unborn children. As Mears' advice was especially aimed at pregnant women, this was one of her main points of concern (cf. ibid.).

It is therefore not to be wondered at that, for Romantics, the city, as the opposite of nature, the place of "fancy and pretended science" (Mears, 2), was hardly the ideal surrounding for children and an environment from which they had to be rescued (cf. ibid.). Romantic poetry was very partial to this kind of imagery, as we can see, for example in Hurrell's poem "Happy Days in the Country": "Afar in the city, two summers ago,/Here the shadows of poverty lower,/With no one to tend her, no parent to bless,/She faded and drooped as a flower,/She was only a waif, yet the Saviour of earth,/Looked down from His throne in the sky" (ll. 17-

22).[238] In order to preserve this harmony, the trope of the child's death gained in popularity, because it allowed the young creature to forever remain in this state of communion with "uncorrupted nature" (Wood, "Angelic", 116) without having to enter the inevitable state of adulthood. This relation to transcendence provides the child not only with a connection to the essence of the 'natural' but also to the supernatural (cf. McGillis, 102), a concept which is also very much detectable in Wordsworth's "We Are Seven". Perhaps because of this idea the connection between the child and death is often presented as extremely close: While the rational adult perceives only the contrast of life and death, the child's mind is able to discern the relationship between "life and afterlife" (ibid., 105).

The child becomes, according to Sally Shuttleworth, "the object of adult male fascination, and nostalgic yearning for a state that can never be reclaimed" (7). According to the Romantic perspective on childhood, this special phase of life is therefore perpetually linked to nostalgia for the adult individual, because it is a state that the adult human being longs for without being able to reach it again or ever experience the same feelings as the child (cf. ibid., 109). McGillis confirms that the child as teacher of at least a semblance of their own innocence was an integral aspect of the notion of the romantic child: In the most idealised form the child resembles "a vision of loveliness sure to enlighten the adult" (102). However, this vision causes the adults' realisation of their own lack of "brightness" (ibid.) and, by being a signifier of loss, may even create "bitterness" (ibid.) in the adult mind. Many Victorian authors, for example George McDonald, also saw "childhood as an embodiment of innocence, purity and imaginative potential" (ibid., 61). In the romantic view, parental failure or even misconduct was inherently derived from the contrast between their children's complete innocence and sweetness in a "stage of virtue and sacredness" (ibid.) and the parents' loss of innocence and consequent bitterness. McGillis describes the romantic idea of the child as the "represent[ation] [of] a wholeness that contains its own separation" (101), a paradox, eternally fixed in an in-between state.

While Shuttleworth is of the opinion that this nostalgia brought forth by the "sense of irredeemable loss, fixed on the figure of the small child" (ibid.) was perpetuated well through the Romantic and Victorian period and "reach[ed] its peak

[238] *Our Waifs and Strays. The Quarterly Paper of the Church of England Central Home of Waifs and Strays.* Issues 1883-1884. Accessed 28.10.2025. The Waifs and Strays.

in the 1890s" (ibid.), Gavin notes a certain change in the presentation of childhood in literature from Romanticism to the Victorian era: While most aspects mentioned above were true for both periods, Romanticism predominantly adhered to the presentation of "childhood as a desirable state, distinct from adulthood, for which adults longed: a lost idealized clear-visioned, divinely pure, intuitive, in-tune with nature, imaginative state of life, of whose spirit adults felt the loss and sought to capture in literature" ("The Child", 8). Many Victorian authors, such as Charles Dickens, conversely, chose to focus on the less ideal side of childhood and instead stressed the bad social environment and harsh conditions many children had to deal with every day, providing them with a less "idealized" (Gavin, "The Child", 9), less "symbolic" (ibid.) and more socially grounded character – what Gavin calls the humanisation of childhood, presenting children as "victims" (ibid.) rather than as redemptory figures (cf. Hillel, 155) and "teacher[s] of the adult" (Gavin, "The Child", 8). Victorian conceptions of childhood particularly emphasised the social components that could endanger children's moral and physical growth and facilitate corruption (cf. Hillel, 146). Social responsibilities of parents, and adults in general, were more strongly emphasised than they had been in previous periods, and common literary tropes, such as the figure of the child-criminal, were a reflection of this trend (cf. ibid.).

Apart from this trend, "moralistic" and often "religious conventions" (Gavin & Humphries, 5) became more prevalent in the context of the image of childhood. Accordingly, the romantic concept of the inherent goodness and purity of the child shifted slightly and, though it did not vanish entirely, became imprinted with the belief in the need to shelter the child's purity from corruption and "to instil [sic] moral values of trust love and honesty in their children by cultivating their inner goodness" (Jarrar, 61). Neglecting this task meant, according to the doctrine, that parents willingly endangered the moral soundness of their children's soul and, consequently, bore the blame of the damage to their offspring's "moral and emotional being" (ibid.).[239] The depraved child was presented as being in an

[239] Although bad adult behaviour could, according to the Victorian perspective, cause children to become degenerate and be "made old before their time" (Hillel, 150), adults were still absolutely necessary for perfect happiness during childhood – relieving the child from unnecessary responsibilities which were caused by neglectful parenting, or the death of the parent, when children had to take over adult tasks of "work [and] care" (ibid.) in order to maintain their livelihood but without any possibility of ever undertaking "play and childish pursuits" (ibid.).

'unnatural' state – a counterfigure to the ideal romantic child whose innocence remained secure (cf. Hillel, 154). The desperate need of adult moral "guidance" (158) for the Victorian child was justified through the child's extreme vulnerability and incapability of directly perceiving "the slings and arrows the world can inflict on the unwary" (McGillis, 111). This was not necessarily the case because the child was in itself regarded as flawed from the onset, as had been the rather Puritan assumption prevalent in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century – the duty of the adult to maintain this innocence as long as possible was put into focus. The stereotypical picture was that of an "innocent child [in possession of] blue eyes, golden curls, rosy cheeks" (Hillel, 152).

In the Victorian period especially, the idealised child was, of course, intricately linked to the bourgeoisie, the middle-class family ideal which should ensure a perfectly happy childhood in which the children were the "loved and cherished darlings" (ibid.) of their parents while the criminal and wicked child was regarded as the result of adult, particularly lower-class or degenerated upper-class, weakness and depravity, marking these parental figures as unfit caretakers of their children (cf. Thiel, 138).[240] Victorian realist fiction like, for example, the novels of the Brontë sisters, depict children as neither perfectly innocent nor inherently criminal or bad. Instead, their portrayal provides insight into the influence of the children's environment and adult control, thematising topics such as misguided adult advice, wrongly used discipline and punishment, as well as the children's "vulnerability to abuse" (Wood, "Angelic", 121).

In Victorian evangelical fiction the two categories used to describe contemporary childhood were, as Thiel suggests, represented in a rather "simplistic" (ibid.) way, emphasising both the "wild, untamed" (ibid.) side as well as idealising the innocent counterpart as the perfect, ideal child. Though *Oliver Twist* is certainly not an evangelical novel, the eponymous protagonist is, as Thiel argues, "essentially a personification of the Romantic ideal" (136) embodying

[240] Some distinctions can be made between male child-criminals and the depiction of their female counterparts: The Victorian perception of femininity was usually taken into consideration by contemporary authors, which is the reason for the special emphasis put on helplessness and vulnerability in the depiction of female children in particular (cf. ibid., 140). In this context, Liz Thiel points out that novels like *Oliver Twist* depict several not unimportant characters, like Charlie and Dodger, who are definitely not innocent but are not portrayed as victims either (cf. 132); they appear to enjoy their free life as thieves, thus contradicting the ideals of Romanticism as well as maybe degenerated by adult influence but still retaining a certain amount of innocence at the core (cf. ibid.).

evangelical principles: He never yields to the pressure which urges him to forget about "middle-class morality and manners" (ibid.), and it is his perfectly preserved innocence which succeeds at last and it is his beauty and good manners which convince every adult character of his good nature (cf. Wood, "Angelic", 119). The evangelical child, an extension or modification of the ideal Romantic child, was regarded as inherently innocent, as "pure yet doomed" (West, 53). In mid-Victorian, often "sentimental" narratives, "childhood [was] characterized by a natural innocence that was threatened by too-early exposure to the adult world" (ibid.). West characterises this manufactured innocence as inherently "problematic" (ibid.) because "what happens to the child when it, inevitably, enters what is constructed as the adult world of commerce, sexuality, and all that has been held at bay by its unassailable innocence?" (ibid., 53-54). The most prominent solution was, again, the fictional child's death as a means of rescuing not only the adult, but the child itself, true to the evangelical ideal of Victorian charity to the young (cf. ibid.).[241]The child's superiority concerning innocence and the ability to grasp religious and moral concepts without the adult need of over-complicating and 'rationalising' these issues were still notions that prevailed during the Victorian period. In the Victorian conception of childhood, the 'child-as-saviour' concept implies that the child's purity is able to cleanse the guilty adult figure, a process which often involves the death (cf. Gryctko, 2) of the child figure itself as the ultimate sacrifice (cf. Gavin, "The Child", 8-9 & Hilles 155

Towards the end of the Victorian period and during the Edwardian era, the perception of childhood changed again: The depictions of adult corruption of children and "of […] the child-as-victim" (Gavin, "The Child", 10) were drawing to a close at the turn of the century. Because of legal improvements, such as the Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children Act from 1889, for instance, authors perhaps felt less need of realistically depicting the bad social conditions of

[241] West mentions, for instance, Beth from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (57). As British examples, Lady Isabel's son William from Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (also mentioned later in this thesis) or Helen Burns from *Jane Eyre* could be referenced. But Victorian authors also tried to "reconcile" (Thiel, 133) the two images of childhood, namely the "animalistic" (ibid.) side, which, like most of Fagin's boys in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, enjoyed breaking rules without mourning their loss of innocence and the lack of middle-class "sweetness" (ibid., 134). Shuttleworth, therefore, describes the Victorian perception of the child as by no means unequivocal: "Childhood was an elastic category, deemed in some rather startling definitions, to last until the age of 30. It became increasingly important during the period as a category of both social and self-understanding, and hence a depository of the confusions and contradictions of the culture" (20).

childhood; instead, fantasy elements, which had been less prominent in Victorian literature, became popular during the Edwardian Era (cf. ibid.). In consequence, "childhood became its own distinct realm, an Arcadian world apart, unreachable by adults who often desperately long for it" (ibid.) and more topically separated from the Victorian world of children's physical and spiritual improvement.

5. "[D]ischarging" their duty? Parental role models in Jane Austen's *Sense & Sensibility* (1811)

As Ford observes, "[c]hildren don't play much of a role in Jane Austen's novels. In *Sense and Sensibility*, however, their behavior is used as an index to maternal effectiveness and care as well as to the sincerity or hypocrisy of other adults" (npag.). This already suggests that depictions of parenting fulfil multiple functions in terms of characterisation in Austen's first published novel. Moreover, children and the affairs surrounding children, be they emotional, legal or financial, form the basis of the plot: In Jane Austen's *Sense & Sensibility*, the reader is confronted with a comparatively detailed view of the legal as well as social situation of the Dashwood family. This 'family setting' is going to shape and determine most of the conflicts that are about to arise. We learn that the unmarried and heirless state of the older Mr Dashwood led to a vacuum in the line of inheritance that had to be filled by another relative (his nephew, Mr Henry Dashwood, the father of our heroines) who became the owner of the estate as well as the luxurious residence that was part of it (cf. Austen, *Sense & Sensibility*, 3).[242] The novel is still set in an environment in which "great landholdings for generations" (ibid., 46) and largely unchallenged systems of universal patriarchal authority determined the status of the family as a whole. Tauchert also emphasises that the "early nineteenth century was marked by […] the landed class's anxiety over the breaking up of the whole estate […] or the loss of inherited estate to 'new' money" (56). The reader is aware of the fact that our heroines, Elinor and Marianne, are growing up as children of well-to-do parents that taught them their allegiance to a certain social community whose standards they have come to expect as the norm. To this family, loss of estates and land means

[242] The novel was first published in 1811, and it's setting consequently predates many changes that were brought about by the Victorian era with its accelerated industrialisation and reliance on technical innovations (cf. Pool, 47).

loss of "social distinction" (Pool, 46), a situation which Mrs Dashwood and her three daughters reflect.[243] Her stepson's refusal to recognise the validity of the (not legalised) promises on his late father's deathbed to act as 'provider', as paternal figure for his female relatives causes the loss of a significant part of their economic and social security (cf. Wiltshire, 25); they are quite literally "degraded" (Austen, S & S, 8): The women have to move from the large and luxurious estate Norland to "a small house, on very easy terms" (Austen, S & S, 23). It has to be noted, though, that even this relative security is only due to the support offered by another man (cf. Kelley & Odom, 9), a relative of Mrs Dashwood (Austen, S & S, 23). One (male) provider dies, the next fails and a third one, who is "a gentleman of consequence and property" (ibid.), steps in.

The topic of financial concerns in connection to children and family-formation crops up in several passages of *Sense and Sensibility*. The legal regulations were very clear in most cases: Since the custom of primogeniture was meant to ensure the preservation of the estates in an undivided form, the eldest son was the lawful heir of everything (cf. Pool, 90). Even though usually the presence of an heir was seen as a Godsend because it ensured continuation and stability (cf. ibid.), in this case, it opens the door to misuse of privilege. What emphasises the inequality between the son from the first marriage on the one hand and his half-sisters on the other is the circumstance that he is only one person and they are three girls in total. Contrary to common assumptions, this numerical predominance of the daughters does not lead to a feeling of power imbalance in their favour; rather, the opposite is the case (cf. Anderson, "Propriety", 153). Exactly this singularity of Mr John Dashwood, the fact that he is singled out, suggests to the readership that his importance and his impact on the family structure is far greater than that of his half-sisters, evoking a miniature social power pyramid with him at the top. However, as Ford points out, "[d]espite the way male behavior, good and bad, drives its plot, *Sense and Sensibility* is populated by mothers and their children" (npag.).

[243] Of course, this circumstance would primarily affect the male members of the family, since daughters usually did not inherit the land and were, therefore, not as much bound to it socially as their brothers, fathers, or husbands (cf. Pool, 90). However, financially dependent women were never unaffected by it either. Their survival depended on either their own financial independence, meaning an inheritance or a large dowry, or the financial situation of the man that was closest to them (cf. ibid.). If both forms of provisions failed or were insufficient, economic and social hardship ensued.

Mothers as well as fathers have to endure continuous anxieties about the financial uncertainty of their offspring. A passage depicting a (slightly one-sided) conversation between Mrs Jennings and Elinor concerning Edward and Lucy Steele's supposed engagement may serve as an example:

> 'Wait for his having a living! – aye, we all know how *that* will end: – they will wait a twelvemonth, and finding no good comes of it, will set down upon a curacy of fifty pounds a year, with the interest of his two thousand pounds, and what little matter Mr Steele and Mr Pratt can give her. – They will have a child every year! And lord help 'em! How poor they will be! I must see what I can give them towards furnishing their house' (cf. ibid., 261).

The widespread poverty of curates in nineteenth-century British parishes was already mentioned earlier and serves perfectly to illustrate the difficult situation of the poor clergyman Edward Ferrars, who lost the support of his family in his ecclesiastical career. Hannah More already mentioned "the elegantly dressed but slenderly portioned curate's daughter" (62) as a kind of epitome of the impoverished upper-middle class. The struggle to keep the insignia of a station that has moved financially out of reach, and force the children to do the same, endangers the sense of self-worth. As Collins confirms, fifty pounds a year, the regular payment for curates, was not always the norm, and many curates found themselves obliged to accept a lower salary (cf. 111). More, from an evangelical perspective, actually criticises this struggle, especially in the context of girls' education: Outward appearances should not be the first concern in bringing up children since they encourage a superficial mindset and a longing for extravagancies and luxury which are often unattainable (cf. ibid.). Mrs Jennings is apparently less evangelically minded because she realises what couples needed for their future, in material rather than spiritual terms, if they did not want to drop out of their accustomed social setting completely: Besides the furnishings of their abode, servants are another concern, "Two maids and two men, indeed! […] No, they must get a stout girl of all work. – Betty's sister would never do for them *now*" (Austen, S & S, 261, original emphasis). The following chapter endeavours to shed light on the most prominent mother figures from Austen's novel and their representation of the ideal portrayed in selected advice texts.

5.1 "[T]ender love for all her […] children"? Fanny, Mrs Dashwood, Lady Middleton, Mrs Palmer and Mrs Jennings as questionable role models

Mrs Dashwood, her daughter-in-law Fanny, Fanny's mother Mrs Ferrars, Mrs Jennings, her daughters Mrs Palmer and Lady Middleton all represent motherhood but differ considerably in its practice and the emotional bond they have with their children. Moreover, social background and change of financial situation influence the way maternal care is expressed. Humility, for instance, which Mrs Dashwood is forced to ask of her daughters, would actually fit well into the discourse of such moralist authors of advice literature as Martha Mears and Hannah More. While Mears, as a midwife, is mostly concerned with women after conception, during birth and as very new mothers, she also lays down statements about female behaviour and comportment in general and with regard to their function as models for their children. Mears customarily promotes "beautiful simplicity" (2) in everything and describes herself as "the humble handmaid of nature" (ibid.). A simple lifestyle, close to nature would therefore be entirely approved by her.[244] Hannah More likewise emphasises the importance of humility, yet her perspective is not that of the midwife.[245] Both would presumably have approved of the new and humbler abode Barton cottage, while Fanny Dashwood's focus on materialism would be criticised by them as vain and unmaternal. This view has to be mitigated, though, since Fanny exhibits a strong willingness to fight *for her son's* opportunities. This chapter aims to show how the ideal is represented and how it often neglects the complexities of motherhood in connection with social realities.

5.1.1 Fanny Dashwood, defender of "poor little Harry": selfishness as part of maternal expression?

Fanny Dashwood primarily strikes the readership of *Sense and Sensibility* with her purposeful insensitivity towards the situation of her husband's stepmother and her

[244] I am aware that Martha Mears does not address mothers of older children, such as Mrs Dashwood or younger women who – in all likelihood – will eventually become mothers. Her extreme promotion of humility and closeness to nature, rejecting all pretension and artificiality is, however, a general tendency of her writing that is all-encompassing and not limited to conduct during pregnancy and childbirth, but instead provides general advice for mothers and life, as we can see in her naming herself "the humble handmaid of nature" (2).

[245] Despite this initial difference, she as well proclaims humility to be an attitude which should be adopted at every stage in life, not only for the time of parenthood. As an evangelical author, her focus is on "Christian humility [which] is worth all the wild metaphysical discussion which has unsettled the peace of vain women, [sic] and forfeited the respect of reasonable men" (39).

sisters-in law as well as her social and monetary ambitions. As such, "stingy Fanny Dashwood" (Craig, 17) is cordially disliked by both the narrating voice and readers of all kinds. She grudges the Dashwood girls even a small amount of her father-in-law's inheritance (cf. Kelley & Odom, 9), which makes her appear devoid of compassion. However, her behaviour is not entirely lacking motherly motivation, since what she does is also done for her young son's benefit: "'Consider,' she [Fanny] added, 'that when the money is once parted with, it never can return. Your sisters will marry, and it will be gone forever. If, indeed, it could be restored to our little boy –'" (Austen, S & S, 9). Fanny's protectiveness of "poor little Harry['s]" (ibid., 9) inheritance could be read as caring and quintessential motherly behaviour and as her duty as wife. William Cobbett mentions in this regard that "the way in which she [the housewife] can most efficiently assist, is by taking care of his property; by expending his money to the greatest advantage; by wasting nothing" (123). Fanny is indeed very keen on "wasting nothing", because, for her, providing for her relatives-in-law, who are actually "in need" (Kelley & Odom, 9), would be a waste. The ambivalence in Fanny's character can be explored further by having another look at Cobbett's statement concerning maternal regard for their children's fortune:

> The first thing of all, be the rank in life what it may, is to convince her of the necessity of *moderation in expense*; and to make her clearly see the justice of beginning to act upon the presumption, that there are *children coming*, that they are to be provided for, and that she is to *assist* in the making of that provision. Legally speaking, we have a right to do what we please with our own property, which, however, is not our own, unless it exceed [sic] our debts. And, morally speaking, we, at the moment of our marriage, contract a debt with the naturally to be expected fruit of it (153, original emphasis).

Cobbett's advice is informed by middle-class ideology and its focus on productiveness and industriousness and, therefore, the well-to-do upper-class Dashwoods do not appear to be the primary addressees. However, the author himself assures his audience that this piece of advice is meant to be universal, "be the rank in life what it may", since children always cost money, and it is always the parents' duty to provide this money. Due to their rather comfortable circumstances and Fanny's own family background (cf. Austen, S & S, 3-4 & Wong, 57) it does not appear as if Mr John Dashwood has ever had any reason to ask Fanny to save money (cf. Kelley & Odom, 9), nor is it her intention to live cheaply, since her

immediate take-over of Norland, a large estate that is expensive in its upkeep, shows that she cares more for social representation and status than for saving. Norland, however, will be one day her son's property and her unwillingness to save money here could arguably be read as investment in her son's future status as landowner and his father's successor.

Moreover, Fanny does "assist" in her own way in protecting family-money when part of it (although admittedly a rather small part) is endangered by possibly becoming her sisters-in-law's annuity (cf. Austen, S & S, 8-9). She is frugal according to the housewifely ideal promoted by William Cobbett, who deplores the consequences of a lack of frugality, not only regarding the lower and middle classes but also the upper class: "If this [ruin through social ambition and luxury] be the case amongst the opulent, who have estates to draw upon, what must be the consequences of a want of frugality in the middle and lower ranks of life?" (108) However, her frugal practices are only applied to her poorer relatives, not to herself and her nearest family, which reveals her hypocrisy. Furthermore, she does not only "assist", but rather manages the financial affairs through the means of clever manipulation of a rather weak-willed husband, who, from her perspective, acts less paternal when he is willing to part with even the smallest amount of money that would have belonged to his son. Her determination and her focus on financial security and "economic agency" (Kelley & Odom, 9) make her appear rather masculine in the traditional sense, since these attributes mirror the conventional duties of the breadwinner and provider, which might make her seem 'unfeminine' in the eyes of contemporary readers. Craig even argues that she bears resemblance to conservative politicians in her style of argumentation, thus emphasising the masculine connotations of Fanny's behaviour:

> While Tory MPs were making speeches about assisting the poor, most Whig MPs employed the tactics of Fanny Dashwood and remained ominously silent, but, when pushed, Whigs like Burke, Frederic Eden, and Patrick Colquhoun insisted that a working man's meagre wages were, in fact, already adequate to, if not in excess of, his needs, just as Fanny Dashwood argues about the impoverished Dashwood women (18).

In addition, Fanny and her husband appear, at least prior to her manipulation, to have different ideas about family. While John Dashwood at first includes his stepmother and his half-sisters, he is convinced by his wife that they are not 'proper'

family after all: “It was well known [sic] that no affection was ever supposed to exist between the children of any man by different marriages” (Austen, S & S, 9). She argues, not unlike Cobbett, that it is his duty, even his “debt” upon becoming a father to make sure that his son has the best prospects, which, according to her, would be compromised by extending his duties to his wider family, who is, according to Fanny’s argumentation, no family at all and therefore has no direct claim on his paternal support (cf. Tauchert, 54). This is confirmed by the way in which she takes over the place of mistress of Norland without the slightest regard for their feelings or the emotional claim on status and property they might still possess (cf. Austen, S & S, 8). Seen from her perspective, she exercises maternal protectiveness of her son’s status *as well as* practising paternal financial circumspection and rationality to “convince” (Cobbett, 153) her husband of the necessity to keep the inheritance ‘intact’. Read in the light of Cobbett’s advice, there is a certain sense of role reversal in the relationship of Fanny and her husband, which she, however, is clever enough to disguise in front of him: “‘What brother on earth would do half so much for his sisters, even if *really* his sisters! […] But you have such a generous spirit!’” (Austen, S & S, 9-10, original emphasis).

Her comportment shows that her prudence, her financial protectiveness, cannot be separated altogether from her “selfishness” (cf. Cox, “Faith”, npag. & Austen, S & S, 8-9) as well as her “cold-heartedness and narrowmindedness” (Tredell, 112), also because her financial circumspection does not extend to her spending on social representation: Hers is a selfish maternity, a combination which is regarded as almost paradoxical in the light of the prevalent maternal ideal of the long nineteenth century. The focus of Fanny’s maternal care is financial and status-related; there is little evidence of emotional closeness to her son in the novel, despite her occasional, rather artificial exclamations concerning “poor little Harry” and “our poor little boy” (Austen, S & S, 9), both uttered in relation to the debate concerning the possible division of money, which is likely to present her “moral” arguments as “lukewarm”, deliberately using “a child as emotive fuel for her campaign” (Tredell, 118). Fanny’s motherliness stands in the light of her “materialistic vision of life in which self-aggrandizement is the only goal” (Anderson & Kidd, 139). Her maternal demeanour is not likely to be read as expressions of real emotionality but rather as part of her manipulation strategies, in

which she deliberately uses the pretence of maternal emotions to convince her husband that he is acting unpaternally by "giv[ing] away half your [his] fortune from your [his] own child" (Austen, S & S, 9).

Moreover, right at the start of the novel, it becomes clear that Fanny's son is rather spoilt, making "a great deal of noise" and showing off his "cunning tricks" during family visits, unchecked by his parents, and already shows a certain resemblance to his mother in his "earnest desire of having his own way" (ibid., 4 & cf. Ford, npag.). While William Cobbett expresses his domestic habits by exhibiting a remarkable tolerance of children's noise ("Many a score papers have I written amidst the noise of children, and in my whole life never bade them be still" [258]), he would not have tolerated, spoiling or "cunning": Cobbett values among other teachable virtues "honesty and amiable manners" (343) and opines that "evil communications corrupt good manners" (308). Applied to Fanny Dashwood's educational methods, the last statement could arguably point out that Fanny's influence on her son is not the best. Ford supports this idea when she says that little Harry's faults, especially his egotism, appear to be "inherited" (npag; Tauchert, 59). Regarded with this idea in mind, one might even ask, is Fanny a caring mother at all? One might argue in the affirmative, since, disregarding traditional role allocation, she uses all her means to secure the best future for her son (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 141) and she does so, coming from a background which, considering her own mother's, Mrs Ferrars', typical upper-class focus on representation and status (cf. Craig, 20), as well as typical upper-class emotional distance to her children, lacks emotional closeness and "joy of personal connection" (Anderson & Kidd, 141). Still, she embraces the socially accepted idea that a mother should care for her son, even if she also does so in her own way, foregoing the readership's sympathies, but also, paradoxically, contradicting the feminine ideal of caring selflessness and emotional compassion. As Cobbett states, the ideal mother has "no feeling of fear for her own life" (179), but social convention has it that Fanny's social existence, if not directly her life, are very much connected to and dependent on her son, her status as mother of the heir: Saving and benefitting him, is, indirectly, benefitting herself (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 136). If she had no son, she would simply be depicted as a very greedy and egotistical woman; her motherliness is "unromantic" (ibid., 139) in its dependency on "wealth and social status" (ibid.), but it is there. In her character, motherhood and "selfishness" (Cox, "Faith", npag)

are tied together, contradicting the ideal of the selfless mother, whose selflessness encompasses every issue in everyday life. This ideal of entire selflessness is, as Austen's novel generally exhibits, hard to achieve in "a (social) structure which rewards self-interest" (Tauchert, 64) and encourages the excitement of financial and social "envy" (Wong, 57). This conclusion to the analysis of Fanny's motherhood highlights the inherent impossibility of the ideal to be perfectly carried out in practice without violating one or the other rule included in the ideal: Perfect motherhood in the long nineteenth century is a paradox.

5.1.2 Mrs Dashwood: imperfect simplicity and naiveté

Even though Mrs Dashwood can be seen as the opposite of her cold and calculating daughter-in-law Fanny, she cannot be described as a perfect role model, either (cf. Bagno-Simon, 41), since her behaviour is often presented in a rather critical light through the eyes of her eldest daughter Elinor (cf. Austen, S & S, 6-7), who time and again functions as a moral compass in the novel. Despite her recurrent mistakes, she bears herself with dignity in a situation that can be regarded as "degrad[ing]" (cf. ibid., 8) for her status as wife of the late master and mother of his daughters and is able to endure sacrifice for their sake. It is especially interesting to mention certain parts of Hannah More's *Strictures on Modern Female Education* with regard to Mrs Dashwood, perhaps because Mrs Dashwood is a mother of only daughters and More addresses specifically mothers of female children, namely "ladies who, while they are devoted to the enjoyments of the world yet retain considerable solicitude for the instruction of their daughters" (139) in this passage. In the following piece of advice, she informs these ladies that "if they are really in earnest to give them [their daughters] a Christian education, they must themselves renounce a dissipated life. Or if they resolve to pursue the chance of pleasure they must renounce this prime duty, Contraries cannot unite" (ibid.). More's position is evident: Good motherhood means leading a comparatively secluded and rather simple life far away from the hustle and bustle of the fashionable world and its focus on social representation and luxury. The humble country abode of Barton cottage would have suited her promotion of humble living far away from the distracting temptations of the metropolis. However, in order to adhere to the ideal entirely, Mrs Dashwood should have made the decision herself, without the necessity of

economic strain, and freely renounced the world for the sake of her daughters' – especially her youngest daughter's – upbringing, in the light of the middle-class ideal of frugality and industry (cf. Cobbett, 108 & 162). As Bagno-Simon confirms, "Mrs Dashwood has no sense of frugality" (43). She agrees to sell her carriage, also a symbol of status, but only "[f]or the comfort of her children" (Austen, S & S, 26) so that they would have more financial means available. This complies with the idea of maternal sacrifice but also discloses Mrs Dashwood's attachment to the status she has been used to, "had she consulted only her own wishes, she would have kept it" (ibid.). Indeed, the virtuous and pragmatic decision to live in a humbler way appears to be largely due to Elinor's "wisdom" (ibid.; cf. Wiltshire, 26). The fact that Mrs Dashwood regrets having to say goodbye to the comforts of her representative home and her status as mistress, also because of the material loss which this implies for her children (cf. Austen, S & S, 8), proves that her idea of motherhood is, if less than in the case of Fanny Dashwood, still shaped by her background and dependent on upper-class ideals of maintenance of status.

In contrast to Fanny, Mrs Dashwood's primary goal in life is not to see her children climb the social ladder or acquire a great amount of money. However, she is very concerned about their social as well as emotional wellbeing and their financial security. This is one of the reasons she would like to see her elder daughter married to Edward Ferrars: "'In a few months, my dear Marianne,' said she, 'Elinor will in all probability be settled for life. We shall miss her; but *she* will be happy'" (Austen, S & S, 17, original emphasis). However, it is made clear that she does not promote the match "from motives of interest" (ibid., 15). This is a circumstance that is directly contrasted to behaviour patterns that were apparently common with other mothers who "might have encouraged the intimacy" (ibid.) for more selfish or materialistic reasons, whereas others "might have repressed it from motives of prudence" (ibid.). John Gregory, the author of *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* [1774], would have approved whole-heartedly of Mrs Dashwood's motives to wish her daughters happily married since he himself has similar motives, telling his offspring "I wish you to marry for no other reason but to make yourself happier" (81). Mrs Dashwood is evidently too kind by nature to be overly materialistic nor is she overly concerned with social appearances (cf. ibid.). Her primary motive is very plain and simple: wishing the best for her daughter, but she is, despite her

naiveté, not so far removed from the world that she misjudges her daughters' financial situation and believes her daughters to be wholly independent from the social necessity to marry. Gregory, however, judges differently, seemingly having his daughters equipped with enough means to justify this comparatively liberal statement: "Heaven forbid you should ever relinquish the ease and independence of a single life to become the slaves of a fool, or a tyrant's caprice" (82). Yet, again, Mrs Dashwood's naivety and initial optimism is shown in her portrayal of a perfectly content future: "'We shall live within a few miles of each other, and shall meet every day of our lives'" (ibid.). Her unrealistic assessment of certain situations also applies to her skills at managing her income and her new domestic arrangements (cf. ibid. 29). In both cases she is explicitly characterised as not very "wise" (ibid.). In this respect, she evidently can be called 'lacking', also if regarded in the light of William Cobbett's writings, which promote the middle-class virtue of household economy even for the higher classes:

> [A]lso in the case of great merchants and of gentlemen living on their fortunes, surely the head of the household ought to be able to give directions as to the purchasing […] and ought to see the things done, or that they be done. She ought to take care that food be well cooked, drink properly prepared and kept; that there be always a sufficient supply; that there be good living *without waste* (118, emphasis added).

Mrs Dashwood evidently finds it hard to adjust entirely to her new, more limited circumstances and is thus also unable to teach her daughters proper economy. This, however, cannot be said to be just her own fault since society (her parents, as Cobbett opines [cf. 327]) obviously failed to prepare her for such a case.

Mrs Dashwood is a daughter of her time, but, in contrast to Fanny, she is openly characterised as a kind woman who is very sincere, if rather emotional, in her "tender love for all her three children" (Austen, S & S, 6). She immediately travels to her daughter, disregarding personal comfort, when Marianne has fallen ill and needs her "solace" (Shen, 108), sympathy and care; "to see Marianne was her first desire" (ibid., 317). In this wish, she echoes Cobbett's idea that an ideal mother has "no thought for herself" (179) when her child's health or even life is at stake. She is usually together with her children, and when she is apart from them it is purely for the reason of letting Elinor and Marianne enjoy themselves and in the hope of securing them a comfortable future. The visit in London is such an instance

(cf. Austen, S & S, 148); it shows that she recognises the social opportunity for her children and is materialistic enough to wish them to pursue it but does not care if these opportunities benefit herself since she stays at home to take care of her youngest child. The fact that Mrs Dashwood is eager to let her eldest daughters visit London is praiseworthy in so far as it showcases her intense interest in their – especially Marianne's – affairs of the heart and wants to see both together with the man of their choice in order to be socially secure, but also emotionally satisfied in the future:

> 'I will have you *both* go,' said Mrs Dashwood; 'these objections are nonsensical. […] [I]f Elinor would ever condescend to anticipate enjoyment she would foresee it there [in London] from a variety of sources; she would, perhaps, expect some from improving her acquaintance with her sister-in-law's family [probably getting into contact with Edward Ferrars again] (Austen, S & S, 148).

But it is not only care for the future that is associated with a visit to London: Mrs Dashwood proves here that she is in favour of enjoying worldly "pleasure" (More, 139) and expects her daughters to do the same. This, from More's perspective, would doubtlessly mark her as an imperfect mother since she, despite her eagerness for her offspring's happiness, chooses the wrong way to promote it, encouraging vanity and providing them with the wrong mindset.

However, the fact that Mrs Dashwood stays at home without regrets in order to educate her youngest daughter would have been very much approved by moralists such as More, who strongly criticises a mother's "perpetual absence from home", "whose time is absorbed by crowds abroad" (139).[246] In order to still the moral and intellectual cravings of her children, especially her daughter's, whose role model she is, a mother should remember that a good education "is not to be effected with the shreds and parings rounded off from the circle of a dissipated life; but in order to its adequate execution the mother should carry it on with […] spirit and perseverance at home" (ibid., 140). In this as well, Mrs Dashwood is definitely not shown to lack any "spirit" (ibid.). Yet, her competence in maternal judgement appears questionable sometimes, since her naiveté makes her misjudge situations

[246] More refers here primarily to mothers who are still nursing and whose fault of neglecting their child is therefore to be considered even more severe since their "physical nurture" (139) is neglected as well. However, she explicitly criticises the mother as well who only thinks about her child's physical well-being and, when her physical presence is no longer required for this task, "desert[s] her post when the more important moral and intellectual cravings require assistance" (140).

which are potentially dangerous for her daughters' future. However, "Mrs Dashwood could be calm, could be even prudent, when the life of a child was at stake" (Austen, S & S, 317). She exhibits this change in her normal stance, when Marianne is indeed very ill after Willoughby's betrayal. Shmidt observes with respect to this scene that "Marianne's lovesickness also incites grave remorse in her mother" (435). However, she cannot keep her reticence up for long and regresses into her old mothering tactics. Mrs Dashwood's immaturity is emphasised by her later denial of the fact that she judged Willoughby incorrectly: "'There was always something, – if you remember, – in Willoughby's eyes at times which I did not like.' Elinor could not remember it; but her mother, without waiting for her assent, continued" (Austen, S & S, 321). She is, consequently, no role model since she remains "superficial" (Evans, 96) in her perceptions, stays in "self-delusion and denial" and "is in no hurry to correct her thinking" (Bagno-Simon, 43). Again, Elinor proves herself to be the more mature person compared with her mother, who was not only unable to recognise the signs of an "unreliable suitor" (Hall, 186), but also fails to acknowledge her own shortcomings after the damage has been done. Cobbett warns his readership that if "[f]ond mothers and fathers" are "over-lenient" in points of principle "punishment" is sure to come (36) in the end and their own lack of judgement is to blame.

This possibility to neglect or mismanage the parenting process involuntarily because of personal shortcomings or lack of ability appears to be among the primary causes for maternal anxiety. For instance, Elizabeth Gaskell describes her worst fears when she writes in "My Diary", "If I should misguide from carelessness or negligence! *wilfully* [sic] is not in a mother's heart. From ignorance and errors in judgement I know I may, and probably shall, very often" (50, original emphasis). There are many errors in judgement in Mrs Dashwood's discernment of various characters and situations (the case of Willoughby is certainly the most prominent one) and consequently she does not reach the degree of insight into her own parenting abilities – or the lack thereof – which Gaskell possesses. It is Mrs Dashwood's kindness and trust that is one of the factors that remove her from a closer resemblance to the motherly ideal promoted in advice literature. Her initial trust in the "liberality of [her stepson's] intentions" (Austen, S & S, 15) to make up for the lack of paternal provider makes her appear naïve and overly trusting in the honesty and integrity of other people. However, she is also depicted as rather

emotional in her despising people who have lost this trust, such as her stepson's wife: "The contempt which she had, very early in their acquaintance, felt for her daughter-in-law, was very much increased by the farther knowledge of her character" (ibid.). Because of her emotional bias, she often makes unrealistic or overly optimistic assumptions and misjudges social situations, as for example the initial relationship between Elinor and Edward Ferrars (cf. ibid., 15-17), or in her assessment of Willoughby's character (cf. ibid., 75). Indeed, "Mrs. Dashwood never supervises the young lovers' behavior nor does she attempt to act as a buffer between her daughter and what could turn out to be a disastrous situation" (Bagno-Simon, 43). In his conduct book, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, John Gregory mentions right at the beginning that parents should be wise in the judgement of the world, which in his opinion could be a danger to children, especially girls, if they were not warned of it at a proper point in time. As a father, he also deems the kind of warning that he is able to provide for his daughters as inadequate because there are matters on which mothers could equip their daughters with information in a more fitting manner, and motherless girls who are deprived of "either […] her instruction or her example" (1) are much to be pitied. Mrs Dashwood is very much alive, and her interest in and love for her daughters is evident. However, her romantic inclination and lack of common sense and knowledge of the ways of the world cause her to misjudge people and situations, which make her advice and instruction for her children often inadequate or lacking in terms of practicality and rationalism. As Bagno-Simon confirms, "[w]ith juvenile or overly emotional mothers, daughters cannot help but be impacted on" (41).

It is Elinor who takes over "the mothering role" (ibid.) and acts "in loco parentis" (Wiltshire, 26) when she mirrors Gregory's advice in reminding her mother of her maternal duty to guide and admonish her children rationally. Mrs Dashwood's "unwavering approval" (Bagno-Simon, 41) of Marianne's overly emotional judgement of people and impulsiveness leads to conflict because the daughter's demeanour remains unchecked. William Cobbett explains with regard to parental guidance: "It is the duty, and ought to be the pleasure, of *age* and *experience* to *warn* and instruct youth and to come to the aid of inexperience" (1, emphasis added). In the context of Marianne's relationship to Willoughby, Elinor asks Mrs Dashwood to aid and "warn" her daughter with the privilege which "age and experience" have given her: "'Why do you not ask Marianne at once,' said she,

'whether she is or she is not engaged to Willoughby? From you, her mother, and so kind, so indulgent a mother, the question could not give offense. It would be *the natural result of your affection for her*" (Austen, S & S, 83, emphasis added). A certain maternal carefulness and mistrust is, according to Elinor, also an expression of maternal love. Even though she does not know it yet and has had no direct hint at his insincerity, Elinor at least *considers* the possibility that Willoughby might not be good for Marianne. Mrs Dashwood, however, is too emotionally biased (cf. Tauchert, 59) to recognise the necessity of healthy suspicion, implying keen knowledge of her daughter's character, connected with love.

Elinor, however, knows Marianne too well to be without suspicion. This again confirms the idea that the older sister takes over the place of the parent. She, as well as Gregory, "know[s] mankind too well; I know that falsehood, dead dissipation, their coldness to all the duties of friendship and humanity" (1-2). Elinor exhibits a stock of experience and knowledge, which her mother, though considerably older, apparently lacks (cf. Evans, 96).[247] Wiltshire confirms that "[t]he alliance of mother and younger daughter forces Elinor into a position where she must appear older than her years" (26) and develop maternal experience on her own. This worldly wisdom is, according to Cobbett, vastly important for domestic happiness: He describes it as a "great stock of knowledge of that kind which has an immediate effect on our personal ease and happiness; that kind of knowledge, upon which the cheerfulness and the harmony of our homes depend!" (2). He adds that "parents should be under the influence of *reason* and *experience*, as well as under that of affection" (264, original emphasis). There is affection enough in Mrs Dashwood's parenting, but hardly enough experience and, according to her understanding and character disposition, even less reason gained from her limited experiences as wife of a well-to-do landed gentleman, living in the country. Gregory, again, proves to be entirely on Elinor's side when he, in his function as paternal advisor, tells his children to be overly cautious in any of their choices, particularly their romantic attachment since evil is found everywhere and "[a] rake is always a suspicious husband, because he has only known the most worthless of your sex. He likewise

[247] According to Brenda Cox, Elinor has also, far more than her mother, incorporated the ideal of self-denial in her control of emotions (cf. "Faith", npag). Lack of emotional control can therefore be interpreted as inherently selfish: "Selfish characters show readers what to avoid. Elinor, though, provides a positive example by exerting herself to do her religious duty to love her neighbor as herself, recognizing her feelings but controlling their expression" (ibid.).

entails the worst diseases on his wife and children, if he has the misfortune to have any" (91). In points of experience, the readership can assume in Mrs Dashwood's favour that she, a respectfully married lady of social standing, has never met a rake and has never been taken advantage of, and, therefore, is unable to benefit from experience which she never made. But, in the context of Austen's novel, this excuse is not sufficient since Elinor, who supposedly has had even less experience, exhibits more reason (cf. Evans, 96). Marianne, for instance, in the end recognises her sister's superior reasoning and power of discernment and therefore changes her behaviour, striving to acquire "a similar level of prudence and moderation to that of Elinor" (Bagno-Simon, 44-45), while "Mrs Dashwood is unable to see both the pragmatic and the ethical dimensions of Elinor's scepticism" (Weiss, 264) and thus exhibits a lack of understanding of her daughter which Elinor is well aware of.

Yet, Elinor neither humiliates her mother nor censures her lack of judgement openly. Instead, she manages to both criticise and praise her mother's parenting style indirectly at the same time in the scene referred to above. She compliments her mother on her kindness and the positive result this kindness can produce in difficult situations when the trust of parent and child is at stake. With this diplomatic behaviour, Elinor echoes the advice from *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, which prescribes that

> [i]t is the correct thing […] [f]or a young girl to give her mother the deference due to her. It is undeniable that the young sometimes possess qualities their elders have not, talents being inborn […]; but if she exhibits her talents in such a way as to imply a contempt for her mother, it will only make onlookers dislike her, in spite of her ability (M.C. 27-28).

There are no "onlookers" in this case, since their conversation is private, but the fact that Elinor behaves considerately and respectfully towards her slightly unwise mother without gratification from outside is likely to endear her character to the reader, especially to a contemporary readership who would be even more keenly aware of the concept of filial reverence as promoted by the conduct book. However, Elinor also manages to remind her mother of her duty to be less emotional and blindly trusting and make use of her parental authority. Mrs Dashwood, however, chooses to refrain from using her authority for the sake of avoiding open conflict and the risk of "distress[ing]" (Austen, S & S, 83.) Marianne. This choice highlights her dislike of antagonism and conflict; however, it also portrays her as a slightly

cowardly person since she avoids an uncomfortable situation for the sake of present (also personal) harmony. These hints of selfishness must definitely be considered a flaw in the portrayal of an 'ideal' mother, as Cobbett confirms: "Now, parents have *no right* thus to indulge their own feelings at the risk of the happiness of their children" (285, original emphasis).[248]

The presence of unreliable and selfish suitors like Willoughby, for example, arguably serves a specific function within the plot which is also related to the depiction of motherhood: "Each of Austen's rogues is self-serving, but each serves the heroine with a learning experience that the mothers or mother surrogates cannot or will not provide for their daughters" (Hall, 189). Mrs Dashwood's inability to prepare her daughter for a reality that is very possibly less romantic than she envisioned enables the heroine to mature without maternal help (cf. ibid.). In Wilshire's opinion, Mariann initially "rel[ies] upon her mother to an extent that actively inhibits her social adjustment" (29). She finally chooses Colonel Brandon because of the experiences she made on her own and discovered "the strength and maturity within [herself]" (ibid.) rather than through her mother, whose closeness to Marianne's initial romantic and unrealistic assessments of characters makes her appear more immature (cf. Austen, S & S, 76-77; cf. Shen, 108). Bagno-Simon supports this idea: "The sisters have not only their mother's inadequacy to overcome, but also the differences between themselves" (41). Both have to emancipate themselves from their mother, as kind as she is, in order to form their own judgement and act upon it.

Mrs Dashwood is a lacking mother, but a mother who tries. She expresses the care and affection for her children in a way that is very different from that of her daughter-in-law, which underlines the fact that she is no straightforward black-and-white character regarding her motherhood. As Wainwright explains, many of Mrs Dashwood and Elinor's choices should be considered with the fact in mind that she, as well as her immediate family, are "wom[e]n who live […] in an uncongenial and often hostile world" (197) and they have to live up to the challenge of protecting themselves as well as others, while still "upholding the social code" (ibid.). This is a complex task which not everyone is naturally up to: They are required to preserve

[248] Nevertheless, the interpretation fits Valerie Wainwright's description of Elinor as a through and through "respectful and considerate" (195) person who is, despite her "altruism" (ibid., 196) also ready to care for her own peace of mind and prefers harmony (cf. ibid.).

their “emotional engagement” (ibid., 202) while still maintaining their “capacity to reflect or reason” (ibid.) in any difficult social situation, but without being called ‘too masculine’ for their reason-based behaviour (cf. Hemingway, xxx). Mrs Dashwood resembles the ideal in her love and her (emotional) care and compassion but lacks the required rationality and is still influenced by her upbringing and social background and its conventions, which hinders her from being more flexible in her care. This conflicting image, even within the quite ‘simple’ and naive character of Mrs Dashwood showcases the idea that notions and representations of motherhood were never entirely free from social upbringing (cf. ibid.), inherited ideas about family life and social belonging, as well as the clash of ideals between the increasingly popular middle-class domestic concept and upper-class traditions. Both Fanny and Mrs Dashwood exemplify this: While Fanny lacks compassion but embraces rationality, Mrs Dashwood does the opposite. In the end, both maternal characters are conflicted, which is not in the least due to the equally conflicting demands of social circumstance.

5.1.3 The socially versed Lady Middleton: Perfect motherhood or the socialisation of children under the wrong premises? Children in social context

Lady Middleton is a woman whose life is very much defined by her family, especially her children (cf. Ford, npag.). They seem to be almost necessary for her identity, which is mirrored in the very first scene in which she appears: the visit at Barton cottage (cf. Austen, S & S, 30-31). Her appearance and her manners, which are both handsome and graceful, are described first, but apart from this she is presented as cold and rather indifferent (cf. ibid.) – altogether not the most interesting and complex character. Enid Karafili Steiner describes Lady Middleton as a “rank-obsessed” (457) woman who is exceptionally well-versed in social hierarchies and the norms of civil interactions (cf. ibid.). In other words, she knows exactly where she stands and how to represent herself. It is therefore interesting to note that for her introductory visit in Barton Cottage she brought along “with her their eldest child, a fine boy about six years old, by which means there was one subject always to be recurred to by the ladies in case of extremity” (Austen, S & S, 31). This situation exhibits several conspicuous assumptions: First, children are always a topic for ladies to be enjoyed and provide an entirely suitable topic for a

social conversation between acquaintances. Second, Lady Middleton is not a very social woman and lacks interest in other people. This is confirmed by Enit Karafili Steiner, who mentions that for Lady Middleton "civility [is] […] a disengaged skill devoid of genuine personal investment" (457). Third, Lady Middleton enjoys exhibiting her offspring in front of company and making them the subject of conversation since they appear to be one, if not the most important factor in her life (cf. Austen, S & S, 31). This chapter aims to highlight how Lady Middleton's presentation of her family as the defining element of her character is, in more ways than one, a very fitting example of early nineteenth-century treatment of children in social discourse among the landed gentry: "[T]hey had to inquire his [Lady Middleton's eldest son's] name and age, admire his beauty, and ask him questions which his mother answered for him" (ibid.). The fact that this conversation is presented as a template for similar situations hints at the idea that, even though well-situated upper- and upper-middle class families had servants to take care of their children and appeared rather distant from them at times, their existence and their presence under certain circumstances very much remained part of the everyday life of their parents and of their social interactions and was important for their social image, as can be seen as well in the case of Fanny Dashwood who, like Lady Middleton, regards her son as an extension of her own character and as part of her assets. In contrast to Fanny, however, Lady Middleton appears to be more domestic and less openly materialistic in her closeness to her children, which is interesting because it mitigates her portrayal as a cold fish to some degree.

Lady Middleton's introduction of her family to the Dashwood women with her eldest son representing her children reflects, to some extent, the ideal of family togetherness that is detectable in the vision of "domestic togetherness" (Graham, 41) praised later by authors of Victorian advice literature such as the writers of *Cassell's Household Guide* [1869]; this text presents an ideal of the family as a closed, (united) structure (cf. 33). It is interesting to note that the model of family togetherness promotes this vision regardless of social class, among the wealthy nobility as much as among less affluent families (cf. ibid.). William Cobbett also echoes this sentiment when he highly recommends "*personal* attention, and […] never-ceasing endearments of […] [the] parents" (254, original emphasis) also for the wealthier classes, who should mirror the simple habits of domestic togetherness,

practiced, in his opinion, more often among the lower orders (cf. ibid.). Lady Middleton's habit of presenting herself and her husband together with their eldest son could be argued to reflect this image, at least in society – it is what she wants others to know about herself. The image of ideal family togetherness is the most important issue on her personal ''business card".

As such, the child does not only stand symbolically for the domestic happiness of the whole family as it should be perceived by outsiders: Lady Middleton also exhibits the functionality and the social security of her family since her eldest child is male and will, like Fanny Dashwood's Harry, inherit Sir John's title as well as his estate (cf. Pool, 90-92), another example of Brejon de Lavergnée's "father-to-son" model (cf. 90). Like Fanny Dashwood, the Middleton family can rest assured that there will be continuity and stability – financially as well as regarding social status among their peers because they have a son to tread into his father's footsteps (cf. Pedersen, 114). Hanson mentions that children were regarded as inseparably connected to social status (cf. 39), and Lady Middleton's performance mirrors this norm; she introduces herself and her family in a way that presents them in the most advantageous light. The fact that the whole company starts discussing the physiognomy of the child, specifically regarding the question of resembling his parents (cf. Austen, S & S, 31), enhances this idea. The parents are seen as role models that the child is modelled after: "In the present case it took up ten minutes to determine whether the boy was most like his father or mother, and in what particular way he resembled either, for of course everybody is different" (ibid.).

One function of Lady Middleton's child in this situation is that of a social commodity: In her study *The Peripheral Child in Nineteenth Century and its Criticism*, Nell Cocks describes the child in Jane Austen's novels – here referring to *Persuasion* – as particularly interesting because of their position, which is often superficially perceived as unimportant and negligible for the main narrative (cf. 32). She argues, however, that ultimately the child in social situations might not be the main character, but still has considerable impact on the general social pattern, if only in a rather passive way (cf. ibid.).[249] For Cocks, the child is constantly 'othered'

[249] The natural bond that was thought to exist between parent and child, the perception of the child as an extension of the parents, justifies here the deliberate use of children in social context for the

and put into opposition to the surrounding adults in various ways, but cannot be neglected because the presence and position of the child sheds new light on social situations (cf. ibid.).[250] In the above-mentioned scene, Lady Middleton's son is far from marginalised in one sense, since he is the subject of conversation, but his true self, his real character are unimportant for the main narrative; what solely matters is his function, his position in the social context. Moreover, he is othered insofar as he is the only child present. His 'othering', his presence in this group of adults, does not tell us anything about him, but only about the adults in his environment. This function means that the child is far from being, in Cocks' words, "peripheral" (ibid.); after all, he is vital for the characterisation of the adults, especially his parents. Yet, the depiction of the child as a 'social commodity' is also reminiscent of the idea that, as opposed to mid- and late nineteenth-century depictions of children, the child is regarded as "property" (36) of his parents. Legally, the situation is clear; prior to 1839, the child was indeed largely considered "property" (Berry, 34), belonging primarily to the man in the house. In the chapter "Letter to a Father", William Cobbett comments on younger children being forced by their parents to present themselves in front of a society of adults:

> I always felt pain for poor little things, set up, before 'company,' to repeat verses, or bits of plays, at six or eight years old. I have sometimes not known which way to look, when a mother (and, too often, a father), whom I could not but respect on account of her fondness for her child, has forced the feeble-voiced eighth wonder of the world, to stand with its little hand stretched out, spouting the *soliloquy of Hamlet*, or some such thing (283).

purpose of benefitting the family as a united entity. "On every formal visit a child ought to be of the party, by way of provision of discourse" (Austen, S & S, 31). In their Introduction to the volume *Children and Youth as Subjects, Objects, Agents*, Levinson, Maynes and Vavrus comment on the difficult relationship of adults, usually caretakers, to children in various cultural and historical contexts. They especially draw attention to the inherent power imbalance between these two entities: "We also consider how different regimes of power—the state, or slave owners, for example, and in our time the international order itself—have positioned children as '*objects'* to be acted upon or manipulated." (Levison et al., 1). Lady Middleton's young son is used by her directly (under the supervision and acceptance of his father) as a tool to present both power and social standing of their family and as a representation, a mirror image of their self and as a tool to ease social interaction.

[250] In Austen's *Persuasion*, Mary Musgrove's sick child, for whom Anne is asked to care during the parents' absence, first functions as a means for Anne to escape an embarrassing and painful reunion with her ex-fiancé Captain Wentworth (cf. Austen, *Persuasion*, 50-51) and later both children take the role of a catalyst for renewed contact and consequent tension between the heroine and her love interest (cf. ibid., 71-72).

For Cobbett, this exhibition of the child is a sign of parental selfishness that is opposed to the ideal of sacrifice, which he inherently connects to parent- and especially to motherhood.

Cobbett calls this treatment of children "*unjust*" (285, original emphasis) of the parents, who, through their own exhibition of social standing and family harmony, teach the child the wrong set of values:

> thus to teach it to set a high value on trifling, not to say mischievous, attainments; to make it, whether it be in its natural disposition or not, vain and conceited. The plaudits which it receives, in such cases, puffs it up in its own thoughts, sends it out into the world stuffed with pride and insolence, which must and will be extracted out of it by one means or another; and none but those who have had to endure the drawing of firmly-fixed teeth, can, I take it, have an adequate idea of the painfulness of this operation. Now, parents have no right thus to indulge their own feelings at the risk of the happiness of their children

Even if it is not made explicit, Lady Middleton also features in the role of an educator in her interaction with her son at least in this scene.[251] During their introductory visit in Barton cottage, the readership receives a hint that she is at least attempting to teach her offspring ideal social interaction or expose him to such in the context of a comparatively harmless and less stressful occasion: Lady Middleton tries to play down the shyness of her son as only being due to the exciting occasion: His demeanour of seeking the closeness to his mother and looking downwards (cf. Austen, S & S, 31) displays a certain insecurity that was not exactly encouraged, especially in male children of the wealthier classes, since their future was usually positions among the leaders of society: Grenby mentions in this context the role of the parents (especially the father) as educators, who have to make sure that their son is fit to enter the social world one day, representing the family adequately and ensuring the stability of the household (cf. 23). William Cobbett would classify such a set of values as superficial and unproductive for the establishment of the middle-class ideal of domesticity: He described the act of exhibiting a child as ridiculous and almost cruel when commenting on the performance of the son of one of his acquaintances in company: "And this [his performance] in a voice so weak and distressing as to put me in mind of the plaintive squeaking of little pigs when the

[251] In one of the later scenes, Lady Middleton explicitly fails in her role as educator (cf. 34 & cf. Gorham, 47). This, again, despite her focus on maternity, proves her to be ultimately an inadequate mother, at least according to advice literature.

sow is lying on them" (285). Lady Middleton's determination to exhibit her son "for social […] gain" (Anderson & Kidd, 140) stresses her coldness and promotion of status-related values (cf. Tauchert, 66): another instance in which the initial perception of Lady Middleton as a, if not likeable, at least domestically minded person, begins to crumble.[252]

Lady Middleton's presentation of her son in the above-mentioned scene, however, is not the only passage in the novel where children, in particular Lady Middleton's sons, are made the subject of conversation and serve the purpose of characterising the characters taking part in the gathering. At a party at Mrs Ferrars' London residence, children are, once more, used to fill a gap in the conversation – this time less successfully since not all characters choose to cooperate:

> When the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room after dinner, this poverty was particularly evident, for the gentlemen *had* supplied the discourse with some variety – the variety of politics, enclosing land, and breaking horses – but then it was all over; and one subject only engaged the ladies till coffee came in, which was the comparative heights of Harry Dashwood [Fanny's son], and Lady Middleton's second son William, who were nearly of the same age (Austen, S & S, 221).

Another difference to the first 'child-exhibition' scene in Barton cottage is the fact that this time, the children's actual presence is not even needed; they exist solely as objects of conversation. It is mentioned ironically by the heterodiegetic narrator that the absence of the children is necessary for the conversation to unfold in the first place, since it would be over very quickly had they been present to have their heights compared there and then, leaving a definite result:

> Had both the children been there, the affair might have been determined too easy by measuring them at once; but as Harry only was present, it was all conjectural assertion on both sides; and everybody had a right to be equally positive in their opinion, and to repeat it over and over again as often as they liked (ibid).

[252] It is also interesting to discover that Sir John is definitely not the primary parent here since it is suggested that it was her idea to bring their child to this introductory visit (cf. ibid.). While her husband is very "chatty" (ibid) and generally very warm and welcoming to his new tenants, his wife focusses on their social appearances as well as taking over the role of instructor of their son (ibid.). As it was common for women to take charge over all children, also boys, up to a certain age (cf. Schneider, 42), her being the main educator and model figure for her six-year-old son in a social situation would not have been regarded as uncommon.

Consequently, the objectification of both Harry and William is necessary for this conversation to work, which reveals that Lady Middleton does not stand alone among her peers with regard to her social values, which are deplored by middle-class moralists such as Cobbett – she is part of the system and goes along with its values.

In addition, the drawing room scene enhances the difference between male and female conversation: While the gentlemen converse about outdoor activities and professional matters, the ladies are, at least in this constellation, much more limited in their choice of subject, and it is presented as lucky that they have one at all. Cobbett proves himself to be critical of exclusive ladies' gatherings since the subjects discussed there could potentially harm the domestic happiness (due to being too critical of the husbands' doings): "There are, in almost every considerable neighbourhood, a little squadron of she-commanders […] These are the tutoresses of the young wives of the vicinage" (187). In this case, the social "tutoresses" (ibid.) of the other women are not exactly "youngish wives", however, and they are not there to subvert the patriarchy, at least not directly, but rather to confirm their social position through a matching of their sons as representatives of their "blood-kin" (Tauchert, 65).

It is, indeed, not surprising that two of the more influential, socially high-ranking ladies present on this occasion are the mothers of the boys who are being compared. Since the children function as extended versions of their parents' identity (cf. ibid.), it is the mothers who are competing with each other: a simple conversation to pass the time becomes a power-challenge – thus arguably subtly subverting the male privilege of competition with "universal maternal" (ibid.) means: "The party stood thus: the two mothers, though each really convinced that her own son was the tallest, politely decided in favour of the other. The two grandmothers [Mrs Jennings and Mrs Ferrars], with no less partiality, but more sincerity, were equally earnest in support of their own descendant" (Austen, S & S, 221). The fact that the whole scene is described in a manner that is reminiscent of the style of a modern-day sports match enhances the atmosphere of underlying social challenge, of which, again, the children are only the superficial subject – they are the medium through which status is expressed and affirmed (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 140). The emphasis that is laid on blood and family allegiance is one of the

most striking aspects of this scene. Even though the ladies are, due to their femininity and the duty of keeping up the appearance of respectability in accordance with their status, obliged to maintain a socially acceptable pretence of polite behaviour, the two 'teams' are in fact 'at war' with each other. This competitiveness, if expressed openly, would have been contrary to all demands on female behaviour. Consequently, the mothers "politely" (Austen, S & S, 221) refrain from being too open in their allegiance.

The widows and matriarchs, who are legally not under the direct control of a husband any more, take the underlying atmosphere of challenge out into the open and – in a figurative sense – fight for their family's dominance in this social encounter.[253] They create a "private great society [which] runs on matriarchal principles" (Auerbach, 15); however, their motherhood remains a central element, because the patriarchal structure of the society they live in has still to be adhered to and, in consequence, their maternal function has to remain a defining moment because this is their designated role in the domestic ideal. The matriarchal competition in the drawing room scene, however, is not without consequence, because the other characters who are present, endowed with less social power, are now under the pressure to declare their allegiance: It is not enough that the respective members of the child's families have made their stands clear; the hierarchy of everyone present needs to be affirmed.

> Lucy, who was hardly less anxious to please one parent than the other, thought the boys were both remarkably tall for their age, and could not conceive that there could be the smallest difference in the world between them; and Miss Steele, with yet greater address, gave it, as fast as she could, in favour of each. Elinor, having once delivered her opinion on William's side, by which she offended Mrs Ferrars and Fanny still more, did not see the necessity of enforcing it by any farther assertion; and Marianne, when called on for hers, offended them all, by declaring that she had no opinion to give as she had never thought about it (Austen, S & S, 221-222).

All ladies present in this situation try to manoeuvre their way through this jungle of domestic politics that only at the surface level deals with the heights of two young boys. The one competing with the best diplomatic skills and possessing the highest

[253] Mrs Ferrars and Mrs Jennings would still have had "the right of dower", which provided them with "income from approximately one third of their husband's land" (Pool, 181). This law was abolished in 1833 with the passing of the Dower Act (cf. ibid.).

ambition is clearly Lucy Steele.[254] González Mínguez argues that Lucy Steele's performance of femininity, which includes her 'fondness of children' and her "sensibility" (32), is nothing but a "sham" (ibid.), a disguise that functions as a ladder for her ambition, which entails a readiness to accept society's norms and inequalities and using them for her own ends – in this case, to please her "tutoresses" (Cobbett, 187), who also have incorporated domestic norms, in this case maternity, in their stratagem to present their character, status and family. Anderson and Kidd elaborate on this: "Lady Middleton demonstrates to Lucy that wealth and title provide sufficient fulfilment [sic] to one with an empty head and luxurious habits" (140). Elinor, by comparison, has intelligence but no ambition to rank highest in this struggle over domestic hierarchy (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 140). She cares for polite behaviour but has no wish to bend the truth, as she perceives it, to please the matriarchs present. She thus chooses to remain "authentic" (González Mínguez, 32), in contrast to Lucy. Marianne, though, is the rebel of the company and rejects the struggle for hierarchy altogether by refraining from giving either of them the honour of allegiance. A simple upper-class domestic scene arguably echoes political debates in the public sphere, with women claiming power in much the same manner as men, only in a different setting. The children, who are the subjects of this debate, are as much objectified as a horse, a gun, or, in a more modern setting, the size of a car.

As the readership gets to know Lady Middleton, a clearer picture of her character emerges, which, however, does not primarily serve the purpose of making her character more complex. After a longer time of acquaintance with her, the most fitting, even all-encompassing description of Lady Middleton, according to the perspective of the Dashwood girls, would be that she was "a mother" (Austen, S & S, 32). By contrast, her husband is not described as "a father" but rather as "a sportsman" (ibid.). Ford comments that "[t]he opposition of the Middletons' personalities, the separation of their interests, and Lady Middleton's unconcern

[254] Gorham affirms the idea that too much ambition in young girls was regarded rather critically and she could be accused of having ideas "above her station" (52), use "pretentious" (ibid.) methods to attract those above her and finally make "an upwardly mobile marriage […]" (ibid.). The figure of the "husband-hunting girl" (ibid., 53) was regarded as rather threatening, especially later, in Victorian times, when domestic virtues of modesty and self-negation were over-emphasised (cf. ibid.). The "husband-hunting girl", however, "represents the converse of the good girl's selflessness and gentleness, and like the portrait of the lazy girl it was frequently employed by early and mid-Victorian critics of middle-class family life" (ibid.).

about anyone else might account for her 'solicitude' about her 'troublesome' children (65)" (Ford npag.).[255] While she, apart from her motherhood, is mostly referred to in connection to her manners, he is, again, depicted as quite fond of sports (outdoor) entertainment (cf. ibid.):[256] "[T]he good spirits of Sir John […] gave exercise to the good breeding of his wife" (ibid.). His vivaciousness is making up for her lack thereof, and in this respect, they complement each other very well. However, her concern with social appearances and manners makes her take part in Sir John's activities: On the one hand, she is very much aware of the fact that, being the mistress of the household, it is her duty to preside over the social arrangements hosted at her husband's place and that it is beneficial for her image and status if those fit the current fashionable demands of "elegance" (Ford, npag.). On the other hand, her presence serves the purpose of providing the necessary restraint to Sir John's more 'outgoing' entertainments, which might be potentially unfit for their status in life; her countenance lends respectability to the vivacious undertone of their gatherings. Social rules do not even include the possibility that Lady Middleton might have preferred being primarily described as a 'sportswoman' instead of a mother.

Moreover, the differences in the ways she and Sir John are described serve to make her function as mother stand out and thus make her appear almost as the epitome of motherhood. Isabella Beeton, for instance, proclaims that a natural inclination for "[t[he infantine management of children, like the mother's love for her offspring, seems to be born with the child" (478). In *The Pupil of Nature. Or Candid Advice to the Fair Sex* [1797], midwife Martha Mears even more clearly calls motherhood "perfection of her [the woman's] being" (4), and according to this statement one would assume that Lady Middleton comes very near the midwife's motherly ideal. Lady Middleton appears to be absorbed in her children's affairs, so that she does not appear to have any other special interests (cf. Ford, npag.). This, in some ways, corresponds to the description of Elizabeth Gaskell's feelings when she describes her attachment to her daughter: "How all a woman's life, at least so it

[255] Ford here quotes Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*.

[256] According to Gorman, sports and competitive exercises were seen as traditionally male occupations, even though from the early Victorian period onwards more and more "vigorous" (71) exercises were "encouraged" in girls as well. The difference was, however, that while boys, and their fathers, could – and were supposed to – indulge in these pastimes in public, girls were still restricted to the privacy of their home (cf. ibid.).

seems to me now, ought to have reference to the period when she will be fulfilling one of her greatest & [sic] highest duties, those of a mother" (53). These descriptions paint the figure of a mother in an almost saintly light due to words such as "perfection" and "great and high". Regarded in this light, Lady Middleton's absorption could be read as willed by 'nature' and as fulfilment of her 'natural' purpose. However, this would ignore the complexity of Austen's presentation of maternity in the social context and to overlook the smaller social commentaries that the author dedicates to Lady Middleton.

Even though she is a very dedicated mother, Lady Middleton is far from being a saint, or a role model according to the domestic ideal. This becomes obvious in a closer comparison between her motherly comportment and the ideal. Mears' descriptions of the process of becoming a mother, as well as the mother's connection to her children, is commonly depicted as highly emotional: "How delightful to the ear is the shout of victory at the close of a dreadful conflict!" (Mears, 129). It is indeed hard to imagine Lady Middleton due to her composed and rather unemotional countenance acting in any way that comes close to the emotionality Mears refers to. She does, indeed, "humour" and "spoil" her offspring "all the year round" (Austen, S & S, 32; cf. Tauchert, 66). But the readers still receive the impression that she is emotionally very flat. She appears to be quite indifferent to all social events around her as long as they do not concern her children – Sir John is the only one who shows real enthusiasm at the Dashwoods' arrival at Barton cottage, for example. During an assembly at her own residence, Lady Middleton appears rather bored by the company and only exhibits some emotion when her children enter the premises (cf. Austen, S & S, 34). Since conversation in Lady Middleton's company only seems to run smoothly when the talk centres around her offspring (cf. ibid. 31 & 221-222), this is apparently a characteristic phenomenon during a party. Rather than being the 'perfect' mother, Lady Middleton is characterised as 'nothing BUT a mother.' She is not even a prudent and attentive socialite, a picture one might have formed after her initial visit in Barton cottage during which she made use of her child in order to create polite conversation in want of something else. Instead, she deliberately intended the conversation to focus on her child for her own "self-aggrandizement" (Anderson & Kidd, 139). Her whole existence is determined by her motherhood and all other aspects of her social and

private life fall sadly short and leave her ultimately as a very one-dimensional character.

As a hostess of Barton Park, Lady Middleton neglects her duties of hospitality towards her guests over her maternal feelings, which constitutes an act of selfishness (cf. Tredell, 112) that hints at an inherent vanity which would not be condoned in most advice manuals. The mistress of Barton Park does not hinder her offspring from rudely violating her own comfort in front of company and disturbing her guests. "Lady Middleton seemed to be roused to enjoyment only by the entrance of her four noisy children after dinner, who pulled her about, tore her clothes, and put an end to every kind of discourse except what related to themselves" (Austen, S & S, 34). Lady Middleton is pleased by the fact that from this moment onwards all attention centres on her children. This kind of behaviour is directly opposed to the attitude recommended in *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* [1893]: "[It is the correct thing] [f]or a parent to show pride in his children; Not to do so has to be unnatural. But it is not the correct thing for you to imagine that other people are as interested in them as you are. How should it be so? It is the blood-tie which makes them so dear" (M.C., 29). Even though Lady Middleton apparently has a strong maternal consciousness of this "blood-tie", she seems to fall short in educating her offspring in a proper manner. In the above-mentioned scene (cf. Austen, S & S, 34) it would have been her duty to prevent her children from behaving inappropriately. As the readership learns from later scenes, this impolite and wild kind of comportment is apparently the norm for Lady Middleton's offspring when appearing in social situations (cf. ibid. 115-117). The fact that the unmannerly bearing of the children, and their mother's acceptance of it, is not a singular occurrence casts an even more critical light on Lady Middleton as a mother figure. The author of *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* appears to be of the same opinion, prescribing the best conduct in all situations to be "to be as conscious, considerate, affable, and entertaining at home as in society" (M.C., 9). Lady Middleton's disregard for any discomfort her guests might experience due to her children's demeanour depicts her, contrary to the recommendations, as *un*conscious, *in*considerate, comparatively unfriendly and rather inactive as well as boring. Her omission to find any fault, not only with her children, but also with herself and her compliant acceptance of the others' discomfort because the disturbers are HER children is totally opposed to, for example, Elizabeth Gaskell's

perspective on her own parenting skills and her belief that it would be prideful to suppose her own motherly skills faultless (cf. 52). Instead, Gaskell is of the opinion that she "must pray to be forgiven for […] [her] errors & led into a better course" (53). While Lady Middleton's lack of awareness of her maternal faults can be argued to mirror Mrs Dashwood's downplaying her faulty judgement of Willoughby in some respects, there is a decided difference between the two characters, manifesting itself mainly in Mrs Dashwood's evident capability of maternal sacrifice and more universal kindness, as opposed to Lady Middleton's "heartlessness" (Anderson & Kidd, 140).

Officially, even in higher-ranking households, the mother was charged with the task of educating and 'civilising' her younger offspring (cf. Schneider, 42), though this duty was often delegated to nurses and nannies (cf. Wagner, "Victorian Nursery," 805 & Buchan, vi). The parents' task to educate, or at least to initiate the education of their children and ensure their socially adequate behaviour in polite society, was crucial to the public perception of their family life; the behaviour of their children could be either beneficial or harmful to their reputation (cf. Schneider, 43). It is true that Lady Middleton is introduced as a woman who cares for manners and social appearances (cf. Austen, S & S, 32) and is eager to officially present her family as thriving (e.g. during the visit at Barton Cottage). However, this superficial adherence to the family ideal does not correspond to her actual social practices, which are revealed in the course of the novel: Neither does Lady Middleton seem to realise the impact of her behaviour on the opinion of the other members of the company, nor does she perceive in her children's liveliness an undeniable lack of respect towards her own person: Besides being "noisy" and disturbing her and Lady Middleton's guests, the little Middletons damage her clothes and treat her without any consideration or restraint at all (cf. ibid., 34). This is directly opposed to the presentation of ideal parenthood in most didactic novels and conduct books, which mention respect for parents to be the number one rule of a harmonious family life (cf. Waldron, 50). In *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, for instance, respect for both parents is a prominent issue: "[It is the correct thing] [f]or children to accept their parents' judgement as worthy of respect, if only because they have travelled so much farther on in life and necessarily know more of its pitfalls and snares" and "[w]hen in society, [it is correct] for a young man to give his mother as much attention, and show her as much courtesy, as if she were his sweetheart. Among

highly-bred persons you will always find this the custom" (M.C., 29-30). Lady Middleton's children definitely do not adhere to this ideal behaviour. However, since they are still quite young, it would have been the parents' duty to acquaint them with this ideal. Elizabeth Gaskell, for instance, is aware of the danger to encourage children's selfishness and her own duty as a mother to prevent them from becoming selfish (cf. 58) and disobedient and spoiled and ruthless towards others (cf. 69). Gaskell writes about her disappointment when she discovered that her older daughter hurt her younger sister: "I think it must be from the love of power, but of course we try to check it" (ibid.). Again, Lady Middleton is not inclined to do anything of that sort.

The commotions caused by the unrestrained behaviour of Lady Middleton's children and her tendency to ignore these turbulences are likely to have, according to the author of *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, consequences for the future of the children. The book mentions the maxim that "No children should be out of their place and an annoyance to the grown up members of the family anymore than to visitors. It makes *themselves* unhappy *in the end* as well as those who weary of them" (M.C., 14, emphasis added). The notion that it would be the mother's duty "[t]o remember that a happy and harmonious home *raises great and noble men and women*" (ibid. 10, emphasis added) is, as it seems, completely disregarded by Lady Middleton. However, it is even more likely that she does not even perceive the disturbances in her home as inconvenience (because they are caused by HER children) or as disturbances at all. This ignorance, however, is according to the advice text, a fault in itself because it is evidence of thoughtlessness in the performance of motherly duties.

Maternal indulgence is another factor associated with Lady Middleton's negligent parenting style. As mentioned in chapter 4.3.1, Gregory's *A Fathers Legacy to His Daughters* includes the topic of indulgence towards children, primarily young boys, and warns that the "uncontrolled licence we [men] are too often indulged with in our youth, are apt to render our manners [male manners] more dissolute, and make us less acceptable for the final feelings of the heart" (9). One could very well argue that Lady Middleton's choice to comment on her son's "impertinent encroachments" and "mischievous tricks" (Austen, S & S, 115) with the appreciative statement "John is in such spirits to-day" (ibid) constitutes exactly such a case and will, according to Gregory's argumentation, not be beneficial to

John's further moral development. Apparently, there is an inherent difference between Gregory's idea of parenting and Lady Middleton's. One contrast is the fact that Lady Middleton regards her children as perfect and not in need of correction because they are, as mentioned earlier, an extension of herself, while Gregory, with his religious, Protestant background, regards his children as faulty, not through their own design but by nature, and therefore in constant need of instruction, which the parents ought to provide (cf. Jarrar, 62) in order to "protect them [the children] from danger" (Broughton & Rogers, 4). A lack of punishment would thus not be in the children's best interest because it is bound to cause harm later and could even be interpreted as indifference (cf. Jarrar, 62) with regard to the future wellbeing of the child (cf. chapter 3.3.1). Lady Middleton's assumption that her children would not need any punishment because of their connection to herself is therefore a form of vanity that would have been condemned by advice literature. Gregory, again, is of the opinion that "the natural vanity, of your sex [women], is very apt to lead you to a dissipated state of life, that deceives you under the appearance of innocent pleasure; but which, in reality, […] weakens all the superior faculties of your minds" (11). While Gregory certainly suffers from an extreme prejudice concerning the 'specific femininity' of this fault, his assumption that vanity influences the mind seems to ring true in the context of Lady Middleton, who has become completely oblivious to the fact that her lack of correction in the education of her children lays her open to social criticism. It is exactly these significant matters which are ignored by Lady Middleton, and which make her, despite her obvious interest in her children, a figure that fits the criticism of advice texts, such as *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, perfectly: "[It is not the correct thing] to be indifferent and selfish in small matters. Coldness and carelessness destroy the charm of home life" (ibid. 14). This statement fits Tredell's assessment that within *Sense and Sensibility*, "coldheartedness and selfishness" are usually "link[ed]" (112). In *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, John Gregory also declares coldness (cf. 1) to be one of the factors that mirror the deterioration of modern life and declares it his objective to arm his children against it. Lady Middleton, characterised by her "cold insipidity" (Austen, S & S, 34), evidently does not do so.[257] It is interesting to

[257] It is true that John Gregory dedicates his work to his daughters, who are much older than Lady Middleton's children at the time (cf. Gregory, 1). Yet, a parallel is nevertheless discernible, especially in this instance, since Gregory talks of the general state of the social environment as a danger for everyone and a circumstance to be aware of for parents of children of every age.

discover that behavioural elements which are perceived as shortcomings in advice literature are also noted by the characters within the novel and, to a certain extent, also identified as faults, one example being Elinor's dislike of the parties at Barton Park, which are usually overshadowed by the presence of Lady Middleton's children (cf. ibid., 117), who "run wild" (Ford, npag.) once again.

Lady Middleton's children and their lack of restraint and respect for others do not only serve to depict her own negligent behaviour. Infantile misbehaviour here, just as the maternal rivalry in the London drawing room, also implicitly characterises the surrounding characters as well as the hostess and mother's treatment of these characters. Lucy Steele and Elinor, again, both react in almost diametrically opposed ways to the impolite conduct of Lady Middleton's offspring: While Lucy and her sister are "in continual raptures [over the children], extolling their beauty, courting their notice, and humouring their whims" (Austen, S & S, 115), neither Elinor nor Marianne participate in the scene but only "sit […] composedly by, without claiming a share in what was passing" (ibid.). Ford explains that through the satirical descriptions of Lady Middleton's parenting methods "[t]he narrator mocks mother and child as well as the fawning Lucy Steele" (npag.). Anderson and Kidd comment on Lucy's methods, claiming that "flattering [Lady Middleton's] […] vanity with empty compliments and pretended adoration of […] [the] children" serves the purpose of paving the way into the closer acquaintance of those who "possess the wealth and consequence that she desires" (140). It is not only the selfishness of the parent (cf. Bagno-Simon, 52) that is disclosed here. William Cobbett describes the embarrassing performances of other people's children as a tough task for every honest spectator: "Upon these occasions, no one knows what to say, or whither to direct his looks. The parents, and especially the fond mother, looks sharply round for the so-evidently merited applause" (284). Lady Middleton exhibits almost exactly the same behaviour as the mother in Cobbett's advice text, even though the latter, in comparison to the mistress of Barton Park, was at least a little more justified in expecting applause since her offspring had just given a small performance (cf. ibid.), which, even though tiresome to the guests and embarrassing for the child, deserved more praise than the acts of vandalism Lady Middleton's children are praised for. However, especially regarded in the light of Cobbett's anecdote, their reaction to the little Middletons also reveals Lucy and her sister to be dishonest and hypocritical.

Lady Middleton, however, does not regard the scene in this light at all: "Fortunately for such who pay their court through such foibles, a fond mother, though, in pursuit of praise for her children, the most rapacious of human beings, is likewise the most credulous; her demands are exorbitant; but she will swallow any thing" (ibid.). The consequence is that she has an entirely different perspective on the exaggerated flattery of the Steeles than Elinor and Marianne; she accepts their evident blarney "without the smallest surpri[s]e or distrust" (ibid.) because they complement her "maternal complacency" (ibid.), they confirm her initiate trust in her own and her children's faultlessness:

> She saw their sashes untied, their hair pulled about their ears, their work-bags searched, and knives and scissors stolen away, and felt no doubt about its being a reciprocal enjoyment. It suggested no other surpri[s]e than that Elinor and Marianne should sit so composedly by, without claiming a share in what was passing (ibid.).

Lady Middleton regards usually negatively connotated behaviour such as excessive flattery as understandable and customary, while viewing rational honesty with negative surprise and so reversing the moral hierarchy in order to please her own vanity. Elinor, however, recognises Lucy's assurance of her 'love' for 'lively' children as a mask covering her real purpose:

> 'And what a charming little family they [the Middletons] have! I never saw such fine children in my life. – I declare I quite doat upon them already, and indeed I am always distractedly fond of children.' 'I should guess so,' said Elinor, with a smile, 'from what I have seen this morning.' (ibid., 117).

On the surface, Lucy complies with William Cobbett's ideal that young women should, in order to be 'marriage material', in every case be fond of children, because he "never knew a woman of that taste [and who disliked children] who was good for any thing at all" (179). However, Lucy is a mere caricature of this maxim, through which Austen debunks the hollowness of an ideal used for selfish purposes (cf. Kelley & Odom, 22).

Elinor's honesty and integrity prevent her from wishing to make a good impression on Lady Middleton, which becomes even more evident later on, when Elinor is exchanging ideas about 'ideal' children with Lucy Steele: While the latter eagerly declares her preference of "children full of live and sprits" and claims that she "cannot bear them when they are tame and quiet" (Austen, S & S, 117), Elinor

confirms her being of the opposite opinion: "'I confess,' replied Elinor, 'that while I am at Barton Park, I never think of tame and quiet children with any abhorrence" (ibid.).[258] In this passage, it is once again made evident that Lady Middleton breaks the rules laid down in *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* since she clearly does not "make it [the household] pleasant and attractive" (9), at least for the less ambitious and more honest characters among her guests. As the mistress of her household, Lady Middleton has, according to the advice text, "the greatest power of anyone to make the home a place of peace and happiness, or a place to avoid" (ibid. 12). The lady of Barton Park chooses to make her house not a harmonious domestic gathering place but a place of social competition. To make matters even more severe from the perspective of parenting advice literature, she achieves this through her at once negligent and indulgent mothering practices (cf. Ford, npag).

A tendency towards carelessness and lack of attention is one aspect that is mentioned in Elizabeth Gaskell's diary as a motherly fault that must be counteracted as quickly as possible, even if circumstances and context may excuse the mother of direct blame. In Gaskell's case, illness prevented her from paying more attention to her daughter; nevertheless, she accuses herself "I have been ill, and perhaps lazy, which I certainly ought not to be in anything concerning you [her daughter]" (57). Lady Middleton even exhibits a surprising amount of carelessness with regard to the physical safety of her children in letting them play with "knives" and "scissors" (Austen, S & S, 115). This is especially surprising regarding the fact that motherhood appears to be the essence of her character (cf. ibid., 31-33) and just a few sentences earlier she is described as "fond mother" (ibid.): another way in which she departs from the ideal. Moreover, as already mentioned, Lady Middleton exhibits signs of disregard for her offspring's comfort during her introductory visit in Barton Cottage when she complacently accepts her son's evident uneasiness and discomfort for the sake of appearances and social conversation (cf. ibid. 31). Even though the first scene depicts emotional rather than physical distress and in the

[258] This exchange established the antagonism between the two characters, and, even though children are the superficial subject of their discourse, they are actually only part of what is revealed about Lucy and Elinor's motives and dispositions: Lucy Steele's main interest is not the interaction with children, but achieving social advancement by means of securing the goodwill of socially superior figures like Lady Middleton, and Elinor is very much aware of this: "Their [the Miss Steeles'] manners were particularly civil, and Elinor soon allowed them credit for some kind of sense, when she saw with what constant and judicious attention they were making themselves agreeable" (Austen, S & S, 115).

second confrontation the pain is only potential, there is definitely a recognisable parallel between the two encounters, which hints at a less 'caring' side in Lady Middleton and ultimately exposes that her only true interest is in herself (cf. Bagno-Simon, 52). As Anderson and Kidd confirm, "[s]tone-hearted Fanny, Lady Middleton, and their protégé, Lucy, all choose narcissistic self-absorption over genuine community and suffer no apparent loss in doing so" (141).

Lady Middleton's exaggerated consternation at the negligible injury her youngest daughter Annamaria receives from a dress pin in her own mother's clothes and the amount of attention that is dedicated to the rather superficial injury (cf. ibid.) do not appear to fit this interpretation of Lady Middleton's motives at first glance. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the passage again serves to emphasise Lady Middleton's vain gratification at the exaggerated amount of care the little girl receives from the two Miss Steeles. Moreover, the sequence can also be argued to reinforce the picture of the hostess as an ultimately careless mother since she could have known that there were potentially dangerous pins in her dress when she chose to cuddle her child.[259] Exaggerated trust in her maternity as sole justification for her existence and extreme pride in her status as wife of a local gentleman of rank and mother of his children establish the unlikability of Lady Middleton's character and ultimately prove her maternity to be "devoid of substance" (Anderson & Kidd, 141). A major part of this presentation of character is enabled through social rules and social prejudice: Lady Middleton complies with the ideal but at the same time does not; she is another maternal character who in her choice to adopt elements of the socially prescribed, normative maternal behaviour fails to accomplish the actual goal and falls short of expectations. The question arises: Is the maternal ideal of the long nineteenth century achievable at all? The depiction of most fictional mother figures would suggest that this is not the case.

[259] There is a small paragraph in *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* that is indeed also dedicated to the subject of carelessness and negligence, not only in mothering but also in more banal matters like dress. The book states that "[It is not the correct thing] [t]o be careless in dress at home anymore than when abroad. The dress should be appropriate to the occasion, and all the better if it is" (M.C., 13). The stray pin in Lady Middleton's attire that injures her daughter (Austen, S&S, 115) can maybe hint at the circumstance that Lady Middleton, even if she is socially quite well versed, puts more thought into appearing superficially flawless in looks but neglects the smaller matters that are not visible at first glance. Regarding the broader picture, this pattern is mirrored in the mother's entire life, in social as well as private contexts. She is knowledgeable in social circumstances (Karafili Steiner, 457) but she is also inconsiderate and thoughtless, which shows that her regard for civility is very shallow (cf. ibid.).

5.1.4 "Serenity, cheerfulness and good humour" during pregnancy: Mrs Palmer as the ideal mother-to-be?

Throughout *Sense and Sensibility*, there are just two recorded pregnancies, one of which is not essential to the plot but depicted in greater detail, whereas the second one is indeed relevant to the later action but is only mentioned as background information. The latter, the unwanted pregnancy of Colonel Brandon's ward, will be relevant in a discussion of Willoughby and Colonel Brandon as paternal figures. The focus of this chapter lies on the comparatively detailed description of Mrs Palmer's pregnancy and giving birth. While Mrs Palmer's pregnancy is not elementary to the plot, it nevertheless allows a good insight into the characters' family life and helps to further distinguish the Palmers' personalities in relation to parental ideal(s). Mrs Palmer's unconventionality, in some respect overriding the directives of domestic advice, is striking, which arguably elevates her from a mere side character to a relatable and oddly likeable person despite being continuously "overlook[ed]" (Anderson & Kidd, 141) by research.

The depiction of Mrs Palmer's pregnancy and confinement is interesting, not just because of the matter itself, but because of the uncomplicated and every-day style in which they are mentioned. In aspect, Mrs Palmer is described as very similar to Mrs Jennings, her mother, and very unlike Lady Middleton, her sister, which makes her, in fact, a very "good humour[ed]" (Austen, S & S, 103) woman, though not a particularly intelligent, witty, or fashionable one (cf. ibid.). Elinor even "judges" (Ford npag.) her in a deprecatory manner to be "a very silly woman" (Austen, S & S, 108). But is Charlotte Palmer's determination to take life easy really that "silly"? Even though her light-heartedness was apparently not deemed the norm, this type of behaviour is still depicted, if not as entirely positive, at least as not exclusively negative in advice texts. In her advice manual, the midwife Martha Mears describes the state of pregnancy as "most distressing" even "to women who are in good health" (17). This does not seem to apply to Mrs Palmer, though, since she does not only seem to be "in good health" but is also not the least bit "distressed". This mirrors her mental health and does not entirely comply with the image of women being meek and in need of their doctor's and husband's support (cf. ibid. 6). However, despite thinking that it costs women a lot of effort to achieve,

Martha Mears still prescribes the formation and maintenance of a calm state of mind, "a habit of serenity, cheerfulness, and good humour" (33). By contrast, Mrs Palmer's cheerful and vivacious temperament appears to be very much natural and not at all the result of careful deliberation with medical practitioners or after having read advice literature. Contrary to "distress", this natural cheerfulness is the mental state that Martha Mears deems best for the pregnant woman and her child because "[i]t imposes no irksome restraint; it requires nothing more of them than to perform the duties of life with alacrity, and to fill up the moments of leisure with innocent recreations" (ibid.). Mears' statement appears to be proven right, at least in the case of Charlotte Palmer, whose pregnancy seems to take its course without any kind of turbulences (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 136).

One initial hint that Mrs Palmer has a very uncomplicated pregnancy is presented already in the scene in which she is introduced. The fact that she is pregnant is mentioned comparatively late and is only revealed through suggestive hints from Mrs Jennings, who is, as usual, hovering on the edge of being indelicate (cf. Dodge, npag.): "How does Charlotte do? I warrant you she is a fine size by this time" (Austen, S & S, 154). This would be considered an extremely indelicate remark, especially because Mrs Jennings is asking Colonel Brandon, who is no relative. The cultural consensus at the time was, as Cobbett explains, especially among the upper-and upper-middle classes, that "[w]omen should be, and they are, except in few instances, far more reserved and *more delicate than men*; nature bids them be such; the habits and manners of the world confirm this precept of nature" (200, emphasis added). Mrs Jennings clearly departs from these principles. The comparative silence about such an important topic as the birth of a potential heir, however, can thus be explained as compliance with the social standard related to Mrs Palmer's position as woman and wife of a gentleman. Moreover, the late revelation of her pregnancy is indicative of her general temper: It reveals that Mrs Palmer does not like to make a fuss over her physical condition.

Despite her generally very happy disposition and adherence to the rules of 'delicacy' with regard to her pregnancy, Charlotte Palmer still does not entirely adhere to the ideal. She behaves as unrestrictedly emotionally as she can in several situations, regardless of any advice that might suggest a more moderate and restrained behaviour, especially regarding the outburst of emotions, be they positive or negative. In his work *Hints to Mothers* (1837), the medical practitioner Thomas

Bull, for example, recommends "perfect quiet of body and mind" (100) to ensure the unborn child's safety. Contrary to this advice, Mrs Palmer is exuberant in asserting her own happiness about the state of various things, such as, for example, her sister's parlour and enjoys sharing her enthusiasm with her surroundings (cf. Austen, S & S, 103-104): "She came in with a smile, smiled all the time of her visit, except when she laughed, and smiled when she went away" (ibid., 104). Charlotte "burst[s] forth" with good spirits and deems everything "delightful" and "charming" (ibid., 104-105). Martha Mears argues similarly to Bull, stating that "[p]alpitation of the heart, when immediately occasioned by violent exercise, strong emotions of the mind, or any thing [sic] that promotes the increased action of the blood" (95) can be extremely harmful to mother and child. Again, Mrs Palmer appears to be not particularly concerned with her physical state and therefore does not steer away from physical exercise, which the doctors in the novel have recommended her to avoid (cf. Austen, S & S, 104). Even her mother Mrs Jennings, who cannot be described as the epitome of carefulness and restriction, utters her wish that "'they had not travelled quite so fast, not made such a long journey of it, for they came all round by London upon account of some business'" (ibid.). The pregnant lady, however, waves aside her mother's prudence: "Mrs Palmer laughed, and said it would not do her any harm" (ibid.). The danger of miscarriage was, however, a very real one: Martha Mears admits that she is aware of the danger of miscarriage and has herself experienced the helplessness that medical practitioners were often enough faced with in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries:[260] "I must at the same time confess, that there is no part of my practice which I have been so little able to reduce to a certainty, or which appears to me to require greater skill and fertility of resources than the prevention of miscarriage" (108). Not even a predisposition of "good health" and the avoidance of a feeling of "despair" (ibid.) can, according to the midwife, be any kind of assurance. Being informed about this would naturally heighten the anxiety in a mother to be, and anxiety and distress are, as previously mentioned, emotions that Mears is eager to prevent because of their potentially dangerous side effects (cf. 33). Charlotte Palmer would, accordingly, have every reason to be at least a little nervous and occasionally lose her good spirits. Mears' warning of any "violent passion" (109) and their

[260] For more information concerning medical developments and the insufficiency of science, see chapter 3.2.

destructive effects appears utterly lost on cheerful Mrs Palmer, whose advantage it is, however, that in all her emotionality she remains eternally positive, defying social expectations of female anxiety and irritability.

While Charlotte's "determin[ation] to be happy" (Austen, S & S, 109) is certainly no bad attitude, according to advice literature, her disregard of her mother's worries concerning exercise (cf. ibid., 104) is a more ambiguous issue. It is true that midwives, such as Martha Mears, were by no means against exercise and even strongly recommended it in a moderate form. Mears, for example, writes that "[e]xercise and temperance are universally acknowledged to be the best means of preserving health" (66). Despite this widespread recommendation, she admits that exercise is still a highly controversial topic, even among medical men, and that "a great difference of opinion prevails respecting the nature and degree of exercise proper for pregnant women" (ibid.). With such indefinite recommendations, which seem to support Elizabeth Gaskell's frustrated statement "[b]ooks do so differ" (52), new insecurities and potential reasons for further anxiety are created. Charlotte, however, seems to be unbothered by the ongoing debate and appears to be following purely her own plans, apparently experiencing no physical or emotional conflict or discomfort. Maybe unknowingly, she thus reaffirms Mears' ensuing statement in which she modifies the rule that prescribes the adherence to professional (medical) advice:

> I should therefore feel the utmost awkwardness and timidity in venturing to advance a contrary doctrine, did I not consider that the weight of authority, and the prevalence of any opinion are as light as air, when opposed to the *dictates of nature, to the testimony of experience, and the conclusions of fair reasoning* (66, emphasis added).

In this passage, the midwife acknowledges and respects (male) authority, as usual, by not committing herself to either side of the argument. However, she also leaves room for the natural inclinations of the woman herself as well as her ability to think sensibly. Mrs Palmer's firm conviction that a certain amount of exercise "would not do her any harm" (Austen, S & S, 104) should consequently not be waved aside patronisingly but actually considered a valid point in the whole debate.[261] At least,

[261] In another passage, Mears emphasises her arguments even more. The statement in question deals with the amount of exercise that would be considered proper for a woman in the later stages of pregnancy: "When the contents of the womb begin to increase very perceptibly, the same degree of exercise, which we before enjoyed with pleasure, will now make us faint and weary; — a strong hint

Charlotte proves to be active and vigorous in her daily life – a fact that would have been very much stressed by Mears, who, instead of emphasising the harmful effects of too much exercise again (cf. 95), warns of the opposite – inactiveness: She claims that "[f]rom what has been said on the subject of exercise, ladies of fortune will easily perceive, that luxury is not a more fatal enemy than indolence" (70). Obviously, in passages such as this it is easy to spot Mears' middle-class bias, which is similar to More's perspective (cf. 62-63) and principally condemns extravagances of all kinds as unethical, and, as in this case, also as unhealthy (cf. Gorham, 4-8). However, the mention of "luxury" and "indolence" once again stresses the fact that Charlotte does not specifically care for class representation (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 145).

One controversial event during Mrs Palmer's pregnancy is certainly the aforementioned visit to London. The evangelical author Hannah More with her dislike of the questionable enjoyments of the metropolis, including visits to the opera and public balls, emphatically criticises "the luxury and excesses of London" (More, 224) especially for pregnant women. Charlotte, however, appears to be much more distressed at the very thought of anyone forgoing the visit than at the idea of travelling and looks eagerly forward to "chaperon you [Elinor and Marianne] at any time till I am confined" (106). Despite her distress at the thought of sacrificing her enjoyment, this would have been considered as part of the socially demanded maternal sacrifice. Like More, Martha Mears might consider the trip to London dangerous, since public entertainment might arouse unwanted passions (cf. 21).[262] However, the fact remains that the prospect of enjoying public entertainment during the London season is very much in line with Charlotte Palmer's cheerful and sociable temper and consequently beneficial for her health. Strikingly, the beneficial effect is produced through a disinclination to sacrifice enjoyments, which constitutes a definite incongruity with the maternal ideal, which saw female

to diminish it. *Our own feelings will direct us better* than the caprice of others" (67, emphasis added). In these lines, Mears once more establishes that the pregnant woman's intuition should not be underestimated, let alone ignored. Of course, this way of arguing ties in very well with the emphasis that is put on nature in all of Mears' recommendations (cf. 2).

[262] According to Mears, especially public concerts with their modern artistic sounds which do "not breathe the true spirit of sentimental expression" (35) tend to excite pregnant women unfavourably (cf. 36).

sacrifice as a central aspect of even pre-natal care of the child (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 1).

Mrs Palmer's satisfaction with her life is not marred even in direct confrontation with her husband's "studied indifference, insolence and discontent" (Austen, S & S, 108) and his direct criticism of her mother and other acquaintances (cf. ibid.), which might be considered quite "hurtful" (Anderson & Kidd, 144). Martha Mears' statement that an emotional, even angry, reaction to the husband's behaviour during pregnancy is likely and even understandable (cf. 32) shows empathy with regard to pregnant women – especially since an emotional reaction is even deemed acceptable if the husband's behaviour is well-meant and kind interference rather than the somewhat ironic indifference displayed by Mr Palmer. In Charlotte's case, Mears' consideration seems wasted, however, since her husband's indifference is barely noted by the pregnant lady and certainly causes "no pain" (Austen, S & S, 108; cf. Anderson & Kidd, 144) at all. Her attitude turns his bad temper into something "ridiculous" (ibid., 109) and "droll" (ibid.) that can be laughed about in a friendly way. Even though this seems to be a quite sad state for marriage, at least from the reader's perspective (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 144), for Mrs Palmer it might be the right thing since anger or sadness at her partner's behaviour could, in Mears' opinion, cause not only psychological but even physical "injury" (32). This is, also according to Anderson and Kidd, a sensible strategy since her "happiness does not depend on anything or anyone other than [her]sel[f]" (141). Moreover, the fact that Charlotte is evidently unaffected by her husband's behaviour in public social situations as well shows that she does not care too much for social appearances or feels any pressure for herself and her husband to resemble the ideal married couple (cf. ibid., 145): "She is happier than sensitive women like Elinor and Marianne or cold fish like Lucy Steele, Fanny Dashwood, and her own sister, Lady Middleton. She loves others freely and enjoys being alive" (ibid.). This shows that striving for the contemporary social ideal of domestic harmony at any cost, including maternal sacrifice, does not necessarily lead to happiness but rather causes problems and ambiguity, as can be seen in the cases of both the sympathetic Mrs Dashwood and the unlikeable Fanny Dashwood and Lady Middleton.

Mrs Palmer's birth announcement is typical of the time, mentioning her as "the lady of Thomas Palmer, Esq." (Austen, S & S, 232) and emphasising the fact that she gave birth to a son, a male heir to the estate. The event is considered of

such social importance that the party in London breaks up to attend Mrs Palmer in her home (cf. ibid) and pay their respect to her. Despite the fact that the birth of the son is depicted as an important event for the family, the readership also learns that the grandmother, Mrs Jennings, does not deem it imperative to spend an unproportional amount of time in her daughter's presence after she has assured herself of Charlotte's safety (cf. ibid., 243). Apparently, in the first days after the birth of the boy, Mrs Jennings indeed "wished to be as much as possible with Charlotte" (ibid., 232).[263] This appears justified since, as Martha Mears explains from her own professional experience, the process of childbirth was no simple, easy affair, but a strenuous process that could hold many dangers for both mother and child and "to which, all the powers of the constitution are summoned to contribute; and every shivering may be considered, not as the symptom of any weakness or danger, but as the signal for some grand and united effort" (119). Being a mother herself, Mrs Jennings would naturally know about at least some of the dangers of childbirth. It is significant to note, "at the end of a fortnight, […] her mother [Mrs Jennings] felt it no longer necessary to give up the whole of her time for her [Charlotte]" (ibid., 243). The readership is aware of Mrs Jennings' inherent kindness (cf. Mijares, npag), her reasonable but not overbearing interest in her daughter's pregnancy, and her happiness that Charlotte gave birth successfully (cf. Austen, S & S, 232). Therefore, in her judgement, which does not appear careless or cold, Charlotte's situation is not presented as dangerous; the fact that she leaves her daughter so soon highlights, again, the uncomplicated nature of Charlotte's pregnancy and giving birth (cf. ibid., 243) and underlines character traits that both Mrs Jennings and her second daughter share, a certain simplicity and a genuinely cheerful attitude towards all matters of life (cf. ibid., 113; cf. Anderson & Kidd, 141-142).

Even though she is depicted as light-hearted, Mrs Palmer is not portrayed as negligent in the care for her offspring. It is perfectly in line with the advice of most child-care manuals that she immediately insists on calling the doctor when she suspects her baby's discomfort: "'When I got to Mr Palmer's, I found Charlotte quite in a fuss about the child. She was sure it was very ill – it cried, and fretted,

[263] The exact amount of time is not mentioned. One can only deduce that it must have been several days since Mrs Jennings reduces her care for her daughter "at the end of a fortnight" (Austen, S & S, 343).

and was all over pimples'" (Austen, S & S, 243). In the context of the teachings of most advice texts, her intuition would naturally be explained with the emotional mother-child bond. In *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* [1861], for instance, the author mentions the mother's 'natural instinct' (cf. Beeton, 487) and a knowledge that is supposedly inspired by "a direct intelligence of Nature" (ibid.).[264] However, Martha Mears introduces a new angle to the issue of the baby's disease. In her opinion, only

> a strict observance of the rules before laid down will sheathe the nerves, lessen the irritability of the whole system, and defend the brain itself from many alarming injuries. In short, I know of no disease in the long catalogue of infantile afflictions, against which the suckling may not be secured by the tender and rational conduct of the nurse. I do not make any exception even on account of the small-pox [sic]. A child brought up in the manner here described has nothing to fear from that old enemy to health and beauty. The purity of the infant's habit will correct the malignity, [sic] and prevent the usual ravages of the contagion (160).

It could now be supposed that, following Mears' argumentation, Mrs Palmer, due to her light-heartedness and optimistic nature, might potentially have caused her child's illness through some kind of carelessness, neglecting the religious observation of such professional 'rules' as Mears has laid down in her manual and thus causing "the purity of the infant's habit" (ibid.) to be compromised. Elizabeth Gaskell's anxiety during a similar incident, when her infant daughter Marianne "was very very ill" (53) and she "was very much afraid we should have lost her" (ibid.) as well as her frequent mention of her attempts to "be resigned" (ibid.) in the case of her daughter's death, once again remind us of the sad reality that death during infancy was almost a matter of everyday life in the nineteenth century.[265] Mrs Palmer's anxiety, her potential self-accusations and her dissatisfaction with her mother's first assessment of the disease (cf. Austen, S & S, 243) are consequently understandable and justifiable and so is the fact that she makes use of professional

[264] The same instinct prompts her to leave her own house with her child when it turns out that Marianne's illness is potentially contagious (cf. Austen, S & S, 291).

[265] Elizabeth Gaskell mentions the death of other infants several times in her work: "Poor little Eddy Deane was taken ill of croup on the same night [as her own daughter], and died on the following Monday" (68); "A few weeks since she saw the funeral of a young girl in her walk with Betsy [the nurse]" (62). Following the description of these sad incidents is not, however, Gaskell's medical plan how to boost her infant's health but usually a religious allusion, frequently in the form of a prayer for resignation since she feels that to pray for her daughter's health too often would be 'idiolatry', distrust in God's will, or even a lack of thankfulness (cf. ibid., 54). Passages that deal with matters of diet or medicine can be found but are much rarer than her religious invocations.

help during childcare. Her behaviour might not conform to the domestic ideal, but it confirms Anderson & Kidd's statement that Charlotte is "sensible without being calculating and cold-hearted" (142).

Like most women of her social station, Charlotte Palmer employs a nurse to assist her in taking care of her new-born. Though this was common practice, nurses, especially wet-nurses, were quite a controversial issue (cf. Cobbett, 231 & 260), especially in the face of the rising popularity of middle-class morality. Martha Mears, for examples, admits that the presence of the nurse is a social convention, but, in her eyes, the nurse constitutes another possible danger because of "possible irregularities" (160) in habit that might potentially further disease. William Cobbett supports the suggestion that nurses as well as other servants involved in childcare potentially harm the physical wellbeing of the child and, as a warning, names several cases in which children have been "crazed or killed by nurses or servants" (272). Mears, however, does not altogether condemn the mother for employing a nurse but rather advises her how to circumvent the disadvantages that might go hand in hand with the advantages that the nurse's help constitutes (cf. ibid.).[266] Considering these arguments, it can be concluded that Mrs Palmer is, despite her unconventional carelessness considering social representations and moralist norms, a daughter of her time and is unashamed to value some social conventions of her class due to their advantages in personal comfort; she is a considerate and affectionate but not a self-sacrificing mother, "[n]either overly sensitive nor emotionless" (Anderson & Kidd, 141).[267] After the birth she is portrayed as spending time with her child, while her mother did "carpet work" (Austen, S & S, 288), thus proving that she has an emotional connection to her son and does not consider it below her station to exhibit this connection. The depiction of Charlotte Palmer shows that Austen considered a strong mother-child bond to be still possible despite delegating some motherly duties, despite deviations from both the traditional upper-class standard of distant parenting and the spreading middle-class

[266] One way to prevent the spread of disease through the above-mentioned "irregularities" (Mears, 160) of the nurse, is, according to the midwife, inoculation (cf. ibid.). She also provides advice as to the proper time when the child should be inoculated (cf. ibid).

[267] Despite her prudence and scruples to do everything the correct way, Elizabeth Gaskell also employs a nurse (cf. 63).

ideal of self-sacrificing, all-encompassing motherhood.[268] Moreover, the nurse Charlotte employs is not depicted as lazy and negligent but, on the contrary, as reasonably skilled and experienced in judging children's ailments since she is said to correctly identify the illness of Mrs Palmer's son as "red gum" (Austen, S & S, 243). Olshin remarks in the context of medical treatments in Jane Austen's works that instances such as the illness of Charlotte's son show how ineffective medicine still was at the time; a lay opinion was often of as much value as a doctor's and in quite a few cases the nurse is shown to be the most practical person (cf. 317). However, Charlotte is reassured only by the apothecary's diagnosis (cf. ibid.); this adherence to professional opinion, despite the insecurities connected to medicine, fits into the picture that Charlotte, despite her lack of pretension, is an upper-class woman who grew up in luxury, could afford to spend money on doctor's fees and trusts in the official opinions, who state that employing a doctor is the safer course of action. Martha Mears, for example, states about doctors that she "would with heartfelt rapture strain my feeble voice to swell the note of public praise which they have so justly deserved" even though she is aware that "prejudice and error" are still at large in the medical profession and that "reverence for nature" (3) is still the best course of action. Again, it is shown that Charlotte values comfort and peace of mind, which the presence of a medical professional can grant her, since she is able to afford their assurances and was raised in a surrounding which taught her that making use of professionals is the correct thing to do.

The level of skill a nurse should possess is indeed mentioned very often in advice literature, especially in less moralistic and more medical and practically oriented texts: The midwife Martha Mears considers it to be of the highest importance (cf. 159), William Buchan confirms in *Domestic Medicine* [1769] that the quality of the nurses depends on the training they have received (vi), and

[268] Since Mrs Palmer is only a side character who first appears comparatively late in the novel and who does not grow in importance throughout the narrative, the reader does not learn a lot of details about her further characteristics or her family life. One can, therefore, only superficially judge her bond to her child and, since we do not know whether the nurse she employed was a wet-nurse or not, no statement can be made about whether Charlotte lay herself open to criticism due to this very controversial practice, which was highly condemned by authors such as Isabella Beeton (cf. 478). One fact that has to be taken into consideration is the growing unpopularity of wet-nurses: A practise that was still considered comparatively normal in the eighteenth century grew to be widely rejected in the mid-to-late Victorian times (cf. Wagner, "Speculations", 131). Since *Sense & Sensibility* is an early nineteenth-century novel, the disdain for the practise would not have reached its peak and the practise would still be considered nothing causing complaints, especially among upper-class circles, where contact between mother and child was rather limited (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 8).

Cassell's Household Guide [1866] advises to accept only "trained and certificated" (10) nurses.[269] In this respect as well, Mrs Palmer seems to be up to the standard since the nurse is acting as her own, the mother's, extension and only supports but does not replace her – a piece of advice that is provided by Isabella Beeton (cf. 478). Again, this issue confirms that Mrs Palmer, though largely unaffected by vanity, makes use of her own privileges when it comes to spending money on comfort, the necessary safety of her child, as well as entertainment (e.g. her insistence to chaperone the Dashwood girls). She shows no great inclination for maternal sacrifice, status-related social representation or the domestic ideal; she is neither a typical upper-class woman, nor does she bow to the moralistic demands of the rising domestic ideology; however, she values her child as well as her own comfort, likes her husband, but is not overly absorbed in him, nor does she value his judgement above anything else. She might be considered "silly" (Austen, S & S, 108), a "gossipy chatterbox" (Bagno-Simon, 43 & cf. Schneeberger, 138) and "intellectually marginalized" (Anderson & Kidd, 142) by some, but her strategy pays off.

5.1.5 Two matriarchs in opposition: "Vulgar" kindness vs tyrannical refinement

Mrs Jennings, as mother-in-law to Sir John, is described as being very much part of the family circle, which makes her a very social person (cf. Austen, S & S, 144) who "simply enjoys […] company" (Anderson & Kidd, 143). She is first mentioned as part of a dinner party where she appears as "good-humoured, merry, fat, elderly woman, who talked a great deal, seemed very happy and rather vulgar" (Austen, S & S, 34) and "industrious in gathering gossip" (Schneeberger, 138). Her favourite subject of conversation are "lovers and husbands" (Austen, S & S, 34), which already hints at the fact that the marriage of her children was of prime importance to her, despite the fact that the resemblance to her daughter seems rather small, if

[269] Of course, William Buchan also mentions this point because he is the trainer and receives much of the credit for the nurses' behaviour (cf. vi). The advice given in *Cassell's Household Guide*, to consider employing only nurses that have been "trained and certificated" (10) has to be considered in the context of the time the *Guide* was published. In the second half of the nineteenth century official certifications grew more and more common, and so-called amateurs were less likely to be accepted in a professional context than they were in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as can also be seen in the development of the midwife profession (cf. Mottram, 134).

not non-existent: While Lady Middleton focusses entirely on the younger children and has scarcely room in her mind to consider anything or anyone else, apart from her manners and her appearance as society hostess (cf. ibid., 32), Mrs Jennings appears more invested in the older, or even adult 'children's' concerns such as courtship, engagement and marriage (cf. ibid., 36); in fact, as Mijares confirms, "[t]his interest in getting husbands is a significant part of her character" (npag.). She preserves this 'motherly' concern for the matrimonial happiness and extends it, far beyond the marriages of her own daughters, to all suitable girls of her acquaintance (cf. ibid.). Even though this 'meddling' is perceived as annoying by Marianne (cf. ibid., 37) and, to some extent, Elinor, it proves her "generosity" (Anderson & Kidd, 144) and willingness to invest time and effort for the (as she views it) benefit of persons who are unrelated to her (cf. ibid.). Mijares supports the idea that the reader's opinion of Mrs Jennings changes at the same time as Elinor starts to see the widow in a different light: "Austen significantly develops Mrs Jennings from a vulgar old tease to a competent mother figure" (npag.). While her meddling "makes her appear frivolous and idle" (ibid.), her behaviour during the stay at her townhouse is entirely different since the readership and Elinor are suddenly able to observe Mrs Jennings as a society lady, who knows her surroundings and is kind and accommodating to her guests (cf. Austen, S & S, 151). She shows genuine concern for Marianne in her misery (cf. ibid., 182 &191) as well as "inner strength and independence" (Anderson & Kidd, 143), caring little about others' assessment of her.

As shown above, there is more to Mrs Jennings than can be assumed from the "vulgar" first impression. A closer look at the ideal presented in advice literature shows that Mrs Jennings is, like Mrs Dashwood, no black-and-white character with regard to her maternity, either: Despite the initial impression that she defies social norms through her frankness and vulgarity (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 143), she turns out to be a good housekeeper as well, a fact that, according to advice literature, speaks greatly in favour of her character. In her household manual Isabella Beeton asserts that a woman's qualities will show most clearly in the performance of her domestic duties "for on these are perpetually dependent the happiness, comfort, and well-being of a family" (7). In other words, these performances highlight her maternal characteristics – her compassionate energy as well as her managing talent

(cf. Mijares, npag; cf. Anderson & Kidd, 144). Mijares corroborates the fact that her managing skills shed a positive light on Mrs Jennings' character: "Austen […] often uses a character's home and stewardship to reflect that character's integrity, and Mrs. Jennings's home environment follows that pattern" (Mijares, npag.). For instance, *Cassell's Household Guide* calls mothers to observe a "methodical manner" (142), promotes management skills and economy (cf. ibid., 1), More proclaims the moral impact of motherly behaviour (cf. 52), and Martha Mears believes in the mother's duty to treat servants and household staff with fairness and thus be a role model for future generations (cf. 70). Mrs Jennings is a "mother figure" (Mijares, npag.) moving beyond her biological motherhood by combining compassion and kindness with practical domestic skills and social knowledge.[270] At least in this regard, she is indeed "an excellent role model for her younger daughter Charlotte" (Anderson & Kidd, 144).

A closer look at the character of Mrs Jennings shows that she indeed fulfils most of these requirements while falling short through her lack of respect for "the rules of propriety" (ibid., 143) as well as refinement and restraint. Stohr, indeed, comments that "[t]here is no doubt that the often rude and tactless Mrs. Jennings is morally superior to her perfectly polite, but shallow daughter. Yet the remark indicates how important it is that good moral principles be accompanied by behavior that is consciously attuned to the moral dimensions of ordinary social interactions" (382). She also exhibits a strong disregard of social appearances which can be read in a more positive light since it makes her appear less materialistic and opportunistic. However, despite her departure from 'fashionable rules', she appears to have provided her daughters with a very fashionable, though arguably superficial education. According to Mears, a mother should embody "purity and simplicity" (ibid., 33) and the authors of *Cassell's Household Guide*'s warn of "superfluity and luxury" (33) in maternal household management. In the eyes of John Gregory, who promotes a domestic education for girls with thorough knowledge of most household matters (cf. 42), no "extent of fortune" (ibid.) can excuse the neglect of household duties, and William Cobbett even declares simple "knowledge of domestic affairs" (89) as an absolute prerequisite for every girl who intends to

[270] In her function as temporary surrogate mother for Elinor and Marianne during their stay in London, Mrs Jennings performs similar offices to Mrs Allen in Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818). She is also "a good-humoured woman" who is "fond of" (Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 16) her charge and supervises Catherine's social appearance in Bath without being too strict.

create domestic harmony in marriage. One of Gregory's reasons to advertise this standpoint is the thought that if money should fail, the "ruin that follows the end neglect of […] [domestic matters] may be more immediate" (ibid.), and Cobbett is of a similar opinion in his dislike of fashionable education: "Of what use are her accomplishments? Of what use her music, her drawing, and her romantic epistles?" (121). Mrs Jennings' education of her daughters with its focus on a socially and financially advantageous marriage is indeed too fashionable for middle-class moralists: "Both daughters have benefitted from London finishing schools, including lessons in music and art, and have married into landed society" (Mijares, npag.). This rather superficial focus (cf. Ford, npag.) would without doubt have caused decided criticism especially from evangelical authors such as Hannah More, who writes in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* [1799]:

> But I may safely appeal to the observation of mankind, whether they do not meet with swarms of youthful females, issuing from boarding schools, […] who are introduced into the world, under the broad universal title of accomplished young ladies, of all of whom it cannot very truly and correctly be pronounced, that they illustrate the definition by a completeness which leaves nothing to be added, and a perfection which leaves nothing to be desired (61).

Mrs Jennings' desire to see both of her girls married "to land and title" (Mijares, npag.) can very well be deemed an overly strong reliance on 'vain' appearances and a substitution of moral for material values (cf. More, 60). Again, William Cobbett's advice to fathers supports More's argumentation; he describes the reason for his dislike of fashionable accomplishments as connected to his inherent disinclination to support hubris and asks rhetorically

> why should they [young women] all be musicians, and painters, and linguists? Why all of them? Who, then, is there left to take care of the houses of farmers and traders? But there is something in these 'accomplishments' worse than this; namely, that they think themselves too high for farmers and traders (327).

Gregory, as well, judges the focus on 'accomplishments' somewhat critically, even if not as harshly as More or Cobbett. In his opinion, the "intrinsic value" (41) of such 'typically feminine' occupations as "needlework, knitting, and suchlike" (ibid.) is "trifling" at best. Yet, according to him, they have extrinsic value in "enable[ing] […] [his daughters] to judge more perfectly what kind of work [they should do] and to direct the execution of it in others" (41-42). The idea of

amusement provided by such occupations is likewise not wholly rejected by Gregory:

> Another principal end is, to enable you to fill up, in a tolerably agreeable way, some of the many solitary hours you must necessarily pass at home. It is a great article in the happiness of life, to have your pleasures as independent of others as possible. By continually getting abroad in search of amusement, you lose the respect of all your acquaintances, whom you oppress with those visits, which, by a more discreet management, might have been courted (42).

Whether or not the 'amusing' occupations Mrs Jennings' daughters learned in their expensive boarding schools kept them at home and prevented them from getting "abroad" (ibid.) too much is highly questionable, since the very reason they were taught was usually social exhibition to further marriage prospects (cf. Cobbett, 124; cf. Mijares, npag.). Despite her unconventionality, her maternal kindness, her "independence" (Anderson & Kidd, 143), Mrs Jennings is, at least in the education of her daughters during her earlier years, not entirely averse to social conformity, especially where her daughters' future is concerned. She is not presented as ignorant regarding the "pressure to marry well" (Kelley & Odom, 10) and wants them to have all possible advantages which money and rank can offer them (cf. Mijares, npag.). Mrs Jennings' honest motherliness, which also includes making use of her social advantages, sets her apart from other female characters in Austen's novel.

Especially Mrs Ferrars stresses social decorum in an exaggerated degree, which is already reflected in her appearance. Readers are informed that "Mrs Ferrars was a little, thin woman, upright, even to formality, in her figure, and serious, even to sourness, in her aspect. […] [A] lucky contraction of the brow had rescued her countenance from the disgrace of insipidity, by giving it the strong characters of pride and ill nature. She was not a woman of many words" (Austen, S & S, 220). This first description establishes a strong contrast to Mrs Jennings, who is introduced as "vulgar" (ibid., 34) but "merry" (ibid.), slightly silly and irritating but kind (cf. ibid). The core difference between them is that Mrs Jennings likes people and Mrs Ferrars does not, which also makes the latter completely different from the motherly ideal presented in advice literature. Mijares confirms that these two comparatively wealthy widows with comparable backgrounds are used to establish a contrast: "Mrs. Jennings defies the negative stereotype of the conniving and mercenary, status-driven city widow, as often portrayed in the

eighteenth-century novel. Mrs. Jennings's virtue does not depend on her environment but on her good nature. She counters Mrs Ferrars (Austen's 'city widow') and daughter Fanny with her kindness and generosity toward Elinor and Marianne" (npag.), her "compassion" (Andersson & Kidd, 144) and supportiveness during Marianne's emotional turmoil (cf. Mijares, npag.), acting, as Wiltshire puts it, as a "delegated mother figure" (26) during Mrs Dashwood's absence. In contrast, Mrs Ferrars cares for the social success of her sons, Edward and Robert, who are, despite being grown up, depicted as very much dependent on their mother. However, this dependence is not due to emotional attachment but to the monetary pressure she exerts upon them (cf. Austen, S & S, 225 & 245), thus proving her inherent selfishness and disregard of her children's happiness, firmly insisting on the customary right of the parent to be respected and honoured by one's offspring (cf. ibid., 99). Elinor recognises this pattern in the relationship between Edward Ferrars and his mother: "The old well-established grievance of duty against will, parent against child, was the cause of all" (ibid.). Elinor also perceives that in this case it is not just a conflict on an equal footing – in order to solve the problem Mrs Ferrars needs to be "reformed" (ibid.), a demand which her partiality towards her more egotistical younger son Robert also ultimately forestalls (cf. ibid., 357). Especially Cobbett warns parents to exercise "impartiality" because "when *pecuniary interests* come to be well understood and to have their weight, here is a rivalship, to prevent which from ending in hostility, require more affection and greater disinterestedness than fall to the lot of one out of one hundred families" (328, original emphasis). Mrs Ferrars, however, has no apparent qualms about letting her son go after his decision to keep his word to Lucy (cf. Austen, S & S, 253). It is indeed not Mrs Ferrars' merit that the two sons remain on comparatively good terms with each other (cf. ibid., 357).

Of course, Mrs Jennings' maternity is not ideal either, and her attentions are at times "ill-judged" (Austen, S & S, 183) and consequently even fail to reflect Mrs Jennings' inherent kindness in their effect on the recipient of these attentions. Stohr is stricter with Mrs Jennings: "[H]er ill-considered attempts to console Marianne have the opposite effect. Through her rudeness and lack of insight, she mortifies her friends, puts them in awkward positions, and sometimes causes real pain" (384). Mrs Jennings' genuine belief in the harmlessness of her endeavours (cf. ibid. 385-37) puts her in line with such mother figures as Mrs Dashwood, whose methods

were similarly "well-meant" (ibid.). However, exactly this aspect separates her from her own daughter, Lady Middleton, and from Fanny Dashwood (cf. Tauchert, 66): Lady Middleton is entirely different: she exhibits motherly behaviour exclusively to her own children and considers the offspring of other families someone else's concern.[271] She thus appears less 'meddlesome' and judicious in social situations but also considerably less kind (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 136).

It is certainly true that Mrs Jennings' actions are not selfless, since she enjoys matchmaking very much and is not very much concerned about the initial embarrassment of her targets: "The immediate advantage to herself was by no means inconsiderable, for it supplied her with endless jokes against them both [Marianne and Colonel Brandon]" (Austen, S & S, 37). The fact that she can be selfless or self-sacrificing but also likes her own comfort and enjoyment is mirrored in the circumstance that she is willing to visit Charlotte during her confinement, going "thither every morning as soon as she was dressed, and did not return till late in the evening" (ibid., 232). She sacrifices her time when she genuinely believes that she is needed, "attributing Charlotte's well doing to her own care" (ibid., 233); once there is no more need for her care, however, she leaves again to live her own life, since she "felt it no longer necessary to give up the whole of her time (ibid., 243). Of course, Charlotte is a married daughter and Mrs Jennings' maternal attention to her is not what is usually covered in advice texts that address mothers of unmarried children. However, in the context of more general concept of female sacrifice Hannah More calls every woman to favour her own family instead of fulfilling her own wishes for entertainment:

> She who rejoices at […] the prosperity of a person whose interests do not interfere with her own, may exercise her selfknowledge, by examining whether she rejoices equally at the happiness of every one about her; and let her remember she does not rejoice at it in the true sense, if she does not labour to promote it. (88)

Again, Mrs Jennings ignores moralistic ideas of femininity in favour of being her true self. Mrs Ferrars, by contrast, is equally unrestricted by demands of the concept of female sacrifice: Like Mrs Jennings, she is a matriarch without a husband and with considerable monetary means at her disposal, which she employs for the

[271] This is, for example, reflected in her antagonism to Mrs John Dashwood and her son (cf. Austen, S & S, 221).

benefit of social ambition, including her children (cf. Tarpeley, 98). The Ferrars brothers largely depend on their mother for any financial and social favours (cf. ibid. 15), and she uses this for her own ends, "try[ing] to impose" (Tarpeley, 98) her own materialist values on them (cf. Craig, 27). Auerbach's characterisation of Lady Catherine De Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice* can also be applied to Mrs Ferrars, who also essentially "functions as an image of the overweening matriarchate that would result could widow and daughters inherit the estate" (15).

Mrs Jennings' maternity, like Charlotte's, is kind and caring, but not sacrificial beyond her personal comfort and enjoyment (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 145).[272] But in this kindness lies the main value of her motherliness and the biggest fault in Mrs Ferrars' maternity: "In contrast to Mrs. Ferrars, her maternal affections run wide and deep. Notably, she routinely takes in, or offers to take in, those who have been scorned by the Ferrars, including not only Elinor and Marianne, but also the Steele sisters and even Edward" (Stohr, 384). However, Mr John Dashwood, for example, judges the situation from the angle of social and financial advantage, and consequently absolves Mrs Ferrars from any blame in disinheriting Edward. John Dashwood comments on Edward's predicament: "Mrs Ferrars's conduct throughout the whole, has been such as every conscientious, good mother, in like circumstances, would adopt. It has been dignified and liberal. Edward has drawn his lot, and I fear it will be a bad one" (Austen, S & S, 253). He obviously disregards Mrs Ferrars' vanity and susceptibility to flattery, which cause her to overlook the traditionally ascribed rights of the first-born son (Edward) in favour of her favourite, his younger brother, whose 'mistakes' are much easier forgiven. Her proneness to listen to (Lucy's) flattery make her neglect her ambition of becoming the highly praised and noble Miss Morton's mother-in-law (cf. ibid., 222-223). Though most readers and critics would certainly disagree, Mrs Ferrars' behaviour as a mother is deemed entirely impeccable by some characters, which suggests that

[272] Her motherly kindness towards the Dashwood sisters is indeed misread by more mercenary characters who are of the opinion that motherly kindness from a maternal figure should imply maternal obligation as well, for example Mr John Dashwood, who believes that Mrs Jennings' behaviour should raise "expectation" (ibid., 214) and entitle his half-sisters to monetary support in the elderly woman's will (cf. ibid.). Elinor rejects this way of thinking and judges Mrs Jennings' motherly kindness to have worth in itself without monetary or legal advantages. Mr John Dashwood shows himself to be ignorant of the true meaning and value of motherly feelings, centring only on the less emotional and more pecuniary side of motherhood, which is, for example, mirrored in Mrs Ferrars's behaviour.

the upper-class social norms, represented through Mrs Ferrars' distant and cold mothering (cf. Craig, 20), are still more common in the social environment presented in *Sense and Sensibility* than could be supposed from content of advice texts with their predominantly middle-class biased, which largely suggest a more moralistic and domestic ideology. Both Mrs Ferrars and Mrs Jennings fail to adhere to the domestic ideal of motherhood, but for different reasons: One of them lacks affection, the other lacks social awareness (cf. Stohr, 382). We cannot say much about how happy Mrs Ferrars is, but it can be assumed that she would be reasonably content in being able to exercise power over her children and children-in-law (cf. Austen, S & S, 357). Mrs Jennings does not change either and remains equally happy in extending her 'unsuitable' attentions to Margaret (ibid., 359).

5.2 "Bad seducers" and "prudent" caretakers? Father figures in *Sense & Sensibility*

Within the novel, children and family are portrayed as important social resource but also as emotional comfort to elderly people. The older Mr Dashwood, for instance, lives very "comfortably" (Austen, S & S, 3) "in the society of his nephew and niece, and their children" (ibid.). This contentment is due to two reasons: Firstly, he is assured of the fact that his line will continue, and therefore his duty as a patriarch, as the primary provider of the family, is fulfilled and he can relax in the knowledge that his family's stability is socially maintained. Of course, the Dashwoods belong to "the gentry, the locally based 'country families' of squires, clergy, baronets, and knights with properties […] large enough to have tenants" (Pool, 46) and therefore typically were not obliged to rely on their own physical work for their upkeep. However, the father's role as "provider and breadwinner" (Strange, 51) still had to be representatively fulfilled.

Secondly, his personal happiness is secured as well; until his end, the principle of family "togetherness" (ibid., 88) is reaffirmed since his extended family relieved him from loneliness after the death of his wife and "the cheerfulness of the children added a relish to his existence" (Austen, S & S, 3). In his advice manual from 1829, William Cobbett describes his own experiences, in which he is familiar with a similar sense of emotional comfort through the presence of his children:

> What have I had worthy of the name of *'cares'*? And, how is it *now*? How is it when the *sixty-fourth year* has come? And how should I have been without this wife and these children? I *might* have amassed a tolerable heap of *money*; but what would that have done for me? It might have *bought* me plenty of *professions* of attachment; plenty of persons impatient for my exit from the world; but not one single grain of sorrow, for any anguish that might have attended my approaching end. To me, no being in this world appears so wretched as an *Old Bachelor* (218, original emphasis).

Because of the dual security, due to the children's role as what Cobbett calls "the pride of your prime of life, and the props of your old age" (ibid.), "[h]is [Mr Dashwood's] attachment to them all increased" (Austen, S & S, 3). In the context of family togetherness, emotional and physical support go hand in hand: "The constant attention of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dashwood to his wishes, which proceeded not merely from interest, but from the goodness of heart, gave him every degree of solid comfort which his age could receive" (ibid.). It is emphasised here that the care for the elderly uncle and father figure is *not* the result of selfish motives, and not even solely due to a feeling of duty; instead, it is clearly shown to be connected to genuine affection and kindness. The emphasis on sentiment is strongly reminiscent of the late eighteenth-century sentimental novel, in which traditionally not only the heroine but also the hero adhere to principles of sentiment rather than reason alone (cf. Wagner, "Man of Sensibility", 171).

The uncle, however, fulfils his office of paternal provider only incompletely since he secures the estate for his nephew but not for his nephew's daughters, despite the fact that they have "added a relish to his existence" (Austen, S & S, 3). This appears unjust and is best explained in the context of the patriarchal fear that the estate would not remain undivided: "The old gentleman's will overlooks the 'value' of the ethic of particular relationship represented by the disinherited […]. In the process the estate is preserved whole for an abstract patrilineal inheritance" (Tauchert, 53). The patriarch thus problematises and complicates the role of the provider for his nephew, who has the difficult duty to save enough money to secure the future of his wife and his daughters. He tries, but fails, through his untimely death (cf. Austen, S & S, 4), apparently a common problem in the long nineteenth century, since *Cassell's Household Guide* [1866] dedicates some time to advertising securities and insurances for such cases: "Let him ask himself what punishment could be greater to his spirit, if cognizant of human affairs, than to witness or know

of the distress and perhaps crime [of his family's destitution], which his own prudence might have averted" (39). In Mr Dashwood's case, being willing "to save every penny" (ibid.) for his offspring's future wellbeing is not sufficient. Instead of the professionalised insurance advertised fifty years later in the *Guide*, Mr Dashwood has only his son as insurance. Death leaves his 'charges' to his oldest son, Mr John Dashwood (cf. Wiltshire, 25), who, under the influence of his wife Fanny, proves to be unwilling to adopt the role of the provider. This assembly of paternal failures highlights the difficulty of the paternal task in a patriarchal system that entirely depended on male privilege and female subordination and dependency. Dependency creates helplessness, and helplessness engenders the moral duty to provide. Not all father figures in the novel recognise this moral duty, or they recognise it only in part, and the result is at least legally and financially a "silencing, or displacement, of the matrilineal line" (Tauchert, 55) in favour of patrilineal power. In the following, Mr John Dashwood, Sir John Middleton, Colonel Brandon and Mr Willoughby will be scrutinised according to the paternal ideal presented in diverse advice texts which should aim, according to Cobbett, at conveying "a clear comprehension of man's rights and duties in this capacity" (Cobbett, 331). Consequently, their respective performance as providers, caretakers, educators, role models and attachment figures in the domestic realm will be evaluated.

5.2.1 A "just and well-thinking" father or an immature egotist? The case of John Dashwood

Mr John Dashwood can be considered partially a failure in his function as provider and breadwinner. Tapley confirms this: "John Dashwood has a double obligation to help his sisters because they are family members and because he has made a promise to his father to do so" (91). The issue that he is only in part a failure in fulfilling his duty is due to the fact that his nearer, nuclear family, meaning his wife and son, are well and secure (cf. Tauchert, 54). He only superficially recognises the circumstance that his patriarchal position morally obliges him to provide for more than just his nearest family – he has indirectly taken on the moral function as 'protector' for all those dependent on him (cf. Maurits 59) in the moment he promised his father to do so (cf. Tredell, 119). He willingly stepped into his footsteps to fulfil what his father's death prevented himself from doing – he became, as stated above, the 'insurance' for his half-sisters and step-mother (cf. Wiltshire,

25), which "every just and well-thinking man" (39), according to *Cassell's Household Guide*, should include in his family arrangements. Mr John Dashwood is, consequently no "just and well-thinking man" (ibid.) according to the paternal ideal. Affirming this idea, Tarpley mentions John Dashwood's willingness to value "utility [rather] than […] morality" (92); "utility" (ibid.) here refers to maintaining the size of his son's future fortune (cf. ibid., 93).[273]

John Dashwood's nuclear family, contrary to the Dashwood girls, seems to be socially as well as economically in comfortable circumstances even without the Dashwood inheritance (cf. Austen, S & S, 6; cf. Craig 17). Has he, in this respect at least, fulfilled his duty? The answer appears at first to be affirmative; however, this security seems to be primarily due to his mother's and wife's money and their family's support (cf. Austen, S & S, 3-4 & cf. Tredell, 120). At the start of the novel, it is explicitly stated that he would not have needed his father's inheritance to maintain his lifestyle or preserve his wife and son's status in life (cf. ibid.; cf. Craig, 17). Since his wealth is primarily due to women, however, contemporary readers might have already started to doubt the 'manliness' of John Dashwood's character – doubts that will later on be confirmed through depictions of his domestic dynamic with his wife. Even though it is also made evident that his disposition is inherently selfish, since he never felt "much kindness" towards other people except for "himself", he is explicitly mentioned as taking care for "his wife, and their child" (Austen, S & S, 8) and is therefore willing to compromise his initial intention to "discharg[e] […] [his] promise" (ibid. 11) of providing for his half-sisters.[274] While Tredell opines that John and Fanny Dashwood's "exclusion of their wider kin, can be seen to adumbrate a sociological shift in the nineteenth century from the extended family as a network of support and affiliation to the modern 'nuclear' family'" (120); this is a form of paternity, because he is acting as provider for his

[273] John Dashwood's selfishness is also mirrored in his "economical acquisitive" (Tauchert, 57) strategies in the management of Norland estate. Through enclosing the Norland common he disregards the community for personal value (cf. Craig, 23).

[274] Tarpley argues that John Dashwood's (and to a certain extent Willoughby's) selfish confusion about the exact nature of their promises is a reflection of the changes of the legal status of binding promises from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century (cf. 92-93). The increasing secularity of the legal world had the consequence that promises were no longer regarded as spiritually sacred and therefore "lowered the standard" (ibid., 92). In the context of *Sense and Sensibility*, Tarpley promotes the idea that "Jane Austen concerns herself with such changes and with the resulting greater freedom that some young men felt they now had to break their promises. Both John Dashwood and John Willoughby enact the more modern, secular utilitarian view about keeping promises" (ibid.).

son, but, according to the ideal, it is misguided or misunderstood paternity because it explicitly characterises him as selfish (cf. Craig, 17), prioritising personal feelings and preferences, which directly opposes the fatherly ideal according to which the father figure was obliged to adequately care for everyone that is remotely under his control (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 7). William Cobbett states in the context of paternal impartiality, especially regarding monetary matters, that fathers should act impartial in all their paternal considerations because the money they spend on one fatherly task, even if justified, can lead to a financial disaster for the rest of the family: "How many fathers have been ruined, how many mothers and families brought to beggary, how many industrious and virtuous groups have been pulled down from competence to penury" (329). Moreover, he indirectly and rather cowardly delegates his paternal duty, "shirking his responsibility to his stepmother and sisters and leaving other people, like Sir John Middleton, Mrs. Jennings, and Colonel Brandon, to assume what was John Dashwood's own financial obligation" (Craig, 21). Again, William Cobbett speaks of the general paternal duty of every man to the community:

> Now, supposing you to have a plenty; to have a fortune beyond your wants, would not the money which you would save in this way be very well applied in acts of real benevolence? Can you walk many yards in the streets; can you ride a mile in the country; can you go to half-a-dozen cottages; can you, in short, open your eyes, without seeing some human being, some one born in the same country with yourself, and who, on that account alone, has some claim upon your good wishes and your charity; can you open your eyes without seeing some person to whom even a small portion of your annual savings would convey gladness of heart? Your own heart will suggest the answer; and, if there were no motive but this, what need I say more in the advice which I have here tendered to you? (67)

John Dashwood acts directly opposed to Cobbett's moral entreaties because of his extreme greed, which excludes service to the community – even if the members of the community in question are related. Fanny Dashwood "congratulates" (Craig, 21) her husband on this choice and his "inability to handle his money ethically" (ibid, 22).

His paternal selfishness is the reason why his wife's manipulative tactics work: In Craig's opinion, he is "all-too-willing" (18) to succumb, and thus his wife's arguments convince him almost immediately of the invalidity of the duties he not only inherited but also reaffirmed in the form of a deathbed promise (cf. Austen, S

& S, 8-9; cf. Tauchert, 54). This weakness causes familial chaos and makes John Dashwood's position as paternal authority figure in his own home appear unstable at best; as Maurits states, "[k]eeping one's household in order was an important mark of manliness" (65), and John Dashwood's management is a definite "failure of authorisation" (Wiltshire, 32). As previously mentioned, his relationship to his wife would, especially in a contemporary context, create many questions as to the appropriate 'manliness' of the father figure. Moreover, John Dashwood proves himself to be not the actual head of the household, even though he officially functions as such – it is Fanny and not he who makes the decisions and influences his social standing as a man in his home as well as his moral standing as a man of his word. He no longer acts on his own accord, since Fanny "moulds her husband's passion till she makes *his* will" (ibid., original emphasis). Austen's depiction of John Dashwood is a "critique" of such domestic "capitulation" (Tarpley, 94). William Cobbett also speaks firmly against the husband's submission to his wife, because of disastrous effects on family harmony caused by the patriarchal order being turned upside down:

> As to matters of little comparative moment; as to what shall be for dinner; […] as to the management of the house and of menial servants; as to these matters, and many others, the wife may have her way without any danger; but when the questions are, what is to be the calling to be pursued; what is to be the place of residence; what is to be the style of living and scale of expence [sic]; what is to be done with property; what the manner and place of educating children; what is to be their calling or state of life; […]; all these must be left solely to the husband (189, original emphasis).

Cobbett presents this order as God-willed by quoting the Bible and thus forecloses further questions as to the case if the wife should prove to be the one who is right – an argument that does not seem to exist in his perspective on the circumstances. Tarpley also argues that this submission to his wife indirectly points out John Dashwood's immaturity, since he is not able to emancipate himself from his wife and make a decision on his own: He should have realised "that the woman he chooses to marry will enhance or impede his progress from sonship to mature manhood" (ibid., 95). In consequence, according to the ideal, Mr John Dashwood is not a real father figure and cannot really be one because he is no 'real man' to begin with. He would have to grow up, claim his authority and recognise his moral

responsibility in order to become a paternal figure who could potentially comply with the ideal.

5.2.2 Paternal attentiveness outside the home? Sir John Middleton as contrast to John Dashwood

Sir John Middleton is, in contrast to his wife, not primarily depicted as a parent by occupation. Of course, he is known to have children and among them at least one son, who ensures the continuation of his line (cf. Pool, 90-92). His status would naturally require the fathering of children to ensure the maintenance of the social order in his community, and his family's continued standing within their social group (cf. ibid.). However, his interests are presented as very social as well as private and family-oriented, which goes beyond his own family alone: He is "a sportsman" (Austen, S & S, 32) in the first place, a country gentleman who is kind to his fellows (cf. ibid., 31). Biological fatherhood is consequently one of his duties, but he definitely does not take it more seriously than his other responsibilities. It is even hinted at that he does rather take it less seriously because of his wife's complete absorption in the topic of biological parenthood. His "hunt[ing] and shoot[ing]" (Austen, S & S, 32) function as means of distraction from his wife's exclusive focus on motherhood at home. Sir John's interests are, even if they oblige him to leave his home, nevertheless very compatible with the ideal of a domestic father: Even William Cobbett, who strongly promotes domestic fatherhood as the only way a man can fulfil his duty towards his children, states that he himself educated his boys in these pastimes which were thought to be appropriately 'manly' but still 'healthy' and so close to home that the man did not become an absent father and "exotic" (Strange, 87) figure in his own household (cf. Cobbett, 291). He could even be, according to Cobbett's argumentation, a suitable role model for his children since his pastimes are, even if they are typical of a landed gentleman of means, not frivolous. Cobbett describes his own position as paternal role model to his offspring:

> [T]hey heard no talk from *fools* or *drinkers*; saw me with no idle, gabbling, empty companions; saw no vain and affected coxcombs, and no tawdry and extravagant women; saw no nasty gormandizing; and heard no gabble about play-houses and romances and the other nonsense that fit boys to be lobby-loungers, and girls to be the ruin of industrious and frugal young men (297, original emphasis).

It is true that Sir John can be called foolish in his teasing of the Dashwood girls (cf. Austen, S & S, 44), but he is no drinker, and his company and friends, including Colonel Brandon, can be called respectable and free of "coxcombs" (cf. ibid., 32). He enjoys female company but without immoral purposes and prefers them to be "unaffected" (ibid., 33) instead of extravagant. If he has a faible for imagining 'romances' between his acquaintances, it is, though annoying, meant in a friendly way and seeks to promote their happiness. He does not lose any money in gambling houses or has any other vices but discharges his duties as landowner quite judiciously (cf. Craig, 25). Sir John evidently represents the traditional image of men as heads of the family: His absorption is not undomestic, even though it lies outside, while his wife's main interest is inside the house with her children and both, consequently, keep the appearance of the domestic ideal (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 5) as well as his position as father intact and functioning in the eyes of their acquaintances.[275]

Sir John is presented as doing everything he does with his own characteristic "cheerfulness" (Austen, S & S, 32), and what he does is actually very paternal in its nature: "The friendliness of his disposition made him happy in accommodating those whose situation might be considered, in comparison with the past, as unfortunate. In shewing kindness to his cousins therefore he had the real satisfaction of a good heart" (ibid., 33). As Craig puts it, Sir John enters the Dashwoods' providerless life "[l]ike a knight in shining armor" (24). He becomes the provider that John Dashwood refused to be and thus exhibits his natural paternal energy, which is not, contrary to his wife's maternity, affected, meant to comply to social expectations, but comes from his character, from his "good heart". His generosity and his provider status are emphasised through the fact that he supports the Dashwoods not just by giving them a home; Sir John lets them use his own carriage (cf. Austen, S & S, 40), sends them "his newspaper" (ibid., 30) and is "constantly feeding the Dashwoods" (Craig, 24; cf. Austen, S & S, 30), which "is a significant financial contribution to their household budget" (Craig, 24) as well. William

[275] Sir John is explicitly described as a man with limited "resources" (Austen, S & S, 32). The word, in this case, does not refer to his property or income but to the limited nature of his interests, meaning that he is a very simple, or even one-dimensional, person. He lacks a complex intellect, and his education was, apparently, so superficial that it could not make up for it (cf. ibid.). However, as Craig opines, "Sir John demonstrates that a squire does not have to be particularly clever in order to know what to do, or in order to actually do it" (25).

Cobbett's *Advice to Young Men* includes the counsel to "[r]espect goodness" (355) and, according to this doctrine, Sir John is certainly worthy of respect. Cobbett continues to promote paternal behaviour, even if unaccompanied by biological fatherhood, and reminds his readers to shield "the weak against the strong" (334). If we call the Dashwood women "defenceless", which they arguably are in a society that deprives them of most rights and places them in a position in which patriarchal support is needed for their social standing and comfort, Sir John is indeed "protecting them" from "powerful guilt" (Cobbett, 355), represented through the guilty figure John Dashwood.

Even though his optimistic temperament makes him seem more likable than his wife, it is coupled with behavioural patterns that make him appear as falling short of the fatherly ideal: We do not see him parenting his own children, who are usually taken care of by Lady Middleton anyway; rather, his paternal efforts appear to be concentrated outside the boundaries of his house. He is seldom mentioned as spending time only with the members of his nearest family circle, specifically his wife and children alone (Austen, S & S, 32-33). On the contrary, he is said to derive particular happiness and amusement form larger gatherings which include younger people:

> [H]e delighted in collecting about him more young people than his house could hold, and the nosier they were the better he was 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 (ibid., 33).

Though this description of Sir John's favourite social engagements implies a fatherly affection for adolescents and young adults, it is evident that the society of his nuclear family is insufficient to satisfy Sir John's need for company. One can, therefore, wonder how much paternal feeling in the narrow sense is contained in the country squire's wish to be surrounded by young people. Considering the fact that spending time with his own children might have sufficed to fulfil his paternal instincts, the reader cannot help but question the actual amount of paternal motivation within his character – especially since Sir John is never portrayed as a father who is very much absorbed in his children and their interests. Having fulfilled his duties as head of his family, according to the common social demands for men of his age and status, and exhibiting interest in his offspring that is sufficient not to

arouse either negative or positive comments, Sir John feels free to focus his paternal energy outside the bounds of the nuclear family (cf. Tredell, 120). This circumstance is another factor that makes Sir John appear as a positive foil to John Dashwood. While John Dashwood chooses to ignore his paternal duties to his larger family and community (cf. Craig, 25) in favour of securing wealth for his only offspring, Sir John does not limit his understanding of fatherhood to its biological definition and, by contrast, shows only perfunctory paternal interest in his actual children, being absorbed in his role as landlord, squire, benefactor for (distant) relatives in need and generous host. (cf. ibid.). Obviously, supporters of domestic fatherhood, such as Cobbett, would consider this reversal of priorities not ideal either. He, in fact, mentions that a husband should spend as little time with others and as much time with his wife and children as possible to preserve family harmony:

> When left to ourselves we all seek the company […] in which we *take the most delight*: and therefore every husband, be his state of life what it may, who spends his leisure time […] in company other than that of his wife and family, tells her and them, as plainly […] that he *takes more delight in other company than in theirs* (173, original emphasis).

Given the mismatch in the personal tempers of Lady Middleton and Sir John, his preference for a wider social circle provides him with opportunities to exercise his "good heart" and gives him more gratification than the company of his children, who are engulfed by Lady Middleton's maternity. However, according to Cobbett's argumentation, he hazards family togetherness and family happiness for the sake of the happiness of the wider community, which admittedly benefits from it.

Despite not being primarily characterised as a father in contrast to his wife, who is first and foremost "a mother" (Austen, S & S, 32), Sir John Middleton turns out to be much more of a paternal character than Mr John Dashwood due to the latter's cold "selfishness" (Craig, 23). He is also more paternal than his wife is maternal, even though this is presented at first as her primary characteristic: He truly cares for others, even if he acts foolishly at times, thus exhibiting a different approach to fatherhood, which is less focussed on biological bonds and more on communal care and enjoyment.

5.2.3. Acknowledgement of guilt vs delegation of paternal responsibility: Colonel Brandon and Mr Willoughby acting "impudently"?

Another character within *Sense and Sensibility* who exhibits paternal characteristics without being directly related to the recipient of this parental attention is Colonel Brandon, who is, biologically, no father at all. He functions as the guardian of his former fiancée's child and cares for her as if they were related by blood (cf. Tauchert, 57). This characterises him openly as a caring person who is capable of empathy and has a strong protective instinct. Moreover, he is pictured as a swift-acting man in times of need, as we can see in his reaction to the message of his ward's misfortune (cf. Austen, S & S, 63-64). However, in the context of the teachings of advice literature, is this behaviour truly paternal? William Cobbett promotes it as a general truth that "[w]e all acknowledge that it is our bounden duty to provide, as far as our power will go, for the competence, the health, and the good character of our children" (350). Financially, Eliza the younger appears to be secure thanks to Brandon's support; her health and the health of her illegitimate child appear likewise in good condition, as far as the reader knows. However, Cobbett puts more emphasis on the 'spiritual' welfare of the dependent character than on their economic situation.

While this particular scene appears to highlight Colonel Brandon's selflessness, it can consequently also be interpreted as his rude awakening to the circumstance that he has, due to misplaced trust and maybe even over-indulgence, neglected the freely accepted paternal duty to his ward and the safe-keeping of her body and character. As far as the reader knows, it would have been "in his power" to prevent this event had he been in closer contact with his ward and had he known more about her acquaintances and not trusted his superficial observation (cf. Austen, S & S, 197). He himself acknowledges that he had been acting "imprudently" (ibid.) towards her and lacks, therefore, the necessary parental instinct, according to Cobbett. This author explicitly warns mothers but also fathers to be especially careful of sending girls away from home:

> commit her daughters to the care of persons, with whose manners and morals it is impossible for her to be thoroughly acquainted; is she to send them into the promiscuous society of girls, who belong to nobody knows whom, and come from nobody knows whither, and some of whom, for aught she can know to the contrary, may have been corrupted before, and sent thither to be hidden from their former circle; is she to send her daughters to be shut up within walls,

> the bare sight of which awaken the idea of intrigue and invite to seduction and surrender; is she to leave the health of her daughters to chance, to shut them up with a motley bevy of strangers[…] is she to do all this, and still put forward pretensions to the authority and the affection due to a *mother*! And, are you to permit all this, and still call yourself a *father*! (309, original emphasis)

He, as well as the parents Cobbett criticises, neglects his guardian duty through his trust in another person, Eliza's friend's father, who, not unlike himself, proves to be "a well-meaning, but not a quick-sighted man" (Austen, S & S, 197).

Arguably this lax conduct can be interpreted as a mistake in his 'parenting', which Colonel Brandon obviously acknowledges and which he neglected, and is punished "for eight long months" being "left in conjecture" and has to "suffer […]" (ibid.). Her misfortune is also his penance, and he continues to take paternal care of his ward. When he leaves the party at Barton abruptly because of the message about Eliza's situation (cf. ibid., 63) it is not in his personal interest – on the contrary, he leaves Marianne to her suitor Willoughby, knowing that his chances will diminish even more by his absence.[276] He nevertheless acts this way because he deems it his duty – another characteristic of the ideal father, according to advice literature. He is assertive while also emotionally present, considerate and sufficiently selfless. His sacrificial spirit in this situation is in line with Cobbett's idea that "parents have *no right* thus to indulge their own feelings at the risk of the happiness of their children" (285, original emphasis). Colonel Brandon does not "indulge" in his "own feelings" at a time when the safety and "happiness" of his ward is acutely questioned. One can consequently state that Colonel Brandon represents most features an ideal father should possess, despite his initial mistake.[277]

Colonel Brandon's age, furthermore, strengthens the paternal associations with his character; especially since he is very often contrasted to Willoughby, who is a younger man and behaves in a very un-paternal way, being inconsiderate, selfish and acting cowardly when confronted with the result of his own actions (cf. Hall, 189). He is reckless while Colonel Brandon is "very prudent" (cf. Austen, S & S, 69) – a man who "honors his special obligations in spite of their negative

[276] Moreover, he will be censured for impoliteness to the present company, risk Mrs Jennings' kind-hearted ridicule as well as the suggestive rumours and hints spreading about his motivation (cf. ibid., 63-64).

[277] In consequence, he is rewarded with a marriage to the woman of his dreams and is thus given the perfect opportunity to fulfil this paternal role for his biological children as well, since he has already been through his period of trial. He stands for "domestic happiness", in contrast to Willoughby, who represents "'violent passion'" (Tauchert, 64).

consequences" (Tarpley, 95). On the other hand, we see Willoughby, who is unable to extricate himself from a dilemma that he has brought upon himself (cf. ibid., 306-307 & Hall, 188) and has to be rescued by the fortune of a woman – this whole scenery turns the concept of paternal assertion upside down while also highlighting Colonel Brandon's positive qualities (ibid., 189), as Cobbett affirms, "that to marry for money, for ambition, or from any motive other than the one pointed out by affection, is not the road to glory, to happiness, or to peace" (87). In contrast to Colonel Brandon, he is not able to find domestic happiness in the end, even though he is officially "forgiven" (Tauchert, 69; cf. Austen, S & S, 359). Colonel Brandon's qualities are paternal, since they are unselfish, caring and protective, different from "Byronic Willoughby" (Tauchert, 71); the Colonel, as Hall corroborates, "provide[s] the stability, honesty, and generosity that is imperative for a healthy relationship" (ibid.).

As an illegitimate father, Willoughby has already fundamentally broken the rules of what is considered 'good' paternal behaviour in the long nineteenth century. Martha Mears and Hannah More have clear words for this, labelling such men as Willoughby "base seducer[s]" (More, 29). Their selfishness in disregarding the fate of the woman they slept with, or the fate of the potential offspring contradicts the rules of emotional as well as physical care for mother and child, as can be seen in Colonel Brandon's description of the jilted woman's fate:

> 'The first news that reached me of her,' he continued, 'came in a letter from herself, last October. […] Little did Mr Willoughby imagine, I suppose, when his looks censured me for incivility in breaking up the party, that I was called away to the relief of one whom he had made poor and miserable; but had he known it, what would it have availed? Would he have been less gay or less happy in the smiles of your sister? No, he had already done that, which no man who can feel for another would do. He had left the girl whose youth and innocence he had seduced, in a situation of the utmost distress, with no creditable home, no help, no friends, ignorant of his address! He had left her, promising to return; he neither returned, nor wrote, nor relieved her (Austen, S & S, 197-198).

This speech again solidifies the contrast to Colonel Brandon's behaviour, who, instead of Willoughby, attends the woman who is about to become a mother. Again, he behaves in accordance with Martha Mears' description of 'ideal' fatherly behaviour:

> How sweet the duty that now calls him to sooth every care [of the pregnant woman], - to share in and lessen pain by tender sympathy, - to raise the depressed spirits, - to pour a kind of day light into the mind, - to swell the heart with rapture, - and give the most sanitary impulse to the genial current of life! What delightful emotion must that man feel, who dries the tear as it steals down the cheek of beauty, - who anticipates in silent wish, - and shelters from each rude blast the tender buds of mutual affection (29).

Willoughby's refusal of any share in the affairs of his short-term mistress is not only disloyal and selfish; it depicts his image of women as beings of secondary value (cf. Hall, 187), even attempting to cast some of the blame on her.[278]

His only excuse for leaving the pregnant girl and not acknowledging her child is that he "did *not* know" (Austen, S & S, 306, original emphasis). Willoughby basically chooses to be not only an "absent father" (Strange, 4) but an almost non-existent one in refusing to legitimise his child and Eliza by marrying her or caring for her financially, even after his aunt's ultimatum (cf. Austen, S & S, 306). Craig acknowledges that "[a]s Mrs. Jennings reminds Elinor and the reader, illegitimate children were common enough" (26) and do not "signify" (Austen, S & S, 186) in the least that the father of one will be cast out from polite society or considered an unsuitable father in the eyes of fashionable society, even though it meant ruin for the girl – a circumstance deplored by middle-class moralists:

> But, there are other cases of a very different description; and where a man goes coolly and deliberately to work, first to gain and rivet the affections of a young girl, then to take advantage of those affections to accomplish that which he knows must be her ruin, and plunge her into misery for life; when a man does this merely for the sake of a momentary gratification, he must be either a selfish and unfeeling brute, unworthy of the name of man, or he must have a heart little inferior, in point of obduracy, to that of the murderer (Cobbett, 136).

However, even from the perspective of the less moralistic, less middle-class and more upper-class 'polite society', Willoughby's supposed ignorance of her financial

[278] In order to diverge some of the blame, Willoughby points out Colonel Brandon's bias as well as Eliza's passionate and ignorant behaviour, which, according to him, was partly to blame for the outcome of their relationship (cf. Austen, S & S, 306 & cf. Tarpeley, 97). Tarpley argues in this context that his conduct does not truly acknowledge his guilt in the case of Eliza: "He also concerns himself less with his action's irreparable harm to Eliza than with its effect on Marianne" (ibid.). Hall supports the idea that, even after Willoughby's confession of his wrongdoings to Elinor and his exhibition of concern for Marianne (cf. Austen, S & S, 309-313), he remains a thoroughly self-centred character (cf. Hall, 188). Gevlin argues that this stagnancy in Willoughby's character sets him apart from another adulterer in Austen's works: Henry Crawford from *Mansfield Park,* who receives "moral education" (1067).

straits (cf. Craig, 26) and his refusal to support her would be regarded as ungentlemanly (cf. Tarpley, 98). As Broughton and Rogers mention, financial stability inherently belonged to the nineteenth-century image of an ideal paternal figure, who was, according to social norms, obliged to fulfil his duty as breadwinner and provider (cf. 3). According to Rachel Gevlin, it is symptomatic for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century's legal situation that Willoughby, as well as Colonel Brandon's brother, the husband of Eliza's mother, remain essentially "unscathed" (1063), and there are "[n]o legal recourse[s] available to Brandon in either case" (ibid.), even though "Brandon accepts the financial burden of Willoughby's baby as well" (Craig, 26). Not only the illegitimate mother is entirely powerless without the support of the child's father, but the male helper is likewise unable to pursue the matter legally (cf. Gevlin, 1063). This issue never enters Willoughby's mind, which further emphasises the social "double standards" (ibid., 1065). Furthermore, the child's persona, the child as human subject who is related to him by blood, is evidently never part of Willoughby's considerations – his selfishness makes him unable to feel belonging to or even paternal pride for any child. According to the doctrines of the advice manual *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, though, interest and pride in children is supposed to be a natural parental emotion (cf. M.C., 29).[279] It follows that, in accordance with such argumentations, Willoughby is an 'unnatural' father, or, behaviour-wise, no father at all. The selfishness which characterises Willoughby's perception of his status as father is, in Tarpley's opinion, connected to his vanity (cf. 104), a fault that is not only deplored in Austen's works but also in most advice manuals as a characteristic that is not compatible with parental virtues (cf. More, 58). Willoughby is aware of his duties as a father and potential husband but refuses to meet them because "[g]iving in to his aunt's conditions would mean giving up the kind of independence that would allow his abuse of liberty to continue" (Tarpley, 99).

Willoughby's financial dependency, which finally forces him to marry rich without love (cf. Austen, S & S, 311), exhibits how far away he is from the ideal of independent masculinity connected to the paternal role model presented in advice

[279] Tarpley comments on Willoughby's behaviour, stating that "[e]ven without the subsequent pregnancy, Willoughby may, with his actions, represent himself in one of two ways: as the responsible man who will marry the woman with whom his passion overcame him or as the cold-blooded libertine who will ruin the young woman he only intended to seduce, not to marry. To his aunt and benefactor, Mrs. Smith, he portrays himself unequivocally as the latter" (98).

texts. He is neither in charge in his own home – his wife forces him to write a letter that he does not mean to write (cf. ibid.) – nor is he able to support his family on his own, having to rely on purely 'female' money, first from Mrs Smith, then from his wife (cf. ibid.). William Cobbett describes the man who is dependent on his wife not only financially but also because of her stronger will as inherently unreliable:

> A husband thus under command, is the most *contemptible* of God's creatures. Nobody can place *reliance* on him for any thing; whether in the capacity of employer or employed, you are *never sure of him*. *No bargain is firm, no engagement sacred*, with such a man. Feeble as a reed before the boisterous she-commander, he is bold in *injustice* towards those whom it pleases her caprice to mark out for vengeance (184, emphasis added).

It is indeed true that Willoughby's move to marry Sophia and leave Eliza and his child to the mercy of others appears "contemptible" and his moves are inherently "unreliable" since he never verbally commits himself but only suggests "engagements" which he then continues to break (cf. Tarpley, 100). However, it is his own fault, and not, as Cobbett implies, primarily the fault of the "boisterous she-commander" – to blame her would be cowardly – however, this is exactly what Willoughby does when he complains of the "malice" (Austen, S & S, 311) of his wife.[280] Thus, he remains a coward because he is unwilling to take blame on himself. And a coward, according to the ideal, cannot act as a paternal role model since he shrinks from the position of provider and caretaker. Brandon gains authority, where Willoughby loses it, Brandon achieves domestic togetherness, where Willoughby gains isolation – socially and domestically. This whole outcome is in its core due to Willoughby's refusal to 'become a father', not biologically but in terms of behaviour. Austen, once more, highlights the idea that fatherhood is not determined by blood but through attitude. In the context of the figures of Brandon and Willoughby, the social ideal of fatherhood becomes a means to measure and judge character and determine 'gentlemanliness'. However, the fact that even the righteous Colonel Brandon does not adhere entirely to the ideal emphasises the pressure that the realisation of the socially determined ideal parental status put not just on women, but on men as well.

[280] Gevlin criticises that Willoughby is indeed tonally somewhat absolved in the novel and his "redemption thus comes both directly and indirectly at his wife's expense", who superficially remains the real "villain" (1065).

5.2.4 "Droll" Mr Palmer: A constant and calm caretaker or rudeness personified?

Mr Palmer is a difficult case to judge in the context of domestic fatherhood. On the one hand, he appears rude and unfeeling, on the other hand he exhibits a caring protectiveness, which other male characters in the novel, who are less socially offensive, lack. First of all, the dynamic between Mr Palmer and his pregnant spouse is depicted as highly unequal, and there does not seem to be a direct emotional connection between them that is apparent at a first reading. Mr Palmer appears to pay more attention to his fashionable appearance (cf. Austen, S & S, 103) than he does to the duties of the father and husband presented in advice texts: We certainly do not see him as a "fond husband" (Mears, 4) who pledges his wife "mutual love" (ibid.). When in company, he occasionally even proves to be quite "rude" (Austen, S & S, 108) in his remarks, a circumstance which is even noticed by his cheerful wife, who usually refers to all his actions, even if they are purely egotistical, "droll" (ibid. & cf. Tredell, 113). The fact that he is perfectly willing to accept his pregnant wife's potential discomfort, caused by his public comments and his moroseness (cf. ibid., 108-109), shows that he is by no means eager to "prove the sincerity of his love, and to shew [sic] himself worthy of the choicest blessings of earth and heaven" (Mears, 29). He appears to be far removed from wishing to fulfil his duty as husband of a mother-to-be, which, as Mears puts it, "calls him to sooth every care, -- [sic] share in and lessen pain by tender sympathy" (ibid.). Instead, he seems to be very unconcerned about his wife's pregnancy, to the point of barely reacting when it is mentioned in company (cf. Austen, S & S, 104), arguably because he deems it 'women's business.' His overall indifference regarding his wife's mental state would evidently not be considered ideal male behaviour by the midwife Martha Mears, who describes what she deems 'natural' duties of a husband who is soon to be a father as "fond attention" (29), which has to be paid to his wife, who is probably suffering from emotional distress. By contrast, in some instances, Mr Palmer even publicly criticises his wife's behaviour: "'No,' said he, 'I never said anything so irrational. Don't palm all your abuses of languages upon me'" (Austen, S & S, 109). Of course, Mrs Palmer does not appear to be in the distressed state described by Mears, nor does she appear frail or

neglected in any way, which might be a reason for Mr Palmer's failure to show any emotions towards his pregnant wife in public.[281]

Not only regarding his lack of care for his wife's potential emotions does Mr Palmer fall short of the ideal depicted in advice literature, but also in terms of his own emotional involvement. Mr Palmer does not seem to take Martha Mears' hint that he should 'naturally' feel only "delightful emotions" (Mears, 29) at the thought of his wife's state. Mears, however, appears to presuppose "mutual affection" (ibid.) between the spouses as a condition to prepare for the arrival of the child. Mr Palmer's irritable reactions to almost all of his wife's comments when in society do not directly convey a sense of "affection" or any anticipation of the upcoming event of welcoming a potential son and heir to the family According to the ideal, it would have been his responsibility to keep up appearances, at least to the social environment, and ideally to his wife as well, regarding the true state of his affections, if he were lacking emotional attachment to her. The conduct book *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* includes advice on the proper treatment of the spouse in cases where there is no love in the marital relation: "[I]f you have not done so [married for love], [it is the correct thing] to treat your wife with the same courtesy and gentleness as though you had, both before others and when alone" (M.C., 15). Mrs Palmer considers her husband's lack of emotional closeness evidently amusing: "'There now; you see how droll he is. This is always the way with him! Sometimes he won't speak to me for half a day together, and then he comes out with something so droll" (Austen, S & S, 109). Her ridicule, or extreme amusement, when confronted with socially inadequate behaviour is definitely not the ideal feeling a pregnant woman should experience for her husband, according to advice literature. On the contrary: Martha Mears explains that the result of the husband's care should be "the most lasting returns of gratitude, love and admiration" (32) of the pregnant woman. Since Mr Palmer is not caring in his

[281] Since the readership only experiences the couple in public social situations and never meets them in private, the true state of their married life remains largely unknown. One can only guess that Mr Palmer is as emotionless in private because of his wife's simplicity and openness in talking about her husband's less than talkative social comportment: "'We must go [home], for the Westons come to us next week, you know. It was quite a sudden thing our coming at all, and I knew nothing of it till the carriage was coming to the door, and then Mr Palmer asked me if I would go with him to Barton. He is so droll! He never tells me anything!'" (Austen, S & S, 106). This remark, if taken seriously, speaks of Mrs Palmer's low opinion of his wife's intellectual capacities and even of a lack of respect since the preparations for the visit (carriage) were made without her knowledge and he did not deem it necessary to inform her at least formally until the last minute.

behaviour towards his wife, it is not surprising that the first impression of Mrs Palmer's feeling for him is not exactly "admiration".[282]

When Mr Palmer's son is finally born, the father's interest in him is still depicted as minimal. The new-born is a son and therefore has some importance attached to it as heir and future head of the family, but apart from that Mr Palmer "maintained the common, but unfatherly opinion among his sex, of all infants being alike" (Austen, S & S, 234). His wife's eagerness to establish an emotional connection to the baby is expressed by comparing it to "every one of his relations on both sides" (ibid.); he refuses to accept her ideas, thus presenting himself to the readership and the company as an emotionally distant father who does not take pride in his offspring. This kind of behaviour is opposed to natural inclinations according to the paternal ideal: *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* presents as a 'rule' of ideal parenthood that "[i]t is the correct thing […] for a parent to show pride in his children; Not to do so is to be unnatural" (M.C., 29). Mr Palmer is consequently portrayed as an unnatural father with regard to the ideal, but presumably a very realistic one, at least according to the narrator of the novel since his conduct is commented on as "common, but unfatherly" (Austen, S & S, 234).

However, as Anderson and Kidd promote, there is more to Mr Palmer than just the obvious first impression of rudeness and self-absorption. His wife, in her constant cheerfulness, appears to have recognised this:

> She likely knows better than Elinor her husband's true identity in private, enjoying his charade even and especially when it is at her expense. Such an interpretation of Charlotte's marriage adds even more comic tension through

[282] In advice literature, the issue of respect and self-respect in the context of marital life and social representation is also addressed, because domestic happiness and the child's early impression of their paternal role models were dependent on it. *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, for instance, criticises exactly the comportment that is exhibited by Mr Palmer: Concerning the differences in opinion between the spouses, the readers are informed that "if there should unfortunately be any disagreement between them to conceal it in the presence of others" (M.C., 27). The fact that Mr Palmer criticises his wife in front of company, which does not even consist of family members only, is presented as inherently respectless and a violation of the boundaries of domestic privacy that belonged to the couple's personal space. He accepts the fact that others might think badly about his wife and consequently, according to the conduct book, lowers his own self-worth: It is described that "[t]here is no greater sign of ill-breeding in a man than rudeness towards the woman whom he has made a part of himself" (ibid., 18). Again, the fact that Charlotte is pregnant is an aggravating circumstance because of the heightened sensibility of pregnancy, which, according to Mears, could cause momentary "sparks of anger" in the woman and which should be controlled through the husband's "tenderness and reason" (32). Especially if the anger or the distress have consequences for the health of mother and child it should be the duty of the father-to-be to prevent them, even if it comes at the cost of the own perception of male dignity, since, as Mears opines, it "is not making yourself the slave of caprice or female tyranny: it is bearing with the infirmities of your dearest friend" (ibid.).

> the irony of her asseveration that "'Mr. Palmer is just the kind of man I like'" [117] (145).

Indeed, despite his many shortcomings as father and husband according to the ideal depicted in advice literature, Mr Palmer is not villainized and even boasts of some positive qualities, showcasing his "good nature" (Austen, S & S, 292) and the fact that he is generally portrayed as "quite the gentleman" (ibid., 289). His caring side is shown especially in dangerous situations in which 'polite' and 'fashionable' manners are usually forgotten, as, for example, when he helps the Dashwoods during Marianne's illness, and his prompt departure with his wife when she feels uneasy about their son's cohabitation with the fatally ill Marianne because of the risk of contagion (cf. ibid., 291-293; Anderson & Kidd, 145). Verbally, he treats her concern as "idle", but his actions contradict his words, since he shows respect for his wife's "anxiety" (Austen, S & S, 292; cf. Olshin, 316) through his consent to depart immediately, thus foregoing the comfort of his own home. Arguably, this might even be considered a hint that he is capable of sacrifice. Moreover, he sees to it that Marianne and Elinor are not left without support while he is away, which alludes to the idea that he is capable of paternal consideration, without, however, having bowed to the convention of society to broadcast his image as paternal figure (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 145). In doing so, he complies with William Cobbett's ideal of fatherhood, which promotes "providing for the health and strength of children" (257, original emphasis) as a central factor within the paternal image. His agreeing to depart from Cleveland is one action that serves to maintain his child's health and his concern with Marianne's health, even if he is not biologically related to her and she is technically no longer a child, at least indicates that he recognises the need of those who are at present dependent on him and acts according to this responsibility. He thus *is* a paternal figure, even if this is not the first impression the reader receives, nor, apparently, his desired image in society.

Charlotte, likewise, does not care whether her husband outwardly resembles the ideal or not: "Like her mother, Charlotte does not depend on man or circumstance for her well-being; she has chosen to be joyous and is authentically so" (Anderson & Kidd, 145). Mr Palmer is not painted as a black-and-white character, even though some of his faults might be considered, according to advice literature, rather grave and in dire need of correction. This correction, however, does not take place within the bounds of the novel and the reader remains unsure whether

it will ever happen at all. Consequently, Mr Palmer is not an example of didacticism within a novel. If his faults are depicted to make the reader think about their own conduct and learn from it, this effect is far from being the obvious intended goal of his portrayal. Jane Austen remains tantalizingly 'realistic' and refuses to provide us with an 'easy' solution. Mr Palmer, his marital life and his fatherhood remain largely mysterious. His rudeness towards his wife and disinterest in her pregnancy appear to contradict Austen's assessment of his "gentleman[lines]" (S & S, 289) and the depiction of him as responsible caretaker, and these inconsistencies point towards the fact that the readership does not know all about him. His true face as husband and father remains largely private – the readership is never close enough to 'enter' Charlotte's and his domestic privacy.

Sense and Sensibility's mothers and fathers are a diverse and fascinating lot – care and egotistical calculation are juxtaposed, and sometimes even within one and the same character. Even though the father and mother figures portrayed within the text are all minor characters, influencing the heroines' struggles and personal development in one way or another, the tension that is established between the parents, who follow differing parenting methods, as well as their ambivalence elevate them to figures that are interesting for an intensive study of the novel. In conclusion, it can be said that none of these parents are perfect representatives of the ideal propagated by advice texts, whether they openly aspire to fulfilling it or not.

Within Austen's novel, several mother and father figures are placed side by side in a highly regulated social setting. Interestingly, their individualised behaviour both helps to make normative conventions for parenting as well as gendered social protocols discernible, especially for a modern readership, whose ideas on gender have moved on from the standards portrayed in advice texts. While not being feminist in the narrow sense according to a modern understanding, the text still manages to convey women's every-day social realities – being caught between expectation and necessity – picturing them as shaped by the conventions of their time and by their individual character traits. In this sense, women are equal to men, mothers are equal to fathers in their struggle to negotiate their identity and the responsibility for their children. The struggle to maintain an individual identity as

a person as well as being a mother or father in the nineteenth century is highlighted even more in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, since here fathers and mothers are the protagonists and the clash between normative maternity and paternity and parental weaknesses is the centre of the plot.

6. Flawed vs. didactic parenting: *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*'s dual plea for maternal rights and paternal domesticity

Right after its publication in 1848, the second novel by the youngest Brontë sister Anne, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, was regarded as a somewhat "flawed" (Berg, 24) literary work by some reviewers, and even in later years Anne Brontë's talent as a writer has often been doubted, especially when her works were compared with those by her sisters (cf. Thormählen, "Literary Art", 283). The novel was criticised by her contemporaries for its supposed "coarseness" (Charles Kingsley, from an unsigned Review, *Fraser's Magazine*, April 1949, in: *The Brontës. The Critical Heritage*, 270), which resulted from the explicitness of the text. *The Tenant* was condemned for its attempt to address unsavoury sides of reality, especially since some of the events Brontë portrayed were considered inappropriate topics for women to write or read about (cf. Thormählen, "Literary Art", 284), even though the topic of motherhood at the centre of the novel was indispensable to the Victorian domestic ideal. From today's perspective, however, Anne's "explicit representations of drunkenness, debauchery, and domestic violence" in connection with the themes of motherhood and fatherhood in *The Tenant* are regarded as a clear "warning" (Arms, 34) with regard to the (still topical) theme of domestic abuse. Yet, even when Anne Brontë finally gained more recognition, i.e. from the 1980s onwards (cf. Thormählen, "Literary Art", 283), critics of her text often focus on the arguably too directly "'didactic'" (Thormählen, "Literary Art", 283) character of the novel which, though generally accepted for novels in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, slowly became a derogatory term for "overt moralising" (ibid.) and an alleged lack of artistic quality.

The didacticism readers observe in this novel is certainly very different from that in other didactic tales, and, of course, it differs considerably from advice literature, whose sole purpose was to teach. Even though the *methods* of conveying moral

messages in novels may differ strongly from those in advice literature, a shared interest can be identified, as many scholars have observed in recent years: Parenting and children's education feature very prominently in Anne Brontë's text and are in tune with advice manuals. *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, for instance, states, "a true education must be physical, mental and spiritual" (M.C., 116). All of these dimensions are reflected in Brontë's text and are put into practice with differing levels of success by the various parental figures depicted in the novel. This juxtaposition of different ideas about parenting in the novel invites readers to reflect on their consequences. Thormählen asserts, "Anne Brontë's fiction contains a wide-ranging set of mothers" (ibid., 287), and Carnell confirms that the protagonist Helen's major motive or central goal within the story is the (morally) correct upbringing of her son (cf. 6). Motherhood is thus central as well as problematised when Helen's "unconventional" (ibid.) ideas meet opposition, be it in the traditional views regarding education among the middle-class characters in the village or among the upper class.

It is widely accepted that Anne Brontë preferred the realist mode of writing, never utilising "supernatural elements" (Thormählen, "Literary Art", 284), in contrast to her sisters. Arguably, this realism is also reflected in the array of mother and father figures. As Thormählen confirms, Brontë's text "emphasise[s] the individual's responsibility for his or her own destiny" (292), and we can see this idea clearly in the portrayal of parental figures in the novel. Most of the central characters of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are either biological parents or exhibit strong parental qualities, as, for example, Gilbert Markham, who doubles as narrator of the frame narrative, with his paternal attitude towards young Arthur, which is an important component of the plot. The central question of the novel, however, is the contested definition of good motherhood, and therefore "mothers are omnipresent" (Gruner, 309) and under constant scrutiny of fellow characters, readers and scholars alike. Many mothers are explicitly or implicitly accused in the novel of being too indulgent, especially with regard to their sons: Mrs Markham, Mrs Hargrave, Helen Huntingdon, and Arthur Huntingdon's "madly indulgent mother" (Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, 183). This 'parenting flaw' is presented as a specifically female characteristic, since none of the fathers is accused of it. At the same time, indulgence is also portrayed as a female attempt to

compensate for paternal misconduct and/or absence, since Gilbert and Fergus' father as well as the older Mr Hargrave are dead and can no longer influence and educate their sons, and Arthur Huntingdon as well as Arthur Huntingdon's father are "careless" (ibid.) and either too stern or morally transgressive. Opening the discussion of motherhood in *The Tenant*, the clash of different opinions concerning maternal behaviour, centring around Helen's supposedly suffocating and overprotective mothering is under scrutiny.

6.1 Shielding, educating, amusing and corrupting: Maternal and paternal influence on Little Arthur

6.1.1 "Give me the child!" Maternal possessiveness under inspection

The readers meet Helen under her assumed name "Mrs Graham" at the start of the novel without yet being aware of her flight from an abusive husband and neglectful and injurious father of her child, little Arthur. Due to the external perspective of the homodiegetic frame narrator, the reader learns about her solely through the accounts and perceptions of others, since the narrator Gilbert Markham includes not only his own but also the, often highly critical, opinions and impressions of her new neighbours in his account of Helen. Helen's parenting of her son is as closely observed by the community as her preferences of a solitary life allow. These observations yield plenty of possibilities to highlight the conflicting demands of ideal Victorian motherhood. In her endeavours to educate her son in accordance with the rules of her own conscience, she risks violating the social expectations of her surroundings and challenging the gendered norms associated with boyhood and girlhood.

To some extent, Helen's excessive protection of her son, which she exhibits at the beginning of the narrative, does indeed comply with the contemporary maternal ideal: The Victorian mother's role was that of a "gatekeeper" (Le Veness, 345) for her children, being supposed to protect the moral integrity of their home, as is mirrored, for example, in William Cobbett's critique of mothers who allow their children to be influenced by 'undesirable' companions (cf. 309). Yet, Helen arguably takes this 'gatekeeping' function too far, almost transcending the gender-related limits of the construct. Le Veness's argumentation underlines that in order to become a proper 'gatekeeper', Helen has to compensate for the absence of a

father by adopting stereotypically male qualities (cf. ibid., 345) such as "rational intellect", "passion, anger, territoriality" "along with a strong sense of protectiveness, perseverance and loyalty" (ibid.). Through the negative experiences with her husband, which her environment is unaware of, the young mother's sense of protectiveness is heightened and exceeds what is socially acceptable for a young mother. This becomes apparent when she, during her first meeting with Gilbert Markham, mistakes the young farmer for a potential kidnapper, or at least, yet another man with ill intentions. Her reaction to the physical contact between Gilbert and young Arthur, who has just been rescued from falling down from a wall, is highly emotional and indicative of a certain lack of control, leaving her "pale, breathless, quivering with agitation" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 27). Instances such as this one indicate that the mother-child bond is almost unnaturally close (cf. Wagner, "Speculations", 124) and, according to Wagner, sometimes "lapses into too close a replication of paternal power" (ibid.) with a decided focus on control and ultimate authority. Helen's wish to oversee and control every move of her son is laden with emotionality, which becomes apparent on several occasions and hardly complies with the prescribed ideal of Victorian femininity demanding self-control and discipline. Driven by her bad experiences in her marriage, Helen diverges from the path set for the ideal Victorian mother by showing "signs of aggression and even violence", which would certainly be less criticised if they were found in a father figure but, considering that Helen is a mother, "condemn[...] her to social censure" (Le Veness, 353).

While this reasoning underlines the feminist message of the text, the sequence could arguably also be interpreted as indirect justification of patriarchal family structures. (Excessive) emotionality was after all considered a specifically female 'fault', tied inherently to irrationality, and proof of the righteousness of the model of the patriarchy, which demanded that the rationality of the man should keep the emotional subjectivity of the woman in check: "[I]t was assumed – by men – that men lived by reason and women by emotion. Even as elders sought to ensure that their daughters did not succumb to excess emotion, they also collectively denied them the education that might improve their reason" (Hemingway, xxx). William Cobbett argues somewhat similarly when he pronounces women to "feel" (177) more than men and asks husbands and fathers to deal with them "with due consideration" (ibid.). According to this line of argumentation, Helen lacks male

protection, being separated from her husband and without an official male companion or protector, and, consequently, her emotionality gets the better of her since her emotions are "much more acute than those of men" (ibid., 197). Ultimately, however, this perspective neglects her strength of will as well as the rationality (cf. Le Veness, 352) which underlies her emotionality, apparent in her fearless and determined challenge of the unknown man, which emphasises her courage and her inherent authority, with which she demands "Give me the child!" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 27). Since all of these characteristics are connected to her maternity and her self-image as maternal protector, she arguably manages at least to remain within *the spectrum* of accepted motherhood. This, however, is repeatedly challenged by various characters throughout the novel. Whenever this happens, she responds with a mixture of emotionality and authority, thus mixing the stereotypically feminine/maternal and masculine/paternal in her stance. William Cobbett underlines the strength of maternal courage in the face of immense danger of a child, since "in numerous instances" women have proved to love their offspring "more than their own lives" (178). He relates an incident in which a mother, having had to witness her child being exposed to a highly dangerous situation, without being able to do anything "uttered a *shriek* such as I never heard before, never heard since, and, I hope, shall never hear again; and then she dropped down, as if perfectly dead!" (ibid., original emphasis). Cobbett also promotes the idea that "maternal affection" engenders "female heroism" (267) as a kind of maternal sacrifice. As Lee confirms, heroism and motherhood are inseparably linked in Helen's portrayal of maternity as well (cf. npag.).

Even though Helen does not acknowledge any criticism concerning her motherly anxiety, she also has to realise that betraying the strength of her maternal fears is uncalled for in the everyday social surroundings of the rural community living close to her refuge in Wildfell Hall. After having been criticised for her extreme protectiveness by Mrs Markham, Gilbert's mother, during a social visit to their home, we see her "pressing her darling to her side and kissing his forehead with intense affection" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 35) but still standing her ground concerning her parenting methods. She is determined to "use all the means in […] [her] power to insure for him [her son] a smoother and safer passage [through the dangers of life]" (ibid., 33). She has, presumably inadvertently, revealed part of her "trauma" (Gruner, 310) and has consequently made herself vulnerable: She "blush[es]" and

evades direct eye contact by bending down and kissing her son, thus blaming her over-reaction on an exaggerated mother-child bond and distracting from her personal history of marital abuse and paternal corruption (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 27). The image of an exaggerated mother-child bond is arguably confirmed by her refusal to delegate the duty of parental supervision to a servant and instead taking her son along on every social visit (cf. ibid. 30):

> 'I must beg you to make my excuses to the Millwards and Mrs Wilson […] as I fear I cannot do myself the pleasure of calling upon them till my little Arthur is able to accompany me.' 'But you have a servant,' said Rose; 'could you not leave him with her?' 'She has her own occupations to attend to; and, besides, she is too old to run after a child, and he is too mercurial to be tied to an elderly woman' (ibid.).

Of course, her stance reflects her negative experiences and mirrors her fear that her child might be 'lawfully kidnapped' by his abusive father. However, the "shocked" (ibid.) reactions of her ignorant listeners indicate that she has again made herself the subject of criticism, in spite of the complexity of her 'gatekeeper' role. In the eyes of her audience, she lacks the self-discipline to tone down her intense mother-child bond to an acceptable level. Yet, an extreme mother-child bond is again the excuse she uses in front of the company, explaining that her son "is […] [her] only treasure; and I am his only friend, so we don't like to be separated" (ibid.). Even though attachment, caring behaviour and emotionality were seen as crucial ingredients of motherhood, too much of them in a mother-child, especially a mother-son relationship seems to be regarded as a sign of a lack of self-control and as a danger to the moral character of the child. She is, consequently, openly criticised for the 'excessiveness' of her bond to her son, causing such comments as "I call that doting", "You should try to suppress such foolish fondness, as well to save your son from ruin as yourself from ridicule", "I call that spoiling the child" (ibid.). The fact that Helen possesses an immense amount of self-control, albeit unrecognised by the villagers, who are unaware of the special circumstances, is, for instance, reflected in her outward calm when she is confronted with the villagers' suspicions (cf. ibid., 104). Self-discipline and emotional control are demanded of her to maintain the upper hand in the upcoming "struggle" (Diederich, 26) for survival and still fulfil her duty as maternal role model and educator. Her behaviour in these instances is in accordance with the evangelical Hannah More's promotion of 'the female spirit', which is ideally religious and self-controlled:

> And when that is really the case, when once the spirit of religion shall indeed govern the heart, it will not only animate her religious actions and employments, but will gradually extend itself to the chastising her conversation [sic], will *discipline her thoughts*, influence her common business, and sanctify her every pleasures (95, emphasis added).

The fact that she breaks this self-control deliberately when she chooses to leave her husband, or inadvertently when she violently confronts Gilbert, believing he is about to take her child, only emphasises her struggle to maintain the ideal she has set for herself – and not for society's sake.

The accusations directed at Helen's parenting also contain the rather common charge of parental "over-indulgence" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 183) or, as William Cobbett calls it, "endless pampering […]" (26). This circumstance appears, upon closer examination, to be rather ironic, since "over-indulgence" is one maternal mistake that Helen, prior to her own motherhood, vowed never to commit, since the effects of this fault were, according to her own observation, still visible in her husband (cf. ibid.). Nevertheless, as a mother of a very young child, Helen admits to herself that "a parent's temptation to spoil an only child" (ibid., 192) is extremely high and vows to exercise strong self-discipline in that regard in order to become a proper role model according to the 'structures' proposed by More (cf. 53). One of the reasons for maternal discipline was the mother's role as a model, the importance of setting a "correct example" (Shaw, "Quiet Feminist", 335). Helen is evidently aware of this standard when she calls herself to discipline for the sake of her role. The focus that is put on maternal discipline in Brontë's text does not, however, contradict its inherently feminist message, because it indicates that mothers should be allowed to be role models for their sons as well as for their daughters, for instance because not all fathers can be role models.

As More's notion suggests, self-control was commonly regarded as closely linked to spirituality, which is a very prominent issue in both of Anne Brontë's novels and which is also one of the primary factors in Helen's parenting methods. Just as her overprotectiveness, Helen's focus on religion and self-control does not remain free of controversy even among modern-day scholars. Marianne Thormählen professes to be "shocked" ("Horrors", 14) by the extreme spirituality in Helen's perception of her own motherhood. After witnessing her husband's degeneration through alcoholism, Helen indeed mentions that she would rather see

her son dead than abandoned to godless vice (cf. Brontë, 192), a point of view that is bound to appear unnatural to a secular audience (cf. Thormählen, "Horrors", 14). As Thormählen confirms, "the chief purpose of the novel's heroine is the salvation of her soul, and the soul of her child" – an endeavour which, as the author admits, "may alienate modern readers" ("Literary Art", 289). Much like modern readers and scholars, the characters within the novel also problematise Helen's spirituality, especially in the context of her motherhood. Reverend Millward, for instance, questions Helen's ability to function as religious educator in the development of her son (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 41).[283] Yet, despite his criticism, it is one of Helen Huntingdon's most prominent and character-shaping tasks in the novel, which she performs especially in an attempt to counteract the areligious influence of her husband. *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* comments in a similar fashion: "It is the correct thing […] [t]o recollect that children, while still children, belong to their parents, who alone are *responsible* for the education which shall make them *good or bad* citizens, sons or daughters, later on" (M.C., 118-117, emphasis added).

Socially, the question of the 'correct' education of Helen's son proves to be a point of contestation in more than one way: Since her child is male, an additional concern was the possible feminisation of the boy by too much care and exclusively female influence which could keep him from getting to know and pursuing specifically male-connotated pastimes during her time of exile in Wildfell Hall. Thus, Mrs Graham/Huntingdon feels the need to defend her female influence in front of the censoring neighbours: "I trust my son will never be ashamed to love his mother" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 30). She refutes the common argument that too much, and openly exhibited, familial attachment caused effeminacy. The energy and forcefulness with which she does so, however, is perceived by the company as proof of her uneven temper, which is, in turn, criticism of her femininity and thus also, again, of her mothering methods. The author of *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, for instance, warns the housewife of "an exhibition of temper", especially in

[283] As exemplified by the contested position of Helen as spiritual model figure, parenthood, especially motherhood, is closely connected to religion; the criticism brought forth by the Reverend Millward concerning Helen's spiritual fitness to be a religious model for her son arguably also reflects the fact that the Anglican church in Victorian times was subject to numerous reforms and changes (cf. Poteet, 255). These religious reforms were often connected to social shifts and targeted everyday life. The discussions around Helen's religious position, her efforts to maintain spiritual authority as a mother, manifest the reality of "Christians' struggles" (ibid.). However, as Lee confirms, "[b]oth Mrs Markham and the Vicar are proven wrong in Arthur's future, since the boy grows into the ideal adult man" (npag) thus supporting Helen's moralistic stance.

company, which is "distasteful" to everyone and a sign of "ill-breeding" (M.C., 22). Having been educated in upper-class circles, Helen would surely know about this rule, but in this stage of her life she chooses to ignore one more social convention (having violated others for the sake of her son already), because making a good impression on the company is not her topmost priority – her mother-child bond and the (morally) correct education of her child is. McMaster introduces the interesting idea that Helen's impassioned attempts to prevent her son from becoming the typical victim of common male education is the result of her fear of separation, of severance of the mother-son bond which she fought so hard to establish: "She cannot bear to see the moral gulf grow between herself and her son" when he learns "proper male amusements" (355).

Male education was not considered women's business, at least not from a certain age onwards, because of the same fears of effeminacy and female inadequacy to grasp and master 'the affairs of men'. Mrs Markham argues similarly, warning Helen not to take "'that boy's education upon yourself. Because you are clever in some things and well informed, you may fancy yourself equal to the task; but indeed you are not; and if you persist in the attempt, believe me you will bitterly repent it when the mischief is done'" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 33). Despite this argumentation in favour of masculine independence, Helen maintains a different idea about boys' schools, as her bitter comment shows: "'I am to send him to school, I suppose, to learn to despise his mother's authority and affection'" (ibid.). Again, William Cobbett exhibits a similar idea of schools for boys, which, according to him, often have masters who employ questionable methods to uphold their power and teach their charges nothing useful but instead encourage childishness:

> If boys live only with boys, their ideas will continue to be boyish; if they see and hear and converse with nobody but boys, how are they to have the thoughts and the character of men? It is, at last, only by hearing men talk and seeing men act, that they learn to talk and act like men; and, therefore, to confine them to the society of boys, is to retard their arrival at the years of discretion (308).

He, not unlike Helen, deems it preposterous that a parent should surrender his or her own authority in favour of a, very likely brutal, stranger (cf. ibid.) and ignore the "chance of corruption" (ibid.), which, in Cobbett's opinion, lurks especially in larger boys' schools in well-populated cities. These descriptions fit very well the idea of the 'hardening' of the male spirit and emphasise the contrast to Helen's

isolated education of her son in the Yorkshire moors. However, Helen only imperfectly complies with Cobbett's prescriptions: The exclusively female environment in the neglected manor house does not only deprive her son of the society of other boys and ill-conditioned schoolmasters, but also of the presence of 'real men' as role models. Only Gilbert Markham's arrival changes this 'flaw' in Helen's arrangements.

Mrs Markham's critique of Helen's refusal to grant her son more independence and send him to school instead of educating him herself could also be indicative of the older woman's slightly less Victorian and more late eighteenth-century perspective on male education. It is indeed true that home-schooled little Arthur might be missing the "military exercise" praised by William Buchan as strengthening for boys: "I am happy to find that the masters of academies now begin to put in practice this advice. Each of them ought to keep a drill serjeant [sic] for teaching the boys the military exercise. This, besides contributing to their health and vigour of body, would have many other happy effects" (30). Since Buchan's work was first published in the late eighteenth century, this education might be considered a little old-fashioned by the time *The Tenant* was published and thus presents Mrs Markham (and the Reverend) as representatives of the older generation. Helen's idea of schools, on the other hand, is closer to the advice published later by Cobbett, according to whom schools are generally unnecessary and very often harmful breeding places of bad and degenerate habits (cf. 292). Mrs Markham promotes the idea that some of these 'habits' belong to the "wild oats" (ibid., 36) that, as Cobbett explains, are often believed to belong to the process of growing up as a 'healthy' boy. Gilbert's mother states that "if you would have a boy despise his mother, let her keep him at home, and spend her life in petting him up, and slaving to indulge his follies and caprices" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 33-34). Indeed, having himself educated his own sons at home, Cobbett illustrates that his decision is often despised and misunderstood by ladies among his acquaintance: "Then, they, particularly the *women*, when describing the *surprising progress* made by their *own sons* at school, used, if one of mine were present, to turn to him, and ask, to what school *he went*, and what *he* was *learning*?" (300, original emphasis). Mrs Markham reacts in a similarly disapproving manner as the ladies among Cobbett's acquaintance upon learning that Helen's son is not to be sent to school; though,

obviously there is a slight difference in the circumstances described since Cobbett is a man and father and thus assures the masculine side of education even at home. However, Gilbert's mother is also apparently completely oblivious to the fact that her description of the weak and spoilt boy matches exactly her treatment of Fergus, if not also that of Gilbert. Le Veness notices that loyalty between mothers "is largely absent" (352) here, especially in this section of the novel, which contradicts William Cobbett's description of women as "a *sisterhood*" who "make *common cause* in behalf of the sex" (185, original emphasis). Moreover, the fact that Mrs Markham feels free to criticise Helen while dismissing the Reverend's criticism of her own parenting "reflects something more disturbing, suggesting that male assumptions concerning female roles and responsibilities are less subversive and damaging that a fellow woman's" (Le Veness, 252). Mrs Markham chooses to continue her own criticism instead of showing loyalty to a woman who faces similar difficulties, raising a son on her own in a society which had special requirements for male education (cf. ibid.). Le Veness calls this behaviour a "betray[al]" since Mrs Markham uses "male generated criticism" (353) on another woman and mother.

Even though the traditional rural community largely disagrees not only with Helen's close connection to her son, but also regarding her attitude towards the consumption of alcoholic beverages, the arguments included in Cobbett's text make it appear as if he, at least, would argue along similar lines: "This *love* of what are called 'good eating and drinking,' if very unamiable in grown-up persons, is perfectly hateful in *a youth*; and, if he indulge in the propensity, he is already half ruined" (25, original emphasis). Arthur Huntingdon senior's fate supports Cobbett's warnings and illustrates Helen's endeavours to estrange her son from the use of alcohol in order to prevent exactly this "ruin". In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, however, drinking certain amounts of alcohol, wine in particular, was regarded as normal, even for children and especially for boys, whom it was said to toughen and teach a masculine lifestyle. Helen's decision to forego this opportunity for her child to make supposedly 'masculine' experiences is, consequently, judged as well. The vicar of the village shares this common assumption and deems it downright "criminal" to keep the experiences of drinking from the child, who would become "a fool" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 41) without it. Helen's protestations are laughed at and once more criticised, again by Mrs Markham in particular, who foretells that "[t]he poor child will be the veriest milksop that ever was sopped! Only think what

a man you will make of him, if you persist" (ibid., 32). The Reverend even goes so far as to criticise Helen's spirituality regarding this incident, stating that abstinence is a sign of "despising the gifts of Providence" (ibid., 41) and thus becomes the second male character to question her maternal authority and her position as religious educator and spiritual model figure. Both assume patriarchal authority, Arthur as husband and father and the Reverend as man and spiritual leader of the community. This observation fits the Reverend's later portrayal as the "dominant voice" of Helen's unjust "condemn[ation]" (Berg, 26). In consequence, Berg argues that in his predatory opinions concerning women and education he is similar to the worst men portrayed in the novel and his "phallic walking-stick parallels Markham's and Huntingdon's guns" (26). All in all, Helen is surrounded by "selfish people" (Thormählen, "Literary Art", 286) who pose a challenge to her moral consciousness (cf. ibid.) and her expression of maternity, which is, regarding her stance on alcohol, however, more in line with the idea of middle-class moralistic advice literature.

However, in academic discussions, especially up to the 1990s, Helen is not universally regarded as the innocent party in the educational debate. In her article "Acts of Custody and Incarceration in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*" from 1996, Laura C. Berry even goes so far as to say that due to her extreme measures to make her child dislike alcohol, Helen is unfit to be a mother, and that the novel promotes the installation of a "mediating presence to protect him" (52) from Helen. This argumentation would imply that the Reverend and Mrs Markham are not entirely wrong in their assumptions about proper masculine education, which seems highly questionable from a modern perspective. Moreover, advice texts from the time, such as William Cobbett's writings, for example, show illustrations of, again, maternal sacrifice in which the mother operates with similar, seemingly 'forceful' methods for the greater good of the child:

> But (and this is one of the most admirable of the mother's traits) as she herself will, while the tears stream from her eyes, *force* the *nauseous medicine* down the throat of her child, whose every *cry is a dagger to her heart*; as she herself has the *courage* to do this for the *sake of her child* (185, emphasis added).

Once more, Helen is shown to exhibit similar parenting methods as those advised, or promoted, in middle-class moralistic texts. It can perhaps be considered an additional sacrifice that she now is criticised for a sacrifice that she is demanded to

make because of the doctrines of domestic ideology: The mother is supposed to feel bad about her actions, even though these are meant to protect her child. This contradiction emphasises once more the double standard of the concept of maternal sacrifice. Furthermore, Hannah More's teachings appear to support Helen's methods to make Arthur hate drink as well: "Discipline, however, is not cruelty, and restraint is not severity. We must strengthen the feeble, while we repel the bold. The cultivator of the human mind must, like the gardener, study diversities of soil" (62). In this argumentation, Helen's disciplining of her son could arguably be regarded as a method of enhancing 'masculine' strength, as promoted by Mrs Markham, while alcohol enfeebles (cf. Hyman, 461).

Mrs Markham and most other older women depicted in Brontë's novel "aid and abed" (Berg, 26) the customary treatment of women as objects whose sole purpose is the pleasure and comfort of men (cf. ibid.). In their argumentation, masculinity is tied to stereotypically masculine activities, such as drinking, which are taken as signifiers of masculine characteristics and attributes such as toughness, strength, and independence. Even William Cobbett, who, in contrast to the opinions presented by, for example, the company in Linden-Carr or Arthur Huntingdon, is strikingly domestic in his perception of masculinity and fatherhood, still clings to some prejudices, especially the physical advantages of "tall men", and considers that "it is *not in nature*, that, *generally speaking,* those who are conscious of their inferiority in point of bodily strength, should possess the boldness of those who have a contrary description" (276, original emphasis). Here, physical advantages and mental capacities are to some extent linked (Cobbett only mentions short and tall men – women do not even enter the discussion) and confirm a traditionally masculine picture of strength of will and strength of muscle. Helen's idea that her son would be able to achieve these characteristics without having to adhere to prescribed behaviour patterns and without a decided preference for a homosocial environment, inherently criticises gender expectations which, in line with Hannah More's notions, stipulate that women's "lives are more uniform, less agitated by the passions, the businesses, the contentions, the shock of opinions and of interests which convulse the world" (35-36). Helen's debunking of these ideas exposes the "aggressiveness" that clung to the need to conform to 'masculine' or 'feminine' ideals. It is interesting to note that this indirect criticism comes from Helen, who

appears to adhere, if not to all, at least to many parenting strategies put forth by middle-class moralists. She openly embraces the idea that she prefers a more feminine education of her son:

> I will lead him by the hand, Mr Markham, till he has strength to go alone; and I will clear as many stones from his path as I can and teach him to avoid the rest. […] It is all very well to talk about noble resistance, and trials of virtue, but for fifty – or five hundred men that have yielded to temptation, show me one that has had virtue to resist. And why should I take it for granted that my son will be one in a thousand […]? (Brontë, *ToWH*, 32-33)

Helen's critics, however, fail to recognise her rational approach towards education and solely focus on the 'otherness' of her methods, addressing the "social condemnation" (Le Veness, 352) which Helen's opinion causes. The supposed 'manliness' that the customary education of boys intends to foster does not, as Helen has experienced, train them "to resist evil; instead they revel in it" (Colón, 25) because it is commonly regarded as confirmation of their masculinity within their circles. Feminine guidance instead of masculine temptation is foregrounded in her argumentation, criticising the aggressive model of masculinity promoted in Victorian society, which solely emphasised the need for men to be strong (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 32-33) and not be "treat[ed] like a girl", which would, according to Gilbert's mother, "spoil his sprit, and make a mere Miss Nancy of him" (ibid., 34). A similar argumentation can be found in William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* from the second half of the eighteenth century (1769, republished in 1813), which became a standard household work for decades and is even mentioned in William Cobbett's text (cf. 242). Buchan argues that a too feminine education could actually have physical consequences for the boy:

> It would be of great service to boys, if, at a proper age, they were taught the military exercise. This would increase their strength, inspire them with, courage, and when their country called for their assistance, would enable them to act in her defence, without being obliged to undergo a tedious and troublesome course of instructions, at a time when they are le[s]s fit to learn new motions, gestures, &c. * [sic] An effeminate education will infallibly spoil the best natural constitution; and if boys are brought up in a more delicate manner than even girls ought to be, they never will be men (30).

This idea implies, on the one hand, that a mother is always accountable and blameable for her son's future (cf. Tambling, 130) and, on the other hand, it includes the assumption that a boy, a future man, could be feminised just by feminine

treatment (cf. Hayward Cocks, 1133). Such an assumption, in turn, presupposes "an initial female receptiveness that should be alien to the naturalised and unalterable male identity" (ibid.). Thus, the rather militant masculinity promoted by Mrs Markham, the Reverend and partly even Gilbert, exposes itself.

Besides her opinion on masculine and feminine education, Helen's occupation as a painter, her means to earn a living, marks her as an outsider in the traditional middle-class community in Yorkshire. Helen's skill at drawing, acquired during her education as a well-born girl, has to become the means of financial independence while still allowing her to maintain her status as gentlewoman (cf. Bellamy, 256). Female professionalism in the artistic field was only just beginning in the early nineteenth century (cf. Losano, 7), when the novel is set; as Losano confirms, "[p]ainting was one of the ways by which a woman from the middle classes in England could earn a living and support herself (or her family), and the number of women embracing art as a profession rose steadily through the remainder of the century" (10). The reason for the growing popularity of professional female painting was the traditional educational background of women in this field, due to which "a properly accomplished middle or upper-class woman" (10) usually learned the basics of painting and drawing. This development was regarded in a rather critical light by some members of the public because the opportunity for women to gain a professional status could potentially harm traditional family structures, in which the man was supposed to be the sole breadwinner and professional (cf. ibid., 11). William Cobbett, for instance, acknowledges that women might be compelled by their economic circumstances to earn money, but while doing so he still regards them solely as "helpmates" and not as independent earners:

> She [the wife and mother] has to *help to earn* a provision for her children; or, at the least, to help to earn a store for sickness or old age. She, therefore, ought to be qualified to begin, at once, to assist her husband in his earnings: the way in which she can most efficiently assist, is by taking care of his property; by expending his money to the greatest advantage; by wasting nothing (123, original emphasis).

Helen does comply with Cobbett's ideas in so far as her motherhood is the driving force behind her decision to take up professional painting. However, she is not just a helping hand and deliberately accepts the position of breadwinner even though

the figure who should be the breadwinner is alive. Thus, her interpretation of motherhood is also rebellious and indirectly revolutionary since she breaks the common contemporary norm that "paid work and mothering" were "at odds" (Lee, npag.); thus, Helen's version of motherhood reflects her truth that "working for pay was in fact part of mothering" (ibid.). Indeed, notwithstanding her well-born status, Helen has no other choice if she wants to keep her mother-child bond intact and thus inevitably departs from the model of the separate spheres to some extent (cf. ibid. & cf. Pike, 117). Despite, or even because of her maternal motive, Helen "refuses the gender role dictated to her by her culture, insists on her status as a professional painter" (Carnell, 23) while still being essentially a mother. Admittedly, painting is an occupation which allows her to stay in the domestic sphere because it is not associated with a workplace outside her home.

During her exile, Helen also rids herself to some extent of the expected conventions of social interaction within a local community (which her former position as upper-class society woman demanded) and thus partly ignores, as Langland puts it, "gendered expectations" (121). This fact also mirrors her new position as breadwinner for her small family: "[H]er fight is [...] specifically cast as a move away from sexual dependence on men and toward the kind of economic and social autonomy that can only be achieved by entering the workforce" (Gilbert, 278). Her "living arrangements" (Langland, 121) accommodate her profession as well instead of being representative spaces for visitors, since she, as Langland remarks, receives her neighbours not in the drawing room but in her studio (cf. ibid. & cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 44). The drawing room, usually used for social gathering, is converted into a "workspace" (Losano, 25). In accordance with her intrusion into the male-dominated sphere of breadwinning, Helen does not function as a domestic mistress in her house when the guests arrive but as a painter who has just been disturbed in her productivity (cf. ibid., 30 & cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 44).

6.1.2 "No (maternal) Angel"? Escapist motherhood in Grassdale

Despite repeated hints at her inherent strength of will and potentially 'rebellious spirit', the early stages of Helen's development as a fiancé, wife and young mother are marked by the protagonist exhibiting a high degree of "Victorian earnestness and moral certainty" (Drewery, 340), for instance in her wish to become the

"savior" (Lock, 37) of her husband and, later, the protector of her son. These characteristics were deemed typical of girls at that time and reflect the shortcomings of Victorian girls' education, which was "weak in academic instruction, [but] strong on character formation" (Drewery, 340). Conduct books for girls as well as parenting manuals were adamant in promoting domestic moral values of sacrifice and subordination (cf. ibid.). For instance, in John Gregory's late eighteenth-century text *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1788) a reader can already discern hints of the concept of the woman as a morally superior being whose duty it is, because of her moral superiority, to save, refine and educate the men in her life: "I have considered your sex; not as domestic drudges, or the slaves of our pleasures, but as our companions and equals; As designed to soften our heads and polish our manners" (4). The early stages of Helen's diary, which constitutes the middle part of the novel, do indeed reflect these teachings: She wants to be a "companion and equal" but also sees it as her task to mould her spouse into a better spiritual and moral form: "I should like to be less of a pet and more of a friend" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 164) and "I should wish you [her husband, Arthur] to think more deeply, to look further, and aim higher than you do" (ibid., 168). Young Helen's embarking on her 'mission' as future wife and mother is characterised by a sense of moral security and trust in her upbringing. As Drewery confirms, "[s]he believes there can be no discrepancy between her natural behaviour and her principles" (ibid.). She is going to be terribly disappointed in this belief, and this disillusionment confirms the "criticism of the ineffective education received by both boys and girls" (ibid.), which will later influence her own parenting style. Interestingly, it is especially in adversity and challenging situations that Helen's fundamental strength of will and inherent independence is most discernible.

Hints of her willingness to defy expectations and contradict authority can already be discerned in the earlier stages of her life. Prior to her marriage, during her courtship, Helen Huntingdon displays a mindset that does not pay heed to John Gregory's warnings to his daughters regarding their choice of husband: "A rake is always a suspicious husband, because he has only known the most worthless of your sex. He likewise entails the worst diseases on his wife and children, if he has the misfortune to have any" (91). Helen appears to ignore all warning signs that Gregory mentions: "I have such confidence in him, aunt, notwithstanding all you

say, that I would willingly risk my happiness for the chance of securing his. I will leave better men to those who only consider their own advantage" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 125).[284] The fact that Helen ignores her aunt's warnings already establishes Helen's attitude towards advice and confirms her to be a rather independent, rebellious, outspoken character, despite her strong moral convictions and overt religiousness. She even argues with the help of the Bible to justify her goal of saving the soul of the decadent Mr Huntingdon – again a point in which John Gregory would join her aunt's counterargument by pointing out that differences in spirituality affect the happiness of children and domestic happiness in general (cf. ibid., 145). As explained in the context of religion (chapter 4.3.1), Gregory admonishes his daughters: "If you have a sense of religion yourselves, do not think of husbands who have none. […] If there are weak men, they will be continually teasing and shocking you about your principles. – If you have children, you will suffer the most bitter distress" (92). Indeed, prior to her marriage and in the early stages of her marriage, Helen appears to think primarily of her husband and his potential improvement. Children do not seem to have entered her consideration yet and this lack in foresight is one aspect that Gregory warns his daughters against. Interestingly Helen's point of view undergoes a decided change once her son is born: "God has […] given me a new and calmer bliss, and stronger hopes to comfort me" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 191-192). The antagonism between marital and maternal "bliss" and "hopes" is already hinted at in the protagonist's diary and continues to grow steadily.

It is interesting to note that in Helen's diary the time of her pregnancy is largely skipped, even though Huntingdon's remarks during their visit to London suggest that her pregnancy and the continuous amusements of the metropolis which she participated in for her husband's sake are taking a toll on her health: "Your bright eyes are faded, and that tender, delicate bloom has quite deserted your cheek" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 176). He, surprisingly, also reminds her of her "situation" and of their "future hope", which depends on her "health" (ibid., 176-177). It is clear that

[284] Gregory proclaims: "A man of taste and delicacy marries a woman because he loves her more than any other. A woman of equal taste and delicacy marries him because she esteems him, and because he gives her that preference" (93). Gregory's ideas align with Aunt Maxwell's maxims concerning courtship which, according to Helen's relative, should not start with the woman's love for the man but with rational respect on her side and love only on the man's side (cf. Brontë, 116). Again, this shows the continuation of middle-class eighteenth-century ideas well into the Victorian Age and confirms the growing influence of middle-class domestic ideals.

he draws upon the common assumption that pregnant women should shun bad air and the gaiety of the tiring city life (cf. Mears, 42 & Bull, 83) for his own ends, preferring to enjoy the amusements without his slightly weakened wife, whose looks he can no longer boast about, since she is worn out by her pregnancy. As Deneholz Morse confirms, Helen is "seven months pregnant" when she first notices her "husband's evening dalliance with Annabella" (138), supporting the general picture of him as utterly inconsiderate and selfish. It is nevertheless interesting to observe that Helen appears to disagree and apparently has more interest in keeping her husband under observation than to ensure her child's safety. In Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, the reader can note a similar and yet dissimilar approach towards pregnancy. Charlotte Palmer, like Helen, does not appear to care about the physical exertion of a visit to London while being pregnant, but the motives for wishing this visit to take place are very different: Charlotte is wholly concentrated on fun and enjoyment, while Helen wishes to keep her husband company to prevent his contact with his corruptive friends in order to be able to reform him. By contrast, Charlotte appears to be singularly unconcerned with her husband's comportment, even when he is publicly making a bad impression and utters potentially upsetting remarks. All in all, these differences between the two novels reflect how much the ideals of Victorian respectability have gained hold during the time between the publication of *Sense and Sensibility* in the early nineteenth century and the start of the Victorian period, whose norms heavily influence Brontë's text.

The first time the readership learns about Helen's changed role, apart from the seemingly 'delicate' remarks by Huntingdon, is her own sudden announcement "I am a mother too" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 191) – hinting not at a slow transition but at a sudden shift of priorities. Helen's announcement of her motherhood is accompanied by the revealing statement that her "bliss is sobered" and her "hopes diminished" (ibid.), which renders the revelation of her motherhood slightly depressing, sombre and melancholic in tone and impact. From now on, Helen solely focusses on her duty, which is, as she herself professes, her position as role model, educator and spiritual guardian in order to "educate" her son "for heaven" (ibid., 192). William Cobbett opines that affection between parents and children is the best way to assure a moral upbringing: "This love of parents, and this constant pleasure *at home*, made them not even think of seeking pleasure abroad; and they, thus, were kept from vicious playmates and early corruption" (293, original emphasis). Cobbett's idea

once again highlights the disrupted state of the Huntingdon household, in which the home itself becomes the place of potential corruption whenever the father is present. Therefore, Helen has to be the figure for whom her son maintains the most affection, because this will, according to Cobbett's argumentation, strengthen her influence on him and diminish the superficially affectionate but corruptive influence of the father. The father, in this case, in fact becomes one of the "vicious playmates" of which Cobbett speaks and against whose presence Helen is forced to create another sheltering "home" of her own.

During the early stages of Helen's motherhood, Arthur Huntingdon starts to vie with his own son for Helen's attention and care. He selfishly criticises his wife's absorption in maternal duties and expresses his wish that she should focus her interest on him instead of providing the child with preferential treatment (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 201). This represents the start of Helen's dilemma of duties: a conflict between wifely obligation and motherly tasks, both equally prescribed by society. Obeying her husband's wishes would inevitably mean endangering the child. In her late-eighteenth-century advice text for pregnant women and young mothers, the midwife Martha Mears mentions that it is the husband's duty to be considerate towards his wife when she is, due to the physical pressures of pregnancy and childcare, not as considerate to *him* as usual: "As the most placid temper is liable to be ruffled, and the finest spirits catch fire in an instant, the lover, the husband, the father will certainly think it his duty to give way, and to soothe with kind indulgence the emotions of quickened sensibility" (32). However, it has to be taken into consideration that these instances were considered exceptions to the norm and that usually the woman should sooth the husband in her function as domestic angel: Therefore, in a later guide, we come across other ideas. *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* (1893) mentions, for example:

> It is the correct thing […] [t]o remember that, for whatever reason, your husband has paid you the compliment of selecting you out of the world of women, and that it lies with yourself to make him feel that in doing so he did right. To realise that if your husband is to stay at home, his home must be attractive enough to keep him from the club and from his friends' houses (M.C., 21).

Le Veness confirms that in the light of Victorian notions of ideal wives Helen fails because she "chooses motherhood over wifehood, transgressing conventional expectations" (351). Discussions revolving around this clash of demands on the

mother figure are also reflected in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* when Barbara Carlyle refuses to be too much burdened with childcare, because this could ruin her intimate relationship with her husband (cf. Wood, *East Lynne*, 409). Barbara evidently makes a decision that is fundamentally different from Helen's, who first attempts to balance both demands but, seeing her husband's moral unreceptiveness, eventually abandons a lost cause and focuses solely on her child: "'I would leave you tomorrow, […] and never again come under this roof, but for my child" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 237). In this case, paradoxically, officially accepted arguments in favour of maternal childcare, the idealised mother-child bond and domesticity clash with the ideal of domestic togetherness and lend their points to the anti-domestic ideas of exclusive bachelorhood, represented here through Arthur's wish to re-join his band of male companions for stereotypically 'masculine' enjoyments. Helen is aware that she is supposed to be "the moral touchstone" (Drewery, 342) in her home, but her options to exercise and teach this morality are limited, since women have no executive power in this social model. However, since she represents the moral directive, she, and women in general, are "made [...] responsible for the errancy of men" (ibid.). John Gregory's conduct manual to some extent reflects this way of thinking when he acknowledges that women who married men with less than perfect manners, and cannot reform them, may have to bear the consequences in front of society and be forced to sacrifice their own image: "It may probably […] hurt your vanity to have husbands for whom you have reason to blush and tremble every time they open their lips in company" (134). Especially moralistic advice literature, however, often presented it as the duty of family members, particularly wives and mothers, to admonish other family members, who have fallen under the 'vice'. William Cobbett speaks here of the father's duty to admonish children, but the passage can also be applied to women and husbands, especially since Helen also tries to better Arthur in order to prevent the development of vices in her child. Cobbett acknowledges, however, that admonitions and sacrifices have their limits and can be useless:

> When this *vice*, this love of the society of prostitutes; when this vice has once got fast hold, vain are all your sacrifices, vain your prayers, vain your hopes, vain your anxious desire to disguise the shame from the world; and, if you have acted well your part, no part of that shame falls on you, unless you *have administered to the cause of it*. Your authority has ceased; the voice of the prostitute, or the charms of the bottle, or the rattle of the dice, has been more

> powerful than your advice and example: you must lament this: but, it is not to bow you down; and, above all things, it is weak, and even criminally selfish, to sacrifice the rest of your family, in order to keep from the world the knowledge of that, which, if known, would, in your view of the matter, bring shame on yourself (329, original emphasis).

Helen's warnings, her complaints and her entreaties are equally "vain", and she knows herself to be faultless, but the "shame" remains on her and her child. She is therefore resolved not to "sacrifice" her child to her husband's misbehaviour. The ironic circumstance that wives had to 'clean up' the stains left by their husband's vice and save their families arguably highlights the problematic nature of unyielding and pretentious domestic discourse which fails to spot the true issues of family life and Victorian ideology and renders the paradoxical demands on female existence accessible. According to Turner, the "need to self-censor" (107) and hide the true extent of abuse during marriage also belongs into this category, because it derives from Helen's inherent guilt at not being able to bend her husband's actions to morality and convert him into a better husband and father, even though this was considered to be the wife's moral duty (cf. ibid.). Helen is especially vehement in her endeavour to protect her position as moral and spiritual educator, especially in front of her child, because she, as Thormählen argues, is aware of her own "vulnerability" due to her past "errors of judgement" ("Literary Art", 285). The biggest "error of judgement" she has committed is obviously marrying Huntingdon, and she knows that this error has made not only her miserable but also her child (cf. ibid.). As Gregory's comment concerning marriage with a "rake" (91) has shown, marriage should ideally be considered with prudence as well as affection but should be free from unnecessary passion and vanity, for the sake of the future happiness of the family. Gregory in this context also repeats the common stereotype concerning 'female vanity': "The truth of the matter is, vanity, and the love of admiration, is so prevailing a passion among you, that you may be considered to make a very great sacrifice whenever you give up a lover" (106). Reading this statement in the context of Helen's relationship with Arthur, "[v]anity" (Thormählen, "The Villain", 840) and too much confidence in her ability as a reformer appear to be indeed prominent among her reasons for her marriage. Through foregoing any changes of personal happiness, Helen attempts to make up for her guilt at her imprudence in having given her son "such a father" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 270). Her 'sacrificial path' already starts during the child's infancy, when she is unable to keep her husband from

continuing his bachelor-like lifestyle, while she herself has to sacrifice entertainment for her motherhood (cf. ibid., 193). As Gregory predicted in his description of being married to a rake, Helen "suffer[s] the most bitter distress" (135). The ideal of sacrifice for the good of others has Christian origins in its *imitatio Christi* aspect, originally not limited to one gender alone (cf. Coffey, 176). This background links Helen's spiritual outlook on life to the ideal of sacrifice as well: Helen's story and development are imprinted with the "emerging mythology" (Langland, 113) of this conceptual, sacrificial angel. The poem "The Angel in the House" by Coventry Patmore was only published in 1856, that is, after the publication of Anne Brontë's novel, but the ideology of female sacrifice and good homemaking that has come to be associated with the term had already been established before (cf. ibid.), as *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* indicates.[285]

However, Helen's constant sacrifice has its price, and, in this case, it is Helen's cheerfulness. Arthur Huntingdon misuses the evident contrast between him and Helen regarding their good spirits, and consequent attractiveness for the young child, for his own advantage. It is the father's intention to provoke a rupture in the mutual understanding of mother and child: "'Mama, why don't you laugh? Make her laugh, papa – she never will" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 269). Helen has, as Thormählen argues, changed from the idealistic young girl into "a woman of sorrows" (8). Again, the reader can discover a pattern: Her wish to adhere to the ideal of maternal concern, affection as well as moral and physical care cause Helen to digress from the ideal of innocent female cheerfulness, light-heartedness and "good humour [which] is a very valuable commodity in the married state" (Cobbett, 132). Usually "good humour" was described as an ideal wifely attribute to please the husband and sooth cares caused by the workplace and life in public. *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* therefore warns the female reader that "[i]t is not correct […] [t]o allow him to see you worried […]. It will weary him of you sooner than anything else. It is the correct thing for you to make the sunshine of life for him, as he has all the responsibility" (M.C., 25). Helen's inability to meet the ideal of domestic motherhood is not due to her efforts but to the fact that her conflict with her husband and her anxiety "brings out the worst in both parents" (Wagner, "Speculations",

[285] The poem received more verses until 1862 (cf. Kenlon, 108), which proves the ongoing popularity of the ideal.

126). The constant equilibrium of the female mind was also deemed beneficial to her influence on the children, and Helen's unceasing worries would therefore be regarded as possible negative influence on her offspring. Even though they were evidently caused by her husband, she might be held responsible by many because of her duty as maternal educator and primary moral influence on the child, a duty which she herself recognises: "Having failed to teach her husband, she is determined to teach Arthur" (Birch, 63). Adherence to one part of the ideal, the emotional and moral side, therefore, causes Helen to miss out on the other, the more socially representative part of the ideal. In consequence, the ideal exposes itself as a paradox, inherently conflicted and not to be realised unless by means of hypocrisy and dishonesty. For McMaster, Helen's lack of amusement corresponds to the moral values she represents (cf. 358). Her disapproval is necessary given the nature of Arthur Huntingdon's 'jokes' but is equally harmful to her position as mother. Helen's lack of joy in the interactions with her child, even though caused by the father's treatment of her son, makes the child ultimately "suffer[...]" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 362) because he is torn between the father's cheerful immorality and the mother's affectionate but depressing disapproval. Ultimately, her extreme seriousness, as she realises herself, makes her "unfit" as constant caretaker of her son and "incapacitated as a moral agent" (McMaster, 362) because her child is unable to access her messages properly due to her lack of joy: Again, Helen is caught in a dilemma.[286]

However, Helen's motherhood is not just a source of challenges and worries but also of strength for her. She is extremely close to her son and enjoys time spent together with him as a method of regenerating her burdened mind. The fact that the mother-child bond is a strongly character-determining factor within the novel is excellently depicted in a scene taking place during one of the house parties in Grass-dale, during which Helen and her friend Milicent "enjoy a brief half hour with our children", "romping with the little creatures, almost as merry and wild as themselves" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 219). Both women use every possible moment for being together with their children when the social duties of houseguest and hostess allow this, not just to provide their maternal attention to their children out of a sense of duty but also to forget the atrocities of their husbands. Maternal tasks become an

[286] McMaster notes that with Gilbert Helen is finally able to smile more, which also makes her a better mother and moral educator (cf. 366).

almost escapist occupation in these moments. Especially Helen's bond with her son is thus established through little Arthur's "inoffensive" nature, which consoles the "miserable" (ibid., 194) mother. Moreover, both Milicent and Helen prefer their maternal duties to social representation, whereas Annabella Lowborough, the prototype of the unmaternal, scandalous *femme fatale*, is "lying on the drawing-room sofa, deep in the last new novel" (ibid., 219). William Cobbett observes that "with regard to young women, everlasting book-reading is absolutely *a vice*" (325, original emphasis). The kind of book-reading the author refers to is not educational but a distraction from the duties of every-day life, leading to vanity and the neglect of domestic matters. Hannah More supports this way of thinking and blames the superficial, artificial state of society:

> Talent for [fashionable] conversation should be the result of education, not its precursor; it is a golden fruit when suffered to ripen gradually on the tree of knowledge; but if forged in the *hot-bed of a circulating library*, it will turn out *worthless* and *vapid* in proportion as it was artificial and premature. Girls who have been accustomed to devour *frivolous books*, will converse and write with a far greater appearance of skill as to style and sentiment at twelve or fourteen years old, than those of a more advanced age who are under the discipline of severer studies; but the former having early attained to that low standard which has been held out to them, become stationary; while the latter, quietly progressing, are passing through just gradations to a bigher [sic] strain of mind; and those who early begin with talking and writing like women, commonly end with thinking and acting like children (73, emphasis added).

More opines that women who are accustomed to frequent novel reading only learn to 'act' like women but remain childish and immature, and thus unsuitable for motherhood. She refers to the greater social skills but the moral and domestic shortcomings of the fashionable education, which, again, fits Coffey's observation that "[t]he contrast to the mother-child bond is represented through the character of Annabella Lowborough and Jane Wilson who are negative portrayals of femininity" (154).[287] In contrast, the strong mother-child bond that Helen and little Arthur share can "be read as symbolic of her greater purity, her religiosity, [and] her moral virtue" in the context of Romanticism's view of children as morally superior to adults, which is essentially opposed to "Annabella Lowborough's heartless indifference to children", indicating once more her "moral depravity" (Lee, npag.).

[287] Their vanity and the awareness and deliberate, as well as often mercenary, use of their attractiveness to men are the chief characteristics of their negative depiction (cf. Coffey, 155).

An equally illustrative scene regarding this issue occurs later in the novel, when "most of the company were killing time in the billiard-room, but Milicent and I [Helen] were with little Arthur and Helen [Milicent's daughter] in the library, and between our books and our children, and each other, we expected to make out a very agreeable morning" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 221). Again, the escapist element of maternal tasks is emphasised, this time through the combination with reading as an escapist pastime, which, however, contrary to Cobbett's description of the "vice" of book-reading, does not distract from but is combined with and encourages maternal duties. Furthermore, it is interesting to note how Helen's own tone and word choice serve to create distance between herself and her friend, i.e., the two maternal figures, on the one hand, and the "company", among them Lady Lowborough and Arthur Huntingdon, on the other hand. The books mentioned in this passage are obviously not the morally questionable novels Annabella is reading, and the billiard-room, as a sight of purely artificial entertainment is contrasted to the library (and the park in the first scene) as places of innocent play with the children and sites of education.[288] The spatial barrier emphasises the contrast between the truly parental figures and the rest of the company, remaining oblivious to the children in the house, focussing on their personal enjoyment.[289]

Initially, the constant and almost exclusive "companionship" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 194) of mother and child caused by Helen and her son's comparative isolation in the country and the father's frequent absences strengthens their bond.[290] This togetherness in the idyllic countryside, though, masks only temporarily the disrupted state of the home in Grassdale. Advice texts often describe country living as the ideal for raising a family. John Gregory, for instance, mentions that many "vice[s]" (68) which are quite common in the cities have not reached the countryside, which hints at a perception of the yet uncorrupted state of the rural environment and echoes ideals of Romanticism. William Cobbett as well, expands

[288] The adulterer Annabella would presumably be associated with stereotypically French novels at the time, which were widely known for their representations of adultery (cf. Tambling, 126).
[289] The same spatial barrier is only once breached by Mr Ralph Hattersley, and this incident arguably foreshadows his truly paternal feelings to his daughter, which are going to be discussed in more detail later on.
[290] Tambling notes that reading this issue through the lens of the historical context strengthens the sense of isolation that Helen experiences: "It [the novel] looks back […] to the last decade before railways were built in Britain, and gives a fine sense of the difficulties of travel in those days, and the social isolation this imposed" (119).

on the benefits of country life for a family, commenting on air, food and housing quality (cf. 279). Just as Gregory, but in more detail, Cobbett hints at the temptations of town life and the (also financial) benefits that a life far away from these 'illicit attractions' offers:

> How many scores and how many hundreds of men have I seen; how many thousands could I go and point out, to-morrow, in London, the money expended on whose guzzlings in porter, grog and wine, would keep, and keep well, in the country, a considerable part of the year, a wife surrounded by *healthy children*, instead of being stewed up in some alley, or back room, with a *parcel of poor creatures* about her, whom she, though their fond mother, is almost ashamed to call hers! (ibid., emphasis added)

Yet, the 'purity' of company and activity commonly associated with country living in these and other literary texts is to some extent challenged in Brontë's novel. Little Arthur's life in Grassdale with Helen might seem idyllic at first sight, but it is overshadowed not only by the father's absence but also by Helen's worries, her fears of his physical and mental state and her apprehension concerning the company that he brings with him (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 198-199), which 'contaminates' the surroundings. It is interesting to note that the ideal of the 'united family' does not work here, because Helen and her son are closer to the ideal without the father, which questions the norm.

Thus, in *The Tenant* the ideal of domesticity is often led *ad absurdum* (cf. Pregent, 213): The ideal of domesticity and the 'home', which was the space primarily connected to the feminine stereotype (cf. Coffey, 162), is exploited by the most anti-domestic character in the whole novel, the father, to further his own ends according to the dictates of his fashionable set and the social station he was born into, living a life of leisure. Arthur tells Helen that she should be able to "amuse […] [herself] with the baby till he returned" (ibid., 193); this assumption emphasises his emotional and physical neglect, but also reminds of the argumentation used in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, where Isabel expects the child to keep her occupied since everything else is denied (cf. Wood, *EL*, 170). The common way of presenting motherhood as the "perfection of her [the woman's] being" (4) as the midwife Martha Mears terms it, the social assumption that children were women's primary suitable occupation, is reflected in Arthur Huntingdon's careless remark. The fact, however, that he is able to use it to silence Helen casts questions the ideal of domesticity.

Leaving the tainted domesticity in Grassdale, Helen actively creates another, fatherless but morally uncorrupted, home. Even after her separation from her husband and her flight into another domestic environment, which is undisturbed by his presence, Helen keeps up the spatial proximity with her son as much as she can. She delights in having her son as closely around her as possible, sleeping with him in one bed and being delighted at the relief that there is no one to separate them: "He was here, then – safely clasped in my arms, and many leagues away from his unworthy father" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 301). Again, proximity in the parent-child relationship is emphasised as a reassuring factor, soothing parental worries. William Cobbett also mentions having slept in one bed with his children, particularly to make them fall asleep:

> After the second child, we had no cradle, however difficult at first to do without it. When I was not at my business, it was generally my affair to put the child to sleep: sometimes by sitting with it in my arms, and sometimes by *lying down on a bed with it*, till it fell asleep. We soon found the good of this method. The children did not sleep so much, but they slept more soundly (259).

While Cobbett presumably only refers to daytime habits to keep a very young child quiet and at rest, his explanation offers the possibility to interpret close parent-child contact as a method not only of pacifying and assuring the child's safety but also of establishing a bond. The fact that Helen's mother-child bond with her son arguably resembles the father-child bond William Cobbett had with his children points out once again that Cobbett emphasises not only female but also male domesticity and the tasks of parents in general.[291]

Helen's consciousness of paternal duty is presented as intertwined with her religious morality – an integral part of the plot which arguably determines her fate. Hannah More describes the religious woman as a figure that is both like and unlike Helen Huntingdon:

> Women of the higher class were not sent into the world to shun society, but to *improve* it. They were not designed for the cold and visionary virtues of solitudes and monasteries, but for the amiable, and endearing, and *useful offices of social life*: they are of a religion which does not impose idle austerities, but enjoins *active duties*; a religion of which the most benevolent

[291] Arthur Huntingdon represents decadence and physical pleasure which creates a strong antagonism between him and Helen's morality, revealing the "tension between physicality and spirituality" (Sheppard, 207).

> actions require to be *sanctified* by the purest motives; a religion which does not condemn its followers to the comparatively easy task of seclusion from the world, but assigns them the, more difficult province of living *uncorrupted* in it (95, emphasis added).

Helen endeavours to "improve" her surroundings, especially the father of her son, and lead him to religion (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 166-167). However, when this fails, she indeed chooses the "seclusion" (More, 95) which More deems to be improper for a religious woman, but which is necessary for the child's safety. Helen's spirituality is consequently 'a mixed bag' in light of the demands of evangelical moralists of her time. On the one hand, her initial mindset largely conforms to the ideas of the evangelical author, on the other hand she sees herself obligated to depart from this path to ensure that her conscience stays "uncorrupted" (ibid.), without "degenerat[ing]" (Brontë, 192) under the constant influence of her husband and his friends. As Gruner mentions, in the context of Victorian literary conventions, "the novels [...] must always conclude with a reward or punishment of the mother, determined at least in part by her maternal morality" (305).[292] The focus of her maternal endeavours stays rather spiritual, especially since she has no strong hopes in the present because of her husband's conduct (cf. Thormählen, "Literary Art", 289) and his social circle, which her son is exposed to in Grassdale.

Helen bears a double burden and, in order to restore her own image, which her husband attempted to damage, in front of her child, she feels compelled to impart her own spiritual beliefs on her son. Even the influence of Rachel, the nurse, who is depicted as another religious guiding figure for little Arthur, is not always helpful for Helen's cause since her doctrines are presented as rather rigid and strict, while his father's ideas are downright misleading the child. Consequently, Helen has to find her own way and correct the misunderstood or directly misplaced spiritual assumptions in her son's mind: When little Arthur believes his mother to

[292] Another over-indulgent mother who has to reap the consequences of her parenting can be found in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). Mrs Reed's children, Georgiana, Eliza and John turn out to be burdensome, despite the mother's eager insisting that they are all she has hoped for. The "puritanical" (230) Eliza appears to be utterly joyless, the frivolous Georgiana is evidently unconcerned by her mother's illness, and the son of the family turns out to be the worst, dying in disgraceful circumstances and causing his delirious mother to recollect: "John does not at all resemble his father, and I am glad of it: John is like me and like my brothers – he is quite a Gibson. Oh, I wish he would cease tormenting me with letters for money! I have no more money to give him: we are getting poor. […] John gambles dreadfully, and always loses – poor boy! He is beset by sharpers: John is sunk and degraded – his look is frightful – I feel ashamed for him when I see him" (234).

be "wicked" because his father had carelessly cursed her to be "damned" and, according to the servant Rachel's teachings, "only wicked people are damned" (ibid., 279), she has to tread a fine line in order to restore her spiritual reputation and correct the religious misconceptions. She consequently reacts with an educational speech intended to warn her son of the potential danger of listening too closely to unreliable people, referring especially to his father:

> 'Those are bad words, and wicked people often say them to others better than themselves. Those words cannot make people be damned, not show that they deserve it. God will judge us by our own thoughts and deeds, not by what others say about us. And when you hear such words spoken, Arthur, remember never to repeat them: it is wicked to say such things of others, not to have them said against you' (ibid.).

Helen attempts to avoid open criticism of her husband and his demeanour as father especially in front of his own son; however, her indirect criticism is very strong and inevitable, given the circumstance that her own position as religious role model is at stake. The position of a role model is, according to William Cobbett, "naturally" imprinted in children who "want to be *like* their parents" (297, original emphasis), and the later conduct book *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* urges the parent "[t]o remember, if you are a parent, that to your children you stand fast in the place of God" (M.C., 28). The fact that Arthur intends to deprive her of this authority can, in accordance with Cobbett's argumentation and the presentation in the novel, be described as "unnatural". Because of this knowledge, Helen has no moral scruples to defy her husband: Secure in her authority as religious educator, she takes back her maternal authority by highlighting the inadequacy and harmful energy of the father figure who attempted to take this authority away from her. This combines the idea that motherhood commonly was the only justification for female rebellion and consequent "empowerment" (Lee, npag.) with the "evangelical" (Arms Lamonica, 36) inclinations of the novel.[293] As Gruner argues, "women's natural spirituality is closely linked with the domestic ideology of self-sacrifice" (316) and therefore functions as a kind of 'excuse' for Helen's action of sacrificing her social integrity by criticising her husband, for the maintenance of maternal spiritual authority.

[293] Regarding these tendencies Arms Lamonica, indeed, notes a parallel between Anne Brontë's fiction and her father's, who was a man of the church and used a similar "moral didacticism" (ibid.) even though he was much less direct and outspoken in his criticism of existing norms (cf. ibid., 37).

Without the spiritual background, the scene would be received much differently, and even so, her authority would be questioned since one of the father's functions was that of the religious instructor as well as ultimate household authority, also in questions of morality, according to the middle-class ideal. In *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, the reader is informed that parents should, if possible, always be of one mind, especially in company and in front of their children in order to maintain the image of family togetherness and out of "courtesy" (M.C., 24) towards the partner. In the conduct book, this rule is especially ascribed to correct housewifely behaviour, because the father has "the final authority" and father and mother "are really one" (ibid.). As already mentioned in the context of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and with respect to the masterful Fanny Dashwood, William Cobbett is also strongly in favour of maintaining paternal authority

> 'A house divided against itself,' or, rather, in itself, 'cannot stand;' and it is divided against itself if there be a *divided authority*. The wife ought to be *heard*, and *patiently* heard; she ought to be reasoned with, and, if possible, convinced; but if, after all endeavours in this way, she remain opposed to the husband's opinion, his will *must* be obeyed; or he, at once, becomes nothing; she is, in fact, the *master*, and he is nothing but an insignificant inmate (189, original emphasis).

Helen is aware of this patriarchal ideal and also acknowledges that the rule intends to prevent potential loss of paternal authority in front of their children; however, maintaining the father's authority, while also keeping her child safe, is a task that proves to be increasingly difficult. After Helen has restored her son's religious understanding, the child correctly concludes that, in her line of argumentation, "it's papa that's wicked" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 279). While Helen does not explicitly agree with the child's conclusion, she does not refute it either and passes her judgment, not on her husband as a person, but on his words and actions: "Papa is wrong to *say* such *things*, and you will be very wrong to *imitate* him" (ibid., emphasis added). Backed up by her spiritual justification, Helen can refute paternal authority. However, Helen also acknowledges in her diary the "trouble" (ibid., 284) she has to change the habits adopted by her son due to the transgressive paternal authority. She uses every period of her husband's absence to form her son's mind according to her own notions of morality and "eradicate the weeds that had been fostered in his infant mind, and sow again the good seed they had rendered unproductive" (ibid., 284).

The negative spiritual and physical influence that Arthur Huntingdon exerts on the child becomes one of Helen's strongest arguments in favour of separation. Cobbett's advice text also urges his male readership to consider "their [wives'] devotion to their children, how evidently they love them better, in numerous instances, than their own lives" and deduces that it is the husband's duty to show respect and courtesy when considering his wife's "pains" (178), which she endures for the well-being of the family. Helen could be regarded as illustration of this principle: Her motives are no longer 'only' her own well-being, an argument that would not hold much weight according to the Victorian laws, or society's perception of women's rights, nor is her motive solely the child's physical upbringing – with the argument of saving her son's soul in "deliver[ing] him from such a parent" (Brontë, ToWH, 280), she is able to make use of bourgeois ideology in order to achieve a goal that actually opposes this same ideology, which again hints at the inherent paradoxical nature of these standards. Wagner adds that Helen's anxiety regarding her son's moral future has been influenced by contemporary concerns about heredity and therefore "projects her fears about Huntingdon's past onto a second Arthur Huntingdon" ("Speculations", 124). Such an argumentation is, strangely enough, supported by Reverend Millward's ideas concerning heredity (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 41), which imply that alcoholism or a tendency towards "intemperance" could be inherited. The abuse of alcohol and the unrestrained consumption of food has, according to Cobbett, an influence on the mental state of the person, and this is also what the readers are confronted with in the figure of Arthur Huntingdon: "This was the cause; and, be it observed, that indulgences of this sort, while they tend to make men poor and expose them to commit mean acts, tend also to enfeeble the body, and more especially to cloud and to weaken the mind" (17). According to Pellerito, "supposedly natural connections between patriarchal inheritance of the land" were commonly regarded as connected to the genetic transmission of "biological traits" (npag). Little Arthur could, according to this argumentation, possibly inherit a tendency towards a "weaken[ed] mind" or insanity through alcohol consumption. John Gregory's advice to his daughters confirms this idea to some extent: "Avoid a companion that may entail any hereditary disease on your posterity, particularly (that most dreadful of all human calamities) madness. It is the height of imprudence to run into such a danger, and in my opinion, highly criminal" (133). While Gregory does not mention alcoholism

directly, the context in which the abuse of alcohol was discussed might allow this interpretation of the text.[294] Of course, Gregory speaks of "criminal" negligence and impulsiveness in overlooking such a tendency, because it does not only affect the life of his daughter but also that of his potential grandchildren. However, Cobbett also adds the idea that not only heredity might be the cause of so-called 'insanity' in children, but the cause might also be parental misbehaviour:

> [T]here is, in the management of babies, something besides life, health, strength and beauty; and something too, without which all these put together are nothing worth; and that is *sanity of mind*. There are, owing to various causes, some who are born ideots [sic]; but a great many more become insane from ***the misconduct, or neglect, of parents*** (268, bold emphasis added, otherwise original).

In a time when such ideas would have influenced the minds of most young women, Helen's anxieties concerning both Arthur's biological impact on his son and his presence as influence become even more motivated and understandable.

The problem of the possible heredity of alcoholism is also addressed by Helen herself, in whose family the problem exists as well: "He [little Arthur] was inordinately fond of them [drink] for so young a creature, and, remembering my unfortunate father as well as his, I dreaded the consequences of such a taste" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 284). Her method to cure her child of this "fondness" is to alter his perception of alcohol from a welcomed treat to dreaded medicine without depriving him of it altogether and thus stimulating his fascination with alcohol. She manipulates him by tampering his drinks and artificially inducing "nausea" (ibid.), an ultimate, desperate act of reclaiming maternal authority from his father, who, according to her, might have passed on the inclination of "fondness" of alcohol to his son. The intimate domestic environment of the family turns into a battlefield on several fronts due to the unsuitable father figure. Even though Arthur's actions, such as encouraging his young son to drink alcohol and making him deliberately drunk (cf. ibid., 269), were not illegal at the time, the novel presents a clear stance against it (cf. Sheppard, 208), also problematising the issue regarding not only moral

[294] Thormählen explains that "[i]n the early and mid-nineteenth century, writers of treatises on alcohol and alcohol abuse agreed that drinking affected the imbiber's mind and temper, destroying moral principles and intellectual faculties by degrees" ("Villain", 837).

implications but also physical health.[295] Lock mentions Thomas Graham's medical text, which includes "descriptions of mood change" (37) as one possible symptom of alcohol addiction. This idea corresponds with the fact that alcohol was, according to medical opinion of the time, perceived as having a strong effect on mental health as well as on character and morality (cf. ibid., 219). Graham's *An Account of Persons Remarkable for their Health and Longevity* (1829) states that "[w]ine should never be taken immoderately; and it would be advisable, as much as possible, to abstain from its use, because it affects the brain; hence, no person of a weak organization should venture to drink it, unless in small quantities" (37). Slogans such as these would be well known even at the time the novel is set in, and Arthur Huntingdon's later decline appears to be modelled after Graham's description of mental and physical degeneration. As Berry asserts, Anne Brontë's novels, especially *The Tenant*, reveal the shocking truth that family can be contaminated from within and thus reflect the unsatisfactory situation outside (cf. 43). John Gregory includes passages of similar impact in his advice text, warning of the influence of hereditary diseases and inclinations on future family life: "Avoid a companion that may entail any hereditary disease on your posterity, particularly (that most dreadful of all human calamities) madness. It is the height of imprudence to run into such a danger, and in my opinion, highly criminal" (133). As Graham argued above, alcoholism was often seen to induce symptoms that came close to madness and was as such closely related to mental and – even more commonly – moral disease (cf. Thormählen, "The Villain", 832). Despite this, Arthur Huntingdon, and to a lesser degree Reverend Millward, reflect the normalisation of drinking alcohol in early Victorian England (cf. Hyman, 452). William Cobbett also comments on this trend:

[295] The 'Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children' Act from 1889 brought at least some increase in child protection, explicitly stating that "[a]ny person over sixteen years of age who, having the custody, control, or charge of a child, being a boy under the age of fourteen years, or being a girl under the age of sixteen years, […] causes or procures such child to be ill-treated, neglected, abandoned, or exposed, in a manner likely to cause such child unnecessary suffering, or injury to its health, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour Original and unrevised text taken from legislation." gov.uk. (Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children Act 1889 (legislation.gov.uk) Accessed 9th of September 2024. Furthermore, the act restricted the lawful presence of children in places where alcohol was publicly consumed, even though the privacy of the domestic sphere remained untouched by the legislation, and thus still allowed abusive paternal figures some scope of action. However, these late changes in child legislature indicate that children had indeed to be shielded from their primary caretakers even though the authority of the father remained largely untouched.

> In the passage which I have just quoted from chap. xxxi. of ECCLESIASTICUS, it is said, that 'wine, *measurably* taken, and in *season*,' is a *proper thing*. This, and other such passages of the Old Testament, have given a handle to drunkards, and to extravagant people, to insist, that *God intended* that wine should be *commonly* drunk (29, original emphasis).

While the figure of the "drunkard" (ibid.) was despised by moralists, drinking was still regarded as "part of the social contract" (ibid.). This perspective began to change due to the influences of industrialisation and the middle-class values of industry and self-control (cf. ibid.) as polar opposites to the levity and unrestraint implied by alcohol consumption. Thus, alcoholism became a very topical issue in Britain, as the vice became to gain public notoriety especially in the early nineteenth century when "[t]he temperance movement spread over Britain" (Thormählen, "The Villain", 832).[296]

The Tenant reflects the Victorian perception of childhood as innocent and in need of rescue through the portrayal of little Arthur as originally innocent child "with all his natural sweetness of disposition" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 286). As Helen describes her son, his original innocence is in danger of corruption through morally transgressive adult persuasion but can be saved by an adult saviour figure – Helen, the mother, in this case. The corrupting nature of alcoholism is not just a sign of moral weakness, it is also a potential physical and medical problem (cf. ibid. 30). Helen's mission to save her son is both physical and spiritual, consequently, her son is able to gain strength when playing in the unspoiled environment of Wildfell Hall, where his mother, the "savior" (Lock, 37) figure has brought him, which echoes strongly the idea of the Victorian child as innocent but still in need of adult "guidance" (Hillel, 158). Even in appearance, little Arthur resembles the model Victorian child described by Hillel: An "innocent child [with] blue eyes, golden curls, rosy cheeks" (152). When Gilbert first perceives little Arthur, he is innocently curious, looking over a wall with "a small white forehead, surmounted with wreaths of light brown hair, with a pair of deep blue eyes beneath, and the upper portion of

[296] Thormählen mentions that Helen's strategies to make her son hate alcohol are "recommended by several writers on drunkenness in the 1820s and 1830s" (ibid.). In fact, Mrs Markham and the Reverend promote an "old-fashioned" (Hyman, 453) attitude towards alcohol – at least old-fashioned for the 1840s, when the novel was published. Berry sees this act of Helen as a rather violent and tyrannical revenge and act of reclaiming the rights that society and Arthur have denied her initially (cf. 45). While this explanation sounds possible, the amount of sadistic temperament ascribed to Helen is highly debatable and does not wholly fit into the image of her character as nurturer and carer.

a diminutive ivory nose" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 27). Fittingly, Gilbert also acts as a saviour, immediately after having spotted the child, when he prevents his fall; since her function as breadwinner prevents the mother from acting as the immediate saviour in this situation, Gilbert has to take over this part (not for the last time in the novel). It is not a coincidence that Arthur's innocence first presents itself to Gilbert within nature and forces him to become a saviour figure. In her 1799 evangelical educational advice text, Hannah More comments on the role of nature in children's education and the adult duty to maintain the child's nature:

> While childhood preserves its *native simplicity*, every little change is interesting, every gratification is a luxury; a ride or a walk will be a delightful amusement to a child in her natural state; but it will be *dull and tasteless to a sophisticated little creature*, nursed in these forced, and costly, and vapid pleasures. Alas! that *we should throw away this first grand opportunity* of working into a practical habit the moral of this important truth, that the chief source of human discontent is to be looked for, not in our real but in our factitious wants; not in the demands of nature, but in *the artificial cravings of desire*! (42, emphasis added)

It is interesting to note how many Victorian notions are already present in this early depiction of evangelical parenting, which obviously harks back to Rousseau's teachings on natural childhood. The "artificial cravings of desire" which Arthur Huntingdon has forcefully instilled in his son, must and can be cured within nature – Helen does not "throw away" her "grand opportunity" to teach her child in this unspoiled setting.

Helen always attempts to educate her son in a very natural environment, even during the first stage of her motherhood in the "secluded" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 194) surroundings of Grassdale, where they live a simple life during the father's absence, often playing together in the park and the surrounding woodland. These outings with her son appear to be among the few instances when Helen is able to forget her worries and enjoy herself:

> I was kneeling before him [her son], and presenting them [the flowers], one by one to the grasp of his tiny fingers; enjoying the heavenly beauty of the flowers, through the medium of his smiling eyes; forgetting, for the moment, all my cares, laughing at his gleeful laughter, and delighting myself with his delight (ibid., 198).

In Anne Brontë's other novel, *Agnes Grey*, which also includes a strong focus on education, the protagonist's charges in the Bloomfield household behave in an

entirely different way when spending time outside. Instead of cherishing the positive qualities of nature, they enjoy going "birdnesting" without any consideration of "justice and humanity" (*Agnes Grey*, 33), treating nature not only as inferior but exulting in proving their dominance by means of cruelty. In particular Tom Bloomfield exhibits "extasy and delight" in torturing small birds (ibid. 33-34), which shocks his governess. By contrast, little Arthur and Helen's interaction with nature shows that here nature is allowed to function as mediating factor between the parent and the child, whose inexperienced grasp on the natural environment causes the adult to be able to ignore, for the moment, artificiality, reality and social constructs such as, in this case, the marital problems.[297] Nature is also presented as a signifier of freedom after the period of her 'captivity' in Grassdale; it is the first positive thing Helen notices after her flight:

> Oh, what a delight it was to be thus seated aloft, rumbling along the broad, sunshiny road, with the fresh morning breeze in my face, surrounded by an unknown country all smiling – cheerfully, gloriously smiling in the yellow lustre of those early beams – with my darling child in my arms, almost as happy as myself (ibid., 300).

Later, during her exile, she keeps up the habit of spending time in nature with her son, having him accompany her during her painting expeditions in the surrounding landscape (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 47), and enjoys that he has the opportunity to play outside, together with animals and out of reach of potentially undesirable human influence that could be corruptive:

> What pleased her best of all was to see him romping and *racing with Sancho* [Gilbert Markham's dog], while I walked by her side (though I sometimes deluded myself with that idea), so much as for the delight she took in seeing

[297] Arthur's continuous ruthlessness towards her deprives Helen steadily of the joy in her child's amusements and the ability to play with him: "I am too grave to minister to his amusements and enter into his infantile sports as a nurse or a mother ought to do" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 253). William Cobbett's advice text also includes a warning of too much "silen[ce]" in childcare, instead recommending "singing", "talking to" and "tossing and rolling about" which "mothers in general practise" (257) and *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* reminds its readership "that a happy and harmonious home rears great and noble men and women" (10). Helen is incapable to offer both to her son and the deceiving signs of cheerfulness which her child exhibits are the result of disharmony rather than of domestic happiness. Helen admits that she is often "alarmed" by her son's "gleeful merriment", which "trouble[s]" (Brontë, *ToWH* 253) her because it appears to suggest a temperamental similarity between her child and his father, and she is unable, at such moments, to distinguish between infantile fun and adult frivolity because of her past experiences. Helen appears aware that she is not acting according to the motherly idea when she tries to "damp[en] the innocent mirth" which she "ought to share" (ibid.). Her depressed mental state, which renders her unfit to entirely sympathise with her child, also emphasises the contrast between her and the child's father who "has no weight of sadness on his mind" (ibid.) because his son's future moral and physical disposition is evidently not his concern, contrary to Helen's acceptance of her mission.

> her son thus happily engaged in the enjoyment of those *active sports* so *invigorating to his tender frame*, yet so *seldom exercised* for *want of playmates* suited to his years; and perhaps, her pleasure was sweetened not a little by the fact of my being with her instead of with him, and therefore *incapable of doing him any injury* directly or indirectly (ibid.,48, emphasis added).

Again, this echoes Rousseau's ideas on child-rearing and also complies with Martha Mears' and William Cobbett's teachings; the latter describes his own way of educating his children in the countryside in a similar way:

> Children, and especially boys, will have some out-of-door pursuits; and it was my duty to lead them to choose such pursuits as combined future utility with present innocence. Each his flower-bed, little garden, plantation of trees; rabbits, dogs, asses, horses, pheasants and hares; hoes, spades, whips, guns; always some object of lively interest, and as much *earnestness* and *bustle* about the various objects as if our living had solely depended upon them. I made everything give way to the great object of making their lives happy and innocent. I did not know what they might be in time, or what might be my lot; but I was resolved not to be the cause of their being unhappy *then*, let what might become of us afterwards. I was, as I am, of opinion, that it is injurious to the mind to press *book-learning* upon it at an *early age* (282, original emphasis).

Once more, Rousseau's influence makes itself felt with the mention of innocence and the predominant absence of "book-learning" as well as Cobbett's refusal to act as 'corruptor' in any way. Nature is supposed to be an educating influence on children, teaching them rules and conduct naturally without forcefully bending or training them and without leading them into 'unnatural' and 'undesirable' habits, such as drink, addiction to entertainment, laziness, or morally transgressive readings. In addition, the adult influence, represented here through the figure of Gilbert Markham, is minimised and consequently the danger of 'unnatural' influence, which could corrupt the child, is reduced.

Shaw explains that in the nineteenth century, educational practices where highly disputed in certain social contexts; they consisted of a "struggle" between "the Rousseau-esque or Romantic" against the "Puritan or Augustinian" which assumed that children where tainted from birth onwards and had to be 'purified' according to the views of "Calvinist determinism" (Shaw, "Quiet Feminist", 332). The Romantic approach eventually got the upper hand, and this is also reflected in *The Tenant*, even though the idea of childhood presented in Anne Brontë's novels can be read as a "milder variety of evangelicalism", assuming that "[t]he individual

child is born with a capacity for both goodness and evil; to believe that children will be naturally good is as mistaken as to brand them as naturally evil" (ibid.). Hannah More's ideas corroborate this statement to a certain extent when she recommends to

> furnish them [the children] with a few simple and harmless materials [only], […] and they will manufacture their own pleasures with more skill, and success, and satisfaction, than they will receive from all that your money can purchase. Their bodily recreations should be such as will *promote their health*, quicken their activity, *enliven their spirits* […]. But if you begin thus early to create wants, to invent gratifications, to multiply desires, to awaken dormant sensibilities, to stir up hidden fires, you are studiously laying up for your children a store of premature caprice, and irritability, and discontent (41-42, emphasis added).

Not only do the resemblances to More's text strengthen the underlying evangelical impression conveyed by Brontë's novel, but More's combination of "innocent activity", of "spirits" and "health" also confirms the idea that spirituality and physicality were inherently connected.

Despite the traces of evangelicalism, the influence of Rousseau's ideas on *The Tenant* is clearly discernible as well. Pike comments on little Arthur's weak stature as a confirmation of the justification of Helen's decision to leave her son's father, since the child indeed develops more strength after the change of environment and Helen's "Roussauesque education" (118) on the moors. Obviously, too, the connection between active sports and the male environment is drawn upon in the description of little Arthur's activities. Healthy exercise in nature was generally deemed to be beneficial for children, especially if they were thought to be 'delicate'. William Buchan's treatise on *Domestic Medicine* mentions that the weakness of the child is often a result of the environment:

> A delicate female, brought up within doors, an utter stranger to exercise and open air, who lives on tea and other flops, may bring a child into the world, but it will hardly be fit to live. The first blast of disease will nip the tender plant in the bud: Or, should it struggle through a few years existence, its feeble frame, shaken with convulsions from every trivial cause, will be unable to perform the common functions of life, and prove a burden to society (8).

Helen would presumably be aware of such writings, and she adjusts her environment accordingly. Since little Arthur is indeed mentioned to be "of tender frame" and in need of strengthening activities, it can be assumed that his mother

shares similar views on the benefits of a natural movement out of doors. Accordingly, it is Helen's goal to establish "a safer, healthier home for her son" (Ross, "Anthropocene Feminist", 269), and the emphasis that is put on nature and health in Helen Huntingdon/Graham's upbringing of her boy is confirmed through her preference for the "more airy" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 55) rooms of Wildfell Hall in comparison with the more convenient, but smaller rooms and confined atmosphere of a cottage. In addition, she lists another advantage of her ramshackle abode that is presented as beneficial for her son's health, which underlines Gruner's idea that Helen practices a kind of "pedagogical nurture of little Arthur" (309). Again, exercise is the key component of her argumentation: The large "unoccupied apartments" of the mansion "are very useful for my little boy to run around in on rainy days when he can't go out; and then there is the garden for him to play in" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 55). Moreover, Helen's attempts at gardening in Wildfell Hall reflect her nurturing endeavours and represent a "precise antithesis of the continuities of violence perpetrated by Huntingdon" (Ross, "Anthropocene Feminist", 277).

Reflecting Helen's maternal practices, fresh air is mentioned in almost every advice text to be one of the best methods to preserve or restore health: Thomas Graham in *An Account of Persons Remarkable for their Health and Longevity* (1829) mentions that one of his cases of study appeared "so healthy, that if he had not changed his diet and air, he might perhaps have lived a good while longer" (62). In addition, William Cobbett confirms that "[t]he next thing after good and plentiful and plain food is *good air*. This is not within the reach of every one; but, to obtain it is worth great sacrifices in other respects" (279, original emphasis). Likewise, Mrs Beeton includes "fresh air" (466) in her description of the ideal nursery, and Martha Mears states that "[o]f all the external sources of health, air certainly claims the first notice" (41). The lasting effect of this lifestyle is also mentioned in the novel. Because of constant exercise, fresh air and healthy living, standing in strong contrast to the unhealthy ways that his father introduced his child to, little Arthur becomes "much more hardy and active than when he first entered the neighbourhood" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 58), preferring to walk most of the way to the outing near the sea.

Besides her son's moral, spiritual and physical education within nature, Helen also takes care of her son's general education: Even in the most challenging marital situations in Grassdale, she thinks "it proper to devote some portion of every day exclusively to his [little Arthur's] instruction and amusement" (ibid., 271). Besides school education, Helen does indeed appear to teach her son to adhere to some stereotypically masculine Victorian conventions, such as the ideal of chivalry: During their play in the garden of Grassdale, little Arthur "support[s] the feebler steps of […] little Helen" (ibid., 219), his future wife, practising the role of the protector. In this case, her practices align perfectly with Cobbett's, who also teaches his own son "to protect defenceless innocence" (355) at all costs. Arguably, Helen encourages such behaviour, because it contrasts to the uncaring and ruthless picture of masculinity that her husband represents, and, at this point in the novel, every difference between her son and his father is welcomed. Helen is evidently pleased by her son's behaviour, calling it a "pretty sight" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 219) and musing about his future development.

Regarding education, William Cobbett again provides the example of his own family to illustrate his opinion that education should be administered by parents as naturally as possible: "In the meanwhile the book-learning *crept in* of its own accord, by imperceptible degrees. Children naturally want […] *to do what they* [the parents] *do*: the boys following their father, and the girls their mother; and as I was always *writing* or *reading*, mine naturally desired to do something in the same way." (297, original emphasis) It is true that Cobbett only hints at the maternal function as educator and associates activities such as reading and writing more with the paternal presence (i.e., himself), but the fact that both father and mother are mentioned together as primary educators implies that the mother must occupy a similar (though presumably not identical) function. His writings indirectly even highlight the idea that, since Arthur is unwilling to spend time with his son, Helen has no choice but to take over the paternal part of the education to prevent neglect as well as harmful education. Considering the circumstances, therefore, one could argue that Cobbett would have approved of Helen's conduct in this case since he considers parents in general, not excluding mothers, the best teachers of their children: "What need had we of *schools*? What need of *teachers*? What need of *scolding* and *force*, to induce children to read, write, and love books? What need of *cards*, *dice*, or of any *games*, to '*kill time*;' but, in fact, to implant in the infant heart

a love of *gaming*, one of the most destructive of all human vices?" (292, original emphasis) In Cobbett's argumentation, educational institutions become potential sources of infantile corruption, while the environment of the home with both parents present is a fertile ground for domestic, middle-class virtues such as early rising and modesty (cf. ibid.). Interestingly, it is the presence of the gentleman-father, not any outside institution, that poses the real threat to little Arthur's development in accordance with these virtues and becoming a member of the new, reformed model of masculinity (cf. Coffey, 111), which is going to be discussed in greater detail later on. However, there is one instructor-figure mentioned in Brontë's text who has indeed a deteriorating influence on Helen's son because it represents the extended arm of the educational upper-class ideas of little Arthur's degenerate father.

Furthermore, Helen's husband continues to deny her the rights of the mistress of the house and overrules her claims to (maternal and domestic) authority by engaging a governess without her knowledge or consulting her. In *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, the task of employing servants, or "Engaging Domestics" is listed in the chapter "The Mistress" (13). The process of hiring is, moreover, far from being uncomplicated; according to the author's descriptions the mistress should "form some idea of the character of the applicants" from the descriptions of trusted acquaintances and traders who know their business (cf. ibid., 13-14). Huntingdon's circles hardly match the descriptions of "trusted acquaintances"– a fact that is known to both – and he forces his wife to accept an employee solely based on his own authority. His intention evidently is to make her aware of her status as dependent and powerless person. Besides the acknowledgement of her traditional "business" as biological mother, Helen mentions her "pleasure" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 294) in educating her son, which links maternal duties once again to a certain amount of escapism. The presence of a governess denies her the escape into 'usefulness' and diversion from her problematic life and condemns her to passivity since her husband has "deprived […] [her] of every other occupation" (ibid.). While Helen fully intends to take her "role as moral guardian […]" seriously, she lacks the authority that was usually connected to this position. Arthur employing a governess of questionable origin denies Helen even this small bit of power (cf. Diederich, 27).

Hiring a governess in Grassdale constitutes another attempt to take away maternal authority from the mother and subvert Helen's function as maternal

educator by presenting a replacement figure. Cobbett mentions an example of his own paternal feelings toward the employment of "teachers", explaining that "never had they [his sons and daughters], while children, [sic] *teacher* of any description; and I never, and nobody else ever, taught any one of them to read, write, or any thing else, except in *conversation*; and, yet, no man was ever more anxious to be the father of a family of clever and learned persons" (290, original emphasis). Statements such as these render the author's dislike of 'replacement' figures for parental educators apparent. His arguments are quite similar to Helen's when she rejects the new governess's authority: Besides Miss Meyers' evident unsuitability, a maternal substitute is particularly "unbearable" (Lee, npag.) for Helen because she defines herself primarily as mother at this point, since Arthur has taken away from her every other possibilities to express herself. Intending to keep her role and maintain her authority, Helen comments that the employment of a governess is "quite unnecessary" because she considers herself "fully competent to the task of teaching him" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 294), especially during his younger years. Yet, Arthur Huntingdon argues with her insufficient "qualifications" (ibid.) for the task, thus intending to humiliate her even more. There is one argument in Huntingdon's explanations which would probably be acknowledged by Cobbett, despite the latter's dislike of replacement educators, and that is the fact that Helen is a woman and as such well-equipped to educate daughters – sons, however, are a different matter:

> With regard to *girls*, one would think that *mothers* would want no argument to make them shudder at the thought of committing the care of their daughters to other hands than their own. If fortune have so favoured them as to make them rationally desirous that their daughters should have more of what are called accomplishments *than* they *themselves have*, it has also favoured them with the means of having teachers under their own eye. If it have not favoured them so highly as this (and it seldom has in the middle rank of life), what duty so sacred as that imposed on a mother to be the teacher of her daughters! And is she, from love of ease or of pleasure or of any thing else, to neglect this duty; is she to commit her daughters to the care of persons, with whose manners and morals it is impossible for her to be thoroughly acquainted (309, original emphasis).

However, Huntingdon's seemingly 'virtuous' argumentation is hardly convincing, since he employs another woman to look after his son and does not take care of the boy's education himself. One could also argue that since the father has shown himself to be evidently deficient in "manners and morals", Helen is the best father-

replacement possible (this changes, if only slightly, with the appearance of Mr Markham as substitute father). The appearance of the governess, indeed, falls short of Mr Huntingdon's exaggerated praise of the employee, whom he hired without a personal interview to confirm her character (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 294). Mrs Meyers' "attainments were limited, her intellect noways [sic] above mediocrity" (ibid.). Apparently, the governess only boasts of "accomplishments" (ibid.), which were, according to most advice texts, considered superficial, redundant and even harmful when they were used to encourage personal vanity, according to the bourgeoise worldview of, for instance, Hannah More and other "accurate judges of female manners" (More, 34-35).[298] There is a definite sense of hypocrisy connected to the governess, "a look of guile and subtlety" (ibid.), which underlines her superficiality. While the readers ought to keep in mind that Helen is a biased narrator and has a motive for discrediting the person who replaces her as maternal and spiritual authority, Arthur Huntingdon's criteria for selecting the governess indicate that there is some truth in her observations. Moreover, the artificiality does not remain limited to the governess's accomplishments; they extend to her treatment of her pupil, showing an "overstrained" (ibid., 295) exhibition of affection. However, even if this description fits the shallow standards Mr Huntingdon sets for his son's education, the reader is still constantly reminded of Helen's subjectivity as narrator, especially because Helen is very eager to win back her position of authority within the household as well as her influence over little Arthur's mind, which she justifiably deems to be endangered. We learn that Helen is forced to "remonstrate with her [the governess] on the subject of over-indulgence and injudicious praise" (ibid.). Not only is the "remonstration" a gesture of authority and the still existent, albeit weakened, hierarchy within the household; it is also noticeable that her main complaint is of indulgence – a fault which she herself acknowledges to be tempted

[298] Linked to Mrs Hargrave's habit of social pretension is the employment of a governess who, matching her employer, is characterised by Helen as "as artificial and conventional a person as that prudent mother could procure to rectify the pupil's natural qualities" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 219). This characterisation appears almost as negative as Helen's assessment of Miss Meyers, and, though the motives for employment differ considerably, both are in essence worthy of censure. Again, Helen's ideas resemble More's criticism of female education and the artificiality it usually promotes: "Some popular authors, on the subject of female instruction, had for a time established a fantastic code of artificial manners. They had. refined elegance into insipidity, frittered down delicacy into frivolousness, and reduced manner into *minauderie*" (32, original emphasis). In short, Mrs Hargrave's employment of a fashionable governess, who solely teaches social representation, is not a deed for her daughter's but rather for her own sake. It is part of the ambitious mother's aim to better her family status through her child's marriage. She thus rejects the ideal of maternal sacrifice and proves to have no mother-child bond to speak of.

to commit herself (cf. ibid., 192) and is later on accused of by the Reverend (cf. ibid., 183). Helen has no understanding or sympathy for a governess who commits a similar mistake and also criticises her lack of true spirituality, which just "consisted in an occasional heaving of sighs, and uplifting of the eyes to the ceiling" (ibid., 295). Moreover, Helen is suspicious of the almost maternal "attention" (ibid.) with which the governess watches her son, immediately questioning her motives, and thus justifying her interference. The reason is obviously her wish to point out how very unwarranted the usurped authority of the governess over her son is, not just because of her flawed imitation of maternal emotion but also because of her artificiality in representing them – her hypocrisy, which, as Helen assumes, is just a cheap copy of actual motherhood assumed to achieve social advantages. Arthur Huntingdon describes the governess Miss Meyers, who is very probably his mistress, as "estimable, pious young person" who is "recommended by a respectable old dowager – a lady of high repute in the religious world" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 294). This portrayal superficially appears to fit the ideal, but at a second glance Arthur's true and rather sinister motive for these deliberately chosen descriptions is revealed: Since he has hitherto neither been a particularly religious person nor exhibited any care for his son to be different from the model of his father, his newfound emphasis on the spirituality of the governess who replaces his wife is presumably meant to mock her. Her religiousness has up to this moment annoyed him (cf. ibid., 166), so he is evidently determined to undermine her (religious) authority and her function as religious educator in order to reassure his dominance. Deneholz Morse confirms this: "Huntingdon increasingly will not allow his son – his property – to be a part of his mother's deeply Christian life" (136). The whole point of this parental power-struggle is his motive to emphasise her "nothingness" in society as well as in her own home. Drewery calls this incident, when Helen is forbidden to fulfil the function of both educator and mistress of the house, "the final straw" (344), leading to the couple's separation.

Due to her husband's unfitness as paternal role model, Helen must balance the challenging duties of both male and female parental duties according to the traditional ideal, especially after having decided to leave him. In her attempts to meet the demands of both public and private sphere, she has to sacrifice part of the female ideal and adapt male-connotated characteristics such as toughness and

emotional restraint, risking offending her environment in order to maintain her maternal position. It is interesting to note that in doing so, Helen conforms to a far greater degree to the bourgeoise *paternal* ideal of the hard-working, restrained family man than Arthur Huntingdon, who has never experienced financial hardship, could ever do. The fact that her environment, especially the male part, believes her to be unable to fulfil both functions, especially the role of the protector, is showcased in Mr Hargrave's reaction upon hearing of her plans for her flight. "'Ah, then it is a secret flight you mediate! But with whom, Mrs Huntingdon?' 'With my son – and, possibly, his nurse'" 'Alone – and unprotected! But where can you go? What can you do? He will follow you and bring you back'" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 273). Mr Hargrave assumes that since there is no male person included in the flight party, the women are by definition "unprotected" because they will never be able to protect themselves. Child and nurse apparently do not count as company since, despite having them with her, she is still "alone". *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, for example, advises the husband that "[i]t is most emphatically the correct thing to escort her [the wife] to all public places, to accompany her into society, and to be with her on all possible occasions. A husband who is careless of his duty has only himself to blame if he loses his wife's affections, or if scandal attack her" (M.C., 17). And: "[It is not the correct thing] [t]o go out into society without your husband at all; even to your own mother's house it is scarcely correct, if she has a formal party to which he has been invited. However much it may annoy you to stay at home, if he cannot go, remember that it is *not correct* to go without him" (ibid., 26, original emphasis). Passages such as these illustrate how grave Helen's transgression to go not only alone on a visit, but to flee unaccompanied by a male guide and without her husband's knowledge would have been during the nineteenth century. In addition, Hargrave strongly questions her ability to adopt the breadwinning function of the paternal protector, asking "'What can you do?'". The fact that she "consider[s]" herself "safe" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 273) without male company goes completely against Mr Hargrave's patriarchal worldview and thus reflects how society was likely to judge Helen's dreams of independence.

Yet, without a flight, Helen is unable to fulfil the role of the protector for her son, due to her husband's restrictions. This underlines the idea that Helen is ultimately motivated by the wish to fulfil both paternal and maternal functions for her son. In order to realise the maternal ideal, complete her maternal sacrifice and

maintain the mother-child bond, which is endangered through the presence of the father, Helen has to violate traditional gender roles by taking over the function of the breadwinner and, at least partially, the position of protector of the family. When her husband restrains her from doing so, she describes her position as that of "a slave – a prisoner – but that is nothing; if it were myself alone, I would not complain, but I am forbidden to rescue my son from ruin, and what was once my consolation, is become the crowning source of my despair" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 288). Helen's maternal nature is depicted as deriving comfort from fulfilling her duty as mother, but that duty becomes part of her sacrifice when she is hindered in fulfilling her tasks adequately. Thus, to fulfil the maternal function she has to be financially independent and, as she herself asserts, "labour hard" as to not "take [her] […] son to starve" (ibid., 270). Helen's own fortune is, according to the laws of the time, no longer hers but her husband's from the time of their wedding onward and thus "Helen's economic dependence becomes an acute problem [...] when she finds she can no longer co-habit with Arthur" (Bellamy, 255). Even William Cobbett acknowledges this problem, and, though he does not provide any remedy, he at least recognises that the wife and mother should have a right to own parts of the family finances:

> [S]he rears up his children; she provides a scene of suitable resort for his friends; she insures him a constant retreat from the fatigues of his affairs; she makes his home pleasant, and she is the guardian of his income. In both these cases, the wife *helps to gain the money*; and in cases where there is no gain, where the income is by descent, or is fixed, she helps to prevent it from being squandered away. It is, therefore, as much *hers* as it is the husband's; and though *the law* gives him, in many cases, the power of keeping her share from her, no just man will ever avail himself of that power. (219-220, original emphasis)

The fact that Cobbett is forced to appeal to male integrity does not only remind of Huntingdon's lack of this trait but also highlights the weak foundation of justice in the legislation during the first half of the nineteenth century and beyond. Indeed, Diederich also interprets Gilbert's hesitation to marry Helen at the close of the novel as a newfound realisation of Helen's duty as a mother and matriarch, "to guard over her son's interest and her newly acquired property", which would be endangered by a new husband's inevitable legal "control" (33).[299] It becomes a matter of trust in

[299] His hesitation also suggests that he is sensible of his own social position as well as of her situation and "does not look upon Helen as property" (Cox, "Manual Intercourse", 188).

the integrity of the second husband, not only concerning her own fate but also regarding her son's future.

Legally, however, Helen could indeed be pressured to accept her 'female duties' and "be forced back into co-habitation and sexual relations" (Bellamy, 256). Social norms and the law require her to stay with her husband if she wants contact with her child. Helen acknowledges this after she has learned of her husband's unfaithfulness: "I would leave you tomorrow […] and never come under this roof, but for my child" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 237). Quirk argues that the novel implicitly demands a change in custody legislation "for the protection of children and their mothers alike" (236). Since Brontë's text is set before the passing of the Custody of Infants act, the author's presentation of events indeed "criminalize[s]" (Gilbert, 278) her heroine's act of maternal protection. This decision represents a direct appeal to an audience that has witnessed the change in legislature to, as Gilbert promotes, "question the relationship between law and morality" (ibid.) as well as their own attitudes towards gender-specific cultural norms, especially when parenthood is concerned. As mentioned, after Arthur Huntingdon's explicit refusal to agree to a separation without depriving her of her child, even after her willingness to leave her money behind (cf. Brontë, 238), Helen has no lawful means to achieve her goal and yet maintain her status as mother. William Cobbett addresses this problem in some way when he complains about continuous paternal absence for unjustifiable reasons and hints at the inherent double standard of social rules:

> Where ought he to be, but with the person whom he himself hath chosen to be his partner for life, and the mother of his children? What *other company* ought he to deem so good and so fitting as this? With whom else can he so pleasantly spend his hours of leisure and relaxation? Besides, if he quit her to seek company more agreeable*, is not she set at large by that act of his? What justice is there in confining her at home* without any company at all, while he rambles forth in search of company more gay than he finds at home? (174, original emphasis & last emphasis added)

Of course, Cobbett was no revolutionary and does not address or question custody law as such, but his problematisation of "justice" already hints at the fact that the exclusivity of custody laws was widely regarded as problematic due to questions of morality. Helen is unable to divorce her husband officially and is equally forbidden to keep her son in case of a separation "for under the law prevailing until 1939 [...] a separated mother had no rights at all over her children" (Drewery, 344; cf. Colón,

24). This law would have applied to Helen since the events of the novel take place during the earlier part of the nineteenth century, and by 1848, when the novel was published, the situation had only "marginally improved, allowing [mothers] access to children under seven, but the legal custody of children still remained with the father" (ibid.). The "vast power" which "the *law* gives us [men] over them [women]" (Cobbett, 185, original emphasis) determines that the only way to maintain part of her image and status, although marred by the break of domestic togetherness through her husband's infidelity, is to endure the humiliation of having been emotionally replaced and remain only his "child's mother and [..] housekeeper" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 288).

Given the immense weakness of the wife and mother in the eyes of the law, William Cobbett argues that male infidelity should on no account be regarded as just a 'petty offense', even though legislation was likely to do just this:

> First, you win, by great pains, perhaps, a woman's affections; then, in order to get possession of her person, you marry her; then, after enjoyment, you break your vow, you bring upon her the mixed pity and jeers of the world, and thus you leave her to weep out her life. Murder is more horrible than this, to be sure, and the criminal *law*, which punishes diverse other crimes, does not reach this; but, in the eye of reason and of moral justice, it is surpassed by very few of those crimes. *Passion* may be pleaded, and so it may, for almost every other crime of which man can be guilty. It is not a crime *against nature*; nor are any of these which men commit in consequence of their necessities. The *temptation is great*; and is not the temptation great when men thieve or rob? In short, there is no excuse for an act so unjust and so cruel (198, original emphasis).

Again, sacrifice of her own pride, enduring "jeers of the world" (particularly in the form of Annabella's mockery), is demanded of Helen to maintain the mother-child bond. When even this humiliation does no longer serve its purpose of protecting the child from the corrupting influence of his father, Helen is forced to go a step further in violating social norms: "[B]etter by far that he should live in poverty and obscurity with a fugitive mother, than in luxury and affluence with such a father. […] I could endure it for myself, but for my son it must be borne no longer" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 270). With her stern refusal never to hand over the child to his father (cf. ibid., 304), Helen factually commits a crime, being aware that her maternal sacrifice implies that she must disregard "the world's opinion and the feelings of [her] […] friends" (ibid., 270), offending many people because of her defiance of social

norms. Lee, too, recognises that "idealized motherhood" cannot be reconciled with the "critique on wifely obedience" and Helen's "physical and emotional divorce" (npag.) from her husband.

The topicality of the custody debate is often reflected in maternal Victorian heroines of the time, but perhaps nowhere more than in Brontë's Helen Huntingdon and Ellen Wood's Isabel Vane, even though both act very differently on their maternal feelings: Helen abandons her husband to achieve togetherness with her son and save him from "corrupting influence" (Birch, 62), while Isabel leaves her children (and her husband) and only later returns to restore the mother-child bond (cf. Gruner, 304). Both cases, however, foreground a plot that is mainly "concern[ed] with maternity detached from courtship or marriage" and "exhibit unusual plotting" (ibid.). Isabel and Helen are both bound to experience the state of an outcast due to their actions as mothers and are consequently "shut out of the expected plots of women's lives" (ibid., 305). Helen, similar to Isabel, has to "conceal her identity in order to maintain her maternity" (ibid., 310). The difference consists in the fact that Isabel has to conceal her maternity, whereas Helen is obliged to conceal her marital status in order to act as a mother – both are driven to social defiance by conflicts between the law, social norms and the demands of motherhood.

Even though he acknowledges women's struggle under patriarchal legislature, Cobbett maintains the rather rigid and harsh view that widows should, in the interest of their children and their own reputation, refrain from marrying again:

> There is seldom *an apology* to be offered for a mother that will hazard the happiness of her children by a second marriage. The *law* allows it, to be sure; but there is, as Prior says, 'something beyond the letter of the law.' I know what ticklish ground I am treading on here; but, though it is *as lawful* for a woman to take a second husband as for a man to take a second wife, the cases are different, and widely different, in the eye of morality and of reason; for, as adultery in the wife is a greater offence than adultery in the husband; as it is more gross, as it includes *prostitution*; so a second marriage in the woman is more gross than in the man, argues great deficiency in that *delicacy* (211, original emphasis).

His critique on women's remarriage reflects the double standard that women's chastity is worth more than men's because the paternity of the child is always based on their word (in a time when there were few other methods to determine paternity)

and this could have a decided influence on inheritance and line of succession. However, he also presumes that children will most likely be unhappy with stepfathers, against whom Cobbett appears to be highly prejudiced (cf. ibid). This gloomy view of women's second marriages diverges from Brontë's depiction of Helen's union, especially as far as the child's happiness and the replacement of a corrupt father figure by an arguably much more suitable paternal influence are concerned. However, it is true that the second marriage does come with sacrifices, again mostly on Helen's part, since the widowed state brought immense advantages. As a widow, Helen is finally independent and fulfils her function as maternal provider, occupying both the positions traditionally allocated to mother and father (cf. Deneholz Morse, 139). She has "a fortune of her own" and is "nursing a fine estate for him [her son]" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 366); all these arguments exclude the common defence of widow's remarriages, which Cobbett deems to be poor excuses anyway: "The usual apologies, that 'a *lone woman* wants *a protector*; that she cannot *manage her estate*; that she cannot *carry on her business*; that she wants a *home for her children*'; all these apologies are not worth a straw" (222, original emphasis). Helen manages her own estate and has even more than one home for her son; the justification for her remarriage therefore must be grounded in affection. But this fact is not a consolation for Gilbert, who is at this point unsure of her feelings towards him and has lost all other arguments in his favour – he is, from a material standpoint – worthless for Helen and this is a blow to his masculine ego. Helen's independence, the facts that she is in no way in need of a man to provide, protect or educate her child, as well as her social position, are presented as taunting to Gilbert, whose self-image and belief in the patriarchal structures, in which he grew up, have led him to overestimate his own position.

As these discussions have shown, the feminine ideal, which was naturally supposed to be maternal, and the essence of the maternal ideal of care and nurture, do not go together in Helen's situation. Thus, the underlying hypocrisy and impracticability of Victorian norms related to ideal gender-specific behaviour is exposed and problematised. Milicent Hattersley is presented as a contrast to Helen's unbroken spirit and determination, since she "never complain[s] of neglect" and "never gives him [her husband and her child's father] a word of reproach" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 203 & cf. Dutoi, 237). Patriarchal domestic structures demanded "wifely

submission" (Fitzpatrick, "Tenant", 210), which Helen circumvents to a certain extent when she accuses Hattersley of his mistreatment of his own wife. Accordingly, the double standard and the paradoxes in Victorian society are revealed through the depiction of violence against women and the inherent problems in the education of boys and girls and ultimately show the "failure of a culture" (Thierauf, npag.).

6.1.3 Arthur Huntingdon, "his child's worst enemy" and Gilbert Markham, a Worthy Surrogate Father?

The depiction of motherhood and the different maternal types is much more prominent in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* than in many other Victorian novels; however, it is not just motherhood which is scrutinised by Brontë, who intended her novel "for both men and women to read" ("Preface to the second edition" qdt. in Arms Lamonica, 33) and thus presented in her literary work a "radical literary and social argument for its time" (Arms Lamonica, 33). Her didactic message is consequently addressing fathers and mothers alike. The novel also conveys a warning of the results of "the socially endorsed difference in the education given to boys and girls" (ibid., 40). Moreover, the modernity of the text lies in the "ambivalent" (Pregent, 213) presentation of traditional domesticity, parent-child bonds and, according to Bullock, in the fact that the novel exposes the way in which "silence" was demanded of women to the extent that even "mother figure[s]" (135) like Aunt Maxwell are unable to break it (cf. ibid., 136). The domestic abuse Helen undergoes at the hands of her first husband is in many respects never made specific – a narrative strategy which Turner supposes to reflect Victorian domestic ideology and its method of blaming the victim (cf. 105). According to Thierauf, the "neutrality" in defining sexual assault as a shady mixture of "rape or seduction" is indirectly criticised in Brontë's novel, because the text clearly takes Helen's perspective regarding the assault and the "neutrality" (Thierauf, npag.), or "victim-blaming" (O'Callaghan, 313) is presented as an explicit danger to "women and their children" (Thierauf, npag.). In order to be absolved from blame and hide their 'perceived failure', women, especially wives, had to veil domestic abuse. Their homes are legally ruled by the male figures of the novel, first and foremost, Arthur Huntingdon and Gilbert Markham. Neither of them appears as a perfect father

figure at first glance and this examination does not aim at a complete reversal of this first impression, but rather strives to present a more nuanced picture of their characters, focussing on their paternal characteristics and their effect on the women in their lives.

It seems justified to call Arthur Huntingdon one of the worst and most shocking father figures in Victorian literature. This perception is reinforced by the fact that he remains largely unredeemed throughout the novel, notwithstanding the presence of an innocent, potentially 'redemptory' child character (cf. Hillel, 155). His lack of redemptive potential is hinted at quite early on, when he considers his wife to be "too religious" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 166). He states: "I like a woman to be religious, and I think your piety one of your greatest charms, but then, like all good things, it might be carried too far" (ibid.). As mentioned earlier, John Gregory explicitly warns his daughters of the dangers of marrying a man who is without any spiritual outlook. He mentions that men are generally less inclined to be religious because of their "natural hardness of […] hearts" (9), an excuse which indeed resembles Huntingdon's own justification for his lack of interest in religion: "'If God meant me to be religious, why didn't he give me a proper organ of veneration?'" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 167) He refers to his head and not his heart, but the result is, in effect, similar – it describes the person as predetermined to be less fit for spiritual activity. However, Gregory draws the conclusion that a man thus unfit for religion is equally undesirable as marriage partner and future father (cf. 92). Viewed in this light, Huntingdon's attempt to minimise Helen's religious ardour does not bode well for the future, since, according to Gregory, a man who attempts "to shake your religious principles, be assured he is either a fool, or has designs on you which he dares not openly avow" (18). Since Helen is already married at this point when this conversation takes place, Huntingdon's "designs" on her are even more a direct attack on her spirituality since his motives are presumably less physical. Primarily, Arthur Huntingdon's reason for criticising Helen's spirituality is his suspicion that her spiritual ardour might "lessen" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 166) her affection for him and thus compromise his comfort. His shallow head, which he exhibits to Helen to excuse his irreligiosity, also, as Thormählen asserts, was used to signify to Victorian readers versed in phrenological ideas "a want of firmness of character" ("The Villain", 834).

Helen recognises her husband's selfishness very early on but, at first, makes excuses for him. Her justification for his less-than-ideal conduct are in particular the faulty behaviour of his parents, his "harsh yet careless father" and a "madly indulgent mother" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 183). She tries to compensate this faulty parental education by "mother[ing]" (Thierauf, npag.) her husband herself, who, in turn, reacts rather childishly. In Helen's opinion, the parents' mistakes are mirrored even in the adult child's behaviour, which emphasises the guilt of parental misbehaviour because it, in turn, affects the lives of many other persons, including their potential grandchildren. Helen's argumentation is reminiscent of Gilbert Markham's assessment of his own faulty education by his mother, who spoilt him as well, and shares, consequently, the culpability for his vanity (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 17). As a direct consequence of this line of argumentation, Helen vows to be the opposite to Arthur's imprudent mother in order to stop the chain of parental misconduct from spreading to the next generation (cf. ibid., 183). Martha Mears' argumentation appears to support Helen's assumption:

> In this connexion may I be permitted to remark on the practice at the tables of many families, when the children are at home for the holidays; every delicacy is forced upon them, with the tempting remark, 'that they cannot have this or that dainty at school;' [sic] and they are indulged in irregular hours for the same motive, 'because they - cannot have that *indulgence* at school.' Thus the natural *seeds of idleness, sensuality, and sloth, are at once cherished*, by converting the periodical visit at home into *a season of intemperance*, late hours, and exemption from Study [sic]; so that children are habituated, at an age when lasting associations are formed in the mind, to connect the idea of study with that of hardship, of *happiness with gluttony, and of pleasure with loitering, feasting, or sleeping* (53, emphasis added).

Arthur Huntingdon is indeed the epitome of "idleness, sensuality, and sloth" combined with "intemperance" – characteristics that, according to Mears, are usually acquired in the parental home, through the domestic habits of the mother. If Helen were acquainted with advice literature such as this, it is only natural that her mind would assume Mrs Huntingdon senior to be a very careless and culpable mother. Society apparently trained women to blame mothers and – in turn – to put more pressure on young women as future mothers. However, since Arthur's ideas of fatherhood do not match Helen's moral and educational standards, her efforts to

re-educate her husband prove to be more complicated than expected, and the "evils" (ibid.) of the consequences of misguided upbringing are not easily quelled.[300]

Arthur Huntingdon becomes a 'false' paternal figure, the figure of a "tempter" (Lock, 42) and potential corruptor, or, as Helen calls him, "his child's worst enemy" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 270). Huntingdon tempts his son, for instance, with material possessions, such as "the bright, ruby ring" (ibid., 252) he wears. With respect to expensive clothing and jewellery, Cobbett, who constantly emphasises his own position as father and advisor, warns young men of the dangers of fashionable dress and male vanity. Arthur Huntingdon's behaviour towards his son directly contrasts Cobbett's ideas and thus positions Helen's husband almost as an 'anti-father' in the light of the domestic doctrine: "But this [natural appearance] does not want to be set off by expensive clothes." (20) Furthermore, he judges especially male vanity as more or less "despic[able]" (ibid.), since it distracts the male mind from useful occupation. While Huntingdon's and little Arthur's play with jewellery still appears comparatively harmless at first glance, Helen's reaction tells the readership that it is, in fact, anything but harmless. As Alexa Kelly describes in her study "Angel Bright, Infernal Demon: Tracing Parallels between Arthur Huntingdon and John Milton's Satan in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*", there are direct resemblances between the corrupting father in Brontë's novel and the diabolical figure in *Paradise Lost* (cf. 290-291).[301] The mother experiences "a sudden, imperative impulse to deliver […] [her] son from that contaminating influence" (ibid.). Moreover, the child's reaction to his mother's correction, her "abrupt removal" (ibid.) of the child, emphasises the impact of these passages, since the readership is made aware that the boy is being slowly estranged from his more austere and serious mother by the influence of his high-spirited, indulgent, lavish, and careless father (cf. ibid.). In fact, little Arthur appears to "love him more than me [Helen]" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 252) at one point, which indicates that Arthur Huntingdon, as true 'seducer', is about to undermine Helen's maternal authority through exercising his own, superficially more pleasing, paternal influence. Cobbett, indeed, confirms the significance of almost absolute paternal authority: "all these have made you head,

[300] Birden, for example, reads the engagement scene between Helen and Arthur Huntingdon, in which he kneels on her dress and thus forces her to stay, as a sign of the character's ill manners and his "bad upbringing" (283), which is the fault of his negligent mother.
[301] McMaster already mentions briefly that Huntingdon plays the "role of Mephistophilis [sic]" (355).

have given you full power to rule your family, and if you give up your right, you deserve the contempt that assuredly awaits you, and also the ruin that is, in all probability, your doom" (187). His strong words perhaps explain why some men might experience anxiety, fearing that authority might be 'usurped' by their wives, leaving them to await their "doom". However, Cobbett's ideas have to be somewhat mitigated, since the patriarchal concept, in his opinion, includes the husband's consideration and deference towards his wife, since avoiding conflicts and securing domestic disharmony is always Cobbett's goal: "[A]s to the management of the house and of menial servants; as to these matters, and many others, the wife may have her way without any danger" (189). Huntingdon, however, uses his unlimited paternal authority in a way that is contrary to the domestic, middle-class ideal. Emotionally, as well, Arthur Huntingdon attempts to break the existing mother-child bond by "counteract[ing] my [Helen's] arduous labour for the child's advantage" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 252). He does so, moreover, not from a genuine belief in the justification of his own parenting methods or motivated by emotional attachment, but out of revenge for Helen's emotional detachment from him after his affair with Annabella Lowborough, and out of resentment of Helen's constant criticism of his questionable morals.

Helen herself recognises the insincere motives of her child's "*seemingly* joyous, amusing, ever-indulgent papa" (ibid., 253, emphasis added) who actually "delights to rob" Helen of her "son's affection" out of "motives of mere egotism" (ibid.). Arthur Huntingdon is evidently about to "transform" his son, after his own image, "into a selfish, disobedient and mischievous boy" (ibid.), by "encourag[ing] [him] in all the embryo vices a little child can show, and […] intruct[ing] [him] in all the evil habit he could acquire" (ibid., 268). This process of indoctrination is called ironically "mak[ing] a man out of him" (ibid.) by Helen. In fact, Arthur Huntingdon's 'educational' enterprises remind more of the evil influence of 'vice' described by William Cobbett in connection to bad schools, ill-advised company etc. than of paternal teaching.

> These figurative [wild] oats are, however, generally like the literal ones; they are never to be *eradicated from the soil*; and as to the *colts*, wildness in them is an indication of *high animal spirit*, having nothing at all to do with the *mind*, which is invariably debilitated and debased by profligate indulgences. Yet this miserable piece of sophistry, the offspring of parental weakness, is in constant use, to the incalculable injury of the rising generation. What so amiable as a

> steady, trust-worthy boy? He is of *real use* at an early age (36, original emphasis).

Contrary to Cobbett's assumptions, the harmful company little Arthur is faced with is not situated *away* from paternal influence, but, even worse, is the paternal influence itself. As *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* describes it: "[I]t is not the correct thing […] [t]o imagine that your children will not reward you later on for all the good you teach them, and to forget that all the carelessness will bring it's fruit also" (M.C., 119-120). Arthur Huntingdon's influence mainly means that little Arthur learns "how to tipple wine like papa, to swear like Mr Hattersley, and to have his own way like a man, and send mama to the devil" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 269), as the narrator puts it. Huntingdon uses the child, making him "tipsy" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 269), for his own entertainment and as confirmation of his own justification in indulging in drink and other extravagances: "To see such things done with the roughish naïveté of that pretty little child, and hear such things spoken by that small infantile voice, was particularly piquant and irresistibly droll to them" (ibid.). In line with Cobbett's opinion on drunkenness, Huntingdon indeed symbolically turns into "a beast" (30). This animalistic side (cf. Deneholz Morse, 125) is highlighted by the fact that he educates his son to be 'beastly' himself. In Arthur Huntingdon's worldview, excesses and decadence are privileges of masculinity without which the boy would not grow up to the full use of his masculine powers. It is exactly her questioning of this perception of masculinity, her resistance against her husband's "deliberately debasing instruction" (Birch, 63) of the child which causes Helen to affront Mrs Markham and the Vicar during her time in exile, arguing for a more balanced and less toxic male education. Mrs Markham's and the Vicar's view might differ from Mr Huntingdon's decadent approach to education; however, the baseline of the argumentation remains somewhat similar: Too much female influence would cause "the little fellow to be moped to death between an old nurse and a cursed fool of a mother" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 269).

However, Huntingdon's depiction as father is not entirely unambiguous. Helen herself mentions that her son wins "his father's heart at last" (Brontë, 192), even if it took about one year. Moreover, Huntingdon's last wish to see his child during his fatal illness appears to prove that there is still a remnant of paternal affection left in the very egotistical patient (cf. ibid., 330). The fact that it took

Arthur Huntingdon so long to appreciate his child can be explained by his inherent selfishness and his wish to be cared for rather than to take care of others:

> Judging from appearances, his idea of a wife is a thing to love one devotedly and to stay at home – to wait upon her husband, and amuse him and minister to his comfort in every possible way, while he chooses to stay with her; and, when he is absent, to attend to his interests, domestic or otherwise (ibid.).[302]

The new born baby obviously could not gratify Arthur's egocentricity and even takes away the mother's focus of attention. In this context, Cobbett comments on the shift of female attention in family life after the birth of a child: "When the *child* comes, it divides this [female]ardour with the father; but until then you have it all; and if you have a mind to be happy, repay it with all your soul" (164, original emphasis). Needless to say, Arthur Huntingdon has no intention to repay Helen's affection but rather shies away from the domesticating influence of the child. The longer stretches of paternal absence that will occur later, and mark part of the fickle nature of Arthur Huntingdon's fatherhood, only hint at the actual nature of Arthur's 'ideal' life, which only occasionally includes a (very one-sided) vision of domestic togetherness, in which he gives nothing but is given all. This kind of selfishness, as the advice in *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* hints at, foreshadows not only domestic disruption but also personal disaster: "For him [the selfish man] there is but one person in the universe, and that is himself. When that person fails him he is disappointed indeed!" (M.C., 149) The principle of poetic justice, in fact, makes sure that he is lastly disappointed in himself, having lost his father-child bond and paternal authority, which he never respected in the first place.

The fact that he does not think highly of his own fatherhood, or the baby, is reflected in his assumption that the child is something "to amuse" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 193) his wife during his periods of absence. Evidently, for him there is no duty or responsibility connected to parenthood and his comfort remains his priority. This impression is solidified in his unwillingness to let wife and child accompany him to town (cf. ibid.); the image of a father clashes in his mind with the image of himself as 'man about town', enjoying the amusements and liberties of homosocial company and leading, in essence, a bachelor life. Family, especially the presence of

[302] This description reminds strongly of Mrs Markham's ideas of wifehood, though it is to be doubted that she would have tolerated Arthur Huntingdon's excesses since her ideas are based on the concept of an industrious father.

a small child, would be an obstacle to embodying his preferred image of the 'rakish bachelor'. However, in order to excuse himself and maintain a remnant of pretence to be a socially adequate father figure, he explains the impracticability of the mother and child's visit to London, employing, arguably in a deliberate manner, statements which were not uncommon in advice literature: as his wife recalls in her diary, Arthur Huntingdon explains that "the air of the town would be certain to disagree with him [his son], and with me [Helen] as a nurse; the late hours and London habits would not suit me under such circumstances; and altogether he assured me that it would be excessively troublesome, injurious and unsafe" (ibid., 193). Bad air and the physical dangers of town life and entertainment were usually pointed out, especially in the context of pregnancy and nursing women, because the quality of the milk and consequently the child's health and even life could be affected. William Cobbett explains that parents who let their children grow up accustomed to town life risk "sickly children, children with big heads, small limbs, and ricketty [sic] joints" (279). Moreover, London and its temptations are depicted as a hotspot of "moral decadence" (Ross, "Anthropocene Feminist", 269) and unhealthy customs – a place entirely unsuitable for a young family. This moralistic element is supported by Cobbett as well, who sees the temptations of city life less as a direct danger to mother and children, and more to the father himself, and, again, the risks are connected to alcohol: "[H]ow many thousands could I go and point out, to-morrow, in London, the money expended on whose guzzlings in porter, grog and wine, would keep, and keep well, in the country, a considerable part of the year, a wife surrounded by healthy children" (279). In order to keep children healthy, Cobbett demands that parents should be ready to sacrifice their own pleasure and, most of all, their entertainment. Here, it is especially maternal sacrifice which is asked for. The mother is expected to forego entertainment and enjoyments; however, as Cobbett's admonitions exemplify, stricter views on parental sacrifice maintained that this deprivation of town entertainment should include the father because continuous absence is bound to destroy domestic togetherness (cf. ibid.): "Where ought he to be, but with the person whom he himself hath chosen to be his partner for life, and the mother of his children?" (174) Pike also cites Cobbett, and names especially his dislike of the particularly male habit of drinking and gambling as factors that keep men from their homes:

> He writes in opposition to the masculine ethos of the middle and upper classes, where gentlemen of privilege and independent means spend their days fox hunting or shooting and their evenings at gentlemen's clubs in London. In lieu of sporting or gaming, Cobbett desires the younger generation to cultivate 'sobriety, industry, and activity' (113).

When Arthur Huntingdon's first excuses are circumvented by Helen, who fears his return to his bachelor lifestyle, he explains his reasons seemingly honestly "and somewhat testily" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 193) because he has to abandon part of the pretence of being a 'good' and emotionally caring father: "[H]e was worn out with the baby's restless nights, and must have some repose" (ibid.). *Cassell's Household Guide* confirms that the period of weening, the time in which Arthur Huntingdon vies for Helen's attention, is particularly stressful for the mother in terms of balance between presence and absence: "The period of weaning is justly regarded as one of great anxiety to a parent" (*Cassell's*, 270). Fathers who do not wish to be disturbed by their children's cries are excused in *Cassell's Household Guide* by their duty in the public sphere; the responsibility to care for the child lies, in this argumentation, solely with the mother, the caretaker in the private sphere, who should make sure that the husband's sleep is not troubled by a noisy baby (cf. ibid.). The husband' s work (for his family) also features as Huntingdon's primary justification (cf. 142). Since Arthur Huntingdon is a gentleman of leisure, this argument is immediately dissolved by Helen herself, who explains: "'The truth is, Arthur, […] you are weary of my company, and determined not to have me with you'" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 193). The situation is even worse: "Huntingdon's 'business' from which, exhausted, he seeks respite at home, is debauchery, not honest toil" (Drewery, 342). However, "[w]hile he abuses this central ideal" (ibid.), he is still able to defend himself with the same ideology. A similar incident occurs when the boy is "cutting his teeth", which causes a "sentence of immediate banishment" to be passed on the child "on the first indication of fretfulness" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 201). Arthur Huntingdon does not regard himself as a father and apparently hates to view Helen as a mother: She is, therefore, once more "reproached" for "preferring […] [her] child to […] [her] husband" (ibid.). Helen is left alone to do the work of parenting, since her husband is the opposite of William Cobbett's image of 'hands-on' fatherhood': "For my own part, how many days, how many months, all put together, have I spent with babies in my arms!" (180). Cobbett presents the middle-class ideology of a domestic man, while Huntingdon, true to his upper-class worldview, promotes a spatial and

emotional distance between himself and the child. But there is one precondition that allows Cobbett to play the part of domestic paternity: his work, his "pen" permits him to be thus actively involved with his children. Arthur Huntingdon purposefully ignores the double pressure he exerts on his wife and tries to minimise his son's claim on his wife's maternal attention by stating: "Oh, to be sure, you're overflowing with kindness and pity for everything but me" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 201). The fact that he apparently does not put more importance on his child that on "everything" else in his surroundings points out once more that in Arthur Huntingdon's life there is no place for true paternity since he is unable to attribute importance to any other person than himself. Pike comments: "Huntingdon perverts any semblance of paternal sensibility" (118) by calling his son names. Directly opposed to Huntingdon's initial rejection of his own child, "his utter disregard for fatherhood" (ibid., 119) is Gilbert's later affection for little Arthur.

Pike confirms Cobbett's promotion of male domesticity, which is also clearly recognisable in Brontë's text, even though, as Pike opines, the author of *The Tenant* "would neither abide by his description of the home as 'the man's place' nor would she support his view of the man's greater role within the home at the expense of women's authority" (113). While it is true that the novel depicts the problem of female agency being "exploited" by "male authority" in the traditionally female field of the home, Brontë's text also shows that the home has to be "the man's place" as well, since it is Arthur's absence that distresses Helen in the first place and causes most of his degeneration. She attempts to follow Cobbett's advice: "[L]et him [the married man] resolve not to be seduced from his home; let him never go, in one single instance, unnecessarily from his own fire-side" (Cobbett, 175). For a family to work, according to both Cobbett and Brontë, the father has to identify with his home, even while he is absent, in order to leave the harmony of family togetherness, as well as the mother-child bond, undisturbed. I disagree with Pike, who claims that Cobbett "never addresses the reality of men whose paternal affections are so thoroughly corrupted that single motherhood is a healthier option than the traditional domestic family" (113). In one instance, Cobbett does mention a family that was brought to ruin through the immorality of the father and, in this case, indeed recommends separation. In this passage, Cobbett narrates the story of a characterless young man who had all apparent advantages and ended up

> marrying a most beautiful woman of his own age, of rich parents, and of virtue perfectly spotless. He very soon took to both *gaming and drinking* […]; he neglected his affairs and his family; in about four years spent his estate, and became a dependent on his wife's father, together with his wife and three children. Even this would have been of little consequence, as far as related to expense; but he led the most scandalous life, and was incessant in his demands of money for the purposes of that infamous life. All sorts of means were resorted to to [sic] reclaim him, and all in vain; and the wretch, availing himself of the pleading of his wife's affection, and of his *power over the children* more especially, continued for ten or twelve years to plunder the parents, and to disgrace those whom it was his bounden duty to assist in making happy (223, original emphasis).

Cobbett concludes that this is a hopeless case and that separation is the only way to save the remnants of the family and protect what is left of the domestic ideal.

> There is more of baseness in this character than in that of the robber. The man who obtains the means of indulging in vice, by robbery, exposes himself to the inflictions of the law; but though he merits punishment, he merits it less than the base miscreant who obtains his means by his *threats to disgrace his own wife, children*, and *the wife's parents*. The short way in such a case, is the best; set the wretch at defiance; resort to the strong arm of the law wherever it will avail you; *drive him from your house like a mad dog; for, be assured, that a being so base and cruel is never to be reclaimed:* all your efforts at persuasion are useless; his promises and vows are made but to be broken; all your endeavours to keep the thing from the knowledge of the world, only prolong his plundering of you; and many a tender father and mother have been ruined by such endeavours; the whole story must come out at last, and it is better to come out before you be ruined, than after your ruin is completed (223, original emphasis & later emphasis added).

Huntingdon's inactivity, which is connected to his status as independent landowner, confirms the "Paradigma der Nutzlosigkeit" ('paradigm of uselessness', Coffey, 115) associated with an upper-class lifestyle, despised especially by the rising middle-classes. *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* fittingly comments that men should "remember that habits of industry are quite easily acquired by resolution, and that there is no excuse for the man who does not form them. To rich or poor they are essential if anything is to be accomplished during life. A rich man without these habits sinks into obscurity" (M.C., 131). Arthur Huntingdon's lack of habits of industry and activity also represent a strong contrast to Gilbert Markham, whose daily business is characterised through "konrete[...] landwirtschaftliche Aktivitäten oder deren Verwaltung und Organisation" (Coffey, 115).[303] Through this contrast,

[303] "specific actions related to agricultural tasks, administration or organisation" (Coffey, 115)

not only the old-fashioned aristocratic lifestyle of leisure is presented as dated and potentially decadent, but the connected concept of the aristocratic rake is shown to be antiquated (cf. ibid.).[304] Hyman confirms that the figure of Arthur Huntingdon is not just a personified warning of the evils of excess, he "is emblematic of the increasingly untenable role of the landed gentleman in Victorian culture" (451), and thus makes the novel a pioneer indicator of social change.[305] Gilbert, by contrast, represents the new ideal of bourgeoise manliness which is inherently connected to work and productivity (cf. ibid., 116). As Hyman reasons, Arthur Huntingdon's deliberately anti-domestic attitude is emblematic for a wider social phenomenon: The old-fashioned "man of leisure" cannot fit into the "reorganized social structure", dominated by middle-class values, and is forced to make himself seen and felt by "flouting the rules, refusing change that refuses him" (Hyman, 457). His newfound role as father causes Huntingdon to feel even more cornered in his status as an 'endangered species' of upper-class life, and "[a]dherence to the marital regime brings him closer to the social realm he must flout to maintain his status" (ibid., 458).

Part of Helen's maternal fears is the concern that her son would not be able to properly "respect his father, and yet to avoid his example" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 194), should her husband's conduct continue or even worsen. Showing respect for parents, especially the father as head of the household, was commonly regarded as social prerequisite and marker of character. As *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* states: "It is the correct thing […] [f]or a young man to show respect to his father" (27). In the case of Arthur Huntingdon this becomes very difficult because he is in no way a suitable educator nor a model figure according to contemporary norms, especially in the face of the rising middle-class ideology: "Superior sobriety, industry, activity, though accompanied with but a moderate portion of knowledge, command *respect*, because they have great and visible influence. The drunken, the lazy, and the inert, stand abashed before the sober and the active" (Cobbett, 40,

[304] This view is shared by Joshi (cf. 917).

[305] Considering the sociopolitical and socioeconomic changes in England during the industrialisation, the figure of Arthur Huntingdon becomes the representative of a declining species of class: "The image of the productive man of inherited wealth faded as the traditional activities of the English gentleman were slowly usurped by the professional classes" (Hyman, 455). He becomes a useless surplus in a "professionalized" society and is unable to find new respectable activities without "feminizing himself" (Hyman, 455). The activities Helen proposes to her husband are all traditionally feminine pastimes (cf. ibid.).

emphasis added). Even Arthur's physical attraction becomes negatively associated with his "physical pursuits" (Thormählen, "The Villain", 833) as well as his "laziness" and "drunkenness", and thus deprives him gradually of all his initial advantages. Moreover, Arthur's excessive lifestyle is portrayed as a danger for his son's future, not only because of his moral corruption, but also due to the danger of financial ruin (cf. Bellamy, 255) – a further reason for filial disrespect. Especially his act of preventing Helen's first flight (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 283) turns Arthur Huntingdon into a prison keeper, forcing his wife into "marital enslavement" (Lewis, 16), instead of appearing as a paternal figure (cf. Wagner, "Speculations", 125).

His heir is one of Arthur Huntingdon's "prized possession[s]" (Wagner, "Speculations", 118). Legally and socially the continuation of the paternal lineage is ensured through the mere existence of little Arthur, who bears his father's first as well as last name, fulfilling the requirements of primogeniture and the father-to-son model described by Cobbett: "My answer at last was, as to the boys, I want them to be *like me*" (299, original emphasis). This open indicator of succession does not only function as marker of social identification but also establishes an implied spiritual connection between father and son. This idea is indeed incorporated in *The Tenant*, but, because of Huntingdon's inadequacy as father and husband, Helen endeavours not to acknowledge this connection. She rhetorically distances herself from him, preferring to call him formally "Mr Huntingdon" or referring to him as "his father" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 268) and purely reserving the more familial term of address of the first name for her son. The father-to-son-model can here be read not only as a social but also as a moral (and even physical) concept due to which Arthur Huntingdon threatens to "doom" his son to "perpetuate a vicious tradition of false manliness" (Shaw, "Quiet Feminist", 334). According to Wagner, Helen's flight together with her son is not just a legal abduction but can also be interpreted symbolically in the context of shifting class structures and moral values: "The heir's removal hence functions provocatively as a housebreaking of Regency society" ("Speculations", 118). Moreover, the fact that Huntingdon's deteriorated appearance terrifies his son during their later meetings, and he is unable to establish the carefree, relaxed relationship to the child which they had before his days of decadence and extravagance, "disappoint[s]" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 331) him. The broken father-child bond also signifies the broken continuation of the line – not the blood

line, but the spiritual continuation of patriarchal and paternal values; the child is now a child of the mother and no longer even recognises his father. The emotional impact of this scene is mirrored in Huntingdon's once again unrestrained reaction, when he accuses his wife of sabotaging parental relationships (cf. ibid.).

Indeed, Arthur Huntingdon continuously insists on his own status and links it on many occasions to his son. Even though he does not work or care for his estate (cf. ibid., 168), he does expect to maintain the authority of the position as breadwinner and grudges Helen's abilities and her endeavours to manage without him, which obviously injures his sense of male superiority. John Gregory's conduct manual includes the author's description of an especially undesirable kind of husband, whose characteristics sound quite similar to those of Helen's spouse: "But the worst circumstance that attends a fool, is his constant jealousy of his wife being thought to govern him. This renders it impossible to lead him, and he is continually doing *absurd* and *disagreeable things*, for no other reason but to show he *dares do them*" (134, emphasis added). In order to show off his male power and prevent his wife from being able to flee and deprive him of his heir through her ability to take over the breadwinning function, Huntingdon burns her means of making money – her painting utensils (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 281) – and thus tries to maintain his authority and his position as sole financial supporter (cf. ibid., 282).[306] Moreover, Arthur regards her work, as "disgrace" (ibid) to him, because, in his mind, work is associated with trade, a connection to which would be a social degradation for him (cf. Losano, 33). Arthur Huntingdon consequently complains that Helen's action would "rob" him of the satisfaction of having his son step into his shoes, instead "bring[ing] him up to be a dirty Yankee tradesman" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 282). In her reply, Helen admits that she attempted to break the connection between father and son in order to "obviate his becoming such a gentleman as his father" (ibid.). Helen's indirect critique of her husband's snobbery, looking down on the "Yankee tradesman" while disregarding his own moral faults, secure in his self-perception as "gentleman", appears to reflect the bourgeoise antagonism to a more upper-class lifestyle with its laxer moral rules (cf. Coffey, 111). However, his effort to distance himself from middle-class respectability, which implies domestic paternity and self-

[306] Huntingdon also takes away Helen's remaining monetary possessions as well as her keys, thus depriving her of the rights and authority of a housekeeper as well as that of a wife (Brontë, *ToWH,* 281).

control, Arthur Huntingdon becomes, through his own "degradation" (Lewis, 16), increasingly "coarse[...]", ultimately arguably "aligning himself with that other 'leisured' class, the other site of gross corporeality, the unemployed poor" (Hyman, 460). William Cobbett's typically middle-class assessment of the nobility fits this description very well:

> '*high birth*' is the enemy of virtue, of valour, and of talent; would show us, that with all their incalculable advantages, royal and noble families have, only by mere accident, produced a great man; that, in general, they have been amongst the most *effeminate, unprincipled, cowardly, stupid*, and, at the very least, amongst the most *useless* persons, considered as individuals, and not in connexion with the prerogatives and powers bestowed on them solely by the law (312, first emphasis original, the rest added).

Arthur Huntingdon, the upper-class but useless and even devilish 'anti-father', however, is ultimately "punished […] by being erased from the novel by death, and replaced by his son Arthur, whose life redeems the Regency rake['s]" (Kelly, 291) legacy. Kelly also draws a parallel between the child Arthur as redeemer and Christ the saviour (cf. ibid.), being reminiscent of the child saviour of Victorian childhood conceptions.

Little Arthur's rescue of his biological father's legacy naturally leads to the question whether he performs a similar function for his surrogate father. Is Gilbert Markham, the bourgeoise farmer, who presents a strong enough contrast to Huntingdon, in no need of redemption through little Arthur at all? As Coffey notes, most research on the figure of Gilbert Markham deems him to be an undesirable companion for Helen, usually because of his resemblances to Huntingdon in his tendencies towards violence and a certain lack of self-control (cf. 117),[307] though there are some researchers, such as Marianne Thormählen and Christine Colón, who defend Markham's position (cf. ibid. & Thormählen, "Horrors", 15-16; "The Villain", 834 & Colón, 27). With the help of advice literature, this chapter attempts to 'absolve' little Arthur's stepfather from at least the most damaging accusations which paint him as a second Arthur Huntingdon.

[307] King argues that Gilbert displays a "focus on self-control" in order to differentiate himself in retrospect from his antagonist Huntingdon as well as maintaining "social dominance" (129). I would argue slightly differently since I cannot detect a particular focus on self-control in the character of Gilbert Markham when it comes to his social manners. His eating and drinking habits are, of course, more moderate and self-controlled than Arthur Huntingdon's since he needs his faculties for the maintenance of the farm, which underlines the middle-class ideology of the virtues resulting from patriarchal professionalism and industry.

It is true that in the beginning Gilbert Markham's character appears to be nothing out of the ordinary – certainly no flawless hero. Yet, for the purpose of this thesis, it is noteworthy that he introduces himself as a character who is closely connected to his family – he is a family-man through and through, if not entirely voluntarily. Fittingly, the picture of Gilbert's environment at the start of the narrative is that of typical rural domestic life with families living together in a comparatively close-knit community. For example, there is a clear difference between the domestic and even "cozy" (Joshi, 911) life at Linden-Car, where, despite the inequality caused by the patriarchal structure, there is banter and free conversation, and the upper-class circle in which Helen grows up, estranged from her father and her brother. As Pregent notes, "[s]ocial order and stability are the major notes of the first chapter" (218), even though there are already clear hints at fissures in the idealised picture. One of these hints is the fact that "of the five primary households that constitute the village as narrated by Gilbert, each exists with at least one parent deceased" (ibid.); one of these deceased parents is Gilbert's own father. These families are, consequently, incomplete according to the Victorian ideal of domesticity; this incompleteness reflects the imperfectness in their characters as well as the importance of parents for the picture of nineteenth-century families.

Due to the lack of a father figure in the household, Gilbert Markham follows in his father's footsteps and performs the office of a dutiful son to make up for this 'lack' or 'incompleteness' within his family by taking over his father's profession as a farmer, "succeed[ing] him in the same quiet occupation" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 17). It was the father's wish that his first-born son, true to the concept of primogeniture, would take over his position, not only concerning his public occupation, but also his private position, his role within the family as breadwinner and head of the family, bearing the responsibility for all relevant decisions regarding his mother, sister and brother. This was not easy but necessary from the perspective of nineteenth-century household standards. *Cassell's Household Guide*, for instance, comments on the issue of widowed mothers and the lack of a breadwinner:

> There is not much thought between them for the present, and none for the future, or for the period of sickness, sorrow, and bereavement. After a time the wife may reflect that if the *bread-winner dies, her all is gone*. […] To mention money in which she can have no interest but by the death of her husband, naturally seems to her unfeeling. With the husband, then, rests all the

> *responsibility of rescuing his wife and children* from destitution when he exists no longer to *provide for them*. Let him ask himself what punishment could be greater to his spirit, if cognizant of human affairs, than to witness or know of the distress and perhaps crime, which his own prudence might have averted […]. If a *just and well-thinking man* but steadily contemplated the possible future of his family, he would save every penny not absolutely needful for daily subsistence (*Cassell's*, 39, emphasis added).

Gilbert's father evidently endeavours to be such a "just and well-thinking man" when he recognises his "responsibility to provide for" his family. He does so, however, not through an insurance at the bank (at least the reader knows of none), but through a more traditional, 'human' insurance, namely his eldest son. Gilbert's presence becomes the 'insurance' that the Markham family will continue to thrive in the community and affirms their continued respectability through the continuation of patriarchal authority.

A tight net of responsibilities binds Gilbert very closely to the small, agrarian community as well as to his mother and siblings and does not leave him with much freedom of self-expression or many possibilities for independent decisions. The fact that he, right at the beginning of the story, is shown to "shelve […] his personal desires" (Ross, "Anthropocene Feminist", 279) indicates that Gilbert is indeed capable of selfless actions and of sacrifice in the face of duty. Gilbert resents these responsibilities to a certain extent because they keep him prisoner in a social environment that does not entirely match his ego, "for ambition urged me to higher aims, and self-conceit assured me that, in disregarding its voice, I was burying my talent" (Brontë, 17). Even though he is clearly positioned at the top of the familial hierarchy, he is restricted in his lifestyle, profession, and choice of acquaintances, because of his responsibility towards his family. It is presented as his filial duty (cf. Carnell, 18) to his mother and father to become the next patriarchal authority figure and take over paternal rights and responsibilities.[308] Accordingly, *Cassell's Household Guide* describes this duty as not unusually connected to "a severe effort of self-denial" but nevertheless as "a constant source of gratification to a man who feels – and who should not? – that it is […] his moral duty to provide for those of

[308] Even though he later breaks it to some extent when he makes Fergus the owner of the family farm, he just establishes a secondary line, because it is hinted that Fergus himself will marry and leave his property to his sons eventually. As Carnell confirms, even this action presents him once more as a conscientious landowner who is "crucial to the stability of the bourgeois public sphere" (ibid.).

his own house" (*Cassell's*, 200). Doing one's duty by working carries, according to this argumentation, merit and honour which is reflected in the well-being of the family. Gilbert's own self-image is severely influenced by this knowledge, as a compensation for his slighted ambitions.

Gilbert's late father, however, is of the opinion that "ambition is the surest road to ruin" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 17) and consequently insists on the strict realisation of the father-to-son model (cf. Brejon de Lavergnée, 90), limiting his son's choices of occupation and acquainting him with the duties and responsibilities of a father figure right from the start, without yet being a father biologically. The late Mr Markham's stance appears to be middle class in its focus on industry, but still more traditional and old-fashioned than the upwardly mobile bourgeoise perspective, represented through, for example, Archibald Carlyle in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*. Mr Markham senior, comparable to Mama Corny, Carlyle's matriarchal half-sister, holds true to his simpler origins and their fixed values, wishing his son to

> continue in the good old way, to follow his steps, and those of his father before him, and let my [Gilbert's] highest ambition be, to walk honestly through the world, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, and to transmit the paternal acres to my children in, at least, as flourishing a condition as he left them to me (Brontë, *ToWH*, 17).

In this character description, not only the strict father-to-son model, but also the position of the father as educator and role model are reflected. Gilbert's father has seemingly incorporated William Cobbett's advice in his parenting principles: "No one knows how to teach another so well as one who has done, and can do, the thing himself" (119). There is a clear emphasis on 'doing', on 'activity' and industry in this sentence which reflects Cobbett's middle-class background but also Mr Markham senior's character: bourgeoise values such as frugality, industry, honesty, self-control and humility are stressed. These values are set in opposition to ambition and social upward mobility which, according to this view, contradict the values of humility and loyalty to the social position of the parents, even though they might be seen as adhering to the ideal of industry and hard work. Upward mobility here suggests a removal from the paternal sphere in particular, a break with the father-to-son model.

Gilbert's portrayal as dutiful son extends not only to his acceptance of his father's wishes but is also mirrored in his treatment of his mother, publicly showing

his reverence to her and complimenting her on her charm (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 21). In the context of reverence and loyalty towards parents, *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* explains that "[t]o know that contempt for the tie of blood shows a heartlessness certain to be rewarded by solitude in later life. That 'blood is thicker than water' is another true axiom never to be forgotten" (M.C., 29). Moreover, the advice text explains that children should always "speak […] lovingly" (ibid.) about and to their parents, and especially a "young man" should "give his mother as much attention, and show her as much courtesy, as if she were his sweetheart" (ibid., 30). Such a behaviour is also taken as a sign of good breeding and respectability of which especially the latter is a key principle of the Markham household. Of course, his apparent politeness and reverence could also be interpreted as a way to showcase his own image since it boosts his mother's admiration of him once more and keeps him in her good graces. This idea is supported by the fact that Mrs Markham delights to be the only female in her son's life, which, because of her high opinion of his qualities, also emphasises her own excellence. In consequence, his potential marriage with "that insignificant little thing [Eliza]" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 23) would not only drag him down but also harm the mother's social value since Gilbert, as the patriarch and the person responsible for the family's status, determines their position within their social community; marrying 'beneath him' would consequently also affect the mother's status.

It is not only Gilbert Markham's self-perception which matches his mother's mind; he initially also largely adheres to her ideas about male and female education (cf. ibid., 33). He thus conforms to the typical Victorian perception of masculinity and femininity, partly also because it corresponds with his ideas about his own self-importance. Mrs Graham's diverging ideas are immediately interpreted as small slights to his own ego: "'You are not very complimentary to us all,' I observed" (ibid., 33). To reaffirm his own value, he insists on a worldview that promotes qualities such as "muscular exertion" and activity, as well as "overcom[ing] great obstacles" (ibid.) as particularly masculine endeavours and disdains everything else as effeminacy. Consequently, without being a father himself and without having special authority over his neighbour or her son, Gilbert appears to be convinced to be justified in judging her educational methods. His mother's principles, which position him as the figure of undivided authority, appear to have been imbibed, at least to some extent, in his own self-image, which resembles following description

of the housefather and his authority by William Cobbett: “And then it is so clearly *just* that the authority should rest with him on whose head rests the whole responsibility, that a woman, when patiently reasoned with on the subject, must be a virago in her very nature not to submit with docility” (186, original emphasis). Admittedly, Cobbett speaks here of wifely submission, but to the unmarried Gilbert Markham, who is head of the family and breadwinner despite being a bachelor, the power of authority would naturally be extended to the whole household, maybe even to some degree including guests. Gilbert also proclaims that a parent should rather “arm and strengthen your hero, than to disarm and enfeeble the foe; and if you were to rear an oak sapling in a hot-house, tending it carefully night and day, shielding it from every breath of wind, you could not expect it to become a hardy tree” (Brontë, *ToWH*, 34). Helen’s rebuke of the inherent paradox in his argumentation, since he explicitly is against the same experiences for a daughter, is met by him only evasively, in order to preserve his pride (cf. ibid.35). As this exchange on parenting methods reveals, Gilbert is definitely not free from “gender-based prejudice” (Thierauf, npag. & Brontë, *ToWH*, 36), which seems to be partly due to his patriarchal position in a traditional rural community and which he appears to have inherited from his mother.

However, notwithstanding the criticism attached to the proportion of Gilbert Markham’s ego, he is indeed portrayed as a character who exhibits some truly paternal qualities. He is usually caring and protective towards young Arthur Huntingdon, immediately perceiving the danger of Arthur playing on the wall and rescuing him when he is about to fall (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 27-28). In King’s opinion, it is especially the language that Gilbert Markham uses to describe himself which “evokes a caring kind of paternalism, rather than the overtly violent language associated with Arthur [Huntingdon]” (126). The reader gains the impression that he enjoys contact with the child, who, in turn, often singles Gilbert out. During a party at the Markham’s’ home, Gilbert is ostensibly pleased to see the growing attachment between his dog and Arthur, which also helps the boy to overcome his shyness in front of a strange man:

> In a minute he was kneeling on the carpet, with his arms round Sancho’s neck, and in a minute or two, the little fellow was seated on my knee, surveying with eager interest the various specimens of horses, cattle, pigs, and model farms portrayed in the volume before me. I glanced at his mother now and then, to see how she relished the new-sprung intimacy; and I saw, by the unquiet aspect

> of her eye, that for some reason or other she was uneasy at the child's position (Brontë, *ToWH*, 31).

Gilbert uses his dog, Sancho, "to his advantage" (King, 130) as a mediator between him and the child in the first place and between him and the mother in the second place. Moreover, King opines that Gilbert's use of the phrase "was seated" veils to some extent the fact that Gilbert must have actively placed the child on his lap himself (cf. ibid.) – an action which would emphasise his paternal authority in their relationship. While this idea appears to fit the overall makeup of Gilbert's character, who is, after all, born and bred to fit into and maintain patriarchal structures, the scene does not suggest any force or deliberate manipulation of the child, which is why his inherent paternal feelings can certainly be noted as the more powerful motivation. This interpretation is supported by the view of William Cobbett, whose own paternal ideas appear to mirror Gilbert's efforts to entertain the child. Cobbett suggests that part of his own paternal duties was getting the children acquainted with animals and interacting with them:

> This is the age, too, to teach children to be *trust-worthy*, and to be *merciful* and *humane*. We lived *in a garden* of about two acres, partly kitchen-garden with walls, partly shrubbery and trees, and partly grass. There were the *peaches*, as tempting as any that ever grew, and yet as safe from fingers as if no child were ever in the garden. It was not necessary to *forbid*. The blackbirds, the thrushes, the whitethroats, and even that very shy bird the goldfinch, had their nests and bred up their young-ones, in great abundance, all about this little spot, constantly the play-place of six children (294, original emphasis).

Here, Cobbett suggests a connection between humanity and nature, specifically animals; educating children to treat them with kindness thus becomes part of natural human connection.[309] Moreover, Cobbett indicates that animals may mirror or even guide correct human behaviour. The sight of birds feeding their young is to the author "[n]o unintelligible hint to fathers and mothers of the human race" (ibid.). Seen in the light of this argumentation, Gilbert's connection to animals is an even stronger emphasis on his inherent paternal nature.

Arthur's interest in Gilbert, his dog and his book depicting farm animals and tools is presented as the traditional 'male' side of child-rearing, the side of boys' education that would introduce them to the public sphere of work as well as traditionally masculine pastimes, such as hunting or breeding animals. The

[309] This idea is opposed to Arthur Huntingdon's treatment of his dog (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 172).

attachment between Gilbert's dog and the boy is emphasised in further scenes (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 48) and underlines that much of Gilbert's attraction for the child is made up of these 'rare' masculine joys. Riding represents another one of these male-connotated attractions for the boy: "If I [Gilbert Markham] happened to be on horseback, he was sure to get a canter or a gallop; or, if there was one of the draught horses within an available distance, he was treated to a steady ride upon that" (ibid.). "Arthur and Gilbert are frequently out-of-doors", and this shared activity fortifies their "growing bond" (Pike, 120). William Cobbett describes his own parenting methods in very similar words:

> [I was] always with them to set an example of early rising, sobriety, and application to something or other. Children, and especially boys, will have some out-of-door pursuits; and it was my duty to lead them to choose such pursuits as combined future utility with present innocence. Each his flower-bed, little garden, plantation of trees; rabbits, dogs, asses, horses, pheasants and hares; hoes, spades, whips, guns; always some object of lively interest […] (283).

The connection of "especially boys" with the outdoors is crucial to Gilbert and little Arthur's relationship. King terms Gilbert's attempts to teach little Arthur "pedagogical masculinity" (131), which again emphasises the connection between the boy and the man, leaving out the mother – he is the educator in this scene, just as his father educated him to take over the farm.

This male side of education and playtime was missing from little Arthur's curriculum up to this point and is, consequently, portrayed as very attractive to him; it presents the temptation of the 'unknown', and even the 'forbidden', since his mother is evidently displeased at the thought of a man gaining influence over her child's mind and actions. Therefore, Helen never fully leaves his side, "always follow[ing] and trudg[ing] beside him" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 48) to control the amount of traditional male influence that is imparted on her son. However, she also allows for this stimulus, which shows the reader that she also believes in the need for male, paternal influence on her son and appears aware that she cannot provide him with this, but, nevertheless, she still remains cautious and distrustful of male influence: While Gilbert is, to his own mind and in the eyes of society, performing a truly valuable paternal task by educating and entertaining the boy with 'boyish' material, his mother fears this influence, because the paternal influence she has experienced hitherto has been seriously lacking in care, true affection, selfless interest and

foresight, being instead ruthless and abusive. Helen Huntingdon, therefore, judges Gilbert's paternal behaviour in the context of her husband's, without yet recognising that Gilbert's care does not purely cling to the masculine stereotypes but also includes touches of the feminine (cf. Wagner, "Speculations", 118) in his interest in the child who is not even his biological offspring. This is emphasised by means of Gilbert's "amuse[ment]" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 31) in childish activities and the fact that he "decidedly like[s] to talk to her [Helen's] little companion, whom, when once the ice of his shyness was fairly broken, I found to be a very amiable, intelligent, and entertaining little fellow; and we soon became excellent friends" (ibid., 47). Such preferences would definitely speak in Gilbert's favour according to middle-class moralists; William Cobbett, for example, praises the man who shows genuine interest in children: "There is nothing more amiable, nothing more delightful to behold, than a *young* man especially taking part in the work of nursing the children" (249, original emphasis) and "I have never observed that effeminacy was at all the marked companion of fondness for little children" (180). It might be due to the class differences in the perception of masculinity and femininity that Arthur Huntingdon would regard such an interest as effeminate, while middle-class masculinity, according to Cobbett (and Gilbert) does not wholly operate according to these rules. Compared to Huntingdon's toxic masculinity, Gilbert particularly showcases certain qualities traditionally associated with femininity. Le Veness confirms this observation regarding Gilbert's 'feminine' traits by pointing out the "more nurturing and maternal" qualities of the farming occupation and acknowledges his caring and protective function when he saves the little boy from the fall, quickly spotting the danger almost with "a mother's eye" (354). The occasional switching of traditionally male and female roles between Helen and Gilbert is supported through the circumstance that Gilbert's teaching of young Arthur, "lookin[ing] for the female's authoritative approval" (Le Veness, 354), suggests that he accepts her prerogative, at least in these situations. In these parentally connotated interactions the abnegation of the stereotypically male 'roughness' and the acceptance of the feminine within manifest the "internal balance" (Poteet, 262) in both Hattersley and Gilbert Markham, which is the only way to make them both fit as men and as fathers to operate in a domestic context. Joshi confirms this assumption, stating that Gilbert has to "reform by becoming more 'feminine'" (915).

However, one could say in Gilbert's defence that his close connection to the dog and his friendly treatment of animals and children in general appear genuine and could arguably be regarded as a 'green flag' concerning his character: It is certainly true that Gilbert is not necessarily sentimental with animals due to his profession as farmer (cf. King, 126) in a time when animal rights were not what they are today, but his hunting has another purpose than the "sport" (ibid., 128) as which Arthur and his friends regard the killing of animals.[310] Pike mentions in this context that Cobbett, for example, promotes male sensitivity towards all creatures and argues consequently against too much masculine aggression (cf. 113 & Cobbett, 294) because such behaviour quintessentially offsets domestic togetherness and harmony:

> Now, what *sagacity* in these birds, to discover that those were places of safety! And how happy must it have made us, the parents, to be *sure* that our children had thus deeply imbibed habits the contrary of cruelty! For, be it engraven on your heart, YOUNG MAN, that, whatever appearances may say to the contrary, *cruelty* is always accompanied with *cowardice*, and also with *perfidy*, when that is called for by the circumstances of the case; and that *habitual* acts of cruelty to other creatures, will, nine times out of ten, produce, when the power is possessed, cruelty to human beings (296, original emphasis).

Even Newman acknowledges that Gilbert is by far more appealing in his treatment of animals than Huntingdon: He "is generally a conscientious farmer and ensures the welfare of his animals" (238). McMaster, as well, distinguishes between Gilbert's impulsiveness and Arthur Huntingdon's deliberate and rather cool, sadistic nature, ultimately highlighting the moral potential of the former (cf. 365). While more negative readings of Gilbert's character are in some respects justifiable, I would also argue that it is Gilbert's paternal nature which, though equally "imperfect" (Thormählen, "Literary Art", 286), ultimately makes the difference and elevates him from the resemblances to villainy.

Gilbert is, according to Colón, the "better choice" because of his honest paternal "concern" for his stepson and his "strong work ethic" (27). With regard to

[310] As some critics argue, Gilbert is portrayed as less maleficent, but he is still a hunter who orchestrates an "unforgivable" (Thormählen, "Literary Art", 286) attack on Helen's brother and plays recklessly and frivolously with Eliza Millward's affection (cf. ibid.) – two of his decidedly un-paternal moments which also underline his youth and immaturity that had to be supressed because of his early assumption of a patriarchal position.

"work ethic" and influence on children, William Cobbett recommends that "*every father* to live *at home with his family*, when not *compelled* by business, or by public duty, to be absent: it is in his power to set an example of industry and sobriety and frugality" (307, original emphasis). Gilbert's close connection to his domestic background as well as his workplace (the farm), which appear to be interwoven, highlights his potential to be a "good father" according to Cobbett's description. Gilbert effectively takes over the position of a surrogate father for little Arthur during Helen's time in exile, and later as Helen's lover and husband, and he does so with her consent. Despite Helen's suspiciousness of every male contact, she nevertheless allows the relationship between her son and her neighbour to grow because "her son derived a great deal of pleasure from the acquaintance that he would not otherwise have known" (ibid.).

Some scholars view Gilbert's bonding with little Arthur and his attempts "to join her [Helen's] enclave" (Ross, "Anthropocene Feminist", 277) rather critically because he uses the child as an excuse to enter her home. As Shawna Ross terms it, he is "courting the entire family" (ibid., 278) and, even though he is generally very pleased by the company of little Arthur and by no means dislikes the role of temporary substitute father, Gilbert still means to use this position for his own personal ends, intending it as a bridge to forming a relationship with the child's mother: "'Let me first establish my position as a friend,' thought I – 'the *patron* and *playfellow* of her son, the *sober, solid, plain-dealing* friend of herself, and then, when I have made myself fairly *necessary* to her comfort and enjoyment of life (as I believe I can), we'll see what next can be affected" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 64-65, emphasis added). In a nineteenth-century context, remarriage is, according to Diederich, usually not presented as an expression of romantic feelings but rather a "reconstruct[ion]" of the domestic ideal that was fractured by the absence of one parent, "particularly the mother" (30). In *The Tenant* it is the father who eventually gets replaced. Cobbett, however, does not regard such a replacement as necessary – quite the contrary:

> Where there are *children*, indeed, it is the duty of the husband to provide, in certain cases, against *step-fathers*, who are very prone not to be the most just and affectionate parents. It is an unhappy circumstance, when a dying father is compelled to have fears of this sort. There is seldom *an apology* to be offered for a mother that will hazard the happiness of her children by a second marriage (211, original emphasis).

Gilbert's reasoning, which implies the idea that a mother cannot be entirely comfortable and happy without a father figure in the picture, is denounced by Cobbett as hypocritical and illogical (cf. 222), because it is precisely the person of the 'second father' who poses a threat to the children of the 'original father' and thus disturbs the father-to-son model and the patriarchal hierarchy. He acknowledges, however, that the argument that a father figure is equally necessary to the happiness of her child continues to be strong in all classes and is condoned by the law (cf. ibid.).

Gilbert continues to provide gifts in order to solidify and extend his influence in this refuge, bringing Arthur "a book, which, knowing his mother's particularity, I had carefully selected, and which I submitted for her approbation before presenting it to him" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 65). In this case, he explicitly respects Helen's prior claim to authority, while still applying for the right to influence the child (cf. Lee, npag.). *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, for instance, calls upon parents "to recollect that books are a powerful educational agency, and actually form the bent of the mind. What children read is never forgotten" (M.C., 107). The fact that he, without having to be asked to do so, consigns the suitability of the book to her judgement indicates that he is afraid of setbacks in his pursuit and hopes to allay her suspicions of his moral inadequacy, also as potential paternal figure and influence on her child. Books, whether for instruction or amusement were thought to be quite a tricky business, since the wrong kind of literature could affect the child negatively. William Cobbett admits to having carefully selected his volumes himself: "As to *books*, with the exception of the *Poets*, I never bought, in my whole life, any one that I did not want for some purpose of *utility*, and of *practical utility* too" (306, original emphasis). Again, there is a focus on industry and work ethics, and, considering the literature which Gilbert previously read with young Arthur, it can be supposed that the book he is about to give to Arthur is of a similar kind. Obviously, this would link him even further with the child since it influences the boy with his opinion and his ideas of 'interesting' and 'useful' content.

Gilbert's deliberations work out; indeed: it is Gilbert's paternal stance that first mellows Helen's antipathy, because it is an alternative model of fatherhood to that of her husband (cf. Pike, 120). For this reason, among others, I would decidedly argue against those interpretations which regard Gilbert's scheming as purely

motivated by his patriarchal wish to exert power (cf. King, 130). Despite his faults, he remains fond of little Arthur and, unlike Arthur Huntingdon, never influences the boy in any way that would diminish the child's affection or respect for his mother (cf. Pike, 120). Yes, he pursues Helen with the help of her son, but he does not do so malignantly or with the intention of pure self-gratification. The increasing "intimacy" and "the kindling flame of […] friendship" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 48) between Helen's son and Gilbert Markham aid the establishment of the relationship between the two adults with the child acting as a willing go-between. As Shawna Ross remarks, the scene in which Arthur and Gilbert are reading a book together can be interpreted, more positively, as an indication that little Arthur is a mediating force between Helen and Gilbert: "[H]is interest in the journal's illustrations unites the vocations of his mother and future stepfather" ("Anthropocene Feminist", 280). Ross refers here to Helen's efforts in gardening and her endeavour to create a healthy, natural home for her child as well as Gilbert's agricultural vocation. This unified picture of the couple through their child negates William Cobbett's concerns regarding stepfathers (cf. 211). While in Cobbett's argumentation the child is the passive victim, Little Arthur here becomes an active force in establishing Gilbert in the position of stepfather, and this also makes the child itself appear in an entirely different light, which serves to reinvent rigid family structures into a dynamic entity bound by choice and affection (cf. Gruner, 308).

The reading of little Arthur as 'acting subject' in the plot is mitigated by Hayward Cocks, who calls the child an "innocent and open object of exchange" (1137), and this perspective appears initially to be confirmed by Gilbert's statement about his protégé: "In love affairs, there is no mediator like a merry, simple-hearted child" (ibid., 78 & Berry, 52). The child is portrayed in more abstract terms as a signifier of romantic ideologies with its "simple" and "emotionally impulsive" but eternally positive and cheerful mind. The child figure forms the opposition to the adults with their reason-based understanding and interaction who are unable to express emotions and overcome "the unfriendly gulf of custom" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 78). William Cobbett's ideas seem to support this concept when he states that children represent "the strongest ties that nature has in store" (133). In *The Tenant* the child also represents a "tie" between the mother and Gilbert, even though there is no biological connection. However, here the child is far more than just a 'tie' or an abstract idea: Gilbert himself acknowledges Arthur's importance, not as an

object to be used, but as a subject, by addressing him directly: "Dear Arthur! What did I not owe to you for this and every other happy meeting?" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 78)[311] Gilbert obviously considers his stepson not just 'some child' or 'mediator entity' but a character in its own right, despite his young age (cf. Pike, 112). The child as mercurial agent is once more highlighted in the last stage of Gilbert and Helen's courtship when he figuratively "leads" his surrogate father to his mother, walking him through the park up to the house (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 369) and "gently pull[ing] my [Gilbert's] coat, and repeat[ing] his invitation to enter" (ibid.), thus finally overcoming the adult's pride and hindering reasoning (cf. Thormählen, "Horrors", 16). Shand argues "[t]he child — frequently romanticized within both literature and art — resists the impulse towards a romanticization that threatens stultification. Instead, Arthur becomes an active force motivating Gilbert and Helen's union throughout the novel" (297), while still exhibiting traces of the concept of the romantic child and his mediator function. In that sense, it seems appropriate that the child convey his mother's message to her fiancé-to-be and helps to bring about the happy ending: "'Mamma says you're to come in, Mr Markham'" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 307). When Arthur descends from his mother's carriage to meet Gilbert, he crosses the divide which has been created by Gilbert's awareness of the class differences between them.

The depiction of Gilbert as surrogate father is substantiated by the pride he takes in Arthur's further development, agreeing to the child's proud declaration that he has grown taller during his absence with the confirmation "three inches, upon my word" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 368). Just as Cobbett describes children as the father's "pride of your [his] prime of life" (225), Gilbert is proud of Arthur's future development, describing him as "a fine young man" who "has realized his mother's brightest expectations" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 376). Gilbert's domestic tendencies can definitely be read as a representation of his fitness to become a father figure who is actually 'present' in his children's life. William Cobbett, for example, argues in favour of male domesticity and sees nothing effeminate in it because for him this is not a sign of male submission but rather an emphasis on male authority in the home.

[311] A similar scene occurs towards the end of the novel, when Arthur, unhindered by social scruples of normative restraint is able to approach Gilbert Markham "with his frolicsome playfellow, the dog. He seized my hand between both his, and simply drew me forward" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 307). Again, the child is acting out of his own accord and thus proves that, while he is to a certain extent the personification of childhood innocence, he is still taken seriously as a subject.

He describes such an 'ideal' arrangement by presenting the example of his own home, which he calls a place of "*delights*" (92, emphasis added). In another passage he presents the ideal of a working-class family as a role model for families of *all* social classes:

> [T]he husband, when free from his toil in the fields*, takes his share in the nursing*, which he manifestly looks upon as a sort of *reward for his labour*. However distant from his cottage, his *heart is always at that home* towards which he is carried, at night, by limbs that feel not their weariness (251, emphasis added).

Marriage and fatherhood are in this reading regarded as markers of domesticity, which was also central to the Victorian ideal of manliness and the adherence to social rules (cf. Tosh, 31-32). It is true that his paternal feelings remain connected, at least partly, to his romantic sentiments towards the mother of the child: "[H]e was my own Helen's son, and therefore mine; and as such I have ever since regarded him" (ibid.). However, he continues to showcase paternal sentiments, for example, when he takes pride in his own children, "the promising young scions that are growing up about [him]" (ibid.) who belong to his idea of domestic happiness. In the end, it is a specific form of marriage that is presented as the ideal environment for children to thrive: The marriage proves to be a "partnership […] of mutual love and respect rather than tyranny" (Deneholz Morse, 140). The growth of Gilbert and Helen's family confirms this depiction of domestic happiness (cf. Brontë, 878), an argumentation to which Fuller agrees: "The nursing plot helps to allay these fears about Gilbert by inflecting Helen's second marriage with a mutual concern for care-taking that was absent from her marriage to Arthur" (npag.). Colón concludes that "[i]n all of these families, the focus is not simply upon the happiness and satisfaction of the parents but also upon the nurturing, moral environment created for the children" (27). Gilbert's stance towards children and his willingness to establish and maintain an emotional father-child bond lets the reader hope that Arthur and Helen's children do "not have to struggle with the same difficulties as their parents did" (ibid.).

The novel, according to Thierauf, depicts Gilbert's development as a "maturation" process, describing how he "outgrows his violence" (npag.) and childish vanity. In order to truly become a father himself, he has to stop being a child (cf. Birden, 269) and needs to leave his mother's influence, who was a major

figure in maintaining his immaturity and conceit through her "indulgence" (ibid., 270). Though both have indulgent mothers, Gilbert and Arthur Huntingdon are "pointed contrasts" (Jackson, 202), especially through their approach to fatherhood and maturity: While Gilbert grows, Arthur degenerates. Hayward Cocks also argues that Gilbert's 'growing up' has to be interpreted as his transformation from his childish state into a man worthy of Helen's parental sphere (cf. 1129). After he has transferred the duty of head of the Markham family to his younger brother, Gilbert is free to move to another place, marry into a different social sphere and become a father instead of remaining a son and brother. The quintessence of this arrangement is the idea that a family cannot remain without a head, who is, according to social norms, always the patriarch, irrespective of social spheres.

Interestingly, however, Gilbert is able to achieve his initial "ambition" (Brontë, 17), not because of his own work, but rather because of affection for a woman and a child and because of waiting for this woman passively: This circumstance almost suggests a gender role reversal in the relationship of Helen and Gilbert.[312] *She* is the active one, the one who makes the decisions and possesses both estate and money; she is also the rational and self-controlled part, while Gilbert is very emotional, subjective, lacks emotional control (as his attack on Mr Lawence shows most clearly), is privately and professionally bound to his family and usually unable to hide his emotionality in front of others (cf. Coffey, 188).[313] From a contemporary perspective, such a change to the expected norm might have been seen rather critically: William Cobbett, for example, calls the women who exercise the right of decision-making "she-commanders", who are "generally without children" (187) (meaning that they are supposed to have nothing else to do than stirring up trouble and disrupting the hierarchy), and the man who submits a "poor henpecked thing" (183). The fact that he talks about this man as a 'thing' denotes

[312] McMaster supports this more positive view of Gilbert Markham and his union with Helen, since it is a union that comes at least close to being based on equality (cf. 363) because her superiority in social status makes up for his patriarchal rights (cf. Lee, npag.).

[313] The excessive outbursts of passion which characterise both Huntingdon and Markham are, according to McMaster and Coffey, indicators that while both figures show similarities, they are fundamentally different since Gilbert is honest and serious in his feelings for Helen (and her son), whereas Huntingdon is fickle, unable to be serious, and ultimately dishonest (cf. Coffey, 135 & McMaster, 363). Gilbert's loss of self-control, the attack on Helen's brother, is the only moment he is actually shown to use violence and this is, according to Sheppard, reminiscent of the "honour model of provocation", which was actually beginning to become outdated during the Regency and early Victorian era (cf. 212). Gilbert Markham's "eventual transformation" and his acknowledgement of his guilt are therefore "in keeping with a more general cultural shift in the nineteenth century" (Sheppard, 212-213).

that, for him, such a man is neutered, losing his masculinity through his submission to the feminine, which his rhetoric endows with a decidedly negative connotation. Gilbert's decision to follow his wife to her home would hence be judged in a similar manner. Gilbert's relationship to Helen can be interpreted as an affirmation of her agency over his, since she "assume[s] power over him by elevating his social status" (Thierauf, npag.).[314] I would disagree with Poole, who regards Gilbert's actions as "negative" when he lacks the assurance of typical masculinity in the proposal scene and acts on "Helen's initiative" (864), because his insecurity indicates that he has, to a certain extent, outgrown his initial vanity. McMaster firmly recognises Gilbert's ability and willingness to change "under the influence of a serious and intelligent woman" who "educates and sensitises him" (364). In the end, Gilbert is not so fixated on his self-worth as man that he is not able to "recognize" and appreciate "true worth in a woman" (Shaw, "Quiet Feminist", 334), and this also makes him a better educator for his adopted son than the biological father was. As Coffey confirms: "Doch schlussendlich wird der Mann erst durch die Eheschließung wirklich zum Mann" (139).[315] Gilbert's alliance to Helen can therefore be read as slightly boundary-breaking as well as socially conforming at the same time – this circumstance he has in common with Helen and her partially transgressive and partially traditional motherhood. Like the mothers in *The Tenant*, Gilbert Markham is not an ideal figure, but his failure to conform to the ideal (for example, through his feminine tendencies) enables him to become a paternal character who subscribes to the ideal of domesticity, which again highlights the fact that the ideal of parenthood is not entirely consistent within itself.

6.2 Self-Serving or safeguarding? Flawed mothers and deficient fathers as side characters

6.2.1 Widows and matrons – Indulgent and ambitious: Mrs Markham & Mrs Hargrave

Mrs Markham as well as Mrs Hargrave are mothers of adolescent as well as adult children, which stands in contrast to Helen as younger mother of a small boy.

[314] However, according to Thierauf, this interpretation, even though it is valid, does not show the whole picture, because "all her property – even her story – fall under Gilbert's greedy coverture" (npag.).
[315] "But it is only marriage which finally turns the man into a man" (Coffey, 139).

However, their approaches towards maternity and the results of their parenting we see portrayed in the novel still allow for an interesting comparison. Gilbert's mother Mrs Markham is a matriarchal figure who is fond of her influence but puts all her power into maintaining the prevailing patriarchal structure of her small rural community and claims the authority to judge Helen's parenting, presenting herself implicitly as a model. Her parenting, however, is inherently flawed: Gilbert's mother is very fond and proud of her sons, considers especially Gilbert to be "capable of great achievements" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 17), has his "advantage at heart" and "prize[s] […] [him] above everything" (ibid., 43); consequently, she is to some extent to blame for Gilbert's vanity. Mrs Markham has a comparatively strong bond with both of her sons, immediately spotting Gilbert's "anxiety and serious pre-occupation" with "her maternal eyes" (ibid., 358-359) when he is troubled by his relationship to Helen. The fact that she derives pleasure and self-gratification from her (male) offspring is shown through the circumstance that she views both of her sons very subjectively and unrealistically. Even Gilbert's younger brother, the rather useless Fergus, is made better by her than he actually is – she for instance insists that his red hair should be considered "auburn" (ibid., 18), which would align more with the contemporary beauty standard. She also likes to spoil her sons with food and drink at home, even though Fergus has not accomplished anything really profitable (cf. ibid.). Hannah More warns of maternal over-indulgence at home, especially through overfeeding and lack of useful "study", as a danger for children's career, proposing the assumption that it would support "natural" inclinations for "idleness" "and sloth" (53) as well as laziness (cf. ibid.). The example of Fergus, his initial uselessness and his feeling that he is not really suited for work can arguably be read as a result of exactly the kind of maternal behaviour that Hanna More criticises. Fergus' career would have been very questionable had Gilbert not left him the farm to manage. Gruner, therefore, calls Mrs Markham's maternal habits "overprotective", which is, ironically, an accusation which Mrs Markham directs at Helen, and "overbearing" (309), which goes along with the fact that she appears to derive her feeling of self-worth first and foremost from her maternal position.

Mrs Markham's maternal pride, protectiveness and admiration are decidedly less noticeable, if they exist at all, as far as her daughter Rose is concerned. This

distinction in attitudes reveals how much Mrs Markham is influenced by the traditional gender role allocation and the common perception of the diverging values of sons and daughters in a familial context. Her sons are warmly welcomed by her after their day's work outside; she sees their comfort as more important than her own or that of her daughter: "'Now shut the door, and come to the fire, while Rose gets the tea ready; I'm sure you must be starved; and tell me what you've been about all day; I like to know what my children have been about'" (Brontë, *ToWH*., 18). With "her children" she only refers to her sons since her daughter would have been close to her most of the time anyway because of their shared duties in the private sphere. The public sphere is an entirely different matter, exclusively belonging to her sons, and Mrs Markham makes sure that the division between these spheres remains intact. She educates Rose to indulge the male members of the household, just like she does, because she, just like William Cobbett, assumes that it is natural for "boys [to] follow […] their father, and the girls their mother" (297). Fergus is allowed to be useless, while Rose, the daughter, cannot neglect the household without earning criticism. In this instance, however, William Cobbett would correct Mrs Markham's parenting methods. In his chapter "To a Youth", he, figuring as the paternal voice, addresses his reader thus: "I am to suppose you to be desirous to become a clever and a useful man; a man to be, if not admired and revered, at least to be *respected*" (31, original emphasis). In this passage usefulness is presented as inseparably linked to self-respect and male honour (although Cobbett also argues for women to be industrious and useful, if in a different way). Hannah More agrees with Cobbett by imploring the mother to hinder her children from being idle from an early age onwards: "O snatch your offspring from adding to the number of those objects of supreme commiseration, who seek their happiness in doing nothing? Life is but a short day; but it is a working day. Activity may lead to evil; but inactivity cannot be led to good" (54). In a different section of his text, William Cobbett additionally promotes usefulness as necessarily connected to the child's duty to "honour" (12) the parents. Mrs Markham, involuntarily, deprives herself of this extra-honour, by leaving Fergus to be useless, perhaps deeming Gilbert's usefulness to be sufficient honour for the whole family. Regarded in the light of this conclusion, it is not to be wondered that Gilbert is a little vain. Rose's usefulness, by contrast, is not "honour" but just duty – a fact that the young woman

herself criticises (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 52) and that emphasises the inequality in the otherwise cheerful home.

Paradoxically, she attempts to keep Fergus close to the domestic sphere, in an essentially useless position, by not allowing him to enter a profession of his own. Since Gilbert is the patriarch in the family, Fergus attaining a profession would mean his removal from home. "'What can I do? replied he [Fergus]; 'my mother won't let me go to sea or enter the army; and I am determined to do nothing else – except make myself a nuisance to you all, that you will be thankful to get rid of me on any terms'" (ibid., 18). Mrs Markham's aversion to a separation from her second son is presented as an exaggerated mother-child bond, which is slowly being recognised and moderately resented by the son, who is on the brink of adulthood, despite his love for the leisurely lifestyle: "Our parent soothingly stroked his still, short curls. He growled, and tried to look sulky" (ibid., 19). The impression of an exaggerated mother-child bond is supported by the circumstance that Reverend Millward criticises Mrs Markham "for being over-indulgent to her sons" (ibid., 24), which, in the Reverend's opinion, even the scriptures caution against. It is indeed mentioned that both Arthur Huntingdon and Gilbert Markham supposedly have or had very lenient mothers and, as a result, both are pictured as having "'inflated egos'" and suffering from "self-centredness" (Le Veness, 349), even if to different degrees. "Maternal over indulgence" (ibid.) is consequently not a negligible parental fault but a shortcoming that can significantly influence the child's character. In her portrayal of Mrs Markham, Anne Brontë's underlying criticism of Victorian social constructs reveals a faulty, or misguided "matriarch", who, despite her care, "ultimately falls short" (Le Veness, 349) in her maternal performance. Her motherly prejudice seems to be, to some extent, the cause of Gilbert and Fergus' flaws, and this renders her blameable, as parents were often deemed responsible for their children's mindset: "We all acknowledge that it is our bounden duty to provide, as far as our power will go, for the competence, the health, and the good character of our children" (Cobbett, 350). Gilbert needs to be 'educated' by Helen to "outgrow his mother's spoiling" (Le Veness, 349) and become a more mature father figure. This indirectly depicts Helen as the better mother figure, who, in contrast to Mrs Markham, is not blinded by love and pride in all those 'male children' – adults and otherwise – around her.

Mrs Markham also exercises her function as maternal educator, however predominantly in the case of her daughter, on whom she imparts such knowledge as she deems beneficial for female occupations in a domestic environment, specifically regarding the woman's sole purpose as "domestic angel", whose duty it is to take the blame if anything "go[es] wrong" (O'Callaghan, 302) in the household. This would have been appreciated by Hannah More, who advises mothers to teach their daughters early on to be always useful in a domestic context, never idle and inconsiderate:

> As an antidote to selfishness, as well as pride and indolence, they should also very early be taught to perform all the little offices in their power for themselves; not to be insolently calling for servants where there is no real occasion; above all, they should be accustomed to consider the domestics' hours of meals and rest as almost sacred, and the golden rule should be practically and uniformly enforced (55).

With her sons, Mrs Markham's position as educator and guiding figure is much less prominent, a circumstance which appears to be deliberate, because she is portrayed as rather traditional, old-fashioned and quite rigid in her mind-set and consequently believes that she, as a woman, would be acting against her own principles if she were to meddle in the 'male businesses' of her sons. Instead, she tells her daughter: "'You know, Rose, in all household matters, we have only two things to consider, first, what's proper to be done, and secondly, what's most agreeable to the gentlemen of the house – anything will do for the ladies'" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 52). In this sentence, Rose cites, rather resentfully, her mother's idea of a harmonious household, which, at its core, requires constant female sacrifice. William Cobbett to some extent confirms this as the appropriate attitude when he speaks of the woman's part in the household: "She rears up his [the housefather's] children, she provides a scene of suitable resort for his friends; she insures him a constant retreat from the fatigues of his affairs; she makes his home pleasant" (219). This "good doctrine" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 25), as Rose's mother calls it, is also one of her arguments against the two women her son Gilbert shows interest in, Eliza and Mrs Graham, who both lack, in her opinion, the required feminine selflessness, being first "self-conceited" and "careless" and secondly "misguided" and "obstinate" (ibid., 53). These characteristics were often censured as signs of faulty female education in advice texts. More warns the mother to "be habituating them [their children/daughters] early to combine two ideas which ought never to be separated,

charity and self-denial" (55). According to Coffey, Jane Wilson, like Eliza Milward, exhibits a lack of emotional depth (cf. 156). These self-centred characteristics are, according to the motherly opinion of Mrs Markham, unmaternal, since they do not focus on another person, preferably a male one, and consequently do not recognise the traditional hierarchy of power within the home (cf. O'Callaghan, 301). When her son explains that *he* would like to make sacrifices for his wife and his future family as well, "bear[ing] one another's burden" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 53), she instantly corrects him, stating: "[Y]ou must fall each into your proper place. You'll do your business, and she, if she is worthy of you, will do hers; but it's your business to please yourself, and hers to please you" (ibid.). This appears to be a rather simplified idea of the patriarchal system and the domestic life within these social structures which, in turn, contributes to exposing the difficult practicality and the inherent injustice of these practices.

However, Gilbert's mother does not accept criticism of her mothering methods, which she apparently believes to be perfect, as it is described to be "galling to her feeling" (Brontë, 24) when the Reverend, a supposed spiritual authority, corrects her. Even though she is religious, thus underlining her own respectability, she positions her skills as mother of sons above the Reverend's experiences as a father of daughters: "'I wish to goodness he had a son himself! He wouldn't be so ready with his advice to other people then; he'd see what it is to have a couple of boys to keep in order'" (ibid.). This statement reveals several points about her motherhood. On the one hand, she believes the Reverend to be removed from the reality of keeping a household by having his home attended to by his daughter and not having to do any domestic work himself or hiring help, despite being a widower. In her opinion, girls are easier to educate and influence, while boys are wilder and less controllable – a hint at the traditional image of male and female nature. Moreover, the statement emphasises her burdens as mother of boys and puts stress on her self-sacrificing position, thus aligning her own image with the maternal ideal once again and rejecting the Reverend's criticism. While he does admit that boyish wildness ought to be kept in check, William Cobbett nevertheless assumes wildness to be a typical male feature, commonly excused by elders and admired by girls: "What girl is not in love with the *wild* youth, and what boy does not find a justification for his wildness?" (311, original emphasis) Mrs

Markham is one of those indulgent elders who excuse boyish wildness as a supposed sign of manliness. It is interesting that she does not accept any criticism of her fondness of Fergus and her wish to keep him at her side but is, in contrast, more than ready to admonish Mrs Graham for apparently "spoiling" her son and her "foolish fondness", explaining that "[e]ven at his age, he [Helen's son] ought not to be tied to his mother's apron strings" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 30). This once more emphasises her bias when it comes to children's education as well as revealing her inherent "social double standard" (Thierauf, npag.) and the widespread "hypocrisy" (Cox, "Manual Intercourse", 175) which the education debate revolving around Helen and her son uncovers.

Mrs Hargrave, another older, widowed mother figure, shares some of Mrs Markham's characteristics (especially her preference of her son and consequent indulgence) but is decidedly less domestic, due to being upper class, and steals Mrs Markham the show where ambition and pride are concerned. Right at the start, the "hard, pretentious, worldly-minded" (Brontë, *ToWh*, 185) neighbour of the Huntingdons is portrayed as an essentially unlikable character and as a mother who embodies many problematic characteristics. Apart from the fact that she apparently wastes her fortune and has a tendency to be extravagant, she has "taught her son to do the same" (ibid.) and this circumstance is even more fatal to the presentation of her character than just personal wastefulness. *Cassell's Household Guide*, for example, quotes in the context of extravagant habits: "The proverb says of an extravagant man, 'He is no man's enemy but his own'" (38). The reader can assume that Mrs Hargrave is at least partly responsible for her son's unwise choice of company, being one of Arthur Huntingdon's intimates, if one of the more "respectable" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 186) kind. Since his father is long gone, it can be assumed, according to Cobbett's domestic logic, that Mr Hargrave junior would be likely to adopt his mother's habits instead, being deprived of male guidance but still adhering to the ways of his parental model figure and imitating her behaviour (cf. 297).

Apart from the grave accusation of the unfavourable and "mistaken" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 186) nature of Mrs Hargrave's maternal influence on her son, the lady is censored by Helen for her unfounded pride in their family and her stinginess, which also causes her to "deprive […] even her daughters and herself of the real comforts

of life, because she will not yield the palm in outward show to those who have three times her wealth" (ibid., 185). Cobbett observes a similar phenomenon in society:

> *The shame of poverty*, the shame of being thought poor, is a great and fatal weakness, though arising, in this country, from the fashion of the times themselves. When a *good man*, as in the phraseology of the city, means a *rich man*, we are not to wonder that every one wishes to be thought richer than he is (57, original emphasis).

Mrs Hargrave reveals a purely materialistic mindset which invests more in others, in public opinion, than in herself and her female offspring. Not being financially able to keep up with the class she belongs to by birth is indeed a "shame" for her and exactly this consciousness becomes her "weakness". Moreover, Mrs Hargrave, in a spirit not unlike Mrs Markham's preferential treatment of her sons, "is determined her cherished son shall be able to 'hold up his head with the highest gentleman in the land" and have the opportunity to fund his "expensive habits" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 185), while the son remains largely unconcerned with the sacrifices of mother and sisters (cf. ibid., 186). The clash of siblings' interests in monetary matters is also addressed by William Cobbett:

> By nature they are rivals for the affection and applause of the parents; in personal and mental endowments they become rivals; and, when *pecuniary interests* come to be well understood and to have their weight, here is a rivalship, to prevent which from ending in hostility, require more affection and greater disinterestedness than fall to the lot of one out of one hundred families. So many instances have I witnessed of good and amiable families living in harmony, till the hour arrived for dividing property amongst them (328, original emphasis).

While Mrs Hargrave's unfairness is primarily caused by gender prejudice and the ideal of female sacrifice, Cobbett's ideas highlight that she neglects the personal feelings of each family member and risks domestic strife and sisterly resentment for the sake of status.

Part of Mrs Hargrave's socially encouraged preference of her son is the circumstance that she intends to use her daughters' marriage to satisfy her personal pride and further the family's reputation, and consequently her son's image. Cobbett denounces parents who pretend to seek the future security of their children, but in reality only gratify their own self-love and wish for an improved status when he states that "you have the desire to see them rich: it is to gratify *yourself* that you act in such a case; and you, however you may deceive yourself, are guilty of *injustice*

towards them" (279, original emphasis). William Cobbett's advice in this case is directed at fathers, but it could be used in the context of motherhood as well, since here the argument of social aspirations holds true as well. Apart from 'matchmaking', mothers had far less opportunities than fathers to further their children's (and their own) social status since they themselves were dependent on the status of the men in their lives: their fathers, their husbands and their sons, or sons-in-law. Walter Hargrave and her daughters' future husbands are the only possibilities for her to improve and see her family improve socially. This does not excuse her ruthless treatment of Milicent and Esther, but it at least mitigates criticism. Circumstances drove women with aspirations to re-value their resources, and children became part of these resources, a social reality which the patriarchal ideas of William Cobbett do not acknowledge.

Like Lady Middleton in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, Mrs Hargrave intends to use her children for her own social ends but is even more ruthless in her goal and methods than Austen's rather cold society mother (see chapter 5.2.3). Through her financial imprudence and her emphasis on social representation "she renders them portionless and makes them burdens on her hands" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 186). An aggravating circumstance in Mrs Hargrave's parenting is the fact that she is oblivious to her own faults, even "congratulates herself on having satisfactorily discharged her maternal duty" (ibid.) and is determined on "bending" also her younger daughter's "fearless spirit" "to her purpose" (ibid.). When her plan for her youngest daughter fails, she feels "very disappointed" and "very angry" (ibid., 287), which suggests that, besides her vanity and her material ambition, a lack of control over her temper further violates the maternal ideal. Mrs Hargrave's maternal "manoeuvring […]" (ibid., 186) is described as a vicious circle which starts with the most prominent among all, and the origin of most, parental faults – selfishness, for which her daughters are readily "sacrifice[d]" (ibid.). This circular relationship of vanity (ambition) and selfishness is also noted (and despised) by the evangelical Hannah More: "[I]ndeed selfishness is so commonly interwoven with vanity and inconsideration, that I have not always thought it necessary to mark the distinction. They are alternately cause and effect; and are produced and re-produced by reciprocal operation" (52). This criticism predominantly addressed at women also fails to acknowledge that social representation was part of women's 'training' and that, especially in the upper class, their education made them fit for little else. Mrs

Hargrave has arguably been indoctrinated to seek advancement in this form, while the middle-class, religiously inclined Hannah More sought advancement in a more spiritual and less materialistic way. Her mind-set and her rejection of worldly recognition appear to fit Helen's criticism of Mrs Hargrave and indicate that Helen reflects the growing influence of bourgeoise values, also on the upper class.

Mrs Hargrave is one of the many failing mothers in the fiction of the Brontës and especially in Anne's writings. For example, the reader can perceive a likeliness between Mrs Hargrave and Mrs Murray, the mother of Agnes's charges in Anne Brontë's novel *Agnes Grey* (cf. Thormählen, "Literary Art", 287). Both upper-class women are, as Thormählen puts it, "abject failure[s] in that role" because they do not provide their daughters with "warmth and stability in human affection and consistent moral support" (ibid.). In conclusion, one can say that the middle-class mother Mrs Markham, in comparison to the total maternal "failure" of Mrs Hargrave, at least manages to maintain the impression of affection and good intention, even if she is quite often misguided. Her egotism and ambition are less prominent and leave, therefore, more room for maternal care. Even her attitude towards her daughter Rose can be interpreted as maternal consideration, since she genuinely believes that the path she teaches her daughter is the correct one for a girl of her social station. This idea is supported by the circumstance that she is in many respects backed up by advice literature in her treatment of her daughter – at least she does not use her for her own ends in urging her to marry 'up'. Moreover, Mrs Markham and Mrs Hargrave are evidently divided by class: While the first stubbornly repeats predominantly, rigid middle-class domestic slogans, Mrs Hargrave imitates the classical aristocratic lifestyle, which is considerably less focussed on domesticity and is therefore able to sacrifice an affectionate family life for the sake of ambition. The only real similarity between them is their indulgence towards their sons, and this is also the one aspect in which Mrs Markham falls short of the middle-class ideal, by neglecting the need for Fergus to become a useful member of the community. However, both make their path among the limited ways for women to shape their own lives and they choose according to their background and the resources available to them; the defects they exhibit along the way highlight not only their characters but also the social restrictions of their time.

6.2.2 Deceiving, reformed and troubled: The gentlemen Hargrave, Hattersley and Lowborough as father figures

Besides the male main characters of *The Tenant*, Arthur Huntingdon and Gilbert Markham, there are three other men within the novel who are related to fatherhood; whether they are biological fathers, such as Ralph Hattersley and Lord Lowborough, or whether they only temporarily display paternal behaviour patterns, like Walter Hargrave, they all approach fatherhood in different forms and for different reasons. This variety in representation enables a discussion of fatherhood as means to showcase reform, in the case of Hattersley and even Lowborough, but also as enabler of deception because it was, and to some extent still is, a socially recognised form of 'good' caring attitudes – an idea which is exploited by the character of Walter Hargrave.

Hargrave is Arthur Huntingdon's friend, who is spoilt by the attentions of his mother, as so many of the male characters of the story, and has, again similar to Gilbert and Arthur, taken over some of his mother's bad habits (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 185). Yet, he appears, at first glance at least, to have some genuine paternal impulses when confronted with Helen's son (cf. ibid., 197). However, upon closer inspection, his interest in her son appears to have more ambiguous reasons and almost appears to be part of his carefully thought-out plan to get closer to the mother of the child. This strategy seems to be similar to Gilbert's plan to approach Helen (cf. Thormählen, "Horror", 14), but upon careful analysis certain differences become apparent. When Helen rejects his somewhat questionable offer of friendship and sympathy regarding her husband's neglect, he proceeds to offer his attentions to the child – choosing the alternate approach, when the direct one did not work out:

> He rode up to her [the nurse], and asked to see the child. He took it carefully into his arms, looked upon it with an almost paternal smile, and I heard him say, as I approached – 'And this, too, he has forsaken!' He then tenderly kissed it, and restored it to the gratified nurse. 'Are you fond of children, Mr Hargrave?' said I, a little softened towards him. 'Not in general,' he replied, 'but that is such a sweet child, and so like his mother,' he added in a lower tone (Brontë, *ToWH*, 197).

It is obvious that Walter Hargrave is keen to emphasise the contrast between the absent father, Huntingdon, whom he, in contrast to Gilbert, actually knows to exist. He stresses Arthur's neglect of his child and deliberately overplays his own 'genuine' paternal attention: "'And this, too, he has forsaken'" (ibid.). He does this

deliberately and the motive is not, as in Gilbert Markham's case, honest interest in the child as well as in the mother. Gilbert rescues little Arthur from the fall during their first meeting, because he instinctively wants to save the child and takes pleasure in his company without yet having a connection to Helen. Hargrave's attention in the above scene, however, and the exhibition of supposedly paternal sentiments, appear more dedicated to the mother; he insists on recognising a direct physical resemblance between mother and child, even though this resemblance is denied by Helen herself: "'such a sweet child, and so like his mother'" (ibid.). Helen's explicit denial already suggests that she has seen through Hargrave's ulterior motives and attempts to frustrate his endeavours right from the start, sensing his moral questionability (cf. Thormählen, "Horror", 12).

However, Hargrave is persistent in his chosen way of attack. In several other instances, he deliberately praises little Arthur in order to gain the right to remain in Helen's presence (cf. Brontë, 198). Hargrave, just like Huntingdon, is a hunter (cf. Thierauf npag.) who is also depicted as a "trespass[er]" on "Arthur's land", "poach[ing]" (Berg, 30) his marital and paternal rights and accepts Helen's moral torment in the process (cf. Thormählen, "Horror", 12-14). He thus continues the model of male objectification of women and social recognition of fatherhood, and paternal behaviour, as forces of 'good', of 'care' and 'protection' are supposed to help him in his attempted deception because it addresses the supposed 'helplessness' of women. The deliberate use of (pretended) paternal sentiment is often presented as a means of manipulation; William Cobbett, for example, describes the following situation, in which the father, even though by no means fond of his child in general, uses an assumed exhibition of affection to get his wife to do what he wants:

> There was a drunken dog of a Norfolk man in our regiment, who came from Thetford, I recollect, who used to say, that his wife would forgive him for spending all the pay, and the washing money into the bargain, 'if he would but kiss her ugly brat, and say it was pretty.' Now, though this was a very profligate fellow, he had *philosophy* in him; and certain it is, that there is nothing worthy of the name of conjugal happiness, unless the husband clearly evince that he is fond of his children, and that, too, from their very birth (181, original emphasis)

The fact that Cobbett compares the deliberate and rather selfish manipulation of his wife by the "drunken dog" of a father to the establishment of domestic contentment

appears a little off-putting, but it showcases how the happiness of wives (and often women in general) depended on the man's good opinion and how vulnerable this made them for manipulation. Hargrave, it appears, is a similar "philosopher" like Cobbett's Norfolk man: The definite similarities between Hargrave's admittedly more polite and subtle behaviour and Cobbett's rude man's open disdain towards his wife, her position as mother and her motherly feeling, which he ruthlessly uses for his own ends, shed a light on the social perception of women, specifically mothers, as overly emotional and rather gullible (cf. Hemingway, xxx). Indirectly, such scenes support the exposure of a system that encouraged male hypocrisy in the exploitation of their female companions. Mr Hargrave also assumes beguiling "domestic habits" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 197) in the time following this encounter with Helen and her son, again, to deliberately contrast his seemingly paternal nature to Helen's absent husband who exhibits no interest at all in either wife or child.

Besides his method of deliberate manipulation using parental emotionality as a 'hook', Mr Hargrave exhibits controlling, almost stalker-like habits in approaching the object of his desire. In the following sequence, he surprises mother and child in the wood on the estate, watching them without announcing his presence. Again, the child and the mother-child bond are taken advantage of when he tries to explain his rather sneaky behaviour:

> 'Excuse me, Mrs Huntingdon,' said he, 'but I was spellbound; I had neither the power to come forward, and interrupt you, nor to withdraw from the contemplation of such a scene. How vigorous my little godson grows! and how merry he is this morning!' He approached the child, and stooped to take his hand; but, on seeing that his caresses were likely to produce tears and lamentations, instead of a reciprocation of friendly demonstrations, he prudently drew back. (ibid., 198)

His exaggerated praise of the child and the calculated mention of his position as 'godfather' are used to assume a position of rightful care and even authority in this situation and to excuse his rude stare at Helen. It is his luck (which he exploits quite shamelessly) that Huntingdon perfectly fits into the description of a father who is blameable for the domestic disruption in his home:

> If he have been cold and neglectful; if he have led a life of irregularity; if he have proved to her that *home* was not his delight; if he have made his house the place of resort for loose companions; if he have given rise to a taste for visiting, junketing [sic], parties of pleasure and gaiety; if he have introduced the habit of indulging in what are called '*innocent freedoms*;' if these, or any

> of these, *the fault is his* [if the wife leaves him for another man], he must take the consequences, and he has *no right* to inflict punishment on the offender, the offence being in fact of his own creating (Cobbett, 206, original emphasis).

Even William Cobbett, who regards female fidelity as sacrosanct and as a virtue which she is to guard with her life, sees the husband as the primary offender in such a case. This kind of argumentation plays, to some extent, into Hargrave's cards since he sees it not only as a means to mitigate the heaviness of the moral offence of adultery in her eyes, but also as a perfect opportunity to showcase himself as the 'true' guardian of domestic happiness in contrast to the profligate Huntingdon, who has forfeited his own privileges. However, his plan does not work out entirely to his satisfaction, which is also due to the insincerity of his interest in the child and domesticity.

Fittingly, this scene shows, similar to the encounter of Francis Levison and Isabel's children in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, how a child's reaction to adult advances could be used to expose character and motivation of the adult. Little Arthur's outright rejection of Hargrave's approach is meant to signify that the child's 'natural' instinct has spotted the dishonesty and deception behind the approach. Again, the image of the child as 'naturally wise' and inherently innocent and good prior to adult corruption is exhibited here and thus Little Arthur is portrayed as prototypical 'romantic child', at least in this situation.[316] The "weeds" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 284) which Mr Huntingdon's friends have left in the originally innocent infantile consciousness represent the prototypical adult corruption which, according to the mother, have not yet managed to entirely spoil the child's mind. William Cobbett comments on paternal influence: "It is, therefore, of the greatest importance, that you here act well your part, omitting nothing, even from the very beginning, tending to give you great and unceasing influence over their minds" (227). It is probably *because* Huntingdon "omitted" to establish his "influence" over young Arthur's "mind" that Helen is able to reclaim her child's innocence. Helen describes that her son is naturally "overflowing with affection" and instinctively inclined to be guided by "love" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 284). In this context, his rejection of Hargrave becomes even more striking. The setting of the scene is

[316] In line with Thormählen's argumentation that Helen is, despite her protestations, secretly somewhat attracted to Hargrave (cf. "Horrors", 13-14), this scene again reminds of the encounter of Isabel's children and the attractive seducer Levison in *East Lynne*, in which the children feel distrust, but the mother tries to escape her own attraction to the man.

not unimportant either: Tellingly, Mr Hargrave's encounter with Helen and her son takes place within nature and within bright sunlight on a summer's day, with Hargrave's presence producing "a shadow [which] suddenly eclipsed the little space of sunshine on the grass before us" (ibid., 198). Hargrave's fake paternity is the corrupting adult influence in this scene. The child's laughter prior to his arrival is contrasted with the tears that are about to erupt as the man approaches.

The reaction of Helen's son to the adult male represents another main contrast between Hargrave and Gilbert Markham: Both male neighbours cherish a romantic interest in the young mother (cf. Thormählen, "Horror", 14), both use, or intend to use to some extent the child's affection to gain admittance to his mother's presence. Yet, the child's reaction is entirely different, and we as readers can therefore deduce that, in contrast to Hargrave, Gilbert's paternal feelings are not pretentious and faked. Moreover, Gilbert appears much less manipulative, which might, admittedly, also be caused by the circumstance that he presents his own narrative. Mr Hargrave, by contrast, is further removed from the perspective of the readers and we only get to know his character through the figure of his victim, the suspicious Helen.

Mr Hattersley, another, even more infamous member of Arthur Huntingdon's decadent group of friends, appears at first even more unlikeable than Walter Hargrave. He is introduced as an abusive husband and careless and volatile character; however, he ends up redeemed, while Hargrave remains a deceptive opportunist. Despite his unlikability, Hattersley is very early on characterised as a person who, notwithstanding his present transgressions, features some redemptive qualities, and first and foremost among these is his paternal instinct. He is one of the rare figures who, during the hunting party at Grass-dale, breaches the divide between the domestic, parental sphere and the ruthless, reckless and extravagant hunting party, even though he himself is one of the most reckless characters. The contrast between his inconsiderate, hedonistic and sometimes highly abusive behaviour towards his wife Milicent (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 223 & Dutoi, 243-244) and his affectionate attitude towards his daughter is striking and also serves to mitigate the readers' hitherto negative perception of his character: "Mr Hattersley came in, attracted, I suppose, by the voice of his child, as he was crossing the hall, for he is prodigiously fond of her, and *she of him*" (ibid., 221, emphasis added). This mutual affection also serves as foreshadowing of Ralph Hattersley's later moral transformation. As in the case of Captain Levison in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* and

Mr Hargrave's exhibition of fake paternal affection for his godson Arthur, again, a child's feelings towards an adult character are used to characterise the individual and determine whether or not they were trustworthy or, if they were openly transgressive – as in Hattersley's case – if they were able to reform. Little Helen's reaction to her dissipated father is, indeed, vastly different from the reaction of little Isabel/Lucy to Levison, or of little Arthur to Mr Hargrave; while these children are portrayed to instinctively feel revulsion, little Helen "uttered a shrill scream of delight, and, quitting her mother's side, ran crowing towards him – balancing her course with outstretched arms – and embracing his knee, threw back her head and laughed in his face" (ibid.). Her open and free attitude in her father's presence suggests that she is entirely unafraid of him or his temper – an attitude that her mother is unable to adopt because of her negative experiences with Hattersley. In the perspective of domestic moralists, Hattersley's ruthless critique of Milicent's meekness represents a deliberate act of destroying the domestic ideal, since Milicent's docility was one of the points that made her a perfect candidate for marriage once, but now renders her unfit for his taste (cf. ibid., 178-179). William Cobbett, for instance, calls any husband "unjust and cruel and unmanly" (120) if he violently blames his wife for a habit which he knew she possessed before their wedding, especially so if the 'blameable' trait is actually demanded of her by the social ideal. Cobbett presents, once again, himself as model when he states that he "rendered the mother's labour [in childcare] as light as [he] […] could" (161). Hattersley, by contrast, criticises his long-suffering wife for her adherence to the female idea and aggravates Milicent's labour by adding a psychological burden to her mind. This is also the reason why Helen considers her husband's friend to be "unworthy" (ibid.) of his child, even though his paternal affection is not presented as false in any way – it contradicts his image as Regency rake (cf. Kelly, 291). The father-child bond exhibited in this scene is the only redemptive feature in Ralph Hattersley's character so far and serves to foreshadow his later drastic change of mind – turning from hedonism to domesticity.[317]

However, even though his paternal impulses are positively showcased in this scene, his present state of character – his egotistical and ruthless nature – still appear

[317] This change also reflects the evident cultural shift taking place in Britain during the first half of the Victorian period and is also exemplified through the increasing depictions of domestic abuse in fiction of the time and through legal changes (the offences Against the Person Act [1828]), which led to increasing "visibility" (Sheppard, 213) of the problem.

to be dominant in his general behaviour, thus pointing out that the character's development has only just started and has yet to go through many stages. His manner of playing with his daughter, for instance, is presented as unsuitable and far too wild, which is the reason why the "boisterous pastime" terminates in the child getting hurt and starting "to cry", causing the unreliable father, the "ungentle playfellow" to grow immediately tired of the occupation and "toss[ing] it [the child] into its mother's lap, bidding her to 'make all straight'" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 221). This passage highlights his egotism, his un-paternal impatience as well as his negligence and careless disdain towards his child's mother. Similarly, William Cobbett outlines male "*ill-treatment of the wife*" (173, original emphasis), focusing on abandonment, bad talk, alcohol, and undesirable company – all aspects which also fit the behaviour of Ralph Hattersley:[318]

> When left to ourselves we all seek the company that we like best; the company in which we take the most delight: and therefore every husband, be his state of life what it may, who spends his leisure time, or who, at least, is in the habit of doing it, in company other than that of his wife and family, *tells her and them, as plainly by deeds as he could possibly do by words, that he takes more delight in other company than in theirs*. Children repay this with *disregard* for their father; but to a wife of any *sensibility*, it is […] a *dagger to her heart* (ibid., emphasis added).

Even if Cobbett does not directly mention violence, the lack of respect alone is presented as linked to the husband's performance as a father, which suffers as a consequence of it. In Hattersley's case as well, his child is portrayed as ultimately glad to leave him and return to the "gentle[ness]" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 121) of her mother. If Ralph Hattersley had failed to change in time, according to Cobbett's observations, his daughter's affection might have eventually been turned into "disregard". His presumptuous idea that his wife will restore order to the chaos he created through his reckless play with his daughter not only indicates an inherent lack of respect but also of understanding of his own position and obligations.

Hattersley's whole behaviour is meant to indicate that he is yet emotionally unaware that he is truly a father and an adult, self-reliant figure. His further

[318] Indeed, William Cobbett shows little understanding for the fashionable habit of men to linger over drinks while the women wait in the drawing room; instead, he recommends the behaviour practised by Lord Lowborough, who is ridiculed for it: "No: the plain truth is, that it is the love of the drink and of the indecent talk that send women from the table; and it is a practice which I have always abhorred. I like to see young men, especially, follow them out of the room, and prefer their company to that of the sots who are left behind" (73).

development requires of him to grow up and become a father in his own right, thus matching the maternal energy of his wife. His emotionally infantile play with his daughter shows that he does not play with her as an experienced and superior adult, but rather as a fellow child who has not yet learnt to take responsibility (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 221). The lack of genuine paternal authority is contrasted to the emphasis he himself puts on his masculine appearance, "interposing his height and breadth between us [the two women] […] with arms akimbo, expanding his chest, and gazing around him as if the house […] were his own undisputed possession" (ibid., 221-222). Almost naively, he takes his patriarchal position and privilege for granted without acknowledging that some return might be expected of him. *Cassell's Household Guide*, for example, comments on parents' responsibilities accordingly:

> *The Duties imposed upon Parents* by the English law are the maintenance and protection of their children. It has been considered an unwarrantable thing that those through whose instrumentality children have been called into being, should be allowed to neglect those children, or to throw them as a burden upon others. This is a common-sense view of the matter, and one that would be approved even by persons devoid of that natural affection which is a law of - itself to those who have it (35, original emphasis).

While Hattersley does not throw the task of caring for his daughter upon strangers, he does give his wife the *sole* responsibility. Milicent attempts to remind him of his failure as husband and father: "[Y]ou don't think it necessary to love your wife; you are satisfied if she can keep your house, and take care of your child" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 222). Confirming that he is, if partly unconsciously, aware of the fact that he is yet in an adolescent stage, Hattersley replies to his wife's questioning of his affection for her: "'[W]hen a boy has been eating raisins and sugar-plums all day, he longs for a squeeze of sour orange'" (ibid., 223). His wording indirectly indicates that he still possesses a 'very infantile appetite' and needs to mature to become a better husband and father.

Further proof of the fact that he is a father figure in the stage of development is his praise of Helen's qualities, his acknowledgement that Arthur Huntingdon should change and "be a good husband, a good father, and so forth –'" (ibid., 272). Helen is able to awaken Hattersley's conscience and brings him to "consider […] his wife and children" (Colón, 26) more than personal pleasure. Helen becomes a "missionary" (Poteet, 259), an "instrument" for "reform" (Thormählen, "Horror", 7) in this scene. She does so, utilising her own experiences with bad father figures

like Arthur Huntingdon: "'[S]hould you wish your sons to be like Mr Huntingdon – or even like yourself? […] Should you wish your daughters to despise you – or, at least, to feel no vestige of respect for you, and no affection but what is mingled with the bitterest regret?'" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 290-291). His emphatically negative answer exposes his ultimately domestic inclination. Hattersley seems to accept the warning which, similar to Cobbett's admonitions, indicates that the father's immoral conduct, at best, indeed leads to the contempt of the children: "At the very least, it [immorality in the father figure] makes an unhappy and wrangling family; it makes children despise or hate their fathers, and it affords an example at the thought of the ultimate consequences of which a father ought to shudder" (198). Contempt causes domestic disruption, but even worse is the fact that the father fails as a role model and causes a chain of 'inherited guilt' by serving as a behavioural model for his offspring. It is this idea that ultimately terrifies Hattersley so much that it causes his transformation.

The father is unable to stand the mere possibility of his child's corruption, or the loss of filial love, and this discovery of his previously veiled paternal anxieties marks his transition from rake to domestic paternal character. The fact that he is from the first moment on convinced that his children are "fine, well-dispositioned children" (ibid.) and blesses them indicates that he is predisposed to become a paternal figure. However, before he is allowed to embrace fatherhood to its full extent, he has to acknowledge his responsibility not only to his offspring but also to his child's mother and distance himself from his "brute" behaviour. Consequently, the novel rewards him with a "family of stalwart sons and blooming daughters" (ibid., 355). His ability to fulfil his function as provider is, towards the end, also reaffirmed through the mention that he inherited his father's fortune and became a famous breeder of horses, assuring his productivity in a masculine dominated field while still maintaining his connection to the domestic realm – his family. Ralph Hattersley's ability to change his view on the treatment of women also indirectly criticises the unquestioning passivity of the stereotypical angel in the house, which does no longer represent Hattersley's ideal of a woman even though it conforms with the social ideal (cf. Coffey, 174-175): He got his "squeeze of sour orange'" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 223), which triggered his development.

Lord Lowborough is yet another case than the gentlemen Hargrave and Hattersley since he is, from the very start, already desperate to be "reform[ed]" (cf.

ibid., 159) and wishes to achieve this goal through marriage and family. Despite his previously rakish lifestyle, Lord Lowborough is described as an inherently "domestic" (ibid, 354) man. He endures being "ridiculed" for his supposed "effeminate" custom of "abstaining from alcohol and gambling" (Colón, 25) and genuinely attempts to conform to the ideal of a respectable family man. In Cobbett's argumentation, happiness is largely derived from family life, but gambling excludes domesticity ("I have reared a family; I have entertained as many friends as most people; and I have never had cards, dice, a chess-board, nor any implement of gaming, under my roof" [34]). This principle is derived from his idea that "[n]o gambler was ever yet a happy man, and very few gamblers have escaped being miserable" (34). Lowborough attempts to escape this 'misery', but his reform is not entirely smooth: He struggles with his paternal feelings towards his two children, especially towards his daughter, who reminds him of his wife and whose paternity remains questionable due to Annabella's affair with Huntingdon (cf. Colón, 25). The fact that, to his subjective perception, mother and daughter are alike disrupts his enjoyment of "domestic comfort and endearments" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 354).

Annabella's anti-domestic personality is not only pictured through her distance towards her children, but also her disloyalty to her husband, which remains unmitigated by any maternal feeling. Contrary to the adulterous Isabel Vane in *East Lynne*, who engages the public's sympathies, this absence of emotional maternity makes her ultimately "morally irredeemable" (Lee, npag) from the novel's perspective. Lord Lowborough, consequently, connects anti-domesticity, disloyalty and artificiality, characteristics of his first wife, with his daughter, even though she, too, is a victim. He attempts "to treat her with paternal kindness" and gains her "artless and unsuspecting attachment to himself" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 354). This paternal feeling, however, is only adopted because his perception of the domestic ideal forces him to try to conform to normative paternal behaviour. The ideal father, by contrast, is impartial and affectionate towards his children, regardless of their mother's conduct but, if she is unfaithful "the sooner they forget her the better" (Cobbett, 205). Indeed, moralists like William Cobbett would agree with Lowborough's efforts, stating that for a household to function, it "remains for the *father* to act towards them [the children of his household] with *impartiality*" (328, original emphasis). Yet, despite his efforts to be unprejudiced towards his daughter, the novel presents Lowborough's struggles as unfruitful because his disposition is

not inclined to forgiveness and generosity (cf. Brontë, *ToWH*, 354) and is consequently not inherently "paternal" according to the normative definition of the term by Cobbett. Lord Lowborough's "domestic" predilection is, accordingly, only motivated by longing for "comforts and endearments" for himself and less for others and, therefore, less paternal because "the evil promptings of his nature" (ibid.) are too strong for him to overcome. However, Colón proposes that Lord Lowborough's daughter is in all probability not his own but the child of his rival Huntingdon (cf. 27). Obviously, this plausible theory sheds another light on the paternal nature of Lord Lowborough, who is, after all, prepared to do his utmost to live up to the ideal of a family "where respect and morality reign" (ibid.). The presence of the girl in his house reminds him of his time with the adulteress, and, as Cobbett describes it, "a jail is paradise compared with such a life, and he who can endure this latter, from the fear of encountering hardship, is a wretch too despicable to go by the name of man" (205).

Lord Lowborough's new wife is the exact opposite of Annabella and proves to be a very maternal figure. Yet, she is hardly individualised and represents a concept rather than an actual person, which is the reason why the readership has no opportunity to get close to her. She only represents Lord Lowborough's happy ending: She is described as "warm-hearted" and "a fund of cheerful spirits" without any artificial "brilliant accomplishments" (Brontë, *ToWH*, 354). She represents the middle-class ideal, married to a comfort-loving, slightly incompetent and psychologically insecure nobleman whose struggles with the bourgeoise ideal of paternal affection are due to bad experiences with a woman who was the opposite of this ideal. The second wife becomes "an excellent mother to the children, and an invaluable wife to his lordship", who also brings out "the good" (ibid.) in him. The description of the 'good housewife' from *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, as well, fits perfectly to the portrayal of Lord Lowborough's new wife:

> It is the correct thing […] for the lady who holds this position [of the wife and mother] to remember that the every-day happiness of those in the home circle is in her hands; that she has the greatest power of anyone to make the home a place of peace and happiness or a place to avoid (M.C., 10-12).

Anabella does not only make her home a place to avoid, but she also avoids it herself by being constantly in society, on visits and as a member of parties; domestic happiness is consequently not an important issue for her since she regards her

individual happiness as more important than the happiness of the family as a collective, to whom she has no emotional bond, having married Lord Lowborough only for his status. Lowborough's second wife, by contrast, has an emotional connection to her husband and to his children (as readers might deduce from the short description) despite having no biological connection to them (cf. Pregent, 224-225) and manages to realise the ideal presented in *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* in creating "every-day happiness" within the home.

In Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* parents are everywhere, and each of them represents a strong and specific stance towards parenthood. The clash between normative maternity and paternity and the disruption of the prescribed ideal, already present in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, becomes even more noticeable. This could be read as a consequence of the shift from the somewhat laxer late-eighteenth-century conventions and the beginnings of rigid Victorian moral righteousness (cf. Hyman, 455). The focus on parenthood is obviously due to the circumstance that the majority of the main characters – especially Helen Huntingdon and her first husband – are parents themselves. Especially for the female protagonist, her parental identity becomes a driving force throughout the plot. However, that is by far not all Brontë's text has to offer with regard to the depiction of conflicting parenting approaches. Women's status within society, their legal and moral rights are central to the discussions around Helen's apparently transgressive flight from home to save her child. The protagonist's struggles reveal in a unique intensity the contradictory nature of the ideal she intends to follow – an ideal which appears unachievable without transgression – a paradox resulting from an illusion cleverly disguised as an archetype and a shining example for mothers. The legal system is the first flaw of the maternal ideal, which is pictured as the backbone of society: While women were supposed to be the moral 'saviours' of degenerate (male) members of society and sacrificial motherly protectors of the next generation (cf. Lock, 37), the law factually granted women hardly any room to act as such (cf. Bellamy, 255); yet, the novel points out the relevance of seemingly 'only' domestic issues for the wider public discourse and thus challenges the rigid separation of the spheres.

Social opinion as well highlights the imperfection of the maternal ideal: Eagerness to embody the essence of protecting and nurturing maternity does not shield the protagonist from severe criticism in her community and even from social exclusion. The fact that within society maternal (and paternal) ideals are seen differently, depending on the individual, results, especially in the case of Helen Huntingdon and Mrs Markham, in an open clash of opinions. This also showcases the underlying, shifting and elusive perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Boundaries appear less fixed and certain once formerly rigid ideals are suddenly challenged by other opinions, or by the sheer impossibility to act out said model. The fact that Simone de Beauvoir, roughly one hundred years later, mentions similar struggles in the social perception of women and their reality in the conflict between individuality and 'the ideal' in her chapter "The Mother" (cf. 504) proves not only the persistence of deceptive societal ideals but also the timeless nature and lasting relevance of Brontë's novel.

7. "'[H]e is my child as well as yours'": Representations of motherhood and fatherhood in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*

Ellen Wood's novel *East Lynne* (1861), first published in serialized form in the *New Monthly Magazine* (cf. Bauer-Gatsos, npag.), is the tale of a fallen woman who finds herself occupying this role not due to her wickedness of character, but because of misunderstandings, her weakness and seeming lack of trust in the right and misplaced trust in the wrong person. Similarly to Brunton's Emmeline, the heroine of Wood's novel prioritises a lover over her children and leaves them with her husband, suffering from the separation and being unable to suppress maternal feelings. Yet, in contrast to *Emmeline*, *East Lynne* focusses in more detail, even with painful meticulousness, on the events leading up to and following the transgressive act of absconding from parental responsibilities and ideals and pays less attention to the relationship of the runaway couple. In *Emmeline*'s case, the relationship is broken by the awakening conscience of both members of the guilty party, while in *East Lynne*, the villainous nature of the 'seducer' destroys all sympathies from the very beginning, which puts even more stress on the contrast between the inherently maternal and domestic Isabel, the heroine of *East Lynne*, and Captain Levison, her entirely unpaternal and undomestic lover. In comparison to the more conventional

'domestic' hero of *Emmeline*, he ironically becomes a biological father while mentally distancing himself from any resemblance to the paternal ideal.

Presumably because of this strong opposition between good and evil, the novel can be called a prototypical sensation novel (cf. Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 2) without a proper female villain (the only real villain being Isabel's seducer); despite her moral failings, the audience is asked to sympathise with Wood's Isabel (cf. ibid., 4 & "East Lynne", *Saturday Reviews*, 1862, 187) even more than the reader sympathises with Brunton's Emmeline, whose struggles in her marital home are never directly pictured, whereas Isabel's difficulties as a wife and mother are diligently revealed to the reader. However, just as Emmeline, Isabel is punished for her sin against normative maternity and her "transgressive exceptionality" (Kucich, 159). She is chastised, though in a different way, with her death, which allows bourgeois respectability to have the upper hand once more. Lady Isabel is an enticing case which has already fascinated many scholars, from Ann Cvetkovich in "Crying for Power: *East Lynne* and Maternal Melodrama" (1992) and John Kucich in "The Professional and the Mother: Moral Disempowerment in *East Lynne*" (1994) to Sun Jai Kim in "Owning a Sense of Perversity in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*" (2022). Even later, during her 'fallen' years, Isabel appears to incorporate many, if not most, characteristics that would suit the accepted standard of the period, but is still eventually "punished for her failure to conform to codified femininity" (Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 3) while other, 'less feminine' figures are allowed to remain in society and even gain in status.[319]

The fact that the tale is a sensation novel might have led to a negative reception of Ellen Wood's story in the time of its publication because of the expected presence of scandal and transgression, which was thought to appeal only to the 'lower' and more 'primitive' feelings (cf. Jay viii); however, the punishment that the transgressor ultimately receives provided the tale with a different outlook and turned it, in the eyes of many contemporary reviewers, from a tasteless and 'sordid' tale into a story that actually promoted morality (cf. Kucich, 4). The *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* from February 15th, 1862, mentions, for example, that the novel is inherently "good" and without "pretension" ("East Lynne", 186). Even though the anonymous reviewer concedes that the work

[319] One example for such a character would be Afy Hallijohn, who marries the respectable Mr Jiffin after having had an affair with Francis Levison herself (cf. Wood, *EL*, 601).

is a little lacking in artistic quality, it is said to avoid the faults of many similar stories by not being "spun out, […] affected, or vulgar, or silly" (ibid.) or failing to express the dutiful "abhorrence of such a crime" (ibid., 187). The review even allows for the reader's sympathy for the fallen heroine, who "is not made either too bad or too good" and therefore cannot be "condemn[ed] […] very harshly" (ibid.). The review published in *The Examiner* on November 16th, 1861 corroborates with the slightly later *Saturday Review* by maintaining that "the authoress treats the ground sacred to French novels with the honest and firm step of an Englishwoman. There is no maudlin enjoyment offered in a study of ill-regulated passions" ("*East Lynne*. By Mr Henry Wood, Author of 'Danesbury House.' In Three Volumes. Bentley." 1861, 728). Again, the extraordinary morality and the potential didactic value of the novel are praised by putting emphasis on the contrast to the common characteristics of its genre and the novel's domestic message in relation to parental responsibility (cf. Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 4).

One other characteristic of the sensation novel is, according to MacDonald, the "encourage[ment] [of] physical sensations in the bodies of susceptible readers" (45) which, in the most common cases, were proclaimed to be unsuitable, especially for women, since they were apt to encourage a deviation from the maternal and domestic ideal. However, in the case of *East Lynne*, the sensational text supposedly encourages particularly its female readership to feel empathy for Isabel's maternal anguish and thus 'practise' motherly emotions, while warning, at the same time, of the consequences of transgression (cf. Bauer-Gatsos, npag.) – one reason why the novel's message is described as "healthy" by critics ("*East Lynne*. By Mr Henry Wood, Author of 'Danesbury House.' In Three Volumes. Bentley." *The Examiner*, 1861, 728 & MacDonald, 50). The discrepancies between didactic message and the Victorian perspective on morally acceptable experience of 'passions' have caused many scholars to observe that sensation novels in general, and *East Lynne* in particular, have a "paradoxical" (Amstrong, "Desire", 747) relationship to the Victorian moral system. As Mary A. Amstrong observes, the novel "is praised for its exciting plot and vilified for its vulgarity, commended for its moral voice but condemned for stirring up the basest human instincts in both characters and readers alike" ("Desire", 746). While supporting the idea that the message of the novel is that of a didactic stance towards maternity, John Kucich proposes that the novel has an exceptionally strong class-related lesson which coincides with its sensational

characteristics by "locat[ing] that subversion, not in its own outright attacks on official standards, but within the changing structure of middle-class morality itself" (160) and the power of social-upward mobility and the maintenance of traditional moral values (cf. ibid., 162-163).

7.1 Sentimental, wicked, domineering and practical: Motherhood and the mother-child bond in *East Lynne*

East Lynne is a novel full of depictions of motherhood and maternal behaviour in different varieties and to different degrees – emotional, practical, tyrannical, respectable, unrespectable, selfless, egotistical, biological and non-biological. As an example for the latter functions the character of Miss Cornelia Carlyle, the elder half-sister of Isabel's husband, who, though unmarried and advanced in age, exhibits a fierce and even a little stifling motherly affection for her younger brother, which usually presents itself in the form of strictness and a wish to control his actions (cf. Wood, *EL*, 37 & 372-374). Besides non-biological motherhood, the readership is also confronted with a thoroughly stereotypical depiction of 'bad' motherhood in the character of Lady Mount Severn, who is presented as so cold that she remains remarkably unmoved by the death of one of her sons (cf. ibid., 113), who uses corporeal punishment at a slight provocation which merely concerned her own vanity, and verbally abuses her "sensitive" (ibid., 115) child. As a rule, she behaves very impatiently and unsentimentally towards her offspring (cf. ibid., 117) and, in contrast to the occasional coldness of Barbara Hare, Isabel's love rival, does not even perform her duty conscientiously, frequently ignoring her housewifely tasks as well, such as, for example, failing to inform her husband of Isabel's engagement (cf. ibid., 135-136; cf. Steere, 70).

The following discussion will focus in more detail on the two most prominent mother figures of the novel – Isabel Vane and Barbara Carlyle, née Hare, who both, though at different times, occupy the position as mistress of East Lynne, wife of Archibald Carlyle, both were loved by him, both bore his children, but showed their care in comparatively different ways.

7.1.1 "Sensitive", sentimental and clinging: Isabel as 'respectable' mother

In Wood's work, ideal and misbehaviour are close to each other from the very first. When the readership initially meets the protagonist of *East Lynne*, Isabel Vane, she

is presented as a girl with a perfect predisposition for respectable motherhood. Not only is her appearance of "extraordinary loveliness" (Wood, *East Lynne*, 11) and immediately charms all men, including Mr Carlyle, her future husband, but she also appears to have, until this moment and despite her upper-class background, lived a comparatively "secluded" life away "from the great world" (ibid., 13). This isolation hints at her innocence, the idea that she is still 'unspoiled' by vanity and fashion – all qualities that would have been highly approved by most authors of advice literature. Hannah More, for example, disapproves very much of the habits of families of status to spend too much time on entertainment in fashionable centres of high life (cf. 61), and Isabel's guardians have arguably heeded such critique. Far from being spoilt by the "resorts of vanity for those who have no disease but idleness" (ibid.), Isabel's character is described as "[g]enerous and benevolent" as well as "gentle and considerate" and "timid and sensitive" (ibid.). As Bauer-Gatsos puts it, "Isabel is established as a proper young woman, with a virtuous nature and a good background" (npag.).[320] In accordance with More's assessment, the narrator explicitly tells the reader to accept the initial portrayal of Isabel as "praise" (Wood, *EL*, 13) of her almost universal excellence.

This impression of excellence is supported by Lady Isabel's high regard for the status of motherhood and fatherhood, which is exemplified in her filial attitude towards her own parents. She remembers her dead mother very fondly (cf. Wood, *EL*, 15; cf. Kim, 194) and is highly upset at the death of her father, although he leaves her in a precarious situation that would have made it only natural for her to experience some resentment (cf. Wood, *EL*. 88). However, according to *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, Isabel's respect for her parents, disregarding their personal shortcomings, is "the correct behaviour", since "to give her mother the deference due to her" (M.C., 27) and to respect the "judgement" (ibid., 29) of her parents is "the correct thing" (ibid., 27). Isabel's loyalty to and esteem for her parents, especially her dead mother (cf. ibid., 15-16), is also presented as linked to

[320] Such an exemplary character is often, in More's opinion, the result of an upbringing in the right surroundings. In fact, More considers the home to be the best place to learn and develop and admonishes parents who deliberately send their children, in particular their daughters, to places away from home: "Would not those delightful pursuits, botany and drawing, for instance, seem likely to court the fields, the woods, and gardens of the paternal seat, as more congenial to their nature, and more appropriate to their exercise, than barren watering places, destitute of a tree, or an herb, or a flower, and not affording an hour's interval from successive pleasures, to profit by the scene even if it abounded with the whole vegetable world, from the 'Cedar of Lebanon to the Hyssop on the wall'" (60-61).

her modesty. Her modesty is also indicated by her refusal to wear diamonds instead of the simple bracelet she inherited from her mother, because she "did not like to be too fine" (ibid., 16), which confirms her father's earlier statement that his daughter was not reared to "frivolity or foppery" (ibid., 10). The conduct book also states that such loyal and respectful behaviour reaps its own reward, because to "be a good son or a good daughter is a lovable trait, and inclines other persons to like you" (M.C., 28).[321] William Cobbett, too, harshly criticises fashionable refinement which is unaccompanied by "inborn modesty" (238). In this regard, most authors of advice literature exhibit a bourgeois bias towards lax upper-class manners (cf. ibid., 200) and insist on the idea that "[i]t is often in very simple households that the finest manners are found" (*Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, M.C., 12). Isabel's modesty, her dislike of pretension and ostentation and her emotional attachment to children, which she first exhibits during the time spent with her young relative (cf. Wood, *EL*, 15; cf. Steere, 63), indeed, speak more of a middle-class mentality than an inherent aristocratic attitude and are thus presumably much more relatable for a similarly middle-class audience.[322] Kucich, as well, favours this argumentation, stating that

> the novel uses Isabel to reveal the anachronistic nature of traditional middle-class ethical standards […] to show that they are doomed values in Carlyle's new world [the world of the new professional, uprisen middle-class]. In Isabel, the morally simple lumpenbourgeoisie often ridiculed in Trollope and Collins is raised to the status of tragic victim, a martyr to an increasingly antibourgeois culture (171).

[321] For Isabel, however, this is not always the case, and she is occasionally even misjudged and scolded for adherence to this ideal, especially by her aunt. She accepts her chaperon's criticism that she will look ridiculous "with nothing on […] [her] neck but a school-girl's chain" (ibid., 17), but, at the same time, she also proves her sensitivity and emotional frailty by "meekly" (ibid., 18) crying at her relative's anger (cf. ibid.). The fact that Lady Isabel's character with its quiet and unpretentious passivity is not praised, and even despised, by most of her peers, contrarily to the conduct book's statement that such qualities make "other persons like you" (M.C., 28), serves to highlight society's injustice and presents her as the perfect candidate to attract the audience's sympathies, even despite her later flaws (cf. Rosenman, 26).

[322] Obviously, Lady Isabel belongs to the upper class and her fall, similar to Levison's, can be read as a symbol of the descent of the old order and the shift in power relations between upper and middle classes in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century (cf. Wynne, 66). My argument is that Lady Isabel's mindset does not fit into this argumentation. The only aspect which complements it is her 'fatal flaw', which is also mentioned by Wood herself to be very untypical of a nature like Lady Isabel's, possessing "an innate, lively consciousness of right and wrong" (284). Kucich confirms this, commenting that Lady Isabel's fall in reality does not come about due to a lack of morality but is in reality a result of "her simple commitment to traditional middle-class norms of honesty. Raised with a naïve standard for truth-telling, Isabel is unequipped for the tangled deceptions of the socially elevated world in which Carlyle moves" (171).

Despite her rather bourgeois idea of morality, due to her strict education, Isabel still incorporates "upper-class refinement" (ibid.), a combination which was regarded as perfection for upper-middle-class women and their function as role model for future offspring. Thus, Isabel is presented as a figure with a 'natural' maternal disposition, which is not necessarily bound to biological motherhood. During her time at Castle Marling, Isabel is shown to be superior as a mother figure to Lady Mount Severn, having a far better connection to the lady's son (cf. Wood, *EL*, 115).[323]

Despite a natural motherly inclination, the topics of maternal health and an overly sentimental mother-child bond are presented as intrinsically tied to the character of Lady Isabel, even though, or maybe because, as Simpson argues, Isabel is an entirely passive figure in the process of becoming a wife and mother, marrying her husband more out of necessity than for love. She is "(at least initially) pushed into the maternal role […] without much of a choice" (597).[324] Passivity and an inherent weakness – physical as well as emotional – are hallmarks of the first part of Isabel's existence as mother. According to the two descriptions contained in *East Lynne*, none of Isabel's pregnancies are uncomplicated and the process of birth is presented as rather dangerous. Isabel's fragility underlines her earlier "sensitiv[ity]" (Wood, *EL*, 13) by providing her not only with mental but also with physical "delicacy" (284). Her legitimate first pregnancy with Isabel Lucy has her hovering "between life and death" (ibid., 171) at the time of birth, even though she appears to have been very careful in the earlier stages of pregnancy, being cautious with carriage rides (cf. ibid., 170) and attended to by a doctor as well as a nurse (cf. 172-173). The doctor who helps her during birth reports her "symptoms […] [as] critical" (ibid., 173), and her recovery is rather slow (cf. ibid., 175). The portrayal of Isabel's mental state during pregnancy and her post-partum depression can be traced back to theories concerning 'insanity during pregnancy' (cf. Hanson, 70) from the time. What is stressed is "Isabel's mental instability, the implication being

[323] Young Lord Vane's filial attachment to Isabel serves as proof of her strong motherly nature, which gave the young boy the maternal attention and feeling of emotional closeness that he did not receive from his biological mother. This attachment between her and the young Lord Vane is shown to last even beyond her fall from social grace and indicates that she has secured the child's loyalty, which even defies social restrictions, since he refuses to speak badly of her despite being aware of her transgressions (cf. Wood, *EL*, 598).

[324] This sense of lacking freedom within Isabel's marriage to Archibald is confirmed by Twinn, who remarks that, although intending to depart from "the entrapment of her cousin Raymond's home", Isabel's position as married woman in East Lynne under the supervision of Cornelia is little better and only yet another prison or "trap" (60).

that she is not fit to be a mother" (ibid.), neither morally nor physically. Hanson describes the text's perspective as emphasising "[h]er mental instability [which is] from the very first linked with a degree of moral infirmity" (ibid.).

Yet, weaknesses such as Isabel's mental instability usually went hand in hand with the strict reduction of socially permissible activity for pregnant women (cf. Åström, 123), which included, for example, the idea that some activities were "calculated to rouse strong feelings" (Bull, 20) and would thus have a negative effect on the pregnant woman's mind (cf. ibid.). A similar 'ban' is put on Isabel, who has hardly anything to do and is utterly dependent on her husband's permission for movement as well as entertainment (cf. Wood, *EL*, 170). Despite these misogynist measures, Isabel remains weak and, in consequence, 'blameable' for possibly infirm children. In the context of maternal health and fragility, Thomas Graham remarks in his advice text *An Account of Persons remarkable for their health and Longevity* (1829) that "a weakly father" could very well have "a robust child" (5), since, in the author's opinion, the child's health depended largely on the health and strength of the mother (cf. 5-6). The concept of hereditary health deficits is presented as being essentially the fault of the mother's constitution. Isabel's weakness, too, is apparently passed on to her offspring: Her first child, Isabel Lucy, has to undergo an emergency baptism (cf. Wood, *EL*, 174), and her second son's illness and early death were also commonly regarded "as a matter of inherited constitutional susceptibility" (Jay, xxx). The servant Wilson remarks at the sight of the unhealthy colouring of Isabel's son that "[i]t's just the look that his mother had" (Wood, *EL*, 426). This inherited physical frailty "seems also to suggest that he carries the seed of his mother's moral 'contamination'" (Jay, xxx; cf. Cvetkovitch, 115) as well as the unhealthy inheritance of the "degenerate" (Maunder 62) aristocratic family. The depiction of inherited weakness in the case of Isabel also reflects the pressure that was put on parents, foremost mothers (cf. Graham 3), to be healthy and present, at least outwardly, a vigorous appearance (cf. Adams, 511).

During her marriage, Isabel's continuous infirmity prevents her from being more intimate with her children – she loves to watch them play but remains unable to exert herself (cf. Wood, *EL*, 197). This extreme physical weakness again mirrors her passivity and lack of agency during her union to Carlyle and underlines her rather "pathetic" (Rosenman, 28) impression. But it is not just physical passivity which makes her pitiable; it is primarily her lack of psychological resilience.

Because of this lack of resilience, Isabel is unable to stand her own ground but allows her actions and motives to be reinterpreted and turned around by her environment. Her sister-in-law Cornelia considers Isabel's weakness to be due to aristocratic extravagance: "If Lady Isabel would make an effort, she'd get strong fast enough at home" (Wood, *EL*, 199); consequently, Isabel's wish to remain with her children during her recuperating trip to the seaside could be read as 'selfishness' because, as Cornelia asserts, she is causing some minor inconveniences to Archibald and his breadwinning, money-earning duty, e.g. by producing extra costs. Cornelia might have taken this line of argumentation from advice texts such as *Cassell's Household Guide*, which adhere to the ideal of a woman's selflessness. According to the *Guide*, it is the hard-working middle-class husband's rest and peace that ought to be the most important issue for the housewife and mother – not her own health and emotional well-being –, and she should be able to endure inconveniences to live up to this ideal (cf. 142).[325] But despite such doctrines, the thought of separation from her offspring affects Isabel emotionally: "'Would my baby like mamma to go away and leave him?' she asked, the tears falling fast on his fair curls" (Wood, *EL*, 200). In contrast to the comparative indifference of the other characters, especially Miss Cornelia and Archibald Carlyle, towards the separation of mother and children, Isabel's extreme fear of isolation once again highlights her maternal neediness, which is portrayed, due to Cornelia's comments, again almost as an "excess […]" (MacDonald, 48) of self-centred sentimentality, overruling economic as well as all other practical considerations.

As the discussions surrounding the seaside visit suggest, Isabel has no authority in matters of household economy and financial considerations. However, according to the admonitions of *Cassell's Household Guide*, good husbandry and economy are necessary attributes of a good wife and mother (cf. 1). The *Guide* praises "good sense and discretion" (33) in economic matters and recommends, for example, modest and simple attire for both mother and child (ibid.). While cherishing middle-class moral ideals of parent-child closeness, Isabel is not used to bourgeoise practicality and ideas of self-reliant motherhood with regard to economy. She does not dispense with the help of nurses and servants (cf. Wood, *EL*,

[325] The manual also hints at the idea that, if the wife continually causes difficulties, the husband might get weary of her presence (cf. 142); this is a fear which is also on Isabel's mind and which is reflected in her growing jealousy of Barbara Hare, a previous acquaintance of Carlyle.

199), nor does she care about the additional expense of keeping her children with her at the seaside (cf. ibid., 200), or attempt to reduce the cost of her gowns, which Cornelia deems too luxurious. The author of *Advice to Young Men*, William Cobbett, deplores extravagances in dress and lifestyle and warns young middle-class men to be wary of women who sprout such aristocratic habits, because financial ruin and domestic disaster would surely follow (cf. 107). The fate of the late earl appears to prove Cobbett right, who calls extravagance and luxury "the poor-book of the aristocracy" (ibid.). However, while the author admits that men were also capable of extravagance, female extravagance is depicted as a fault that is far worse because of their inherent "duty […] to assist in upholding their stations by husbanding their fortunes" (ibid.). Cobbett's criticism appears to mirror Cornelia's concerns regarding Isabel's potential extravagance. Such a flaw would also be highly objectionable according to John Gregory (1788), while he would probably excuse the late earl's extreme wastefulness due to his widowed state. Gregory deems household economy "entirely a woman's province" (42). A lack of female, maternal prudence in the household might, according to his argumentation, cause mismanagement. Isabel, thus, is not easily excused due to her gender. In Gregory's opinion, female household management could prove "both good sense and taste in a woman" (ibid.), independently of the size of the household or its budget, since there is no justification for economic neglect in such matters. His argumentation concerning size and financial situation of the estate appears to include upper-class households as well and, which underlines the connection he establishes between household economy and female morality (cf. ibid.). Isabel, consequently, would fall under his accusations – a fact that might constitute a shadowy hint at her later fall in other matters of morality.

Isabel's deficient economic skills as well as her weakness set her apart from the middle-class standard of "hands-on" (Wagner "Victorian Nursery", 802) motherhood. Due to her lack of occupation in the household, which is run by Cornelia, Isabel is less physically demanded by the job for which she is deemed unsuitable by her sister-in-law but is simultaneously also criticised for being an inactive mother and household manager. The lack in Isabel's practical abilities makes her inherently the 'wrong choice' for Archibald Carlyle, since, as William Cobbett admonishes his male middle-class readership, "[t]he things which you ought to desire in a wife are, 1. Chastity; 2. sobriety; *3. industry; 4. frugality*; 5.

cleanliness; *6. knowledge of domestic affairs;* 7. Good temper; 8. Beauty" (89, emphasis added). Though she is depicted as modest and beautiful, Isabel falls short in the other attributes: Her ineptitude as parent and household manager, according to stricter middle-class standards, is confirmed by evangelical criticism of the state of female education, such as Hannah More's, who describes the less self-reliant practices of upper- and upper-middle classes as too neglectful and potentially corrupting

> this class of females, in what relates both to religious knowledge and to practical industry, falls short both of the very high and the very low. Their new course of education, and the habits of life and elegance of dress connected with it*, peculiarly unfits them for the active duties of their own very important condition* (30, emphasis added).

The problem is presented as an overall social default and the blame is mainly laid on social developments, the striving to move up the social ladder (particularly in the case of the rising upper-middle classes), as well inherited decadence (regarding the upper classes). Isabel's ineptitude is presented as connected to the aristocratic legacy in her upbringing, which, though middle-class in its value system, excluded the practical side, i.e. the running of a middle-class household. Her feeble health and Cornelia's ruthless usurpation of the household, moreover, prevent her from acquiring knowledge and making progress. It appears that Isabel is trapped in a vicious circle of inexperience, lack of practice, emotional fragility as well as a gaslighting environment. It fits the depiction of Isabel's dutiful and traditional mindset that the awareness of her own incapability depresses her visibly. Not even the birth of her first child, which she had hoped would bring her some sense of usefulness, can alleviate this sensation, because now her physical weakness prevents her from being an active mother (cf. Wood, *EL*., 170).

Whether motivated by custom or physical necessity, Isabel herself continuously makes use of servants to relieve her in her motherly duties. Engaging a nurse is presented as one of the first and most natural actions after the birth of a child, despite Isabel's openly portrayed attachment to her children (cf. Wood, *EL*, 199). Once Isabel's first child has reached a comparatively stable state of health, "of course the next thing was to look out for a maid" (ibid., 175).[326] Employing a

[326] The same principle is applied in the case of her illegitimate child with Francis Levison, which is also cared for by a nurse (cf. Wood, *EL*, 290) and later a "*bonne*" (ibid. 320, original emphasis) to

nurse for an infant child is presented as an indispensable comfort (cf. ibid., 289). According to Thomas Gisborne, however, the transfer of the "nurturing" (379) duties to another person, without the excuse of health issues, means failure as a parent (ibid.). Moralists considered employing nurses to fulfil motherly tasks not only neglectful of the mother but also endangering the child's physical and mental health. Martha Mears, for instance, warns that nurses, who fulfil their tasks not for emotional or ethical reasons but for financial gratification, were more likely to rely upon neglectful or unhygienic customs in their childcare habits (cf. 160). William Cobbett also displays a critical attitude towards the employment of nurses and servants in childcare, describing possible negative physical and mental effects (cf. 255) to create a deterrent effect on a concerned mother. Untampered by personal emotions, Isabella Beeton, for example, exhibits a different kind of criticism, addressing the discrepancy in status between the employer and the caretaker of the child as problematic because of concomitant differences in moral values (cf. 478-479), and Martha Mears utters her concerns with regard to different hygienic standards in the case of employing nurses from the 'lower ranks of life' (cf. 160). Upper-class Isabel, being unacquainted with middle-class household advice texts, would presumably know little about such warnings, which makes the perpetual presence of a nurse in Isabel's domestic life plausible. On the one hand, obviously, her aristocratic background establishes a certain distance between her and the middle-class addressees of the manuals; on the other hand, her middle-class mind-set, her adherence to middle class ideas about sentimental motherhood and the fact that she has 'married down' allow for a connection between her and the intended readership of such advice manuals, which would render her possibly objectionable from a moralistic standpoint. Mothers were often judged quite harshly for risking to lose the bond to their children through relying too much on servants (cf. Cobbett, 225), and this criticism was not exclusively voiced by others but sometimes even by the mothers themselves.[327] Writings of authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell illustrate this phenomenon. Gaskell documents her anxiety concerning a potential loss of filial affection due to her daughter's supposed preference for her nurse. In accordance with the middle-class ideal of motherly affection and active

assist her during her travels on the continent. Even after having proclaimed that she will employ as few servants as possible due to her financial situation and her guilt-driven wish to live as simply as possible "'[a]s soon as ever the baby can walk'" (ibid., 308), a nurse remains a must.

[327] Barbara Hare's non-adherence to this ideal will be discussed later in more detail.

involvement in her children's life, she confesses a feeling of jealousy (cf. "My Diary", 66) and attempts to teach her daughter as much as she could herself (cf. ibid., 70).

However, moralist ideals and everyday practice were sometimes at odds even in bourgeoise circles. Though Cobbett condemns the practice, engaging a nurse, especially for younger children, was such a commonplace action for upper middle-class parents in mid-nineteenth-century Britain (cf. 255) that the act of engaging help or delegating rougher parenting tasks is not really depicted as detrimental to Isabel's image as mother. As Gorham confirms, despite the criticism offered by moralists, "it was still considered appropriate and usual for middle-class families who could afford them to employ domestics to look after their children" (17). Advice literature such as *Cassell's Household Guide* corroborates this statement, implying in many passages that the employment of nurses was common and accepted in most upper- and middle-class households (cf. 110). It was even considered part of the model of female sacrifice that a mother should accept inconveniences, such as high expenses, to offer her child the best care possible (cf.17; Holmes & Nelson, 1), because, according to *Cassell's Household Guide*, "[g]ood and correct nursing is indispensable to future health and strength" (10). The inclusion of nurses into their advice suggests that the authors of the guide apparently saw nothing amiss in well-to-do mothers delegating duties to a trained, and often expensive, nurse (cf. ibid. 142) and even put potential stress on the less affluent mother, who cannot afford the best nurse (cf. ibid., 10). These controversies in argumentation mirror the social shift within the rising middle classes, who become more and more pragmatic and less 'moralistic', while also indirectly pointing out the double morality of middle-class values – on the one hand demanding constant motherly devotion, on the other hand accepting the growing need for status representation among the rising middle class, which required employing servants.

Apart from the underlying inconsistency of this Victorian parenting ideal and the related moral double standard, Isabel's extreme physical weakness would exempt her, also in the eyes of her contemporaries, from the harshest criticism. Even evangelical authors of advice literature, such as Gisborne and Mears, acknowledge the necessity of relief from nursing and childcare in cases of physical frailty: Mears, for example, writes in the context of the substitution of the breast-feeding mother through a wet-nurse, a practice that she generally deplores, that "[a]s some women,

from great weakness or delicacy of constitution, or from some defect in the nipples, cannot suckle, while others may be prevented from discharging that duty by particular circumstances of their situation in life, the utmost care is required to lessen the evils inseparable from such incapacity" (155). Isabel's depiction as a sickly mother who, despite caring for her children, is forced to rely on her servant Joyce to watch her offspring during her 'sick leave' (cf. ibid., 202), therefore, calls rather for pity rather than condemnation and underlines the sentimentality and "melodramatic" (Rosenman, 25) quality of her motherhood. This impression is strengthened by Isabel's constant fears that she might have to leave her children permanently – in her imagination this could only be caused by her death – and let a stranger take care of them. The protagonist fears that the person who might replace her is her rival, Barbara Hare, whom she considers unable to emotionally relate to her children (cf. ibid., 179-180), "drawing your [the father's] love from it [the child]" (ibid., 180). Isabel once even asks her servant Joyce: "'If I never come back, will you promise to remain with my children?'" (ibid., 202). Their conversation is private and confidential, which puts emphasis on her trust in Joyce as a suitable caretaker for her children and mirrors to some extent that, especially in a middle-class milieu, "[a]nxieties about a 'stranger' raising a child in lieu of its natural mother were common at the time" (Steere, 70).[328]

Another factor which renders Isabel's motherhood problematic is the circumstance that she is continuously denied proper respect for her maternal position by her entire surrounding. Her sister-in-law ridicules her "incessant worry" (Wood, *EL*, 201) for her children, which might worsen Isabel's disposition. This idea is adopted by both Carlyle and the attending physician, overruling her own maternal judgment, and Isabel's sense of uselessness is strengthened because her status is not recognised. Respect for the mother and housewife was considered to be inherently tied to her abilities, but also a marker of status, as can be seen in *Mrs*

[328] All these concerns appear to be unnecessary, however, in the case of the servant Joyce, who has been in the service of Cornelia for some time and is therefore trusted and approved even by the paragon of middle-class frugality, Miss Carlyle, herself, who claims to be an expert in "domestic matters" (cf. Wood, *EL,* 143) and whose financial considerations would certainly not allow Joyce to request any extraordinarily high payment (cf. Wood, *EL,* 63; cf. Pykett, *Sensation Novel,* 63). Indeed, the servant Joyce becomes a "proud mother substitute […]" (Simpson, 597) to Isabel's temporarily abandoned children, a quality which Martha Mears' description of a good nurse seconds (cf. 159). Even Isabella Beeton, who uttered the above-mentioned concerns regarding servants in childcare, admits that a substitute for the biological mother and an artificial mother-child bond is, while always remaining inferior, not always morally unjustified since "though Nature is unquestionably the best nurse, Art makes an admirable foster-mother" (478).

Beeton's Book of Household Management: To illustrate this standard, Mrs Beeton includes a quote from the Bible, picturing the ideal of a wife and mother who "looketh well to the ways of her household; and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her" (Proverbs, xxxi. 25–28, qdt. in Beeton, 7). It is easy to spot the divergence between this ideal and Isabel's position within the Carlyle household, where she is looked down upon by both Cornelia and the servants, Wilson in particular. In addition, Isabel lacks a sense of satisfaction and self-worth, which, in accordance with Isabella Beeton's application of the Bible to middle-class household matters, would be the fruit of a dutifully run household. Consequently, the sentence that "[s]trength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come" (ibid.) is, again, not applicable to Isabel's situation, who is not allowed to 'rejoice' in the future because she did not conform to the ideal. This nonconformity can also be regarded as a reflection of the concept of reward and punishment that is present throughout Wood's novel and emphasises the idea that Isabel is indeed stuck in a vicious circle, or a downward spiral, eventually leading to her disaster.

Isabel's depression during her marriage and motherhood could also be called "melancholy" – a feeling that some authors of advice literature, such as Mears, harshly criticise. Mears mentions that a woman, and especially a mother, who is unable to control her own temper should be called "weakness clothed in terrors" (Mears, 31) because she exhibits a kind of selfishness that puts her own emotions above the care for others and thus neglects inherent feminine and maternal duties. This line of argument coincides to some degree with Cornelia's view, who opines that Isabel's mental instability is due to her emotions and her unwillingness to "make an effort" (Wood, *EL*, 199). Besides Mears, William Cobbett likewise criticises women who suffer from "melancholy" because they are "misery makers" for their whole household, since "[t]hey are always unhappy about something, either past, present, or to come" (128). Cobbett's somewhat patronising attitude towards these supposedly petty grievances that deprive the husband of his undisturbed experience of a domestic paradise is underlined by the author's assumption that having "[b]oth arms full of children" (ibid.) would be a sufficient remedy for the restoration of household harmony, because it distracts the wife from her allegedly imagined complaints, which only "a little real trouble, a little genuine affliction" (ibid.) could cure. That Isabel herself appears to be of a somewhat similar

opinion in supposing that she "shall be better when baby is born" (Wood, *EL*, 170) mirrors how her education was shaped by middle-class ideas and indicates her low self-confidence, immediately supposing that she herself is the cause of the trouble and thus acknowledging Cornelia's superiority as a proactive housekeeper. The fact that the birth of the baby proves to be quite ineffective with regard to solving her troubles, and even leaves her weaker than before, as the servants notice (cf. ibid., 176), indicates that the methods prescribed by Cobbett were only 'glossing over' an inherent problem in nineteenth-century middle-class domesticity and the gradual marginalisation of women (cf. Kucich, 180).

Her separation from her family and loneliness during the seaside visit have an even greater impact on Lady Isabel's development, because it is during this period of being away from her children that she reconnects with Captain Levison, a former admirer and known seducer, and, since neither children nor husband are there to distract her, the meeting rekindles her old attraction to him (cf. Wood, *EL*, 208-209). Isabel associates her home, her husband and her children with affection and with "security" (ibid., 219), and this security is endangered through her removal from her domestic sphere (cf. Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 4). Levison and his decadent mindset and lifestyle are introduced as the primary danger to domesticity, family togetherness and social security, and Lady Isabel is, even if not entirely consciously, aware of this circumstance. First, she fears only for her own tranquillity and is afraid that she would be unable to enjoy domestic togetherness and family life as much as she used to with Levison praying on her mind but still fancies it quite impossible to leave her husband and her children, severing all domestic bonds permanently (cf. ibid., 212). This idea is mirrored by her indignant reaction to Levison's advances and his attempts to belittle her husband as well as Isabel's quiet maternal existence (cf. ibid., 215). He indirectly promises her a life beyond the boundaries of motherhood and wifehood, full of freedom and excitement. The outside world and its entertainments are, also according to William Cobbett, dangerous to family life because they encourage women who treat their home and the society of their husband and children as mere necessities or bystanders in their more exciting social life; such temptations endangering middle-class values of quiet and submissive motherhood are labelled a "curse" (99) in his moralist writings. However, since Isabel is depicted as a very introverted person with close emotional bonds to her offspring – in accordance with the middle-class

Victorian feminine ideal (cf. Kucich, 170) –, Levison's method of seduction proves to be not very effective at first.[329] He later employs a more powerful scheme, when he fuels Isabel's already existing jealousy (cf. Wood, *EL*, 218-252), trying to make her believe that her security within the domestic sphere is only make-believe because of her husband's unfaithfulness. Only this sense of a loss of security and belief in her domestic surroundings causes her to lose the ground beneath her feet and leave her children.

Focussing on her jealousy and her attraction to Francis Levison while disregarding her children's claim on her person would be in the eyes of most authors of advice literature an utterly egotistical and damnable action, because Isabel proves in this way that she considers her own wishes and concerns to be more important than her children's moral and physical welfare, arguably disclosing underlying "narcissistic" (112) motivations, which remove her further from the maternal ideal. Apart from this issue, the depiction of Lady Isabel's exaggerated emotionality also shows how difficult it was to distinguish between ideal and transgressive behaviour, especially in the case of maternal duties and emotions, and how normative performances of motherhood could, paradoxically, trigger transgression.

7.1.2 Maternal empowerment through suffering: Punishment, retribution, and redemption of the 'fallen' Isabel

Isabel's depiction as a highly "sensitive" (Wood, *EL*, 13) figure never changes throughout the entire novel. Isabel's fall, as the omniscient narrating voice confirms explicitly, has neither affected her "refined manners" (ibid., 166) nor her moral awareness. The reader is told that she possesses "an innate, lively consciousness of right and wrong" (ibid.), and this awareness, which is alive even during the time of her transgression, contributes to the sense of punishment that is tied to her development and makes her fall and subsequent strife for retribution all the more tragic, since "a nature such as hers, is one of the last that may be expected to err" (ibid.).[330] Such comments by the overt heterodiegetic narrator inform the readership

[329] Kucich calls Lady Isabel "a flower of traditional middle-class morality somewhat miscast in the earl's household" (170) due to her upbringing according to strict middle-class principles of domesticity, morality and modesty (cf. ibid.; cf. Wood, *EL*, 16).

[330] Isabel's acute moral awareness can also be regarded as a cause for her transgression, as Kucich has pointed out, because her middle-class norms make her unfit for competition in a household that appears to have moved on from these values, or at least interprets them more loosely: "[S]he [Isabel]

that Isabel herself never has any doubts about the gravity of her situation or the impact it has on herself, her children, her environment or her image, and this contributes to the gravity of her punishment. However, as a contemporary review from *The Examiner* assesses, "[t]he crime brings its own bitter punishment" ("*East Lynne*. By Mr Henry Wood, Author of 'Danesbury House.' In Three Volumes. Bentley." 1861, 728). The narrating voice aids Isabel's power of expression through suffering while at the same time reaffirming the righteousness of the domestic ideal and establishes the character of the novel as a "'domestic melodrama,'" (ibid., 23): "Poor thing! poor Lady Isabel! She had sacrificed husband, children, reputation, home, all that makes life of value to woman; she had forfeited her duty to God, […] for the poor miserable sake of flying with Francis Levison" (Wood, *EL*, 283).[331]

Isabel's inherently undomestic lifestyle is presented as inevitably causing suffering, as the narrator makes clear that

> the instant the step was irrevocable, the instant she had left the barrier behind, *repentance* set in. Even in the first days of her departure, in the fleeting moments of abandonment, when it may be supposed that she might momentarily forget conscience, it was sharply wounding her with its adder stings: and she knew that her whole future existence, whether spent with that

reads the fact of her husband's lie about meeting with Barbara as a sure sign of his faithlessness, according to a standard of strict moral consistency […]. While Isabel may initially represent an implicit caution to the social-climbing of Carlyle, then, she ends as a moral alien in an altered middle-class world to which her naive standards of honesty are no longer appropriate" (171 & cf. Schaffer, 238). Moreover, as Kucich asserts, Carlyle's knowledge and deliberate use of naivete and gaps in knowledge form part of his power since "Isabel's infantilism, and to some extent Barbara Hare's, grow out of Carlyle's consistent refusal to confide in his wives. Carlyle's keeping news of William's fatal illness as well as news of Justice Hare's infirmity from reaching Barbara may only seem gallantly patronizing. But his habitual refusal to confide in Isabel leads directly to her ruin" (180).

[331] Some contemporary critics criticised the genre of sensation fiction more harshly, especially where the depiction of domesticity, the breaking of domestic bonds and family morality were concerned, regarding it not just as a mirror of gradual social "degeneration" but also as "an agent of contamination" (Maunder, 60) and as possibly dangerous for "the broader morality of the nation as a whole" (ibid., 59). Pykett explains that the family was the chief setting of sensation novels as well as the "cornerstone of Victorian society, perhaps even civilization itself" (Sensation Novel, 10), and this uncanny combination shocked and revolted readers. Fantina and Hansson add that in taking up and "subvert[ing]" (xiv) such elementary structures of Victorian society as family and gender role allocation, sensation fiction "almost gleefully hammer[s] at the Victorian façade of the harmonious home" (xv). Famous authors of sensation fiction like Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Charles Reade experienced this criticism; in fact, the label 'sensation author', given to them by critics, was meant to have an insulting ring to it. This "derogatory epithet" (Fantina, 1) was also intended to label their literature as 'not quite respectable' since it discussed issues that were not respectable either (cf. ibid.). The works of Ellen Wood and Sheridan Le Fanu caused a similar reaction because the themes included in their fictional texts were "recognized […] as subversive" (ibid., 3). However, despite their difficulties in the past, sensational novels have gained new popularity in a popular as well as an academic context (cf. ibid.).

> man or without him, would be one dark course of gnawing *retribution* (Wood, *EL*, 283, emphasis added).

The step is presented as so fatal that "Isabel, […] can never recover the life she has abandoned" (Cvetkovitch, 102), even though she longs to return to what is, in her opinion, the 'safe haven' of domesticity and regain financial and emotional security as well as her lost social position as "a proud mother, an honoured wife" (Wood, *EL*, 300). This separation leads to the "psychological torture she endures once she returns to East Lynne" (Steere, 56).

The short time Isabel spends with her illegitimate child, the son of Francis Levison, also functions as part of her punishment and emphasises the genre-typical features of the novel. Since she has long since lost her illusions about Levison, it is not love but her perception of a mother's duty that makes her feel bound to a man whom she knows to be the origin of her disgrace (cf. Wood, *EL*, 287).[332] Isabel indeed casts aside her own dignity by actively demanding a marriage for the sake of her son, and maybe even for her own sake, because her dignity is tied to her child's: "'*[C]hance* the legitimacy of the child? […] More terrible to me than all the rest would it be, if –'[…] Have you no pity for your child?'" (Wood, *EL*, 287, original emphasis). In this moment she is evidently not yet prepared to accept her loss of dignity in its entirety, since she uses the words "to me" besides her focus on her child. This indicates that she is aware of the social circumstance mentioned by Cobbett, and, even though she is not yet willing to give up her dignity entirely (also shown by her later rejection of his monetary support), she is so desperate that she is willing to compromise her sense of feminine delicacy to such an extent that she feels the need to ask for a marriage herself. This uncertain state of her dignity once again denotes to what extent women, especially women in Isabel's social position, were dependent on public opinion, which, in turn, largely depended on the men in their lives. They were not only the caretakers of their livelihood but the judges of their reputation and their dignity. Once more it is William Cobbett's text which illustrates the generally accepted principle that women did not belong to themselves:

[332] In Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853), for example, the topic of illegitimate motherhood as a disruption of the ideal is also addressed: The eponymous heroine, on the one hand, adheres to the Victorian ideal of motherhood, while on the other hand subverting the norms by the illegitimacy of her child (cf. Wilson, 94 & 108).

> Their character is not solely theirs, but belongs, in part, to their family and kindred. They may, in the case contemplated, be objects of compassion with the world; but what contrition, what repentance, what remorse, what that even the tenderest benevolence can suggest, is to heal the wounded hearts of humbled, disgraced, but still affectionate, parents, brethren and sisters? (ibid., 136)

Her awareness of her child's disgrace, of the fact that "'[h]e will be a by-word amidst men throughout his life'" (Wood, *EL*, 287) causes her anguish besides feelings of personal shame.

The realisation that in choosing Levison over her ex-husband she has also chosen an inadequate person to be her child's father makes her despise herself since she 'failed' to secure her son's future.[333] This feeling is comparable to Helen Huntingdon's experience of guilt at the thought that she is the reason why her son has an inadequate father. Similarly to Huntingdon, Captain Levison's condescending and disdainful attitude towards his own child casts a bad light on his paternal disposition. He is unwilling to acknowledge *any* emotional connection with his own offspring. Moreover, for the nineteenth-century reader, the scene also clearly indicates that there is virtually no hope for the re-domestication of this broken family. William Cobbett, for instance, reasons that domestic and "conjugal happiness" is impossible if someone is unable to establish an emotional bond to their children "from their very birth" (181). Resignation and melancholic acceptance are the best definition of Isabel's relationship to her illegitimate child (quite in contrast to her later activeness in her dealings with her other children) and stand in opposition to the ideal of maternal bliss. Cobbett mentions that children brought up wrongly or raised in the wrong circumstances (as is the case here) cause more grief than joy, not always because of their own faults, but also because of their parents':

> to make them blessings, you must act your part well; for they may, by your neglect, your ill-treatment, your evil example, be made to be the *contrary of blessings*; instead of pleasure, they may bring you pain; instead of making your heart glad, the sight of them may make it sorrowful; instead of being the staff of your old age, they may bring your gray [sic] hairs in grief to the grave (226, original emphasis).

[333] This feeling culminates when she finds out that Francis Levison is not just an adulterer and self-absorbed pleasure-seeker, but indeed a murderer, and this moment is explicitly termed the most crucial moment of "retribution" (ibid., 497).

The child certainly brings Isabel "pain" because he functions as a constant "sorrowful" (ibid.) reminder of her own faults as well as signifier of her bleak future, in which she is unable to restore the domestic ideal or live a life with any resemblance to normative domesticity.

The bourgeoise idea of an ideal environment for children did not only encompass a material dwelling place but also included the notion of a spiritual refuge, which was "crucial to the notion of 'home' in Evangelical writing" (cf. Hillel, 15). According to middle-class moralistic advice literature, as, for example, William Cobbett's, poorer people in their modesty and simplicity often reflected this ideal best (cf. Cobbett, 99). Through their decisions, the parent figures, Isabel and Levison, have deprived their child of a 'respectable' home, which was regarded as a prerequisite for physical health and moral growth. As Maunder confirms, "[a] regime of healthy living and moral sobriety was essential if they [the ideal mothers] were to produce sound offspring and thereby transmit their personal reputation, property, legitimacy and life to the next generation" (66). Isabel's last child misses out on all that and the mother, more than Francis Levison, is blamed for the non-conformity of her yet entirely helpless son. Isabel's illegitimate child is deprived of the presence of his father, and her restless lifestyle after her separation from Levison conveys the impression of a very anti-bourgeoise way of life. While food and clothing are provided through Mount Severn's money, the 'home' is sadly missing, a fact of which Isabel is acutely aware. This does not only underline the surreal impression of the short life of Francis Levison the younger, but also represents her punishment. The reaction of Lord Mount Severn, her closest relative, to Isabel's child is exemplary for society's perception of a 'fallen' woman; while the reality of her 'fall' had been clear before, the child makes the situation worse, being a visible reminder of the illicit relationship. Mount Severn reveals his shock at the news of the presence of the child when he exclaims, "'The baby!' he uttered in a tone of astonishment and grief, painful to her to hear. 'Isabel! Is there a child?'" (Wood, *EL*, 308) His reaction indicates that the infant symbolically renders the fall permanent and, consequently, lowers his esteem for the mother even more, which confirms William Cobbett's assessment that "[i]t is, amidst those scenes of prostitution and bastardy, impossible for men in general to respect the female sex to the degree that they formerly did" (240). Cobbett's text supports the general idea that mothers of illegitimate children were thought to have utterly lost their

reputation as well as their dignity. Cobbett declares that "the swarms of illegitimate children have a natural and inevitable tendency to lessen that respect, and that kind and indulgent feeling, which is due from all men to virtuous women" (240).

Paradoxically, her motherhood, which lowers Mount Severn's respect for her, is also her only remaining claim to self-respect (cf. Wood, *EL*, 433) as well as the cause of punishment and redemption. The child is not depicted entirely negatively in the plot; he does not only serve as an instrument of chastisement, but he is presented as one of the few sources of dignity that Lady Isabel can still claim, if only because he is physical proof of her position as mother. Her maternal function is displayed as an elevating role which allows her to practise the idealised maternal feelings of "[b]ravery" and "disinterestedness [in self-realisation]" (ibid., 179), which Cobbett also mentions in his text. Isabel's maternity is presented as her primary reason for gathering the courage to renounce Levison as lover and even plan to find employment to earn a living for her son (cf. Wood, *EL*, 292-294). Her plan might be unrealistic, but her rejection of Levison's support is at least an active decision and independent action, contrary to her previous passive existence as wife and lover. Accepting monetary support from the father of her child would have hurt her moral dignity since his money would, despite the separation, indicate her status as his mistress, and thus further brand her as a fallen woman, forcing her to accept her lowly status without reforming herself (cf. Twinn, 69). Her reaction to his offer of financial assistance mirrors this: "'*Whom* do you take me for? – *what* do you take me for? […] I am still Lord Mount Severn's daughter'" (ibid., 295, original emphasis). She attempts to recall her former dignity in reclaiming her original identity (cf. Wood, *EL*, 295-296; cf. Kim, 194).

Isabel's strong awareness of her maternal duties becomes one of the most prominent instruments of atonement, causing her to suffer to a very great extent for her mistakes through nostalgic longing for an irretrievable and romanticised past. The illegitimate child, who "is abruptly killed off as part of the standard fictional package of 'the wages of sin'" (Jay, xxx), functions as more than just one 'item' that furthers his mother's punishment and redemption. His death initiates his mother's further development and offers her the opportunity to start her way of the "cross" (Wood, *EL*, 433). His almost spiritual function is emphasised through the way the nurse describes the dead child as "'a little angel, […] beholding the face of its Father in Heaven'" (ibid., 321). This description is contrasted with the way Isabel

sees her illegitimate son, calling him her "'ill-starred child'" (ibid.). While Isabel's description again reminds of Cobbett's depiction of some children as harbingers of "grief to the grave" (226) due to their parents' fault, the nurse's description connects to the Victorian perception of children as innocent victims of adult depravity whose spiritual purity connects them much more easily with divinity than the corrupted adult, whose bad influence is a danger to their innocence (cf. Gavin, "The Child", 9). This focus on original 'untaintedness' equals Cobbett's perception of children as "creatures that are *helpless*, and that must be *innocent*" (180, emphasis added), thus triggering the protective instinct of the adult. In their imagery both expressions used to describe young Francis appear to have a common basis and present a similar idea of childhood. However, the fact that Isabel chooses to focus on the more negative aspects of this picture, the 'ill-fortune', connected to her son, exhibits both her awareness of her guilt in recognising her child's fate and stresses her need to mitigate this guilt by appointing the worst blame to fate itself ("ill-starred") and not to herself. Since the child's death provides her with an opportunity to change her identity and become a maternal figure for her other children once more, Isabel herself, through her actions, arguably turns the child into a means of 'rebirth', a fresh start, for herself. Isabel's attitude to her child's premature death is presented as a form of motherly love. However, because of the weight of her transgression in the eyes of society, Isabel is not spared, unlike her son, and only dies after punishment. The forgiveness that she asks for from her husband and her children when she only fears for her death after the accident is not granted to her yet (cf. ibid., 322).

Before her retribution takes place, her punishment becomes even more tangible to the reader, encompassing the destruction of her mental health as well as, after her assumption of a new identity following the accident, her physical health, thus rendering her repentance explicit and visible to the beholder: Her loss of reputation is mirrored symbolically in her appearance, the decay of her beauty and her slight sensory handicap from the train accident. Her handicap serves as additional punishment as well as signifier of her fall and her 'burden', a visible reminder of suffering (cf. ibid., 388-389; cf. Kim, 198).[334]

[334] Moreover, her physical impairment mirrors her reduced capacity – brought about by social convention – to be her full self, to claim her familiar bonds, to receive as well as give affection,

With the intent of affirming domestic structures, "nineteenth-century culture invented the suffering woman" (Cvetkovich, 98) as an ideal but also as a form of punishment for transgressive actions. This idea is in line with John Gregory's assumptions in his conduct book *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*. The author draws upon the concept of female sacrifice to explain that suffering is a congenital part of women's existence, even without sin and the ensuing 'necessity' of punishment (cf. 92). A religiously conscious mindset, according to Gregory, presents one possibility to alleviate this 'natural' suffering and make women physically and spiritually able "to act in them [painful situations] with spirit and propriety" (10). Isabel, too, has a religious mind, which causes her to put all her hope in redemption through suffering. Her choice to suffer in exchange for the chance to renew the bond with her children and re-establish a form of togetherness forces her to exercise extreme endurance, in which she is supported by her religious faith and her thoughts of a reunification in the afterlife (cf. Wood, *EL*, 577). With her mindset, Isabel would usually mirror Hannah More's ideal of a British lady, who is supposed to "cherish every tendency to serious religion" (9) and "preserve […] the ark of the Lord" (54). In addition, Isabel appears to reflect Cobbett's conviction that parents should be willing to attend to their children "at whatever sacrifice of ease or property" (255) when she risks the possibility of renewed shame and social defamation for a chance to reunite with her offspring, entering the Carlyle home as a governess under an assumed name. Isabel's voluntary return to East Lynne to be with her children, which she knows will come at the price of personal pain, evidently is a breach of social standards (cf. Kim, 200).[335] Accepting this,

which makes her suffering even more tangible to the reader. Maunder also promotes the idea that Isabel's loss of beauty, her "disfigured body", serves as a mirror, a "sight of her punishment", a "marker of her wrongdoing" (65) as well as a reminder of her generally weak and degenerate constitution.

[335] Besides excessive maternal emotions, her emotionality also encompasses the more negatively connotated sensations of "jealousy, neediness, and attraction to Levison", which make her portrayal ultimately an "ambiguous representation of womanly feeling" (MacDonald, 48) and hint at a potential threat to the Victorian moral system. As much as her expressions of excessive emotions can be read as an indication of Isabel's motherly attachment, they are also signifiers of the instability of the Victorian middle-class household, since "the conduct of Isabel as Madame Vine cannot be brought into alignment with the roles and rights at Archibald's middle-class home" (Kim, 200). Isabel's lack of "professional self-discipline" in association with her children denies her subservient function in this situation and "[h]er domestic role is voluntarily switched from governess back to the mother of her children" (ibid.). In the tradition of disguise narratives, especially in a sensational context, "[t]aking on the appearance of a servant can efface a heroine's identity, and the invisibility expected of servants within a household offers further anonymity for criminal or illicit acts" (Steere, 53).

Isabel takes Cobbett's admonitions one step further by sacrificing not only "ease" and her social status, but ultimately her own health and even her life. Cobbett praises such extreme maternal suffering, considering it "one of the *most admirable of the mother's traits*" if she endures personal pain (whether physical or emotional) during childcare, exhibiting the utmost "courage to do this for the sake of her child" (185, emphasis added). The author proclaims that maternal suffering, in whatever form, enhances motherhood, and even intrinsically belongs to this state. Suffering, even if it is done to atone, thus confirms Isabel's maternity. In the description of how she suffers while being apart from her children, Isabel's emotional pain is described as exceeding the physical discomforts of her decaying health and her handicap by far. Like the woman in Cobbett's anecdote who experiences emotional pain in the performance of her maternal duties, Isabel experiences a proverbial "dagger to her heart" (185), which underlines not only her biological but also her spiritual motherhood – i.e. the emotional connection to her children. The gap between Isabel's inherently maternal nature and her transgressive action is presented as being so wide that it causes the protagonist incessant mental pain, making her unable to regain "calm or peace" (Wood, *EL*, 283).

On the one hand, "[t]hat very suffering […] is an essential element of readers' engagement with the novel and its heroine" (Bauer-Gatsos, npag.), on the other hand, her voluntary suffering upon returning to her former home for the sake of her offspring is presented as her first independent action, and thus combined with a certain sense of empowerment. The idea that Isabel's decision is, for once, taken without consulting anyone, without being manipulated and coerced by others, is highlighted by Steere, who argues that Isabel

> actively takes control of her own life and becomes an autonomous woman, breaking out of the successive roles of obedient daughter, passive wife, and submissive lover that she has heretofore been expected to play. By playing the role of a servant, Isabel literalizes her previous performances of female subservience and uses it as an unexpected source to attain power over herself, her relationships, and her choice of role within her own home (59).

Her motherly power as well as her inner integrity and the active desire for punishment make her in some ways stronger than she had been before, as respectable wife and mother, a position in which she also had to "endorse […] a life defined as representation and a motherhood that consists of knowing how to play

the part" (Jaffe, 110).[336] William Cobbett, too, acknowledges the forced passivity, the lack of legal and official agency that respectable bourgeoise mothers had in their home, calling the act of becoming a wife and mother

> a surrender, an absolute surrender, of her liberty, for the joint lives of the parties; she gives the husband the absolute right of causing her to live in what place, and in what manner and what society, he pleases; she gives him the power to take from her, and to use, for his own purposes, all her goods, unless reserved by some legal instrument; and, above all, she surrenders to him her person. (178, original emphasis)

It is only when this legal bond is taken from her that Isabel makes decisions on her own. With this newly gained "agency" Isabel "ceases to be the passive object of discussion that she is in the first part, and becomes a narrative focalizer" (Jay, xxi). As disguised mother, she is able to "endure" the maternal "pains" and finally take on the "large share of all the anxious parental cares that fall to their [the wives'] lot" (Cobbett, 178).

It is interesting that this agency, provoked by maternal feeling and a desire for redemption, has to be combined with physical and psychological pain in order to achieve its purpose. Rosenman describes masochism in this context "as an acting-out of suffering to achieve some socially-censured end" (23). In accordance with Gregory's considerations, her suffering is a "consolation" (11), a promise of 'something better', a way for women to escape the harshness of reality. Fittingly, Isabel's punishment and the experience of pain, as some scholars have argued, bring about their own gratification. Fitzpatrick also regards the "inward […] and outward […]" punishment as originating in Isabel's "masochistic impulses" ("Separate Spheres", 4; cf. Amstrong, "Desire", 745), which, underlining her conformist attitude towards normative motherhood and wifehood, drive her to seek compensation for those she hurt (her children) and thus feels better herself (cf. Simpson, 594 & cf. Cvetkovitch, 100). While this might be objectionable in the light of the prevailing contemporary public opinion, Rosenman comments that,

[336] Simpson argues that Isabel is actually more active than has often been supposed, especially prior to her marriage to Carlyle, being after all "the first of the female rulers of East Lynne, and it is only later, upon her marriage, that she resigns herself to a different role in the household" (586). However, this statement is questionable because Isabel, prior to her relationship with Carlyle, was always subject to male and even female authority in the guise of her father, her aunt and Lord Mount Severn and his wife (cf. Wood, *EL*, 12, 13, 17, 112), which leaves only limited room for action, even if she had tried to rebel against it. As Cvetkovitch observes, Isabel's constant economic dependency is also the cause for her loveless, ill-fated marriage to Carlyle and her later powerlessness in the face of Cornelia's domestic management (cf. 101).

paradoxically, it is Isabel's femininity which vindicates her to a certain extent: "Because of their social role as guardians of emotion, women are allowed to feel, and because of their prescribed weakness, they seem bound to suffer" (25). Even though excessive emotions were criticised in the context of rational middle-class motherhood (see chapter 8.1.1), Isabel's intense maternal feelings mitigate the judgement on her social transgression in this case, because they stress her womanhood (cf. Rosenman, 25).[337] Isabel's comparative power of expression is still unable to extend beyond the domestic context. Women are presented in *East Lynne* as domestic beings who cannot have a 'true home' without husband and children, and without a home, are deprived of their reputation; they have, in fact, nothing left to live for. The 'natural' domestic nature of women is clearly affirmed in William Cobbett's writing, in which he professes his admiration for the domestic sacrifices that a woman makes as a matter of course during her life:

> when, were we [men] left to one another, we should perish from neglect; when we consider their [women's] devotion to their children, how evidently they love them better, in numerous instances, than their own lives; when we consider these things, how can a just man think any thing a trifle that affects their happiness? (178)

In the knowledge that she failed to perform these domestic duties as expected in the past, due to her upbringing, her health, and Cornelia's obstruction, yearns to make up for this omission, only to find that the right to earn the praise Cobbett describes has passed on to her rival.

Again and again, her 'natural' maternal instincts are also emphasised by the promptness with which Lady Isabel is able to re-establish the lost connection with her children (cf. Cvetkovitch, 114). The reader is told that due to her incessant efforts, which are at odds with her general passivity in the first, 'legitimate' part of her maternity, as well as her "impulse[s] of unrestrainable tenderness" (Wood, *EL*, 414) she manages to "greatly endear […] herself to them", which is why the narrator mentions that "they loved her: perhaps nature was asserting her own hidden claims" (ibid., 438). Officially, of course, this cannot be called a mother-child bond since 'Madame Vine' is only the governess in the children's eyes; however, the statement

[337] Rosenman explains that this utilisation of femininity and feminine weakness and emotion was not just restricted to the realm of fiction. In fact, many "breach of promise suits, which sometimes involved extra-marital sex, displaying female suffering amounted to an established legal strategy, over-determined by the need to redefine a sexually-active woman as an innocent victim. Indeed, a woman's tears could wash away direct evidence of erotic adventurousness" (25).

quoted above suggests that it *is* nevertheless a mother-child bond because the children are instinctively aware that the person they are bonding with is more than a teacher and has a special connection to them. According to convention, nature is feminised in this passage and thus depicted as representation of 'ultimate motherhood', a natural form of maternity that is oblivious to social restrictions and transgressions and only recognises 'natural' feeling.[338] According to Martha Mears, following 'nature', especially in maternal childcare, is usually the best policy, because it sharpens the instincts which adults are prone to lose through rationalisation and adherence to scientific progress (cf. 1). Mears' advice "FOLLOW NATURE [sic] – trace her footsteps – listen to her voice" (ibid.) is therefore an acknowledgement of such 'natural motherhood' – a concept that is clearly visible in Isabel. Her nature is always depicted as imprinted with maternal emotionality, and her motherhood is explicitly described as 'natural', and as the best excuse for the transgressive act of casting conventions aside and entering her ex-husband's house in disguise. Natural maternal feeling is the only thing that could redeem this act. The force of 'natural' motherhood is explicitly depicted in more than one instance after Isabel's return as Madame Vine, for example in her addressing William as "My child" (439) and keeping her son Archie "clasped to her in an impassioned manner that few, save a mother, can clasp a child" (472). These outbursts of feeling are explained to others through the pretended loss of Madame Vine's children (cf. ibid., 487), which makes her motherly energy as well as the pain she experiences appear at least somewhat plausible in front of her surroundings.

However, such explanations are evidently deemed necessary since her comportment is recognised as far from being normal, or 'natural', in a random stranger, even if she is female: After her first outburst, the maid Wilson as well as her own son "stare" at her as if she "had gone suddenly mad" (ibid., 415). This indicates that Isabel's openly displayed motherly emotions are recognised as inappropriate in a governess, who, though she is supposed to fulfil a maternal function (as maternal educator), should be unable to "follow nature" just as a real mother could do, according to Mears' explanation. In addition, a lack of moderation of any kind, including emotional exuberance, was already criticised during the

[338] As can be seen in Isabella Beeton's statement concerning the nursing qualities of nature which always remain inferior to artificial means (cf. Beeton, 478), it was common to regard nature as a maternal force.

second half of the eighteenth century by middle-class authors of advice texts such as John Gregory (cf. ibid. 32-34), who considers it to be an indication of insufficient self-control, an inability to restrain unwanted desires, which would not only point towards a lack of discipline in childcare, but also towards a lack of moral stamina.[339] Gregory also connects a lack of self-control generally with selfishness (cf. 48; cf. Cvetkovitch,112), because, even though maternity was inherently connotated as feminine, the uncontrolled exhibition of passions was condemned as unfeminine (cf. Gilroy, 24).

The tremendousness of her nostalgic maternal longings as governess in East Lynne places Isabel to some extent in the tradition of Romanticism: While "emotional yearnings for […] children" (Wynne, 62) are generally presented as natural for every woman, "transcending class boundaries" (Cvetkovitch, 114), they are at the same time depicted as a higher, almost spiritual force, which, due to her 'special situation', works almost supernaturally strong in Isabel:

> Let a mother, be she a duchess, or be she an apple-woman at a standing, be separated for a while from her little children: let *her* answer how she yearns for them. She may be away on a tour of pleasure: for a few weeks, the longing to see their faces again […] is kept under; and there may be frequent messages, 'The children's dear love to mamma:' but as the weeks lengthen out, the desire to see them again becomes almost irrepressible. What must it have been for Lady Isabel, *who had endured this longing for years*? (Wood, *EL*, 389-390, last emphasis added)

Her nostalgic longing for past happiness can be likened to the romantic "sense of irredeemable loss, fixed on the figure of the small child" (Shuttleworth, 7). This sense of irredeemability, connected to the concept of nostalgia, is also present in Cobbett's writings when he describes the fallen mother's transgression and her consequent "banish[ment] […] from society" (203) as impossible to atone for, severing her from every emotional "claim" to her children, because "[i]t is she who has broken the ties of nature" (ibid., 202). Reminiscences and memory are, according to this notion, all that is left of the mother-child bond, and this explains Isabel's constant nostalgic reminiscing about the past during her stay at East Lynne: "*She* had once sat in that very chair, with a baby as fair upon her knee: but, all that was past and gone. She leaned her hot head upon her hand, and a rebellious sigh of envy went forth from her aching heart" (Wood, *EL*, 409, original emphasis). As this

[339] Cf. Dahmer, 212.

scene exemplifies, her nostalgia is constantly linked to her maternity and her position as mother within the domestic realm.[340]

The legal situation in Victorian England underlined social customs and cast Isabel's image as transgressor in an even more 'criminal' light. Moral inadequacy bars the mother from gaining the right of custody or even visitation according to the Infant Custody Bill of 1839 (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 9) because of the danger for the child's moral corruption through the mother's bad example. During the Lords' Sitting concerning the Custody of Infants Act on July 18th, 1839, Lord Wynford opposed the modification of the hitherto strictly female-exclusive custody law because

> when unhappy differences separated the father and mother, to give the custody of the child to the father, and to allow access to it by the mother, was to injure the child for it was natural to expect that the mother would not instil into the child any respect for the husband whom she might hate or despise. The effects of such a system would be most mischievous to the child, and would prevent its being properly brought up. If the husband was a bad man, the access to the children might not do harm, but where the *fault lay with the wife*, or where she was *of a bad disposition*, she could *seriously injure its future prospects* (§492, emphasis added).[341]

The perception of the child's complete innocence was tied to the idea that this innocence had to be protected if it was to remain uncorrupted, and this could only be achieved through complete separation from 'impure' adult influence, even that of the mother (cf. Hillel, 150). Because of her loss of innocence, Isabel's authority is deemed corruptive, and she, as a fallen woman, is regarded as possible danger for her own children. William Cobbett agrees with the contemporary jurisdiction in harshly condemning particularly female adulterous behaviour, which, especially in the case of mothers, has a fatal impact on society because her immorality endangers her children's future and her "infidelity […] fixes the brand of shame on the cheeks of their parents, their children, and on those of all who ever called them friend"

[340] Isabel's emotions connected to the reminiscences of her holding a baby are linked to what Wagner calls "a sensational incursion into the domestic" ("Speculations", 130). Wilkie Collins, one of the most well-known authors of Victorian sensational fiction, incorporated this principle in the majority of his works and thus negotiated and problematised the idealised representation of family and parents in popular culture as well as advice manuals. Wagner clarifies: "Collins not only features infants in narratives that play with the baby's expected sentimentalization; he also makes the mother-child bond an important theme. In challenging its standard representation, he explores this relationship in the context of […] controversial issues […]" (ibid.).

[341] Original text taken from: HL Deb 18 July 1839 vol 49 cc485-94. CUSTODY OF INFANTS. (Hansard, 18 July 1839) (parliament.uk). Last Accessed 17th October 2024.

(200). Since social norms remain fixed, Isabel "'cannot expiate the shame [she] […] ha[s] entailed upon you [her husband], and upon the children'" (Wood, *EL*, 615). Due to her supposedly higher moral standard, the mother's bad influence was regarded to be much more contaminating for the children than the father's potentially immoral disposition (cf. Holmes, 41). The consequent moral and social dilemma that children were facing with regard to their filial duties of love and respect for their parents and the social requirement of shunning the sinful, 'fallen woman' is mirrored in Lady Isabel's children as well. They want to love their mother but are frequently told not to think about her or even utter her name, which causes them some distress, as becomes apparent especially in William's need for assurance of meeting his mother again in the afterlife (cf. Wood, *EL*, 577). The children, in particular Lucy, exhibit a slightly confused behaviour when they talk about their mother; the girl insists on shifting the blame away from her mother by firmly choosing to believe she was kidnapped and thus left involuntarily (cf. ibid, 417). In Cobbett's reasoning, this confusion can be explained through the fact that Isabel has "broken the ties of nature" (202) and the unconscious infantile rejection of the demand that the children should forget the mother who destroyed the image of "iconic maternity" (Holmes & Nelson, 1). Isabel's domestic ties might be broken, but the 'natural' connection to her children is not and can, according to the text, never be entirely ruptured, because it is dependent "on the biological link to her children" (Cvetkovitch, 114). In consequence, Isabel longs to fulfil her maternal function as moral guide and role model even though she has, in Lord Wynford's words, "a bad disposition"; the impossibility of her being restored to her official position as mother turns this 'natural' bond into a bond of punishment for her (cf. ibid., 105) – as Cvetkovitch observes, "[a]bandonment becomes a violation of natural law" (114).

Besides the fear of moral contamination through her own bad example, Isabel dreads the unhealthy influence of strangers on her children, since she has forfeited her own right to control and shape her offspring's conscience. During her exile, Isabel fears for her children's physical and spiritual welfare, because she, in her function as role model and educator, is not there to guide them. In her advice text from 1801, Hannah More, for example, proclaims an idea that matches Isabel's anxiety, stating that mothers are charged with the enormous burden of the responsibility to shape the morals of the next generation (cf. 52). The reader,

supposedly a mother, is asked to face this heavy duty as a model figure directly and is confronted with the impact and the scope of consequences that her failure entails. In her portrayal of the maternal model figure, More particularly emphasises the mother's spiritual influence, corresponding to her universal Christian duty to spread the faith and "quench the fiery darts of the wicked" (ibid., 53) through her own presence. William Cobbett as well judges the mother to be by far the best educator, even if she herself has intellectual deficits, because, especially among the middle class, no extravagant teaching is needed and external educators do more harm than good: according to Cobbett, abandoning her educational duties also implies that she has forsaken the title 'mother' with all its privileges: "[I]s she to do all this, and still put forward pretensions to the authority and the affection due to a *mother*!" (309, original emphasis). Even though Isabel is aware that she has lost the right to the "authority and affection due to a mother" (ibid.), she still tries to mitigate the impact her decision to leave East Lynne had for her children and make up for any educational deficits, especially in their morality. Even though she would be deemed unfit for this task, the novel does not present her in this way, showing that it was not primarily selfish "love of ease or of pleasure" (ibid.) which kept her from performing her duty. The fact that her transgression would be classified as even worse according to the morality of the time is depicted as a tragedy because the cause was not "a bad disposition" but rather poor judgement, lack of guidance and marital hope.

Consequently, her acknowledgement of her maternal duty as educator is portrayed as one of her redeeming features. Isabel, consequently, wonders if her children "[w]ould […] be trained to goodness, to morality, to religion? Careless as she herself had once been upon these points, she had learned better now. Would Isabel [Lucy] grow up to indifference, to – perhaps do as she had done? Lady Isabel flung her hands before her eyes in anguish" (Wood, *EL*, 390). As is indicated by Barbara Carlyle's later merciless remark to Madam Vine, Isabel's transgression will always have an impact on her children's life (cf. Wood, *EL*, 406), since "the mother is responsible for every aspect of the child's physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing" (Åström, 114). According to many midwives' manuals, the moral and religious background of persons concerned with children's care should be impeccable (cf. Hobby, "Gender, Science", 148) because of their function as mother-replacement. Particularly girls were considered to be in dire need of

maternal guidance, because they were perceived as more susceptible to their mother's 'typically female' weaknesses, such as a lack of self-control and uncontrolled 'passions'. It is thus no surprise that Lucy is singled out by Isabel in her musings. In the conduct book *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, John Gregory also explains his opinion that religious and moral instruction is necessary for girls in particular because "certain differences in their natural character and education render some vices in your [the female] sex particularly odious" (9). The reason for this would be women's superior claim to "modesty" (ibid.) and the need of its preservation. This widespread assumption is a further reason why Isabel is especially concerned about Lucy's religious upbringing, while Archie and William are not directly mentioned: Religious and moral principles were commonly considered more important for women because their fall from grace was deemed more impactful for the domestic setting (cf. Cobbett, 200), as Isabel knows very well. She, therefore, wishes to keep Lucy from suffering the same fate she did.

Sine Isabel's position as "abandoning and abandoned mother" (Cvetkovitch, 105) limits her possibilities to protect her children, and her position as governess only inadequately enables her to maintain a semblance of the mother-child bond, she attempts to compensate for her inability to become a socially adequate mother figure by providing gifts for her offspring (cf. Wood, *EL*, 490). However, in her endeavour to recompense her children, she paradoxically manages to become even more socially transgressive. First of all, her gift giving is an act that clearly overreaches her competences as a governess and thus "threatens to erode the domestic governing power of Barbara, the foster mother, to exercise her hard-won economic autonomy" (Kim, 200). Moreover, Isabel's attempt to compensate materially for the emotional and spiritual loss which her children had to endure while growing up without her seems misplaced. It is true that Isabel, as Kucich asserts, "yearns to provide far more emotional nurturance than Barbara's methods allow" (192), however, her lavish gifts lay her open to the accusation of "pampering", which as stated for example in *Cassell's Household Guide* (314), renders her parenting methods objectionable. *Excessive* care was regarded as unnecessary, indeed even as morally and physically harmful, by most authors of advice literature (especially if the children were spoiled with food). According to Martha Mears, such over-indulgence is "equally unnecessary and dangerous" (148), and William Cobbett likewise underlines the fatal consequences of 'pampering',

exclaiming, “how vast is the difference between one [child] who has been pampered with sweets and one who has been reared on plain food and simple drink!” (278) Cobbett’s opinion reflects middle-class ideals of productivity and hard work when he comments that especially boys could be harmed by pampering with respect to their future work ethics: “a youth thus pampered is worth nothing as a person to be employed in business” (ibid.). The exact nature of the “toys” (Wood, *EL*, 490) that Isabel provides for her offspring to prove her affection is not mentioned, but it is safe to assume that her exaggerated display of (parental) affection would be called ineffective, even dangerous in the light of advice literature’s moral and practical perspective on children’s education. Freely indulging children is, in Cobbett’s belief, an invitation for the children to become useless or even immoral citizens, “the offspring of parental weakness” (36). Isabel’s attempts at ‘making up’ for lost time and affection by spending a considerable amount of money are presented as inadequate by being exposed to Barbara’s harsh criticism, and thus serve as further proof of Isabel’s diminished authority (cf. ibid.). As such, the critique of “pampering” is further punishment because it forces Isabel to exercise humility in the face of her old rival and forces her again to hide her maternal feelings, thus depriving herself of any emotional compensation for her feelings of guilt.

Not just concerning treats, but also with regards to punishment, Isabel’s preferred treatment of her children appears to differ to some extent from the methods practised in the Carlyle household under Barbara’s practical management. Isabel’s sentimental maternal affection cannot bear to see her children dealt with in a less than gentle way. Wilson, the servant, for instance, gets hold of her second son Archie and punishes him for ‘borrowing’ Sarah’s heath-broom (cf. Wood, *EL*, 415); she admonishes him loudly and shakes him in a rather rough way, which is distressing for Isabel to watch, because she fears her child might be beaten (cf. ibid.). Indeed, circumspection concerning excessive punishment by unscrupulous servants should, in Cobbett’s opinion, be far more widespread for, as he claims, “the danger of being crazed or killed by nurses or servants” (272) is quite real. Isabel’s reaction to Wilson’s attitude regarding the children’s punishment is thus, according to Cobbett’s argumentation, a sign of her intact maternal instinct, which opposes involvement of servants in children’s lives out of fear for their wellbeing. However, Isabel disregards the child’s offence entirely because of her affection for her offspring, her joy at being reunited with them, and because of her own inherent

gentleness of character. Wilson, by contrast, stands for the completely opposite perspective: She only regards the child's offence and has neither patience nor understanding because she is entirely unsentimental, practical and fact-oriented. She feels no personal or sentimental tie to the children and does not attempt to develop feelings for them or understand them.[342] The fact that Wilson is not content with the restrictions that are laid upon her authority regarding the children's punishment indicates that the children's actual treatment should be somewhere in between Isabel's excessive gentleness and Wilson's rough handling. "'Beaten!' echoed Wilson; 'if he got a good beating it would be all the better for him; but it's what he never does get. A little shake, or a tap, is all I must give; and it's not half enough. You wouldn't believe the sturdy imprudence of that boy, madame'" (ibid., 415). While the novel focusses on the redemptive quality of Isabel's maternal emotions, her and Wilson's treatment of the children would be considered equally faulty according to parenting advice. William Cobbett, for example, criticises "[f]ond mothers and fathers" who act "over-lenient" (36) with their offspring. He reasons that they might get away with their leniency while the children are still quite young, but 'soft' treatment would, according to him, in the long run have a negative influence on their character and potentially make them "miserable" (ibid.). When Lucy is "en penitence" (Wood, *EL*, 550) and is confined to the nursery with a reduced food ration, Barbara, who at the moment dresses for a dinner party, considers Isabel's plea to release Lucy from her punishment because the girl had been looking forward to "half an hour in the drawing-room" (ibid., 551) entirely unjustified, arguing "when she [Lucy] commits faults, they must be corrected" (ibid.).[343] She judges the governess to be "too lenient" and accuses her of not wanting to "punish her at all" (ibid.). Again, Isabel is the sentimental, sympathetic but impractical woman. In her eagerness for maternal expression, Isabel becomes a little self-centred, only noticing her own need for compensation and entirely disregarding which effect it has on her children, or how her actions might look to

[342] She is also rather harsh, telling Lucy that their mother ran away because she did not love them (cf. Wood, *EL,* 417). With her attitude, Wilson is completely opposed to the other servant, Joyce, who frequently functions as "mother substitute" (Simpson, 597).

[343] Problems concerning the stepmother's treatment of the daughter from the husband's first marriage are also addressed in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *Wives and Daughters* (1866), in which the conflict is heightened because the stepmother has a daughter from her first marriage herself and is "unwilling to let her daughter be behind Mr Gibson's [her future husband's] in sensibility and affection" (172), even though she tries to treat them equally for appearances' sake (cf. 256).

others.[344] According to William Cobbett, though, Isabel could hardly expect to be heard, since the decision regarding the children's punishment is not something the parental figures are morally justified to delegate. In his text, Cobbett points out that miscommunication between parents and children can happen when servants have too much authority and are entrusted with conveying moral principles: A just parental figure "will hesitate long […] before he prefer [sic] a communication with children intercepted by servants and teachers to that communication which is here direct, and which admits not of any division of affection" (251). Barbara is thus justified, even directly obliged, to supervise Isabel in their dealings with the children of the household to prevent fatal mistakes, according to Cobbett's moral admonitions (cf. 255). Isabel is powerless to regain her maternal ground, and the fact that she lacks the authority to mitigate her harsher judgement is a further source of distress to her, thus contributing to her punishment.

In conjunction with Isabel's limited agency concerning her children as an employee of the family, her loss of official maternal authority, her inability to perform her duties to their full extent, comes the sense of "eras[ure]" (Bauer-Gatsos, npag.) of her own person. This erasure is visualised in the change of her eldest child's name from Isabel to Lucy, causing her 'inheritance' to disappear (cf. Wood, *EL*, 392). Physically as well, her erasure is foreshadowed: As Kim acknowledges, "[h]er collapsing body regresses to a being with no name" (200) and without recognised family. In part, this erasure is due to her own action: Her willing (and partly inevitable) change of appearance and identity is, to a degree, a signifier of her acceptance of her new position within society, in which she no longer functions as a mother and in which she officially has no maternal duties. The position as governess mirrors her former identity in its still caring and maternal but ultimately subordinate function. She has, in the eyes of Victorian society, forsaken her identity as a mother, if not emotionally then at least socially and legally (cf. Cobbett, 334), and thus becomes a person without a proper identity, a reflection of the social

[344] Besides this emotional rashness, which was also one of the reasons for her flight from home, Isabel has kept another fault already known from her time as mistress of East Lynne: Contrary to 'unfeeling' Wilson, she is still the opposite of practical. However, the restrictions laid on Wilson's authority also prove that the Carlyle household is not wilfully mistreating the children but, in accordance with the ideal of domestic harmony, keeping up the appearance of a harmonious, emotionally attached and non-violent family. This openly presented picture, even though it does not reflect the whole truth, is a further punishment for Isabel because she remains excluded from this picture and is not allowed to influence Barbara's self-representation of her family

insecurity of her time due to changes in class and gender identification (cf. Costantini, 106).

The loss of the ability of expression regarding Isabel's motherhood does not only concern Isabel herself but is also reflected in the comportment of the characters around her. Isabel has not only been replaced as mother figure, but she is also treated as a non-existent person, since no one is allowed to speak of her. Not only the adults, also her own children are prevented from acknowledging her and, as Isabel's former employer Mrs Latimer tells her, the children regard Barbara Hare as their new mother (cf. ibid., 399). Since her children's transfer of affections is presented as a direct act of being disowned by the characters she loves best, Isabel's punishment is stressed once more: "Mamma! How the word, applied to Barbara, grated on her ear" (ibid., 416). William Cobbett describes the children's affection as being to no small degree contingent upon gratitude for maternal care which they experienced in their early years, and, if they did not receive it, warns of transmission of affection. "The children who are old enough to deserve and remember, will witness this proof of love and self-devotion in their mother. Each of them feels that she has done the same towards them all; and they love her and admire and revere her accordingly" (260). Again, consciously received maternal sacrifice becomes the keyword in the formation of the mother-child bond, according to Cobbett. Even though she practises a belated attitude of maternal sacrifice, Isabel can no longer expect the same result, because her sacrifice is hidden, is made without her children's knowledge and thus cannot be recognised as *maternal* sacrifice by the persons it is made for. The other grown-ups function as the cruel voice of reason in this context: "'Wilson said, if she had loved us, she would not have gone away from us'" (Wood, *EL*, 416). Isabel's time at East Lynne, witnessing the affection between ex-husband and new wife and the acceptance her children show towards the situation, makes her realise that her erasure is almost perfect, and that "[n]either he [her ex-husband] nor the child [William, her second son, in this case] could belong to her again in this world" (ibid., 443). Isolation goes hand in hand with Isabel's erasure; this is very vividly illustrated in her walk back to East Lynne after having received the doctor's report of William's approaching death. While William holds his father's hands, she, as an employee, is not allowed to share their togetherness and relieve her suffering for the death of her child by sharing it with her husband, "walking alone on the other side of the child" (ibid., 522). Her knowledge of the almost entire

erasure of the person that she once was comes along with the realisation that her children's identity is also revaluated not just publicly but also on a domestic level, because Barbara, as her replacement, has diminished her own children's importance with their father.[345] Isabel's silent question if "Mrs Carlyle's capricious 'wants' [were] to be studied before her child's life?" (ibid., 473) showcases this development and the shift in the household hierarchy. Moreover, her thought demonstrates her slightly rebellious feelings with regard to her punishment, which she calls her "[c]ross" (ibid., 612). This is presented as a form of egotism in Isabel because it negates the humility that her punishment demands of her. Even though her emotion is entirely motivated by maternal feeling, it is thus slightly negatively connotated, since rebellion inherently contradicts the stereotypical maternal sacrifice of suffering in silence (cf. Steere, 60). The overt narrator, thus, serves as the voice of contemporary morality, reminding the protagonist to keep on "bearing your cross" (Wood, *EL*, 474) and admonishing her to stick to her initial purpose to seek redemption.

William's death (cf. Wood, *EL*, 576) functions as both punishment and sacrifice and ultimately foreshadows her own death. The boy's death is in many ways a climax in Isabel's 'way of the cross', which is made tangible through the depiction of her "hidden devastation" (Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 4). The impact of the offspring's death on the life and psyche of the parents is not often addressed in advice literature, since the texts are usually concerned with the prevention of this event. However, Elizabeth Gaskell includes related observations in her diary, which she intended as guidebook for her eldest daughter. Fear of the own child's death is, according to Gaskell, one of the most fundamental anxieties of parenthood and the peak of the struggle for (unachievable) parental perfection. In her recollections, Gaskell indirectly compares herself to St. Mary, the mother of Christ, who suffers while witnessing her son's death (ibid. 58-59) and implores religious consolation at the mere thought of the fatal event: "Oh may I constantly bear in mind the words 'The Lord hath given, & the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.' I feel weak & exhausted with writing, or I had meant to write more. God bless my dearest child, and help her mother in her earnest

[345] In her last moments, the erasure of Lady Isabel's person is mitigated slightly, since she is allowed to be recognised by both her husband and Miss Conry, who accept her as Lady Isabel. This regaining of her old identity marks the fulfilment of retribution and forgiveness (cf. Twinn, 70).

endeavours" (ibid., 58). St. Mary and her suffering for the sins of the world as well as Gaskell's striving for quiet acceptance of a higher will become a maternal model for a pietistic mother figure, which Isabel, too, endeavours to emulate. Gaskell admitting that she feels "weak & exhausted" hints at the physical strain that the psychological stress at the thought of the final loss of a child entails. A similar exhaustion can be spotted in Isabel's rapid loss of strength after having attended William through the fatal phase of his illness. Even more than Gaskell, whose two daughters survived, Isabel's depiction bears resemblance to Marian imagery when she kneels at William's death bed, unable to keep him with her (cf. Wood, *EL*, 578). The difference between Mary and Isabel consists in the fact that Isabel's suffering through her son's death is not for the sake of mankind's retribution but for her personal retribution. However, the resemblance highlights the supposedly purifying effect of suffering, especially maternal suffering. The popularity of the subject of the child's death in Victorian times is mainly ascribed to its uses as a 'restorative' trope within the plot – restoring harmony within nature and within the domestic circle (cf. Wood, "Angelic", 116). In this function, William strongly resembles the romantic child since he is depicted as inherently innocent, and his final faith in her maternal affection and in a reunification in the otherworld is allowed to remain unmarred because of his premature death (cf. Hillel, 155).

The death of children and the preceding preparation of the child for the afterlife are difficult topics, and this is also reflected in the way this topic is mentioned in advice literature. Again, Elizabeth Gaskell's diary can be consulted in this context. The author explains the death of a relative to her young daughter without using explicitly religious terms, because she fears her child might misunderstand her (cf. "My Diary", 65). However, Gaskell mentions that she is eager to answer any questions concerning spirituality which her daughter might volunteer on her own accord (cf. 66) and is equally keen to prevent her child from getting knowledge about "[d]eath [sic], falsehood &c &c" (67) from less than trustworthy persons. Gaskell commences to talk about religion and the afterlife only after her daughter has entered school (cf. ibid.), which fits the general assumption that, from a certain age onwards, the knowledge of the Christian vision of the afterlife was omnipresent in Victorian middle-class education and this knowledge was inseparably connected to the "recogni[tion] [of] the need for salvation" (Gorham 19). Because of their importance, Gaskell confesses being confused and a

little upset at her daughter's prosaic reaction to spiritual topics, which she deems unfit for the gravity of the subject, such as, for example, the inquiry after God's bedtime habits (cf. "My Diary", 67) and young Marianne's other, "very material questions" (ibid., 67), which, for her, do not match the seriousness of the subject. Struggles such as Gaskell's reflect that teaching children about death and the afterlife remains a problematic and often ambiguous topic. In *East Lynne*, however, readers receive the impression that the children's, especially William's, knowledge based on Christian spirituality is extraordinarily secure, despite the fact that Isabel, as supposed moral guide, was absent during a crucial period in their life. William is very early on confronted with the topic of his own death since he overhears the servant's talk but appears less emotionally affected by the knowledge than the adults (particularly his mother, Isabel), exhibiting neither fear nor surprise (cf. Wood, *EL*, 439 & 485-486). His equanimity, in contrast to the adults' distraction exposes the rather stereotypical image of an afterlife in Heaven, which Isabel as well as Carlyle have. In comparison, for William, who is described as "quick, thoughtful, observant, and advanced beyond his years" (ibid., 486), the reality of his death has made the concept of heaven more tangible and the reality of life there more feasible while he is, though less than his parents, bound to common religious stereotypes. Even though he might lack an adult realisation of the impact and abstract knowledge of the meaning of the secularised concept of death, his spiritual vision is very clear, corporeal, and practical. This natural connection between supernatural and material, which comes easily to the child, but is difficult to grasp for the adult, is reflected in Gaskell's description of her daughter's 'inappropriate' reaction to Christian doctrine which causes her mother's discomfiture. Fittingly, William's vision of his afterlife involves a humanised conception of heaven, including reunions and family ties (cf. Wood, *EL*, 577) and is clearly both the result of meticulous teaching (cf. ibid., 585) essentially interwoven with infantile trust.[346] However, even though it is simplified, this vision helps him to cope with the parting process and allows him to exhibit more assurance and certainty than the rational adults: "'Papa, how shall I know mamma in heaven? Not this mamma.' Mr Carlyle did not immediately reply. The

[346] The comparison between spiritual childhood and a similar 'material reaction' to a serious topic can be seen in *East Lynne* as well. William is very comfortable talking about his existence in heaven while the adults react emotionally to it because for them these talks indicate separation, no matter how faithful they are. Lucy, however, who is not close to death but very healthy, reacts to Madame Vine's sorrow with a very material wish for food (cf. Wood, *EL*, 441).

question may have puzzled him. William continued hastily: possibly mistaking the motive of the silence. 'She will be in heaven you know'" (ibid., 583). The father is clearly concerned with earthly notions of morality, respectability and normativity, while for the child, the process is quite simple – since Isabel, his mamma, repented, she will be in heaven. This fact mirrors, to some extent, the inherently Romantic assumption that children were thought to be closer to the natural but also to the supernatural world (cf. McGillis, 102), even though William on the whole still remains decidedly closer to Christian doctrine than Romanticism: "It's nothing to die, when God loves us" (ibid.).

Fittingly enough, Isabel's road to redemption reaches its climax at William's death, and when she is on the deathbed herself she behaves similar to her son, anticipating with a rather childlike faith and trust a meeting in heaven and looking forward to death as if she had learned from his example: "William said mamma would be on the banks of the river, looking out for him: but it is William who is looking for me" (ibid., 617).[347] William's function as guide to redemption denotes his moral superiority, which is due to his innocence that is also mirrored in his ability to trust in Madame Vine's word and easily believe in his mother's presence in heaven. Even though his impact on the plot does not reach the extent which would allow calling him the prototypical 'child-as-saviour' (cf. Gavin, "The Child"), there are elements in his character which correspond to this trope:[348] Like the depiction of the angelic, suffering child in the child rescuers' magazine, William's acceptance of his suffering and death and his "child-like faith" (*Our Waifs and Strays*,

[347] In a certain way, Isabel's own faithfulness on her deathbed, which mirrors her son's trust, could arguably also indicate her regression from adult to a childish state (cf. Kucich, 180) due to her illness. Her last words to her ex-husband support this interpretation: "'Archibald, I am on the very threshold of the next world. Will you not bless me […]? Let what I am, be blotted for the moment from your memory: think of me, if you can, as the innocent, timid child, whom you made your wife'" (Wood, *EL*, 616).

[348] Romanticism tended to assign special importance to the contrast between the children's innocence and inherent virtue and the adult's lack thereof, which cause the experience of extreme "bitterness" (McGillis, 102) and regret because of the eternal separation of the adult or parental figure and the ideal state represented by the infantile mind (cf. ibid., 101). It is indeed striking that Isabel seems to start out with the mind of a child, frequently being described as simple, infantile and innocent in her mindset (cf. Kucich, 180) at the beginning of the novel and loses her innocence through her jealousy and her acquaintance with Levison, who seduces her. Her consequent experiences are therefore imprinted, just as the adult's eternal yearning and nostalgic mourning according to the romantic concept, with an intense feeling of regret and longing to return to the uncorrupted, infantile state that is still represented through her children, whose innocence she now intends to shelter to make up for her mistake.

September 1884) provoke adult incomprehension and confusion.[349] In romantically inspired Victorian texts, the child could feature as the cause or the primary helper-figure of the adult's/parent's redemption (cf. Jarrar, 76), taking the position as teacher, or personified 'signpost' towards salvation and forgiveness (cf. McGillis, 102).[350]

Isabel's reconciliation with her husband is only possible in the light of her impending death, the completion of her erasure (cf. Bauer-Gatsos, npag.), allowing her to employ her maternal sacrifice as 'weapon' to achieve her goal: In order to gain reconciliation and forgiveness she has to actively remind her husband of her sacrifice and suffering (cf. MacDonald, 43): "'Think what it was, to watch William's decaying strength; to be alone with you in his dying hour and not be able to say, he is my child as well as yours! When he lay dead, and the news went forth to the household, it was *her* petty grief you soothed; not mine; mine, his mother's'" (Wood, *EL*, 615). In his advice text, William Cobbett recounts the death of one of his children, admittedly during childbirth, but his tale still bears a few parallels to Isabel's narrative. He, too, was forcefully separated from his spouse (by serving time in prison during the event) and explains his wife's dangerous position, paying special attention to her mental state. For the bereaved mother, the only consolation is the closeness of the father; otherwise, without this consolation, his wife would be dead as well, according to Cobbett:

> Yet, so great is the power of the mind in such cases, she, though the circumstances proved uncommonly perilous, and were attended with the loss of the child, bore her sufferings with the greatest composure, because, at any minute she could send a message to, and hear from, me. If she had gone to Botley, leaving me in that state of anxiety in which she saw me, I am satisfied that she would have died (169).

He argues in favour of togetherness in such a sad situation; separation, according to the author, could be fatal to the parents as well – an idea that can be recognised in

[349] *Our Waifs and Strays. The Quarterly Paper of the Church of England Central Home of Waifs and Strays.* Issues 1883-1884. Accessed 28.10.2025. The Waifs and Strays.

[350] While William's death is almost her final step towards redemption. Isabel's other, surviving, children, as well, appear to evoke a redemptive post-mortem ending for their mother, especially the fate of Isabel Lucy that is hinted at, who "seems destined to marry her cousin, the future Earl of Mount Severn", and thus is able to "resume the position her mother lost" (Gruner, 319). The figure of William and his early death also have another function, according to Steere, by "provid[ing] closure. When her father was dying, Isabel was denied the right to see him, despite her repeated entreaties, precisely because she is a female and a family member" (72; cf. Rosenman, 27). Isabel's presence during William's death arguably can be regarded as a compensation for this 'lost goodbye' (cf. ibid.; cf. Rosenman, 27).

Isabel's fate, who sees her son die without the solace of compassion from her partner. In fact, Isabel's situation is presented as worse than the grief of Cobbett's wife because Isabel and her husband are eternally emotionally separated: "God alone knows how I have lived through it all: it has been to me as the bitterness of death" (Wood, *EL*, 615). Fitzpatrick claims that one "single moment of acknowledgement and forgiveness by her husband" ("Separate Spheres", 4) is the only weak comfort that is permitted to mitigate her punishment at the very end. Kucich supports the idea that the recognition of Isabel at her very end ultimately remains incomplete and is felt to be lacking in some respects because "[n]o one but the reader is ever told the complete truth about the causes of her fall. Though she is forgiven in pietistic terms, she is denied the opportunity for confession and collective understanding" (174). I would agree with the idea that Isabel is never allowed to gain "collective understanding" by being unable to explain herself to her children; however, she is allowed to confess to her husband, thus re-gaining part of her voice. The fact remains that Isabel's maternal motivations are able to allow her a certain "closure with her family before her death" (Steere, 62), which she would not have been granted without her strong motherly feeling that overruled social norms (cf. ibid.).

It is Isabel's sacrificial energy, particularly in connection to her children, which triggers her redemptive potential also in the eyes of a contemporary audience. The approach mirrors the portrayal of Isabel's 'natural motherhood' but also showcases the concept of punishment as form of extreme maternal sacrifice. Isabel undergoes a process of mental and physical degression which mirrors the impact of her punishment and also serves to indicate the closeness of the end (death): the proximity of fulfilment and forgiveness. As she becomes weaker and weaker, she cares less and less for herself or her own safety: the ultimate renunciation of vanity and selfishness (cf. Wood, *EL*, 589). This circumstance is visualised and summarised in the final moments before her death when her identity is revealed to Miss Cornelia and her ex-husband: "'my children,' she whispered: how could I stay away from them? […] Jesus did not come, you know, to save the good, like you: he came for the sake of us poor sinners. I tried to take up my Cross, as he bade us, and bear it bravely for his sake; but its weight has killed me" (ibid., 612). Isabel's character and her fate in general mirror the paradoxical expectations on motherhood and the female ideal, which fails to live up to normative maternity while still being

considered essentially maternal and feminine. Thus, the novel debunks, maybe even involuntarily, the impossibility of women to adhere to every aspect of the feminine and maternal ideal while at the same time remaining a 'realistic' character: Isabel must die in order to solve this problem.

7.1.3 Representations of middle-class maternity: "Mamma Corny's" frugal reign and Barbara Hare's new "system" of motherhood

Both Barbara, Archibald's second wife, and Cornelia Carlyle, his half-sister, represent middle-class ideas and thus are a clear contrast to Isabel, not only where their background is concerned, but also regarding their respective conceptions of maternal behaviour. "Mamma Corny" is depicted as unrelenting in "her rule" and as a person of "strong sense" (Wood, *EL*, 37). MacDonald describes her as "clever" but "hard and unfeeling" (47), attributes that were, in a Victorian context, mostly applied to men and masculinity rather than femininity and maternal behaviour, which her nickname "Mamma Corny" initially denotes. Moreover, Cornelia is "active and independent" and "eschews formality and convention in dress; she rules the household with an iron fist; she has a head for business and controls her own rental properties" (Simpson, 591). Thus, her maternal care for her half-brother gains a different implication and highlights, instead of a traditional motherly side, rather her inclination to rule, dominate, and her strong sense of obligation and duty, which also means "to reassert her prior claim to conjugal affection and domestic space" (Cleere, 214). Pykett fittingly names her "the epitome of the active controlling phallic mother" (127), which is accentuated by the account of her anger at being left out of his marriage plans and her strictly principled control over Isabel's household (cf. Wood, *EL*, 152 & 167; cf. Steere, 59). Strangely enough, these descriptions of Cornelia as being in charge of a household resemble some depictions of the 'bad mother' as recorded in advice literature. The midwife Martha Mears, for instance, criticises women who, contrary to the expected ideal of calm serenity, become "a tygress [sic]" (Mears, 31) in their home and reign over their sphere with "a rod of iron" (ibid.). Such 'unfeminine' comportment would, according to Mears, eventually cause disharmony in the household. Mears' last expression in particular almost appears to have been chosen with Cornelia's matriarchy in her 'brother-son's home in mind: While she is certainly efficient and practical, she does not create a harmonious household and thus becomes "a major contributor to […] [the]

collapse" (Nemesvari, 76) of the family structure. "[T]he imperiously-willed" woman, the "matriarch in the patriarch's shoes" (Twinn, 61) with her "unwomanly dominance" (Nemesvari, 77), is constantly contrasted to the "refined" (Wood, *EL*, 167) Isabel (cf. MacDonald, 47). While Isabel's biological maternity is primarily characterised by sentimentality, Cornelia's non-biological maternity is presented as efficient but controlling and thus straying from the path of 'true' maternity through masculine associations. Cornelia is used to being active and independent (she freely chooses to remain single) (cf. Wood, *EL*, 37-38), speaks in a "sharp" (ibid., 152) tone when she is annoyed and is unable to fully grasp Isabel's strong emotional connection to her children until the very end, when she witnesses Isabel's maternal sacrifice (cf. ibid., 612).[351]

Miss Cornelia's masculine attitude, her activeness, her robustness (cf. Pykett, *Improper*, 127), but also her lack of emotional empathy, stressed in the context of the novel by her spinsterhood, are contrasted particularly to Isabel's femininity. This lack of 'feeling' presents her not only as somewhat unfeminine but also overshadows her capability and makes her appear unfit to function as a 'true' maternal leader of the household. Such a message can also be found in some advice texts, if in slightly modified form. The evangelical author Hannah More, for example, rejects any purely outwardly exhibited virtuousness if good intentions and feeling are neglected (cf. 61). Thus, Cornelia is indirectly characterised as having an ambiguous attitude towards domesticity, despite her domestic activity in the Carlyle household: Nemesvari even describes "Mamma Corny's" management as an example of "gender fusion" because she assumes, through her domineering rule, "the roles of both husband *and* wife of the house", which also provides her with a lot of agency and "power" (78-79, original emphasis). As MacDonald confirms, "[w]hile Isabel […] may revel in […] suffering, […] [her] capacity for strong feeling is nonetheless in line with appropriate models of womanly and maternal identity" (47), whereas Cornelia is not. The fact that on Isabel's death-bed, at last, Miss Corny allows herself to display emotions, thus exhibiting her understanding for maternal cares for the first time in the novel, is meant to emphasise the redemptory character of the scene and enables forgiveness to take place, reaffirming

[351] This is shown in the scene in which she criticises Isabel for wishing to take her children with her to the seaside (cf. Wood, *EL*, 200).

traditional maternal roles and somewhat mitigating the "unwomanly" (ibid.) character of Miss Cornelia.

Just like Cornelia, Barbara Hare, later Carlyle, is put in direct opposition to Isabel and is, as much as the other female characters in the novel, "subject to scrutiny" (Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 4) regarding her domestic qualities and her 'maternal disposition'. While, in comparison to the 'fallen' Isabel, she might appear blameless, her character is not uncontroversial and can be seen as a 'mixed package' when viewed in relation to the depiction of ideal maternity in advice literature. Fitzpatrick acknowledges that the character of Barbara indeed contradicts some of the required attributes of middle-class femininity by being overall "assertive, strong, sensible, and active" (ibid.). In contrast to Isabel, who, as mistress of East Lynne, is depicted as rarely moving outside, "Barbara is a busy, mobile spirit" (Schaffer, 233) who actively influences her brother's fate and thus shares at least some of Carlyle's professional activities (cf. ibid., 233 & Wood, *EL*, 237-242).[352]

One aspect that perfectly highlights the ambiguity in the depiction of Barbara is her open expression of passion for Archibald Carlyle: Barbara divides her duties as mother and her duties as wife, being fond of delegating the first and embracing the second, thus overtly expressing her passionate love for her husband and laying bare the fact that her love for him is far stronger than her affection for the children. Evidently, her self-perception is more focussed on the position of wife than on her role as mother (cf. Wood, *EL*, 406-407), and this display of passion is, according to advice literature, not altogether feminine. Martha Mears, for example, explains that unleashed emotions negate common ideas of modesty and prudence and are therefore "unnatural" (110) in women.[353] Her active, passionate declaration of love would, according to the contemporary picture of femininity, contradict the ideal of modesty, but this ideal was in itself not without inconsistencies. William Cobbett, for instance, declares, on the one hand, modesty, especially regarding female

[352] According to Simpson, her activeness is the essential factor that makes her appear happier and more content than Isabel has ever been, and thus "Wood suggests that the woman's happiness is intricately connected to her activity, her business opportunities and her economic freedom" (590). Barbara, in contrast to Isabel, has her own fortune, apart from her ability to solve the murder case together with her husband (cf. Wood, *EL*, 436; cf. Simpson, 590).

[353] That she expresses this passion even prior to their marriage and her refusal to commit to any other man is, according to Fitzpatrick, "a heavy blow to the Victorian ideal of the woman as wife and mother" ("Separate Spheres", 4).

behaviour towards men, to be elementary for a functioning marriage, because a lack thereof, according to him, ensures domestic unhappiness:

> CHASTITY, perfect modesty, in word, deed, and even thought, is so essential, that, without it, no female is fit to be a wife. It is not enough that a young woman abstain from everything approaching towards indecorum in her behaviour towards men; […]. A loose woman is a disagreeable *acquaintance*: what must she be, then, as a *wife* […]. If prudery mean false modesty, it is to be despised; but if it mean modesty pushed to the utmost extent, I confess that I like it. […] [N]ever, for one moment, did it enter into my mind that I could have endured a 'free and hearty' girl for a wife (90, original emphasis).

On the other hand, Cobbett also mentions that it is just, 'natural' and even admirable that "their [women's] love is more ardent, more pure, more lasting, and they are more frank and sincere in the utterance of their feelings" (177). This argumentation is used as well by a contemporary reviewer of the novel who claims Barbara's overtly strong love for her husband to be a decidedly positive aspect of her character. The anonymous reviewer from *The Saturday Review* perceives Barbara as superior to Lady Isabel, not only because she has not committed adultery, but also because her love for her husband is extraordinarily deep and by far exceeds Isabel's "gentle flickering liking" ("East Lynne", *Saturday Reviews*, 1862, 187); the review implies, however, that love is not necessarily a synonym for passion but first and foremost denotes loyalty. One can conclude that this open and comparatively free expression of feeling is only regarded as a positive attribute as long as it supports domesticity and family togetherness. In other words, as long as a couple has no children, the woman is excused for exclusively loving her husband. William Cobbett confirms this idea (cf. 164), depicting the change once the woman becomes a mother as 'natural'. Barbara's pre-marital, 'suspiciously strong' devotion to Archibald could, consequently, only be mitigated by the fact that she later marries him and bears his children, which would 'naturally' balance her passion. Kucich even asserts that "Barbara's simple ordering of the priorities would have shocked many of the novel's readers as a cold oversimplification of these competing claims [of husband and children in the Victorian private sphere]" (191). This circumstance implies that, while Barbara prioritises her husband, her neglect of the children also leads to some confusion in the domestic sphere, since she is, for example, unable to inform her husband of the true state of William's health when he asks her about it (cf. Wood, *EL*, 442).

It is true that advice texts such as *Cassell's Household Guide* recommend that the husband should feature prominently in the wife's considerations, even while exercising her maternal duties towards her children, so that they do not cause any inconveniences to the husband, who is pursuing his duty in the public sphere and purely returns to the domestic realm for relaxation (cf. 142). However, even in this regard Barbara falls short, as can be deduced from the circumstance that she does not attend the children's visits at the doctor's but lets Archibald himself, or Madame Vine, take over this duty. She delegates the duty of seeing William's doctor (Wood, *EL*, 442) – a neglect which is perceived by Isabel to be a deliberate slight of her own child, giving rise to the resentful thought "'Why should she care? […] he is not her child'" (ibid., 482).[354] Since the reader later learns that Barbara has indeed been affected by a slight antipathy towards Isabel's children (cf. ibid., 624), this maternal dissatisfaction might appear justified. The portrayal of Barbara's colder treatment of her stepchildren also seems to confirm William Cobbett's reservations on second marriages; the author declares, for instance, that he does "not *like* to hear a man *talk* of his *first wife*" (221, original emphasis) because the transference of affection implies disloyalty, even if the first wife is deceased.[355]

The primary reason for the negative connotations related to Barbara and her devotion is a lack of maternal compassion. She is "perhaps a shade too careless of her step-children" ("East Lynne", *Saturday Reviews*, 1862, 187), which thus casts her love in a less 'natural' light according to contemporary ideals. As Fitzpatrick confirms, the circumstance that Barbara is an affectionate wife to Carlyle "is not enough to make her likable when she is lacking all other qualities of the traditional feminine gender role" ("Separate Spheres", 5). For instance, Barbara does not sacrifice entertainment for the sake of the children (cf. Wood, *EL*, 409), and, while her love for her baby is avowed several times, this asseveration is also accompanied by a thought of her husband: "'He is the very image of my darling husband'" (ibid., 410) and "'I should never give up my husband for my baby; dearly as I love him'" (ibid., 409). In consequence, her declaration "'I would not lose my baby for the

[354] Even though this action is clearly a delegation of motherly duties and Barbara accepts this voluntarily, Kim argues that Madame Vine's strong engagement with the children's, especially William's health and her offer to take him to the doctor, constitute a weakening of "the authority of Barbara as the sole mistress of Archibald's family" (201) and consequently an empowerment of Isabel.

[355] As in the case of adultery, Cobbett opines, though, that remarriage is a far greater moral offense for women than for men because it strongly exhibits their want of "delicacy" (221).

world! I could not part with him'" (ibid., 405), accompanied by an emotional clasping of her hands appears arguably more perfunctory, especially if read in the context of Barbara's actions. She evidently knows what society expects of her but does not have the intention to conform to it body and soul. Regarding her wish to shape and determine her own life, her character is again portrayed as slightly non-traditional. According to William Cobbett's argumentation, parents should be willing to attend to their children "at whatever sacrifice of ease or property" (255), an opinion which is evidently not shared by the new mistress of East Lynne, and which is presented as standing in strong contrast to Isabel's sacrificial spirit.[356] In consequence, it is particularly her lack of maternity and 'female sensitivity' that ultimately makes the strongest difference in the depiction of the two women: While Isabel is usually defined through her motherhood, Barbara is not (cf. Jaffe, 109).

Barbara's ambiguity regarding her domestic behaviour and relationship to maternity emphasises the way Wood's novel reflects on ideal motherhood. In Steere's words, Barbara is "the text's example of a middle-class mother, [who] hardly demonstrates these qualities herself" (70).[357] Indeed, Barbara herself has a lot to say on the topic of maternal practices, but her model of motherhood is "characterised by rationality and restraint" (Hansson & Norberg, 164) and is thus not entirely uncontroversial:

> I never was fond of being troubled with children. When my own grow up in childhood, I shall deem the nursery and the schoolroom the best places for them, I hold an opinion, Madame Vine, that too many mothers pursue a mistaken system in the management of their family. There are some, we know, who, lost in the pleasures of the world, in frivolity, wholly neglect them: of those I do not speak; nothing can be more thoughtless, more reprehensible, but there are others who err on the opposite side. They are never happy but when with their children: they must be in the nursery; or, the children in the drawing-room. They wash them, dress them, feed them; rendering themselves slaves, and the nurse's office a sinecure. The children are noisy, troublesome, cross; all children will be so; and the mother's temper gets soured, and she gives slaps where, when they were babies, she gave kisses. She has no leisure, no spirits for any higher training: and as they grow old she loses her authority. One who is wearied, tired out with her children, cross when they play or make a little extra noise, which jars on her unstrung nerves, who says, 'You shan't

[356] Jaffe mitigates this picture of Barbara to some degree by pointing out that she is, at least during her time as Carlyle's wife, mostly seen from Isabel's biased point of view, which filters our perception of her (cf. 107).
[357] As an example, Steere mentions the conversation of the servants who fear that, in case of Isabel's premature death, Barbara Hare will make a poor mother-substitute (cf. 70, cf. Wood, *EL*, 179).

> do this; you shall be still,' and that perpetually is sure to be rebelled against at last: it cannot be otherwise' (Wood, *EL*, 406-407).

Rosenman regards this sequence as significant for the formation of the middle-class domestic ideal of the angel in the house, not because Barbara represents it, but because she attempts to escape it, and thus, "in her disconcerting coldness and instrumentality, […] reveals the repressions that produce the icon of the angel in the house, always serene, always ministering to her children's sense of duty and religion, never angry, never possessive, never, one infers, passionate in any way" (29). The fact that she lives more for her husband than for her children, combined with her preference to delegate motherly duties, as well as her indirect criticism of sentimental motherhood, present her as a rather fashionable mother figure, at least according to upper-class living standards.

Barbara is depicted as a woman who is certain of her own desires and is determined to realise them, which was not a stereotypically feminine characteristic in the context of Victorianism (cf., Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 4). This issue is somewhat opposed to Wynne and Pykett's notion that Barbara's character represents the middle-class ideal, incorporating "bourgeois values of prudence and propriety" (Wynne, 69), posing as a direct contrast to Isabel, and that her admonitions appear "to come straight out of the conduct book […]" (Pykett, *Sensation Novel*, 61). It is true that some conduct books and advice manuals, such as the one written by Mrs Sarah Ellis, who is quoted by Pykett (cf. ibid.), advise prudent conduct and favour practicality. However, I would argue that the promotion of practicality always depends on the context and is in most cases relative, and Barbara cleverly uses their argumentation for her own ends. While pampering and over-emotional irrationality, for instance, are generally abhorred (cf. Cobbett, 278 & *Cassell's*, 314), so was a lack of emotional attachment and any hint at maternal egotism. It is clearly her determination to follow her own preferences that moves Barbara to refrain from maternal sacrifice by spending her time with her husband instead of her children, and it is in line with the information the readership receives concerning her passionate love for Carlyle, for which she has proven herself more than once willing and capable to ignore social norms.[358] She rather chooses to re-write conduct-book-practices, according to her own 'managing system': "'*I hold an*

[358] She ignores social norms for example during her passionate love confession when he had just married another woman (cf. Wood, *EL*, 164).

opinion, Madame Vine, that too many mothers pursue a *mistaken system* in the management of *their* family'" (Wood, *EL*, 406, emphasis added). For Barbara, absorbing maternity usually results in a bad marriage (cf. Gruner, 314), an outlook which stands in strong contrast to Cobbett's view of ideal family life. Barbara's speech on practical motherhood is meant to expose her as "lacking in maternal nature, particularly toward her stepchildren" (Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 4), and, contrary to Pykett's reading, the reader, especially the contemporary audience, is arguably not entirely on the same moral ground as her (cf. *Sensation Novel*, 62). A contemporary readership would in all probability uphold a belief similar to Cobbett's assumption that once a woman becomes a mother, "[t]he moment *that* [the baby] gets into her arms, every thing [sic] else diminishes in value" (248, original emphasis), including practicality, a wish for comfort, and care for her own appearance.[359] Kucich supports the idea that the model of motherhood exhibited in Barbara's speech is partly "a destabilization of feminine virtue" (190) which cannot be attributed solely to an underlying resentment of Isabel's offspring, because she includes her own baby in her thoughts concerning the correct treatment and placement of children within the household (cf. ibid., 191); it can, therefore, be assumed that this is her true opinion, unmarred by feelings of jealousy or, as Maunder opines, fear of risking moral contamination of her own children because of the supposedly inherited moral weakness of Isabel's offspring (cf. 67). Moral contamination would indeed have been an acceptable argument at the time, since it was often assumed that, as Cobbett puts it, "[c]hildren naturally want to be *like* their parents, and *to do what they do*: the girls [following] their mother" (297, original emphasis). For Barbara, knowledge and belief in such a principle would supply sufficient cause to preclude any further influence of Isabel's 'contaminated' children on her own offspring. In creating a social distance between herself and her husband on the one hand and the children and their servant caretakers on the other, she presents her own idea of perfect domesticity, which she proclaims to be the result of perfect marital harmony between the spouses primarily and, only secondarily, due to the attachment to the offspring.[360]

[359] It is true that Cobbett mentions that the father of the child might be considered an exception to the rule, but he never promotes the idea that the husband should entirely eclipse the child (cf. 248).
[360] Not only the governess and the children's caretakers possess a lower social standing within the Carlyle household, as mirrored by their respective accommodations, which becomes particularly

Spatial arrangements also play an important part in Barbara's admonitions which suggest that children are confined to "the nursery and the schoolroom" (Wood, *EL*, 406), because too much closeness to the offspring would, in her opinion, lead to disharmony (cf. ibid. 406-407). Again, Cobbett's ideas clash with Barbara's notions: He deems parental closeness, especially between mother and child, essential for a future harmonious relationship and emphasises the importance of abundant physical contact through breastfeeding, frequent kissing, cuddling and even sleeping together (cf. 229-230). The nursery and the employment of nurses and nannies to fulfil these essentially parental tasks are one of the primary indicators of status, because the spatial distance between parents and children constituted a commonly recognised manifestation of social position, indicating a departure from the bourgeoise ideal of family togetherness (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 2). While a representative establishment would boast a whole "separate nursery wing for the children" (ibid.), owners of less lavish establishments had to be content with no more than a separate room for their offspring (cf. ibid.). East Lynne clearly belongs to the first category, in contrast, for example, to Cornelia's smaller house, which reflects the modesty of ideal middle-class living promoted by her. The arrangements in East Lynne, with its nursery for young Archibald and the schoolroom overseen by the governess for the older children, echo Gorham's observation regarding upper-middle-class childrearing in Victorian times, "in which a nurse and assistant nursery maids were employed and in which a separate nursery wing was provided for the children, [and] contact between parents and children had to be limited" (17). Isabel with her aristocratic heritage might be used to such practices since they originated in her circles; however, they were comparatively new in middle-class households and indicated new wealth and the rise of professionalism (cf. Kucich 175, 183 & 190). William Cobbett already appears to foresee a comparable decline in domestic togetherness thirty years prior to the publication of *East Lynne*, and thinks it necessary to warn his readers of the result if "personal attention, and […] the never-ceasing endearments of their parents" (254) are lacking in the upbringing

apparent during Barbara Hare's regime in East Lynne: Here, the relationship of children's quarters and adult rooms as well as the more representative sections of the house are clearly defined: The smaller children, such as Isabel's youngest son Archie, are in the nursery, while the older children, William and Isabel (later renamed Lucy), are in the schoolroom with their governess (cf. Wood, *EL*, 334). Moreover, the new location of Isabel's room after her return to East Lynne in the disguise of the governess Madame Vine indicates her changed status, being far away from the mistress's rooms and closer to the children's quarters (cf. ibid., 401).

of particularly young children due to emotional and spatial distance from the parents, which, in his opinion, creates a lasting estrangement between parents and their offspring (cf. ibid.). Cobbett is especially critical of creating spatial and emotional distance between mothers and children since this could, also in later life, be a source of estrangement for both parties. According to his writings, the children's affection for their mother is a direct result of the maternal sacrifice which becomes their "a motive to [sic] filial gratitude (260).

The upper-class arrangement of rooms mirrors the fact that, especially under Barbara's management, family life at East Lynne is a careful balance between keeping up the pretension of the domestic ideal of togetherness and the creation of the spatial distance necessary as indicator of social rise (cf. Kucich, 164). The attempt to combine upper-class style with middle-class moral values consequently results in a 'watering down' of domestic principles, for example, in a weakened mother-child bond. According to Kucich, this conflict created through socio-cultural shifts "can reveal the inherently transgressive nature of any attempt to combine social competition with morality" (167). William Cobbett's advice text already hints towards this growing tension, mentioning the rise of professionalism with a reference to the increasing need for men to be removed from their families in order to work (cf.176). However, the 're-establishment' of domestic togetherness should always be the end goal of every kind of 'professionalism', which is, in his eyes, merely a tool to afford leisure time spent together with wife and offspring (cf. ibid.). In *East Lynne*, however, this assumption is reversed, which will be discussed in further detail in the examination of Archibald Carlyle as the seemingly perfect father figure. Barbara's insistence on keeping the children at a certain distance can also be regarded as an indicator that she is not yet entirely used to her increased social standing and has to over-emphasise her adherence to aristocratic standards (cf. Steere, 61) by distancing herself to a degree from the bourgeoise ideal. However, even some pieces of advice literature confirm that the middle-class standards of domestic togetherness were generally beginning to weaken even in a strictly bourgeoise context. *Cassell's Household Guide*, published four decades after Cobbett's advice, promotes a strict separation of formal rooms and spaces to be used by children and objects to the 'intrusion' of infantile influence on the social life of the parents: "The custom, […], of converting the breakfast room […] of suburban villas into day-nurseries, is very objectionable" (110), because the

resulting disorder furthers marital disharmony and makes a bad impression on visitors. The shift between Cobbett's early Victorian focus on togetherness and emotional contact and the later emphasis on family representation as well as practicability is indeed striking; it indicates a certain social development among the middle classes which can also be detected in the differing maternity of Isabel and Barbara. Apart from the living arrangements in East Lynne, the spatial separation from the children is exemplified on other levels as well during the course of the novel. Since Barbara entered the household, the children no longer eat with their father (cf. Wood, *EL*, 416), and, during her husband's nomination as candidate for the post of MP, Barbara is "too much occupied to look after the children" (Wood, *EL*, 524), focussing all her attention on him. This, again, hints at the problems between the Carlyle household and the domestic ideal which they are perceived to represent in the eyes of the local community, in which they gain more and more social importance (mirrored in Carlyle's advancement to MP). Consequently, the ideal, even though it clashes to some extent with their reality, serves their social interests very well.

The departure of the Carlyle family from 'old-fashioned' middle-class ideals can be placed in a wider social context and be viewed under the premise of the novel's depiction of social change and the rise of the middle class, replacing the former upper classes. While in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British society it were usually upper-class ladies who had more social freedom, brought about by their wealth, status and less rigid adherence of their class to the model of the separate spheres, in the latter thirds of the nineteenth century wealth became less and less upper-class exclusive and, consequently, the middle classes adopted more and more original upper-class practices of luxury living (cf. Kucich, 192). Rearranging domestic structures and a shifting importance of child-care matters reflected this trend as well (cf. Goujon, 70): The upper-class habit of delegating childcare duties began to spread to the socially mobile middle classes alongside other trends and fashions which became eventually affordable due to the shift in capital. Consequently, the unmaternal and therefore "unfeminine woman came to symbolize much that was objectionable about upward social mobility" (Gorham, 50). The domestic arrangements of the upper classes were continuously regarded by middle-class moralists as deserving harsh criticism and the adoption of these habits by middle-class families as hazardous for domestic life. Even during the

earlier stages of this social shift, Hannah More exemplifies this perspective: In her advice text, she puts special emphasis on the duties of upper-class women, one of which is the responsibility to use their distinction to promote "female principles" (1) in the sphere "where their true importance lies" (2-3), i.e. the domestic realm. According to More, women with an upper-class background were in peril to employ their special opportunities "to no higher purpose than the gratification of vanity or the indulgence of pleasure" for a "degrading triumph of […] luxury, caprice, and despotism" (3). In *East Lynne*, it is clearly visible that the socially rising character of Barbara resembles more and more an upper-class model of wife and motherhood, which renders her objectionable in the eyes of representatives of the old-fashioned middle-class morale (such as More).[361] Barbara's ideas of motherhood are not just depicted as slightly 'unfeminine', as well as unmaternal in Victorian eyes (cf. Kucich, 191), but the distance, the 'professionalism', also denotes her social aspirations:

> Earlier in the century, however, middle-class Victorian women often scorned the aristocratic habit of leaving children in the care of nursemaids and servants, and foreign visitors were often struck by the way children of the English middle class, in contrast to those of the aristocracy, were seen as loving companions by their parents. Barbara thus signifies the dawning late-century upper-middle-class 'professionalization' of the mother, and as such she produces an ethical ambivalence in the domestic realm that parallels Carlyle's occupational ambiguities (ibid, 192).

Barbara as well as her husband are consequently a symbol of the change in middle-class standards due to social "upward mobility" (ibid., 163; cf. Jaffe, 102) and she exemplifies "the new middle-class mother" (ibid., 193).[362]

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[361] Isabel, by contrast, is dwindling from her originally high-born position, full of social representation (wearing her diamonds to a charity concert [cf. Wood, *EL*, 76]), to a humble and dependent position (cf. Steere, 72, cf. Rosenman, 27).

[362] Steere argues similarly when examining Barbara's attitude towards dress and outer appearances: "Even an upwardly-mobile middle-class wife such as Barbara Hare feels pressure to play a role, although it may be less overt. Barbara is so concerned with maintaining an appearance of wealth and status and appearing to be a model of middle-class womanhood that she is overly concerned with expensive dress, remains wary of her servants, and believes she must keep her children at a distance" (61; cf. 67). Emma Butler-Way agrees to this argumentation in so far as that she acknowledges dress and dress choice in East Lynne, in particular for the characters Barbara and Isabel, to be inseparably connected to class and class perspective, mentioning that Barbara's dresses and her frequently mentioned admiration for fine clothing function as "an indicator of her morality" (115) or her lack thereof, because she, as an "upward mobile woman" is criticised for her "vanity" (ibid., 118). In this context, Butler-Way also mentions Isabella Beeton's writings, which equally condemn the practice of 'dressing above the station' (cf. 114).

Barbara's reliance on servants is also indirectly thematised through her preference of distance in parenting, and, as Steere observes, "[t]he irony that Barbara would trust a stranger living under an alias to teach the children morality would not have been lost on the audience" (71). Barbara's behaviour triggers associations with Thomas Gisborne's critique concerning the employment of servants to ease, or even take over, the mother's task.[363] Gisborne describes the delegation of maternal duties without the justification of insufficient health as a display of "a most shameful degree of selfishness and unnatural insensibility" (379). In stark opposition to Isabel, Barbara is quite healthy and even robust, which is exemplified through the outer appearance of the two mothers, especially in the quality of their hair: Barbara's "blue eyes sparkled, and her light hair was rich and abundant. A contrast, her hair, to that of the worn woman opposite to her" (Wood, *EL*, 404). Thus, Barbara remains unexcused for her neglect of duties, and it is also her "vigour" (Maunder, 62) which motivates her controversial sermons on 'healthy maternity'. In her own argumentation, her health is a result of the ability to delegate and not a reason to sacrifice her strength; according to her logic, her prudence is the reason why her children "share her […] robustness" (ibid., 67), and this "robustness" is only allowed to remain uncompromised through the employment of servants. Her attitude directly contradicts William Cobbett's notion that servants have an impairing effect on children's health, which he illustrates with two anecdotes, intending to warn the readership of the extent of the consequences. In both anecdotes, the child is severely physically harmed (in one case even dead) as the result of the servants' laziness and consequent maltreatment, but in both cases, Cobbett condemns the parents, especially the mother, even more than the servants who are directly responsible for the accidents (cf. 268-269). The parents' motivation for leaving the child with their servants is only briefly mentioned and appears to be very similar: One couple leaves their child for two days for a "visit of pleasure" (268), and in the other case "the parents had gone out into what is called an evening party" (269). The deprecating tone in which Cobbett presents these tales reveals that he deems these 'social duties' which the parents prioritise to be of far less importance than their duties as primary guardians. Moreover, he indirectly promotes the ideal of parental sacrifice by associating social gatherings of this kind

[363] Gisborne speaks here of nurses, but the same argumentation could, in most parts, be applied to the strong parental reliance on any other servant primarily concerned with childcare.

primarily with the gratification of personal vanity. Barbara, for instance, also dresses for a party when Madame Vine comes to her with concerns regarding Lucy, but she cuts the governess short because one of her favourite "toilet ornaments" (Wood, *EL*, 551) broke, and she wants her to fix it. Barbara evidently considers the trinket, and with it her looks and social appearance at the dinner party, to be more important than the girl. This scene already indicates that the delegation of child-care duties is associated with a love of luxury, and thus a designation of social status (cf. Gorham, 17).

An additional argument against the exclusive role of servants in the care for children is Cobbett's assumption that the husband's love for his wife depends to a major extent on his perception of her maternal commitment: "[T]he little thing [his child] that had caused the pain received abundant kisses as its punishment [from the mother, his wife]. Why, now, did I not love her *the more* for this? Did not this tend to rivet her to my heart? She was enduring this *for me*" (228-229, original emphasis). Her sacrifice and endurance trigger his gratitude and affection in what Cobbett deems to be a very 'natural' way, but this affection would have been absent had she been unwilling to endure. However, her devotion should, in turn, inspire the husband to care even more for her and enhance his consciousness of his duties as father: "[W]hy should you [the father] flinch from the performance of a still more important and more sacred duty towards herself, as well as towards you and your children" (ibid., 185). Active maternity, love and loyalty towards the husband, according to Cobbett's argumentation, are aspects which cannot be separated; ideas such as these present the audience with the reason why Barbara is ultimately meant to be perceived as 'lacking'. In Cobbett's line of deliberation, the more commitment and maternal sacrifice the better for the maintenance of the marital relationship and consequently for the preservation of the domestic ideal (cf. 229). Barbara's reluctance to sacrifice her comfort and her insistence on keeping her practise of active childcare at a sensible minimum is, consequently, in Cobbett's perspective potentially dangerous for her domestic life and her cherished love for her husband. Any attempted compromise causes a domestic dilemma which mirrors Cobbett's assessment that distance between parents and children, spatial as well as emotional, is never conducive towards a healthy domestic and married life, because the removal of infantine influence from the adult sphere speaks of adult laziness, sensuousness, vanity, and/or social ambition (cf. 254). In Barbara's case, jealousy.

Accordingly, immature feelings of the supposedly adult character preclude the presence of the real child, the presence of *justified* immaturity, which cannot be improved by mature adult influence through the deprivation of the presence of the parent in this way. Parental duties remain unfulfilled if these obstacles remain in place, according to Cobbett.

Even the pregnant Barbara is shown to go her own way while still exhibiting her absorption in her husband and promoting his social position. This behaviour could be interpreted ambiguously: "Barbara's flouting of the sanitary restrictions and responsibilities of chaste maternity is further underscored by her impassioned refusal to stay at home during her second pregnancy when Archibald relocates to London for the parliamentary term" (Cleere, 215). However, according to Cobbett's writings, the fact that Barbara, even in a physically weakened state, is unwilling to leave her husband, could be interpreted not as an unnecessary exhibition of strong will, and thus very 'unfeminine', but rather as a display of emotional attachment to the child's father and her wish to remain 'safe' in his proximity. Cobbett's description of his own wife's stay in London during her pregnancy and his imprisonment reflects this: In emotional tones he expresses his gratitude that his wife "actually went and took a lodging as near to Newgate as she could find one, in order that the communication between us might be as speedy as possible; and in order that I might see the doctor, and receive assurances from him relative to her state" (169). The wife's act is presented here not as transgression, but as female sacrifice and thus entirely acceptable. Moreover, the wish to introduce the child 'together' into the new world is reflected in Elizabeth Gaskell's diary as well: Gaskell's description of her own domestic life and parenting practices indeed includes illustrations of husband and wife parenting their child together, as can be seen in the frequent use of the pronoun "we" to point out that theirs was a consensual decision (cf. "My Diary", 65). However, highlighting the ambiguous nature of Barbara's relationship to the maternal ideal, she herself contradicts this theory by repeatedly showing more concern for her husband's comfort than for her own relationship to her children.[364] In this sequence, the reader is supposed to have

[364] Concerning William's diet, for example, Madame Vine proposes to provide cream, Mr Carlyle agrees to her proposal and Barbara only says "Pray give your orders, Madame Vine […]. You have more experiences with children than I" (Wood, EL, 442). When her husband asks her about the doctor's orders, she is unable to tell him because she does "not always see him when he comes" (ibid.).

the impression that Barbara's main aim is to be close to her husband herself and that any thoughts of her unborn child are only of secondary importance. In addition, her mobility during pregnancy underlines her strongly 'professional' attitude towards her husband's career and her active wish for him to move up the social ladder and support him in this endeavour (cf. Cleere, 215) – for her, her pregnancy has to be combined with the family's ambitions. Confirming this reading of her character, Barbara, for instance, only lets her new-born baby share her bed one night because her husband is away and the child thus could not disturb him (cf. Wood, *EL*, 409-410).

Barbara's "transformation" of her role in the household from a purely domestic position into an occupation which is closely associated with her husband's professionalism shows that Barbara's interests come 'dangerously' close to being called undomestic (cf. Kucich, 190). The business interest that Barbara exhibits, together with her tendency to delegate maternal cares and stand by this practice, depicts her as an extremely strong-willed and confident woman. In contrast, the evangelical Hannah More, for example, represents a view that would slowly become almost old-fashioned among the middle-classes when she insists that women should rather practice humility more than others and "devote" their efforts "to the glory of God" (xiii). This ideal behavioural pattern was, according to the author, only truly realised in the faithful adherence to domestic principles, and Barbara has distanced herself from this pattern. However, More's idea is not so outdated yet that Barbara can avoid a normative domestic fate; her engagement in Archibald's professional exploits is only tolerated because the end is to promote domesticity, e.g. bring back her brother Richard. Otherwise, her undomestic comportment would be criticised directly. Cobbett's ideas confirm the potentially problematic nature of Barbara's activities for the ideal of domestic togetherness, uttering his concern regarding women who are too much 'embroiled' in their husband's business, outside their own sphere:

> A wife may be chaste, sober in the full sense of the word, industrious, cleanly, frugal, and may be devoted to her husband and her children to a degree so enchanting as to make them all love her beyond the power of words to express. And yet she may, partly under the influence of her natural disposition, and partly encouraged by the great and constant homage paid to her virtues, and presuming, too, on the pain with which she knows her will would be thwarted; she may, with all her virtues, be thus led to a *bold interference in the affairs*

> *of her husband*; may attempt to dictate to him in matters quite out of her own sphere; and, in the pursuit of the gratification of her love of power and command, may wholly overlook the acts of folly or injustice which she would induce her husband to commit, […] (183, original emphasis).

Cobbett's depiction of mothers involved in professional interests emphasises the supposed tendency to become 'bossy' in their relationship to their husband and consequently upset the normative role allocation, domestic ideal and domestic happiness. While Isabel with her very feminine ways was never allowed to be part of the public sphere, or even have a glimpse into it, "Barbara adopts a professional attitude toward the Victorian centre of femininity: her motherhood" (Kucich, 191) and thus, from a contemporary point of view, 'masculinises' the role of the model mother.

However, Barbara's unsuitability for the Victorian ideal and her plea for unsentimental practicality in motherhood can also be regarded in a more positive light, especially from a modern standpoint. She openly voices her concerns regarding the reasonability of the ideal of sentimental motherhood and allows her own wishes to take precedence over the moralistic ideas of togetherness and the mother-child bond (cf. ibid., 406-407 & 442). Her often quite "brusque" (Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 4) attitude and her criticism of the over-emotional expression of motherly love by the governess who lavishly provides gifts for the children (cf. Wood, *EL*, 490) indicate to the readership that she indeed does not see herself as obliged to follow "virtues of quiet passivity and motherliness that are meant to come along with reign of the domestic sphere" (Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 4). Indeed, Barbara's very direct, open and a little harsh critique of her governess's behaviour (cf. ibid.) is at the least an indicator of her self-confidence, her determination, as well as her firm belief in her own position and her own methods of parenting and provides her character with an almost 'modern', feminist touch. However, her strict treatment of the unfortunate Isabel would presumably not have contributed to the likeability of her figure in a contemporary context, even though Barbara could not know the whole truth about her employee's circumstances.

Barbara remains a controversial character in spite of not being a figure who is lacking all redemptive qualities. There are several aspects which mitigate a harsher judgment of her character: In the employment of servants and governesses to look after the children, her own as well as her stepchildren, Barbara is pictured

as more or less capable, seeing to it that the children are fed, clothed and educated (cf. Wood, *EL*, 405-408). In educational matters, she adheres to the practices of governess-selection commonly adopted by the well-to-do population, and this could indeed be a rather complex and tricky business, involving questions of "class pedigree and moral qualifications" (Jay, xxxi). The circumstance that Barbara, despite her efforts, hires an 'unsuitable' caretaker in the figure of the 'fallen' Lady Isabel, is, at least at a first glance, not due to her negligence, since "[t]he recruitment through word of mouth and casual connections […] was by no means untypical" (ibid.). However, as Jay points out, it highlights Barbara's insufficient experience in the habits and customs of a class that was used to employing governesses, having herself only recently risen to that position (cf. ibid.), and it emphasises her intention to move away from the evangelical/bourgeoise ideal of self-reliant motherhood. She does not neglect the provision of education and care and superficially appears to be circumspect in choosing the person for this task, even if she does so primarily out of duty and trusts in the recommendation of a remote acquaintance who is solely known for the advantageous marriage of her daughter to a German nobleman (cf. Wood, *EL*, 398). Emotions and attachment are definitely a subordinate point in Barbara's household.

Yet, an emotional motif is, in Cobbett's argumentation, essential regarding parental decisions on children's education (cf. 99). Cobbett positions himself to be against 'fashionable' education which was often provided by governesses in higher-ranking households, and which can be assumed to be provided by a governess such as Madame Vine, who trained a future German countess: Barbara's priorities, in consequence, appear to be drifting in the wrong direction, according to the middle-class ideal. Besides the controversial nature of the manner of education, the nature of the caretaker has to be considered as well: "It is very bad to have a child even carried about by a dull, inanimate, silent servant, who will never talk, sing or chirrup to it; who will but just carry it about, always kept in the same attitude, and seeing and hearing nothing to give it life and spirit" (257). Even though the charges are older and do not have to be "carried about", the critique would have applied to Isabel's disposition as well, since she is to "have the entire charge of the little girl: she will be your [Madame Vine's] companion out of school hours: did you understand that?'" (Wood, *EL*, 408). Barbara delegates the care of Lucy to the governess without knowing about the exact temperament and/or character of the

caretaking figure. Madame Vine's melancholic behaviour, motivated by her grief, combined with her unusual appearance, would have justified Barbara's suspicion as to the governess's suitability for the post. It is noticeable that the melancholic disposition and the strange appearance of the governess (her appearance has never been entirely explained to the employer) is only of minor importance for Barbara, who is more focussed to leave the charge of Lucy as soon as possible and find a "gentlewoman" (Wood, *EL*, 409) with a suitable resume to do it. The latter circumstance once again confirms Barbara's ambition in the realm of class and social status.

However, the readership leaves Barbara's character on a rather hopeful note at the end of the novel: The fact that she is the first person to think about William after the mistaken fire alarm (cf. ibid., 556-557) already indicates that she is able to overcome her resentment and is indeed capable of caring motherhood, which hints at a possible reconciliatory future that depicts her as more inclusive regarding the children in general but especially concerning Isabel's offspring, towards whom she admits to have harboured a slight animosity:

> '[T]here has been a feeling in my heart against your children, a sort of jealous feeling, can you understand, because they were hers; because she had once been your wife. I knew how wrong it was, and I have tried earnestly to subdue it. I have indeed, and I think it is nearly gone. I' – her voice sunk lower – 'constantly pray to be helped to do it; to love them and care for them as if they were my own. It will come with time' (ibid., 624).

So, even though "Barbara's love for her stepchildren is not the same as her love for her own baby" (Simpson, 597) or even her husband, there is still a hint of motherly feeling, and Barbara's position regarding the contemporary maternal ideal remains ambiguous. Whether Barbara is aware of the controversies her domestic attitude incites is not made entirely clear within Wood's text. According to Simpson, her confession concerning her jealousy of Isabel's children shows that "Barbara certainly does not consider herself to be an ideal mother either, and her acknowledgement of the Victorian family's imperfect nature forms the closing of Wood's novel" (598). This reading presupposes an overall feminist interpretation of the text which cannot be affirmed in every aspect, as, for example, the glorification of female sacrifice through Isabel and Barbara, who is admittedly not a sacrificial mother but still a devoted daughter-angel-in the-house for her invalid mother and strict father (cf. Wood, *EL*, 235). Still, read *against* the, to some degree

'villainising', moralistic prejudice against Barbara, her character can be arguably interpreted as a progressive vision of maternity through her endeavours to overcome the limits of traditional mothering. Moreover, in the contrast between Isabel and Barbara, the novel in general highlights the division between 'rational mothering' and 'emotional maternity' which, in turn, hints at the impossibility to find a perfect balance in the question of 'ideal' mothering. Where Isabel is lacking Barbara excels, and where Barbara as well as Cornelia incorporate 'unfeminine' aspects in their practices of maternal care, Isabel triumphs.

7.2 "Loving homes"? Fatherhood in *East Lynne*: Between ambition and abandonment

True to the Victorian doctrine of the domestic ideal, fatherhood is not as prominently thematised in Wood's sensation novel as motherhood evidently is. Nevertheless, paternity is depicted as inseparably connected to the presentation of maternity, and is, just as maternal behaviour, represented through several different, even downright opposing, forms, which creates the impression that father failures are everywhere in *East Lynne*: There is, for example, Justice Hare, Barbara's tyrannical father, who dominates his household, apparently oblivious to the concerns of his family, and is unnecessarily strict with his invalid wife, who fears his reprimanding (cf. Wood, *EL*, 23), temporarily obstructing domestic togetherness with his adherence to rigid principles (cf. MacDonald, 54). In order to restore the image of the domestic idyll and the ideal of family harmony and togetherness between parents and children, his illness is introduced, weakening his tyrannical supremacy, providing peace for the household, which is made whole again through the return of his son Richard (cf. ibid., 607). Justice Hare is a paternal failure according to the ideal, because only as an incapacitated patriarch can he become part of a unified domestic setting while in his full power, he created disharmony rather than togetherness. Likewise, the old Earl of Mount Severn is a disaster as a breadwinner and thus violates what Thomas Gisborne would consider the 'natural' order of familial relationships in which divine authority has provided men with the duties of "the culture of the soil, the erection of dwellings, and, in general, those operations of industry, and those measures of defen[c]e, which include difficult and dangerous exertion" (20). It is interesting to note that "the robustness of constitution" (ibid.), which, according to the author, God has imparted on men to

fulfil their duties, is missing in the earl, who dies quite early in the novel and thus escapes parental duty altogether in a way that is pictured as almost 'cowardly': The earl is unable to ensure his daughter's wellbeing after his death, because he neglected his task to make provisions, squandering money rather than saving to secure domestic happiness (cf. ibid., 6-11; cf. Kim, 185). He is consequently explicitly labelled a "bad" (ibid., 105) father by the respectable middle-class environment of East Lynne, who partly deems it his fault that Lady Isabel is driven into the unlucky marriage with Mr Carlyle and finally hazarded her domestic happiness. The "institutional dimensions of gender" (Connell, 42) label these characters as either 'good' or 'bad' according to the domestic ideal while still managing to leave a rather confusing picture of the intricate workings of the patriarchal social order.

Domestic harmony, or the lack thereof, is also a noticeable concern in the case of the two main representatives of fatherhood: the respectable upper-middle-class lawyer Archibald Carlyle and the well-born, decadent playboy Captain Francis Levison. Both father children during the time the novel is set, and both have Isabel Vane as mother for at least one of their sons. These are, however, all the resemblances to be detected between the two characters, who are otherwise presented as strong opposites, Archibald Carlyle being by far the morally superior, thus stressing the novel's agenda of middle-class moral superiority, the downfall of the wicked undomestic, unsettled, selfish and vain seducer and the final restoration and affirmation of domestic happiness, religious faith and family togetherness (cf. ibid., 624). However, it is interesting to note that, while this message of reaffirming domestic principles might be the most prominent one, even seemingly 'perfect' middle-class fatherhood, it cannot escape ambiguity and thus helps to denote the underlying insecurities concerning the ideal Victorian gender role allocation.

From the very start, Archibald Carlyle is presented to the readership as having potential to become 'the perfect Victorian father', and this picture of seeming perfection was perceived from the very first by Victorian reviews, which describe the character, for example, as the "god-like attorney" who is depicted as a rather "improbab[le]" figure and "a regular lady's ideal" ("East Lynne", *Saturday Reviews*, 1862, 187 & cf. Wynne 62). Wynne similarly asserts that Archibald Carlyle's character represents a middle-class hero-prototype which can frequently be spotted in Ellen Wood's novels (cf. 61; cf. Jay, xxiii). At a first glance, this

assessment appears to capture the whole essence of the character: He is presented as hard-working, attached to family bonds since he is close to his half-sister (cf. Wood, *EL*, 37), financially secure in his position and far from extravagant in his habits as an unpretentious small-town lawyer (cf. ibid., 37-39), leading "a life of domestic sobriety" (Wynne, 69). Such a comportment would usually be applauded in advice texts, which customarily had a steady bourgeoise bias. Emphatically middle-class authors of advice literature such as William Cobbett, for instance, promote the idea of male "industry, laborious study, [and] frugality" (21) as the basis for a healthy family life. A few decades after Cobbett, *Cassell's Household Guide* as well promotes industry and financial stability to render a man able to afford the duty of provider and breadwinner (cf. Strange, 51). An instable financial future was a severe hindrance to the smooth upkeep of domestic ideals, and failure of provision for the family could come at the cost of social standing and the public image that belonged to status (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 10). The presence of Carlyle's secure savings objectively reduces the risk of "failure in fathering" (ibid. & cf. Gorham, 3) and presents one of the aspects that appears to confirm his position as a model of middle-class masculinity (cf. Kucich, 62) and even enable his social rise.

His financial assets also contrast rather positively the impoverished and emancipated aristocratic fathers, the earl of Mount Severn, Isabel's late father, and Francis Levison, who are both essentially described as failures – failures in their own life (both end up rather pathetically) and in particular with regard to their fatherhood, losing the privileges of their status (such as political influence, in Levison's case, and the landed estate, in the case of the earl). In contrast to Carlyle, they are thus objectionable, since the idealised middle-class Victorian image of masculinity and fatherhood was rather intolerant towards male failure and weakness (cf. Strange, 53-55), and those who succumbed were often regarded, in William Cobbett's words, as "a disgrace to his kindred, and an evil to his country, instead of being an honour to the former and a blessing to the latter" (54). Middle-class values and norms are emphasised through an indirect praise when Carlyle is confronted with representatives of so-called 'old money', such as his wife's father (cf. ibid., 62, 66, 68 & 69). This class opposition becomes evident during the first meeting of the earl of Mount Severn with Archibald Carlyle and presents the earl's backstory as a "cautionary parable about class identity" since the aristocrat "is revealed to

have been the victim of his own unexpected inheritance", which turned him from "a model of discipline and sobriety [almost reflecting middle-class norms]" into the very representative "of decadent late-Victorian aristocracy" who cannot equal the great "middle-class achievements" (Kucich, 168) of his future son-in-law and thus reaffirms the general picture of the shift in Victorian society. The earl and the middle-class lawyer, the first a father, the latter planning on becoming one, have a special kind of dynamic within the text, which sheds a light on the respective portrayal of fatherhood, its connection to masculine representation and self-perception. Some passages from Cobbett's text indicate that the dynamic of homosocial acceptance and approval among men, and the maintenance of a respectable, commonly admired masculine image depends upon "their [men's] capacity and willingness to be in some way or other *useful*" (20, original emphasis). Cobbett clearly promotes middle-class ideals of usefulness, industry and self-control which are present in Carlyle but absent in Mount Severn.[365] The latter's self-perception but also his image as perceived by his peers is consequently considerably strained since he is quite useless in most matters, especially in the matter of paternal

[365] The young earl of Mount Severn, the successor of Isabel's father, is definitely not as spendthrift and imprudent as his predecessor, however he is presented as much more presentable from a middle-class perspective, also due to his growing closeness to the middle-class lawyer Archibald Carlyle. He is not the perfect father according to the ideals of advice literature since some traces of stereotypical upper-class child rearing can be spotted in his treatment of his son, young Vane. Not only does the boy visit the most prestigious public school (Eton), but he is also speaking French to show off (cf. Wood, *EL*, 596-597). William Cobbett, for example, is ardent in his declaration that schools were providing insufficient education, particular with regard to parental care (cf. 299). Even though William Cobbett himself learned French in France and published a book on this language (cf. ibid., 4), other middle-class authors of advice literature were more suspicious towards foreign languages, especially in the context of foreign literature, as can be read in Hannah More's advice text, in which she warns of this kind of literature due to its questionable morality (cf. 41). Young Vane's preference of French is predominantly due to his mother's ambitious and pretentious influence (who is herself described as having questionable moral values), however, the fact that Mount Severn, as father, does not object or influence the education of his son in any perceivable sense, speaks, for one, for his absence from home, and his lack of authority compared to his wife. The fact that he is very often away from home and is therefore essentially an "absent father" (Strange, 4 & Tosh, 129) is presented also as a consequence of the lack of domestic harmony in his home due to Lady Mount Severn's disregard for middle-class domesticity and the connected values. She flirts with other men and does not greatly care for her children (cf. ibid. 113-115 & cf. Pykett, *Improper*, 125) and, we can assume, also lacks fondness for her husband. Domesticity in the Mount Severn household is therefore greatly lacking and, consequently as well as a result of the same, paternal and maternal behaviour are deficient. Lady Mount Severn's management is presented as typically upper-class and the earl's absence and his (and his son's) frequent visits to East Lynne could be read as a longing for the more domestic setting in the middle-class household. It is true that, due to his rise in social rank, Carlyle does no longer present the stereotypical middle-class values which Cornelia is so fond of, however, it is still removed from the negatively connotated upper-class lifestyle that is represented by the old earl and lady Mount Severn. Moreover, the reader can see that both social spheres are growing closer together, one adopting more upper-class habits (Carlyle), the other preferring middle-class domesticity (Mount Severn).

provision. He himself admits that he has become an "embarrassment" (Wood, *EL*, 6) and acknowledges to have disregarded the needs of his late wife and his daughter, who both had to endure "his follies and his neglect" (ibid.). This behaviour results in the break of domestic bonds due to the death of his wife and the daughter's education in the hands of a mother-substitute away from her father, and is also punished with the lack of an heir who might function as "a way out of his [the earl's] difficulties" (ibid.). Moreover, there are some doubts as to his remaining moral integrity and his adherence to the masculine ideal; as Kucich observes, the earl is showing traces of "effeminacy" in

> his cowardice toward creditors and the helpless physical dependence brought on by his infirmity. Emblematically, the earl mourns that he never had a son who might have cut off the entail. The bitter fruits of social mobility in this allegory turn out to be a loss of male virility, male honor, and sustained patriarchal lineage (168).

The entail tied to the earl's property, and his inability to change the financial predicament of his daughter which the entail implies is further presented as a crucial problem, also regarding Isabel's standing in society (cf. Simpson, 586-587). In complete opposition to this representation of thoughtlessness, the novel stresses Carlyle's financial and practical preparedness to take on the position of the breadwinner, promising to take care of his future wife and his potential children even after his own death:

> 'Our establishment will be small and quiet, as compared with her [Isabel's] father's. […] East Lynne will descend to our eldest son, should we have children. My profession is most lucrative, my income good: were I to die to-morrow, Isabel would enjoy East Lynne, and about three thousand pounds per annum' (Wood, *EL*, 139-140).

Carlyle's plans would theoretically suit William Cobbett's description of the dutiful man's preparation for marriage and the potential arrival of children, stating that "morally speaking, we, at the moment of our marriage, contract a debt with the *naturally to be expected fruit of it*; and, therefore […] the scale of expense should, at the beginning, be as low as that of which a due attention to rank in life will admit!" (153, emphasis added) It is the husband's responsibility towards his wife who, just as the children who are about to arrive, are now under his explicit financial and emotional authority (cf. ibid.). However, the contrast between the lawyer and the earl is even more far-reaching.

After his marriage, Archibald Carlyle becomes father to not only one but two sons with Isabel alone, signifying his 'healthier' and, in Kucich's terms, more 'virile' disposition not only in social but also in physical terms. This circumstance reflects and assures at the same time two growing types of anxiety in mid-Victorian society: the fear of the potential male failure to fulfil their reproductive duty and the mistrust of feminization, often specifically associated with the 'decadent' upper ranks of social life (cf. Tosh, 22). Cobbett, for example, draws the picture of a young lower-class couple who apparently have a large number of children and are presented in many ways as a model of good health, morality and work ethics:

> The wife was then only *twenty-two*, and the man only *twenty-five*. She was a pretty woman, even for *Sussex*, which, not excepting Lancashire, contains the prettiest women in England. He was a very fine and stout young man. 'Why,' said I, 'how many children do you reckon to have at last?' 'I do not care how many,' said the man: 'God never sends mouths without sending meat.' 'Did you ever hear, 'said I, 'of one PARSON MALTHUS?' 'No, sir.' 'Why, if he were to hear of your works, he would be outrageous; for he wants an act of parliament to prevent poor people from marrying young, and from having such lots of children.' 'Oh! the brute!' exclaimed the wife; while the husband laughed, thinking that I was joking. I asked the man whether he had ever had *relief from the parish*; and upon his answering in the negative, I took out my purse, took from it enough to bait my horse at Horsham, and to clear my turnpikes to WORTH, whither I was going in order to stay awhile, and gave him all the rest (99, original emphasis).[366]

Cobbett evidently intends this description of the simple life, filled with numerous offspring, to function as an example for his predominantly middle-class readers. His argumentation is that children produce domestic happiness and that, provided the husband and wife do their respective duties and live a frugal life, they are not in need of financial aid by the parish. He indirectly criticises opinions within society that attempt to limit reproduction and fertility by means of the law. Neither should married couples be limited in their fertility by society nor by the law, because he

[366] The parson Malthus mentioned in Cobbett's text was a late-eighteenth, early nineteenth-century "political economist, a political biologist, and a political demographer" (Wells, 1-2) who is mentioned here in the context of his *Essay on Population* and his opinions on "limits to social progress imposed by man's place in nature" (ibid., 2). As Wells explains, "for Malthus, vice and misery were the necessary product of man's biological characteristics and place in nature. Since man's potential rate of increase in population was greater than the potential rate of increase in food production, population would necessarily be restrained from its full increase" (3). William Cobbett is evidently of a different opinion, hence the positive example of the large, healthy and dept-free lower-class family. Cobbett was also against Malthus' idea that "'moral restraint'" (Cobbett, 84) within families, and a consequent lower birth rate, would be the best policy.

regards this fertility as something entirely positive.[367] Besides their moral integrity, the health of the lower-class couple is emphasised in the sequence through the use of words such as "pretty", "fine", "stout" (ibid.). In most nineteenth-century middle-class discourses, the 'degenerate' upper classes were seen as less reproductive than the healthy middle classes or even the hard-working, respectable lower classes. For example, the advice text *Domestic Medicine* by William Buchan describes the upper classes primarily in connection with laziness, self-indulgence and "inactivity" (67). This description, in contrast to Cobbett's depiction of the healthy rural couple, appears to fit very well to the widowed, "weak-willed" (Maunder, 64) earl who has only one daughter, never re-married, and is unfavourably contrasted to Carlyle, who has many sons by two women. Especially Carlyle's children born by Barbara, the healthy middle-class woman, are described with expressions that are similar to the words used in Cobbett's portrayal of the strong farming family: The baby is depicted as "stout […]" (Wood, *EL*, 412), "wide […] awake" (ibid.) and "rosy" (ibid., 411), with a healthy appetite and a strong body (cf. ibid., 410). Wynne confirms this impression of inherent middle-class superiority in the comparison between the earl, as representative of noble but less healthy stock, and Carlyle: "Wood foregrounds the conflict of interest of the bourgeois and the upper classes, identifying the qualities which, she believes, constitute an 'ideal' style of masculinity" (62).[368] Archibald's money as well as his discipline in accumulating wealth by himself and ensuring a stable income impresses others, and is partly accredited to his simpler days under Mamma Corny's

[367] The fact that Cobbett's exemplary couple never received poor-relief is depicted as a badge of honour and proof of their good character and their 'worthiness' of their children. Cobbett's portrayal thus matches many of the overseers' reports describing the recipients of relief as "worthless". Text taken from: Part one, section one. *Poor Law Commissioners' Report of 1834. Copy of the Report Made in 1834 by the Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty*. London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1905 [1834].

[368] Moreover, Carlyle's success within his social environment appears to be stable and enduring, since he manages to "consolidate […] his new status" (Kucich, 168), not only through his numerous offspring, but also through his election as M.P., a "social victory" that is, according to Kucich, not due to old-fashioned inheritance but to "hard and honorable work" (169) and his familial bonds rooted within the community. Carlyle's standing and his promising future as gentleman and father are reflected in his upward social mobility, which allows him to provide both of his wives with immense financial security, even prior to his election. This 'marker of masculinity' particularly impresses Isabel's aristocratic relative: "'I came here this morning almost prepared to strike your husband, and I go away honouring him. Be a good and faithful wife to him, for he deserves it'" (Wood, *EL*, 140). This sentence also functions as a social acknowledgement of Mr Carlyle as gentleman (cf. Kucich, 176). It is noticeable that in this statement, the emphasis is laid on male honour as dependent on the ability to provide and create a secure environment for the future family/children

tutelage, who "bore for him all the authority of a mother; the boy had known no other" (Wood, *EL*, 37). Indeed, frugality and simplicity are generally also very much applauded in advice literature and are, for instance promoted by William Cobbett. On the one hand his maxims support, but, on the other hand, they also contradict Cornelia and, thus, allow a critical reflection of Carlyle's behaviour as housefather. Cobbett tells his male readership to take care that the housewife ensures

> that there *be good living without waste*; and that, in her department, nothing shall be seen *inconsistent with the rank*, station, and character of her husband, who, if he have a *skilful* and industrious wife, will, unless he be of a singularly foolish turn, gladly leave all these things to *her absolute dominion*, controlled only by the extent of the whole expenditure, of which *he must be the best*, and, indeed, the sole, *judge* (118, emphasis added).

Carlyle's new good living is indeed "inconsistent" with his upbringing and showcases that the lawyer is beginning to get caught in between contrasting allegiances.

Carlyle, having officially forsaken the domain of Cornelia's "motherhood" when he married Isabel, has not only taken over the function of potential father and breadwinner but also a new allegiance, namely to his wife and her position as mother of his future children. However, as Cornelia's foster-son, he mostly "submit[s]" to his half-sister, "for the force of habit is strong" (Wood, *EL*, 37). His position as 'son' to Cornelia makes it convenient for him to surrender authority to her and bow to her 'maternal' judgement. Cornelia's influence is surprisingly still visible after she has left East Lynne, in Carlyle's days as up-and-coming politician, during which he still embodies many principles of frugal life which have stuck to him out of routine. The children's diet, for example, is in some ways influenced by the food Carlyle received when he was a boy under Cornelia's maternal guidance:

> 'We get tired of it [the breakfast routine] sometimes, and then we have milk-and-water and bread-and-butter, or honey: and then we take to bread-and-milk again. It's aunt Cornelia who thinks we should eat bread-and milk for breakfast: she says papa never had anything else when he was a boy' (Wood, *EL*, 416).

Passages such as this point out that no matter how much he has risen in social importance, Carlyle cannot entirely get rid of his strict, economical and unpretentious middle-class upbringing; the father's origins have an impact on the

children, even though they have received an ‘up-grade’ from solely “bread-and-milk” in the form of occasional luxuries such as “honey”, which hints at the slightly laxer rules and modified domestic values that are in tune with the wider social shift in society. His acceptance of domestic luxuries, for example, causes Mamma Corny’s disapproving comment: “‘Wilful wastes make woeful want. I taught you that as a child’” (Wood, *EL*, 147). This small detail is only part of the bigger picture that depicts Carlyle as the prototypical representative of changing times. Cobbett’s three ‘golden rules’ of middle-class paternity, “industry, laborious study, [and] frugality” (21), are still to some extent incorporated in Carlyle’s later life but are modified to fit into his new lifestyle, which causes Cornelia to bemoan his gradual loss of middle-class frugality in favour of money and status.

The ‘upgrade’ of traditional middle-class habits and values is mirrored in Carlyle’s willingness to spend money on comfort, appearing sometimes even generously, despite his ambition and prudence, especially in the case of his wife and his offspring. When Isabel wishes to take her children with her to the seaside resort, he, in contrast to his “clever” but “hard and unfeeling” (MacDonald, 47) half-sister, allows it at first and is only persuaded to decide otherwise because of objections from Cornelia, who at this point in the novel still controls him in her position as mother-substitute (cf. ibid., 201). According to the author of *Everybody’s Book of Good Conduct*, treating one’s wife and children with generosity never poses any danger to masculinity, although this was apparently a genuine social concern (cf. Tosh, 21). From the perspective of the conduct book, in fact, the opposite is the case, and male inconsideration is far more harmful to the image of the middle-class gentleman-father (cf. M.C., 12-13). This resemblance between Carlyle’s original intention and the image of ‘correct’ masculinity in the conduct book might leave the impression that Carlyle’s masculinity complies with the desired ideal. Since the advice text mentions stinginess as an explicit sign of “ill breeding” (ibid., 18), Carlyle’s supposed generosity seems to confirm ‘correct breeding’ and thus his ability to rise in status. However, his ‘consideration’ remains rather superficial and is easily swayed; ultimately, the readership is left in doubt whether Carlyle really

intends to show affection or just displays his paternal authority, which he considers his 'righteous' part to play.[369]

There is more to the figure of Archibald Carlyle, father and husband, than just his supposed perfection as representative of middle-class masculinity (cf. Wynne, 62), as lover, and as provider. Fitzpatrick argues that Isabel's and Archibald's marriage ultimately fails because both stick very strictly to the surroundings of their respective spheres – the public and the private realm – and Archibald Carlyle in particular does not allow any permeability (cf. "Separate Spheres"7). Isabel remains alone at home in the company of his rather rigid half-sister and is kept in utter ignorance of his professional affairs, her only occupation being the children, suffering from depressed spirits (cf. Wood, *EL*, 170). As R. W. Connell writes in her study *Masculinities* regarding the historical formation of masculinity since the industrial revolution, "[t]he entrepreneurial culture and work-places of […] capitalism institutionalized a form of masculinity, creating and legitimating new forms of gendered work and power" (188). Carlyle's professionalism, which enables his social rise and serves as proof that he is indeed able to perform the breadwinning function (cf. Wood, *EL*, 139-140), is also problematised because Carlyle is an absent husband, especially to Isabel, in comparative ignorance of her problems, and also becomes a rather absent father (cf. Schaffer, 228). In Schaffer's argumentation, *East Lynne* reflects the transposition (cf. Jaffe, 104) of the workplace away from home and into the homosocial sphere of professionalism, which is alluded to by John Tosh (cf. Tosh, 129; Schaffer, 228-229). Offices of professional men were, according to the modernised systematisation of the workplace, now located away from home and the domestic sphere (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 7 & Schaffer, 231), which "is, in fact, one of the major issues *East Lynne* interrogates. In a period of uncertain, transitional expectations about workspace, Archibald Carlyle represents a new breed of professional men who conceptualize work away from the home" (Schaffer, 229). Professional connections become more important than his family, since even Cornelia, who formerly lived above his office,

[369] Particularly this consciousness of his own social rise and the adaption of new customs would be regarded as a danger to maintaining middle-class values. One example is, for instance, the food served at the earl's table which is rather dazzling to the, as yet, unaccustomed eyes of the frugal lawyer, so that the narrator comments: "Take care of your senses, Mr Carlyle" (Wood, *EL,* 66). According to William Cobbett, the custom to have extravagant food, particularly expensive wines, on the table threatens morality, even if the custom is only kept out of habit and/or the necessity to prove one's affluence in front of guests (cf. 58).

loses her connection with his workplace (cf. Wood, *EL*, 166-173 & Schaffer, 229). Cobbett, for instance, exhibits a way of thinking which criticises this rigid separation, providing his own personal experiences as model to underline his affirmation of male domestic involvement: "My time, when at home, and when babies were going on, was chiefly divided between the pen and the baby" (180). The strict separation of the spheres in the Carlyle home, according to Schaffer, "both facilitates a dangerous liminal zone between the two and encourages confusion between them" (229).

Archibald's unawareness of Isabel's problems as mother and wife exposes their union as "dysfunctional" (Twinn, 59). In parenting advice, the evasion of domestic conflict is regarded in a very critical light, especially by William Cobbett, who argues emphatically in favour of domestic togetherness and parent-child as well as husband-wife communication:

> But, to do the things I did, you must *love home* yourself; to rear up children in this manner, you must *live with them*; you must make them, too, *feel*, by your conduct, that you *prefer* this to any other mode of passing your time. All men cannot lead this sort of life, but many may; and all much more than many do. My occupation, to be sure, was chiefly carried on *at home*; but, I had always enough to do; I never spent an idle week, or even day, in my whole life. Yet I found time to talk *with them*, to walk, or ride, about with them; and when forced to go from home, always took one or more with me (293, original emphasis).

Domestic togetherness and a father-child bond created in this manner, the core points of Cobbett's argumentation, are not achieved in Isabel and Carlyle's domestic life. In accordance with this reasoning, Schaffer, for example, asserts that it is not only the wife who suffers through the husband's "overattention to a business that is inaccessible to his [her]" (238) and his disregard of the tension within the household, but that the children suffer as well. Carlyle's acceptance of Isabel's ignorance concerning his occupation causes miscommunication within the family for which he is largely to blame, unexcused, in Cobbett's argumentation, by his duty to earn money.

Moreover, her inactivity is partly due to Carlyle's considerate but also controlling orders; during her pregnancy he explicitly forbids her to "'go out without him'" (Wood, *EL*, 170; cf. Simpson, 593), which once more hints at his preoccupation with his own position as paternal authority figure. On the one hand, this could be regarded as extreme care for his wife; on the other hand, it is a show

of his superior place in the 'outside', the public sphere (cf. Wood, *EL*, 167 & cf. Kucich, 184). When the first child has been born, he appears to care more for her safety than for his daughter's, stating, when asked by Isabel about the condition of their baby, "'you are safe, my darling; safe and spared *to me*'" (ibid., 174, emphasis added). On the surface, he appears to have fulfilled his duty, which indeed begins, according to the midwife Martha Mears, *before* the actual birth, during pregnancy, and should compel him to provide constant emotional support (cf. 29). However, Isabel's pre-natal and post-partum depression, which causes her to "never feel very well now" (Wood, *EL* 170), is never really noticed by Carlyle. In consequence, even though his control over Isabel can be read as an attempt to "shelter […] from each rude blast the tender buds of mutual affection", Carlyle fails to "dr[y] the tear as it steals down the cheek of beauty" (Mears, 29).

As the inequality and miscommunication between Isabel and Archibald Carlyle becomes increasingly obvious, the couple's children are more and more drawn into the conflict between the aristocratic stay-at-home mother and the ambitious middle-class father, who concentrates on his work. Cobbett adds in the same context that

> [t]he working man, in whatever line, and whether in town or country, who spends his *day of rest*, or any part of it, except in case of absolute necessity away from his wife and children, is not worthy of the name of *father*, and is seldom worthy of the trust of any employer. Such absence argues a want of fatherly and of conjugal affection, which want is generally duly repaid by a similar want in the neglected parties (253, original emphasis).[370]

Absence, according to the author, creates emotional distance and is the root of dysfunctionality and misunderstandings, breaking the ideal of domestic togetherness:

> Carlyle is so profoundly preoccupied with work that he becomes oblivious to the emotional dynamics of his most intimate relationships and domestic spaces. Withholding information, concealing emotion, and ignoring others' social and emotional cues, Carlyle never becomes aware of his culpability for the emotional havoc of the novel (Schaffer, 238).

Carlyle's deliberate secrecy when it comes to issues that are going on in his workplace creates emotional confusion at home, causing Isabel to suspect an affair

[370] Despite his critique of paternal absence, Cobbett is shown to be in favour of the separation of the spheres, saying that the good wife and mother should have "absolute dominion" (118) in the household.

between Barbara and her husband: "How could it be otherwise, kept up, as it was by Barbara's frequent meetings with Mr Carlyle" (Wood, *EL*, 252). This development echoes Cobbett's advice that husbands should never give their wives any cause, however unfounded, to suspect any infidelity or any disloyalty towards their family, not only for their own happiness, but also for the happiness of their wives and children:

> The truth is, that the greatest security of all against jealousy in a wife is to show, to prove, by your acts, by your words also, but more especially by your acts, that you prefer her to all the world; and, as I said before, I know of no act that is, in this respect, equal to spending in her company every moment of your leisure time. [...] What company can a young man and woman want more than *their two selves, and their children*, if they have any? (196, emphasis added)

In this argumentation, absence causes emotional distance, which in turn results in paternal carelessness and might even have worse results than just disharmony: "[C]onjugal infidelity is, in so many cases; […] *generally* caused by the want of affection and due attention in the husband" (130, original emphasis). Cobbett proclaims "neglect" and "indifference" (90) from the paternal figure in the household to be the first step towards the wife's adultery. In the case of Isabel Carlyle, this proves to be true. The "central conflict of the novel" (Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 7) is initiated through an overly strict adherence to the boundaries of the private and the public spheres and a disregard or ignorance of the ideal of conjugal communication and togetherness promoted by Cobbett, which, according to the author, is the justification of the model of the separate spheres (cf. 196.).

The failure of communication in particular is mirrored in Carlyle's inability to understand and empathise with Isabel's emotional motherly feelings when separated from her offspring (cf. Wood, *EL*, 210). Lady Isabel's "exclusively ornamental" (Schaffer, 232) function leads to the circumstance that her maternal feelings are constantly neglected or disregarded. Isabel's wish to stay close to her offspring during her period of recovery has her husband "sorely puzzled between Isabel's wishes and Isabel's welfare: He would promote both if he could, but if they clashed – ?" (Wood, *EL*, 201). The problem is the fact that he belittles Isabel's ability to make independent decisions and, moreover, that he is giving in to the objections of the true matriarchal figure of the novel, his sister Cornelia, failing to

acknowledge that Isabel has a right to cherish her mother-child bond (cf. ibid.).[371] McDonald as well emphasises Carlyle's "tendency to misunderstand or even ignore her [Isabel's] feeling" (48; cf. Simpson, 593), an attitude which becomes particularly apparent when she misses her children during her stay abroad and longs for a greeting from them. His response to her pining is presented as more practical than sentimental:

> Mr Carlyle laughed: he was not a mother, he was *only* a father. Archie [their youngest son], with his year of age, send kisses! 'Had you been away as I am, he should have sent some to you' murmured Lady Isabel. 'I would have taken a thousand from him, and told him they were for papa' (210, emphasis added).

It is interesting to note that the narrative voice almost excuses Carlyle's attitude, letting him remain a reliable father in front of society and contrasting Isabel's sentimental clinginess with his rational thinking, the slight hints at ruthlessness being excused as idiosyncrasies associated with his gender. In this passage, the opposing depiction of motherhood and fatherhood and their respective dispositions is conspicuous and reminds of Cobbett's assertion that "women feel more acutely than men" (177) and are in stronger need of visual/sensory proof that their love is returned (cf. ibid.). The added 'only' in the description of Carlyle denotes the idea that fatherhood falls short in the understanding and development of emotions, being more aware of practical facts (such as his boy's age), while motherhood needs, and is intensely aware of, all fine nuances of emotions. Motherhood, moreover, is depicted as requiring a much more intimate connection to children to achieve a state of emotional satisfaction than fatherhood does. The father would have been satisfied with a simple message about his offspring's wellbeing, while motherhood needed an emotional sign in the form of kisses. This indirect characterisation of male 'rationality' in a paternal context again bears resemblances to Cobbett's proclamation concerning the biased male perception of female emotions: "The truth is, that men in general look upon women as having no feelings different from their own; and they know that they themselves would regard such disappointments as

[371] Even during Isabel's stay in Trouville, near the sea side, she remains comparatively reclusive for fear of making 'undesirable' acquaintances, and she does so by her husband's advice: "'It would not be advisable to do so indiscriminately,' he replied, 'but you may chance to find someone whom you know'" (Wood, *EL*, 203). This hopeful statement, however, is followed by a description of all the con-artists and swindlers who are populating the town at the moment, so that Isabel is after all encouraged to stay on her own as much as possible (cf. ibid.). Ironically, Levison is the one acquaintance she has contact with, because he is someone whom she "knows" and who proves to be the greatest swindler of all.

nothing" (ibid.). It is emphasised in the passage describing Carlyle's mindset that the mother-child bond cannot be imitated by fatherhood; it will remain eternally feminine and thus highlights the fact that Carlyle, in stereotypically masculine fashion, exhibits a decided "lack of emotional intelligence" (MacDonald, 48).[372] However, equally noticeable in the above-mentioned passage from Wood's novel is Carlyle's assumption that men are objective, while women – especially mothers – are always subjective, disregarding facts and being slightly unreasonable – a biased perspective on motherly emotion which, in Carlyle's case, "at times seems almost sadistic" (Rosenman, 30). This concept is to some extent also reflected in John Gregory's conduct book, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, in which he mentions "[t]he natural hardness of our [men's] hearts", which is, according to the author, caused by, the "strength of our [male] passions" and "inflamed by the uncontrolled license we are too often indulged with in our youth" (9). A result of this combination of 'natural' inclination and faulty upbringing is, according to Gregory, a degeneration of manners which causes them to appear "more dissolute, and make us less acceptable for the finer feelings of the heart" (ibid.). Read through the lens of Gregory's perspective, Carlyle's treatment of Isabel's maternal emotions is, consequently, partly male 'nature' and partly due to a lack of ethical knowledge attributable to social mismanagement of male education.[373] While Carlyle's depiction appears to confirm traditional assumptions about gender, it also, paradoxically, underlines once more that Isabel and her husband are an essentially "mismatched" (McDonald, 48) couple and thus sheds a light on the 'ideal' home as hotspot for conflicts caused by social demands and ineffective male and female upbringing. Indeed, Archibald Carlyle's characterisation maintains some paradoxes throughout the course of the novel, which explicates the conflicting demands on husbands and fathers. He is pictured, on the one hand, as "[t]he epitome of the Victorian model of masculinity that invests men with reason and rationality" (Twinn, 63); on the other hand, he is depicted as, whether intentionally or unintentionally, unfeeling, even rude at times and unable to communicate (cf. ibid.).

[372] Kucich confirms Carlyle's extraordinary incompetence when it comes to reading emotions, especially female ones: The lawyer is "oblivious of Barbara's infatuation and his wife's jealousy, but he never has the slightest perception of the distress his sister causes Isabel, although even the servants are aware of it" (184).

[373] However, as Heidi Hansson and Catherine Norberg observe, while Isabel is constantly portrayed as a passive victim of her (maternal) emotions, the father figure Carlyle and his emotional control are strangely enough presented as "normative" (157).

In the context of Gregory's critique of "faulty upbringing", one could argue that Cornelia's matriarchal influence on her half-brother has significantly shaped his perception on maternal emotionality and caused his failure to empathise with a more sentimental type of attachment.[374] In this line of argumentation, Carlyle's incapability to grasp Isabel's extreme motherly love is also presented not just as a lack of understanding but as conformity to social conventions. These conventions determine that "women as natural, emotional beings must also be controlled, and if men are capable of controlling their own emotions, they are therefore also capable of controlling women" (Hansson & Norberg, 162). Carlyle, however, fails to 'control' Isabel properly, and thus loses the mother of his children, replacing her with Barbara in order to achieve the presentation of an 'ideal', complete family.

During his second marriage, Carlyle has apparently "learned his lesson […] and seems more willing to intervene in the domestic sphere" (Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 7). This is also exemplified in his decision to send his strict half-sister, who, as caretaker of the household, 'sabotaged' his first marriage, away and thus gives Barbara the full position of mistress of the household – a role that was always withheld from Isabel (cf. ibid., 7-8). Indeed, it is striking that most scenes which depict Archibald Carlyle primarily as an emotionally attached and domestic father take place during his second marriage to Barbara (cf. Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 7). Particularly during this second marriage, Archibald Carlyle is still shown to take his duties as provider for his whole household, as figure of authority, especially in the financial, professional sense, very seriously. He sees it as his responsibility to take care of his dependants, his invalid son as well as the governess Madame Vine, who are both officially his charges. During William's illness, for instance, various extravagant choices of food are prepared under his authority (cf. Wood, *EL*, 420 & 442), a practice which Cornelia might have called extravagant but which, according to *Cassell's Household Guide*, is prudent and conducive to the child's welfare. The guide's advice to add extra meat to the children's plate, especially "in our climate" (*Cassell's*, 343), speaks of a similar concern for children's physical improvement, which was, especially according to the Victorian idea of childhood, considered to go hand in hand with spiritual, religious improvement (cf. Gavin & Humphries, 6). Obviously, the fact that Carlyle can

[374] Cornelia's dislike of sentimental attachment which could potentially clash with her frugality is also reflected in her "grim" (Wood, *EL,* 147) attitude towards Isabel.

afford such ‘extravagances’ speaks of the newfound luxury style of living in the establishment of the originally rather simple lawyer. William’s treatment thus puts emphasis not only on Carlyle as a concerned father, but also on the new status and financial capacities of his household, which strengthens the notion, brought up by Kucich and Schaffer, that Carlyle, as a new generation of middle-class, distances himself slowly but steadily from his origins both spatially and ideologically (cf. Kucich, 176; cf. Schaffer, 231; cf. Jaffe, 104-105). It is interesting to note that Cobbett supposes the fathers of ‘simpler’, middle-class families to be much more conscientious in the recognition of their duty (cf. 251), which reflects the inherent assumption of the superiority of the middle class in matters of morality, mirrored in Carlyle’s performance, and could maybe hint at the fact that Carlyle is not yet wholly emancipated from his origins.

This principle of ownership as well as moral responsibility and divine justification of authority over wife, children and the whole household resurfaces when Carlyle renames his daughter from ‘Isabel’ to ‘Lucy’ after his first wife deserted him (cf. Wood, *EL*, 281).[375] In the first place, his order of renaming her without consulting her (or anyone else) affirms his authority, “his controlling power” (Kim, 187), and demonstrates his ownership of *his* child. The question of ‘ownership’ of children, also reflected in the right of custody, had been a subject of intense debate and contestations in mid-Victorian times, fuelled by acts such as the

[375] His patriarchal generosity and concern for Madame Vine, indeed, speak of Carlyle’s new self-perception as ‘squire’, as local leader stepping into the shoes of the incompetent earl by truly caring for his dependants: As Cobbett asserts while explaining the moral duty of the breadwinner towards his wife and offspring and all of his establishment “God has said, […] and the very nature of things prescribes that there must be *a head* of every house, and an *undivided* authority. And then it is so clearly *just* that the authority should rest with him on whose head rests the whole responsibility” (187, original emphasis). In the following encounter with Madame Vine, the reader is not only confronted with Carlyle’s awareness of this maxim but also acquires an idea of his self-confidence as authority figure within his home. “‘At any rate, you [Madame Vine] have become ill at *East Lynne*, in attendance on *my* children, […] you *must* therefore allow me to *insist* that you permit *East Lynne* to do what it can towards renovating you’” (Wood, *EL*, 599, emphasis added). Carlyle explicitly affirms his position as master of the household, his identity as father of his children, and his duty as provider, and, even though he is outwardly very polite, the sense of ascendancy is present in this statement, suggesting that he does not allow for any contradiction. He claims ownership over his house, his children, and therefore exerts his right as employer and provider, by speaking of himself as all-encompassing figure, including his wife, family and servants, through the name of the house. East Lynne, the estate, becomes a pars-pro-toto for the family, which belongs legally to him; it is a symbol of ownership. Authority, resulting from this ownership is evidently a central issue for him (cf. Kim, 187), bestowing privileges as well as duties, with a similar justification as used by Cobbett. “What right has he […] what right to a husband’s vast authority; what right to the honourable title and the boundless power of father: what right has he to all, or any of these, unless he can found his claim on the faithful performance of all the duties which these titles imply?” (250, original emphasis).

Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), which made divorce more accessible, at least to men (cf. Jay, xi).[376] Fatherhood (and marriage) were the 'natural' prerequisites for masculine authority, which was generally affirmed by the legal situation in Victorian England even though social insecurity and legal reforms led to a growing anxiety (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 9). Carlyle's affirmation of this complete authority over his child would therefore be a familiar issue for a contemporary readership and appear very topical. In the second place, Carlyle's decision to rename Isabel into Lucy indicates that he renounces Isabel emotionally as well as factually. The original owner of the name Isabel had once been legally his property, had been *his* wife, but broken this bond of ownership in renouncing *his* name (Carlyle) by choosing another man. This breaking of ownership would be a blow to Carlyle's masculine pride and trust in *marital* authority, which he tries to compensate by affirming his *paternal* rights. However, Rosenman regards the process of renaming in order to restore his authority almost as futile because "Carlyle may rename his daughter Isabel 'Lucy' and forbid anyone to speak Isabel's name, but Isabel installs herself at East Lynne under his very nose" (27), changing *her* name on her own. In this argumentation, Isabel's disguised return to East Lynne to perform her motherly duties is seen as an (involuntary) slight for "patriarchal law on two counts, implicitly claiming her right to East Lynne and to her own children" (27) and thus suggests underlying instabilities in Carlyle's authority.

The connection between the process of naming children and paternal authority is demonstrated in *East Lynne* not only by renaming Isabel but also by the names chosen for Isabel's younger son Archie and Barbara's first-born child Arthur Archibald. As has been remarked in chapter 4.2.4 concerning paternal authority and the "father-to-son-model" (Brejon de Lavergnée, 90), transferring the father's first name to a son meant bestowing, at least in part, the father's authority on this son and marking him officially as successor to the full power of the father (cf. ibid. &

[376] Changes in family law and matters of female employment were topics frequently underlying the plot of sensation novels (cf. Pykett, *Sensation Novel*, 10) and this contributed to the 'uncanny' feeling of Victorian traditionalists, attempting to preserve the status quo. Legal reforms such as the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, also termed the "Divorce Act", the failed Married Women's Property Bill of the same year (cf. ibid., *Improper*, 61) and the "'surplus women' controversy" (ibid., *Sensation Novel*, 44; cf. Kenlon, 108-109) brought up questions concerning the commonly accepted model of femininity and womanhood in particular and, consequently, also targeted the ideal of motherhood. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 indeed expanded the property rights of women to some extent and made divorce less a spiritual and more a legal matter by shifting it from the Ecclesiastical Courts to the Court of Divorce and Matrimonial Causes (cf. Pykett, *Improper*, 61).

Grenby, 23). Even though he is not the eldest son, Isabel's son Archie has been named after his father Archibald, and, since the eldest, William, dies, Archie is marked as a successor to his father's position (cf. Pedersen, 114), bearing his name. The name 'Archibald', the status denoting title of the patriarchal inheritor to his father's authority, is already "monopolised" (Wood, *EL*, 413) when Barbara's son is born, as she rather resentfully remarks, appearing "vexed" (ibid.) at this circumstance, which is comprehensible to a certain degree: Her own son is deprived of the highest honour within the group of children and, moreover, of the dignity of being the closest child to the father in terms of the father-to-son model, with the intention of passing on to him the family heritage, the power of patriarchy as well as the estate (cf. Pool, 92). This circumstance hints at the importance of the heir, even in an officially still upper middle-class household, and again implies potential social upward aspirations, since the emphasis on succession and inheritance were traditionally more associated with upper-class family structures. The physician William Buchan, in the context of comments on the degenerated health among the wealthy, indirectly highlights the importance of an heir, especially in an upper-class context, or when property is involved and emphasises the disastrous state of the childless aristocracy with no one to continue the father's legacy (cf. Buchan, 76). Archie's name is therefore a constant reminder for Barbara that Isabel, as his mother, will never be entirely gone from East Lynne, and is even able, through her son, to regain a sense of authority, because her line will be given the ownership of the property. Moreover – and perhaps most importantly to Barbara – she will always be 'the first wife' of Archibald and have a close connection to him because of her child, who resembles his father and is named after him. Buchan's quote, of course, also reflects on the supposedly degenerate nature of the upper class who are presented as unable to keep hold of their property due to a lack of offspring. The Carlyle family's abundance of potential heirs denotes the fact that they have almost replaced the original upper classes as landholders. Here, however, the replacement is not complete, since it is Isabel's son and not Barbara's who bears his father's name.

Archibald Carlyle is pictured as a proud father, being aware of the circumstance that the children reflect his social position and his authority. He loves to hear his children being praised, urging Madame Vine to make a positive remark about his new-born son, whom he calls "a fine fellow" (Wood, *EL*, 413) and

occasionally visits his offspring in their schoolroom to check on them, thus appearing to contrast his wife's doctrines of avoiding being "troubled with children" (ibid., 406). His pride in his second wife and their children is very explicitly depicted (even though their relationship from his side is mentioned to be less passionate than his love for Isabel [cf. ibid., 431]) and he has, at least in some situations, no problems with or objections to the exhibitions of fatherly emotions, "smothering his [the baby's] face with kisses" (ibid., 413). Within advice literature, paternal pride in one's offspring, for sons in particular, is described in E*verybody's Book of Good Conduct* (1893) as a natural and proper expression of the biological bond that exists between parent and child (cf. M.C., 29). This "blood-tie" (ibid.), according to the manual, does not only foster an open expression of affection between parents and children, which was viewed as controversial in a time when fear of masculine 'feminisation' was on the rise (cf. Tosh, 21). Contrarily, however, the perfect domestic middle-class masculinity demanded affection, particularly towards children. According to Cobbett, "[b]eing fond of little children argues no *effeminacy* in a man, but, as far as my observation has gone, the contrary" (180, original emphasis). Cobbett's goal is clearly the promotion of the masculine image of the 'protector' (cf. ibid.), which is impelled by an emotional relationship to the child and generally furthers male authority and supremacy in the household and in society – much more than an emotionally cold, absent father ever could, according to Cobbett's line of argumentation.

Especially Carlyle's paternal concern for his dying son William foregrounds his caring side (cf. Wood, *EL*, 441-442 & 517), yet even here, his comportment is not entirely free of hints at the conflicting demands of the middle-class ideal of domesticity and his self-image as patriarch whose duty it is to maintain his authority within society. Paternal care and concern for sick, troubled, even dying children was an aspect of middle-class fatherhood which also featured as an integral part of the ideal of domestic harmony. In Elizabeth Gaskell's diary, for example, the author's daughters are presented as having an emotional relationship with their father as well, and the mother and author appears to be particularly proud of this circumstance because it reflects their close-knit domestic bond (cf. "My Diary", 66). However, this ideal of the caring father often clashed with the demand for men to be 'the voice of reason', untainted by subjective emotions, which is mirrored in Carlyle's reaction to the doctor's pronouncement of the precariousness of William's

state, which is received by him with a stereotypically masculine 'stiff upper lip', not exhibiting any extreme outward emotion: "What Mr Carlyle felt was not *suffered* to appear: his feelings were entirely *under his own control*. That he was tenderly and sincerely attached to his children, there was no doubt. He remained quite still, his eyes shaded by their drooping lids" (Wood, *EL*, 518, emphasis added). This evasion of emotionality because of gender-related normative behaviour is strengthened by Carlyle's firm request that the physician should reveal the truth about William's condition *to him* because "the child has no mother […] to be shocked with it" (ibid.) and who, consequently, would have to be kept from learning the truth. Kucich interprets this as a deliberate disregard of the agency of motherhood and femininity and as "one of the novel's consistent protests against professional discretion: that it is used systematically to restrict women's access to the truth" (179-180). Rosenman confirms that the father's emotional restraint indicates that, "Carlyle apparently feels obliged to repress them [paternal emotions] – they cannot be felt or acknowledged, much less displayed." (29).

This pattern of behaviour is somewhat opposed to Cobbett's idea that emotions are natural even in men, if they indicate their strong attachment to their family. Regarding the potential death of his wife he states, for instance, that "how was I to contemplate her corpse, surrounded by her distracted children, and to have escaped death, or madness, myself?" (169). It is not only the passing of his wife, but also the thought of the despair of his children which causes Cobbett's emotionality in this passage. Concerning open display of feeling in connection to his offspring, Cobbett is, again, emphatically against the notion of 'feminising emotions'; he proclaims to "have never observed that effeminacy was at all the marked companion of fondness for little children. This fondness manifestly arises from a compassionate feeling towards creatures that are helpless, and that must be innocent" (180, original emphasis). While it is true that Carlyle's character features elements of repression, in particular of sad emotions related to his offspring, one can observe that he has no problems exhibiting emotional connection to his children when they are well and consequently able to reflect his own pride in them. Acknowledging an immense inner emotional turmoil in front of the doctor and Madame Vine would be an admission of weakness which Carlyle tries to avoid in order to maintain his social image in public. This emotional control is "presented as an ideal that most other characters, and most particularly the women, fail to

attain" (Hansson & Norberg, 167). Schaffer, for example, promotes the idea that Carlyle's reception of William's death reflects this attitude towards emotionality. The message about his son's precarious state is received by him "at his office/Cornelia's house" and "[w]hen William is on his deathbed, Carlyle stays home initially but then goes to court" (240). Favouring physical absence in connection to grief for a child could, again, be indicative of his essential preference for professional authority over sentimental fatherhood (cf. Tosh, 129), but also of his wish to avoid emotional weakness that appears to affect his pride and authority. The notion of Carlyle's ambiguous emotionality calls the seemingly idyllic domesticity in East Lynne into question, and the suggestion of dysfunctionality is, in accordance with Cobbett's suspicion concerning second marriages (cf. 221), underlined by the presence of Isabel's children, who are part of this fake-perfection.

To all appearances, however, Carlyle is a highly religious person with an almost evangelical disposition, which is reflected in his every-day life; he strictly dislikes vanity, ostentation, and the dictates of fashion, for example in Christian names and the fashion of celebrating the christening of children in an elaborate manner (cf. Wood, *EL*, 595-596; cf. Jay, xii).[377] This remnant of stricter Protestant practices in his life style and child-rearing reflects the trend of evangelicalism which regarded contemporary common Christianity, and many practices of the Anglican Church as too lax and encouraging moral slack (cf. Mandal, 5). The discrepancy between Christian standards and common behaviour was viewed with disgust by evangelical Anglicans, who preached the ideals of a simple, orderly, practical, and industrious life (cf. Gorham, 3). These attitudes informed the Victorian middle-class self-righteousness, which, in *East Lynne* in particular, is mirrored in Cornelia's attitude towards homemaking, whose principles she imparts on her half-brother and 'son-replacement' (cf. Wood, *EL*, 37). Therefore, it is arguably Cornelia's strict upbringing that causes Archibald's religious principles; according to the evangelical middle-class author Hannah More, this is a positive

[377] Carlyle also refuses to remarry while his divorced wife still lives, evidently considering himself still bound to her spiritually though they are legally separated (cf. ibid., 319; cf. Jay, xii). Pykett opines that Carlyle's attitude can be read in the context of the mid-Victorian reforms concerning the divorce law and therefore reflects the general tension concerning new perceptions of matrimony which often clashed with traditional value systems and "moral and religious conceptions of marriage" (*Sensation Novel*, 47).

circumstance, since ‘religious masculinity’ constitutes an important factor in the maintenance of a harmonious household in her line of argumentation (cf. 27).

Carlyle’s display of religious principles has an impact on his ‘domestic kingdom’, which, read in the context of the writings of William Cobbett, is the correct way of leading the household because religion is the justification of authority and religious authority constitutes one of the authorising pillars of patriarchal power, without which the father’s status is endangered: “[R]eason, law, religion, the marriage vow; all these have made you [the man, the father] head, have given you full power to rule your family, and if you give up your right, you deserve the contempt that assuredly awaits you, and also the ruin that is, in all probability, your doom” (187). In particular Carlyle regards himself as a religious *educator*, imparting his own spiritual standards on his offspring (cf. ibid. 582-583 & 589), which lets his character superficially appear to be quite a good representation of the ideal of a ‘perfect’ middle-class husband and father. Carlyle openly talks with his children, especially his dying son William, about religious topics, and this fact, coupled with his occasional displays of affection towards his children (cf. ibid., 413), could be read as another indicator of the realisation of the ideal of ‘religious masculinity’ which has granted him this outwardly harmonious household. In support of this line of argumentation, John Gregory writes to his daughters about the choice of husbands, urging them never to consider any men who have no “sense of religion” also for the sake of their future children, since it is the husband’s task to help his wife “to form their [the children’s] minds to virtue and piety” (92). For the sake of domestic harmony and the upkeep of the middle-class ideal, a religious background is, according to Gregory, advisable (cf. ibid.).

However, Carlyle’s spiritual conversations with William, just like his own character, are not entirely without ambiguity. For instance, he creates a distance between his children and their mother, preferring not to mention her, even in the extreme moments besides William’s death bed: “‘Papa! did you know that mamma’s heart broke?’ ‘William, I think it very likely that your poor mamma’s heart did break, ere death came. But let us talk of you; not of her’” (Wood, *EL*, 585). He apparently tries to ignore the fact that his household, despite appearances, does not conform to the ideal of perfect domestic harmony, which is hard for him to accept; he blames Isabel for it and tries to compensate these feelings of disqualification by ignoring her existence. Indeed, according to common moralistic

standards, the taking in or the too open and too generous forgiveness of a fallen wife, let alone the acceptance of her presence among the children, would be considered a sin in itself because of the risk of 'contamination'. William Cobbett's remarks also reflect this common assumption:[378]

> Nay, what is death itself, compared with the baseness, the infamy, the never-ceasing shame and reproach of living under the same roof with a prostituted woman, and calling her your *wife*? But, there are *children*, and what are to become of these? To be taken away from the prostitute, to be sure (205, original emphasis).

Carlyle is conscious of these rules, as is Lord Mount Severn when he asks Archibald Carlyle about Madame Vine's (Isabel's) presence in the house: "'Did she – did she – come back to your house to die?' he blundered. 'You never took her in? I don't comprehend'" (ibid., 618). Carlyle tries to justify himself as a morally blameless father and head of the household: When his wife asks him "'Did you suspect her?'", he answers "'Barbara! Had I suspected it, should I have allowed it to go on?'" (ibid., 623). The evasion in his reply exemplifies that he tries to deflect the accusation of having willingly housed a person who, according to society's beliefs, poses an acute moral danger, particularly to his offspring. Carlyle knows that he has failed in this respect and tries to erase the presence of 'imperfection' from his own conduct (cf. Bauer-Gatsos, npag.). The instability of the Carlyle household under Isabel, and ultimately also under Barbara, proves that, even though Archibald dutifully fulfils his function as breadwinner, there is something lacking in the domestic picture and "Wood thus demonstrates that the ideal image of breadwinner husband and dependent wife was not necessarily the best model for society" (Simpson, 595). Carlyle's self-image as father and provider is questioned by the fate of the women who surround him, and his evangelical views, which position him in the tradition of 'religious masculinity' and middle-class domesticity, do not always appear to line up perfectly with his ambitious business aspirations and his social rise and therefore

[378] Carlyle's evasive answer hints at the fact that, arguably, there might be some guilt involved on his part as well. Cobbett's argumentation appears to confirm this idea, since, as already mentioned in another context, the author attributes a wife's adultery, at least in part, to the behaviour of the husband, stating that "it is for him [the husband] to use [his] power for the honour of his wife as well as for that of himself: if he neglect to use it, all the consequences ought to fall on him; and, as far as my observation has gone, in nineteen out of twenty cases of infidelity in wives, the crimes have been *fairly ascribable to the husbands*" (206, original emphasis). Carlyle might not have given "junketing parties" (ibid.), but the presence of Francis Levison, disregarding his wife's displeasure, can be laid at his door, and this character would definitely be categorised as "loose companion", according to Cobbett's perspective.

seem a little hypocritical. His character exemplifies the split between the old-fashioned, inherited middle-class values, and the new maxims of a middle class in the process of reinvention (cf. Schaffer, 229).

Despite Carlyle's ambiguity, the real 'villain' of East Lynne is doubtlessly Francis Levison, who is, from the very beginning of the novel onwards, fashioned for this role. His faults are at first unrelated to his position as father, husband, and provider but they strongly foreshadow his later crimes, affecting his women and his children. He cheats "simple, unsuspicious country people understanding neither fraud nor vice, nor the ways of an evil world" (Wood, *EL*, 222) of their money by making them pay for his debts. He flirts with the married Lady Mount Severn and toys with young Isabel's awakening feelings for him (cf. 113-115) and is even guilty of murder (cf. ibid., 575). The morally corrupt state of the captain is not only represented in his general ruthlessness and his disregard for children's welfare, as has been explained in the context of the discussion of Isabel as illegitimate mother of his child, but prior to this exhibition, his paternal unfitness is also reflected in the way Isabel's older children react to his presence and in the way he interacts with them during his visit to East Lynne, predating his elopement. Especially Lucy, who appears to have "inherited the refined, sensitive feelings of her mother" (199), senses Levison's true character (cf. ibid., 227-228). She dislikes his touch and starts to cry (cf. ibid., 228), which he utterly ignores, even laughing at her evident discomfort. His interactions with children expose him as an entirely self-centred, but also very superficial person, noticing children's beauty but not caring for anything else (cf. ibid., 227). The boy, Lucy's brother, indeed first appears to like Levison's rough play, which again mirrors the idea that girls and women are meant to represent emotional sensitivity and subjective feeling (cf. Hemingway, xxx). William Cobbett, though indirectly, confirms the normative assumption of typically 'boyish' wildness and roughness, stating that with a little 'false' encouragement "what boy does not find a justification for his wildness?" (311). The fact that he seems to think a justification necessary, though, suggests Cobbett's slightly critical view of 'boyish' excuses for bad behaviour, since, if not checked in time, they might grow into undomestic habits and thus hinder family formation. Francis Levison's rough play is, therefore, depicted as a 'false' and morally questionable influence on the young boy, tempting him to defy mother and sister by following his 'wilder' nature.

Levison's inconsideration towards children is not only demonstrated in his carelessness towards other people's children but is even more striking in his treatment of his own progeny. He is unconcerned about his son's future, not caring whether the boy would be born legitimately or illegitimately and thus carry the burden of his parent's disregard of social rules and be potentially branded for life (cf. ibid. 287; cf. Cvetkovitch, 99). His own status and future as aristocrat are more important to him than his son's, which causes him to ignore the mother's pleadings. Furthermore, Levison is indifferent towards the boy's health, only noticing his new-born for one quick moment, in which he tries to assert whether his child has inherited his own "handsome" (ibid., 294) looks. This emotional disconnection from his own child exhibits Levison's preoccupation with outer appearances, especially his own, and is depicted as inherently 'unnatural', thus supporting a discourse on 'natural' parental affection. Cobbett, for instance, comments on the 'naturalness' of paternal love and care and on the consequent unnaturalness of a disregard for children:

> But the man, and especially the *father*, who is not fond of *babies*; who does not feel his heart softened when he touches their almost boneless limbs; when he sees their little eyes first begin to discern; when he hears their tender accents; the man whose heart does not beat truly to this test, is, to say the best of him, an object of compassion" (247, original emphasis).

There is, in the light of Cobbett's arguments, nothing 'soft' or 'compassionate' in the description of Levison's treatment of children. This lack of softness clashes with the notion that Levison incorporates some stereotypically feminine characteristics, such as, for example, his vanity and his focus on beauty. In a strong exhibition of paternal 'unnaturalness', Levison objectifies his son, calling him "that young article" (Wood, *EL*, 294) and perceiving his own honour as too important to risk the "sacrifice" (ibid., 292; cf. Jay, xxii) of acknowledging him.

Financially, however, Francis Levison is prepared to conform at least to some extent to the patriarchal standards. He is aware of his duty to provide for mother and child and knows that doing otherwise might 'look bad' to the world. Thus, his half-heartened attempts to support mother and child only prove how casually he regards their parting and how little he cares for them both (cf. Wood, *EL*, 295). Though he emphasises that the father should be the financial pillar of the household,

William Cobbett stresses that, according to his ideal of domesticity, the father should do more than just provide financial shelter:

> [Y]ou can provide them with no money equal in value to health and straight limbs and good looks: these it is if within your power, your bounden duty to provide for them: as to providing them with money, you *deceive* yourself; it is your own *avarice*, or *vanity*, that you are seeking to gratify, and not to ensure the good of your children. (279, emphasis added).

The notion that this 'incomplete' or even 'hypocritical' paternal provision is, in fact, a sign of levity and vanity fits the general description of Levison and his focus on outer appearances. Levison's observation that "'[y]ou have no fortune: you must receive assistance from some one [sic]'" (ibid.) indicates, once more, his disinclination to openly contradict patriarchal rules, such as masculine breadwinning. The possibility of women earning their own living does not even enter his mind, and he, therefore, disregards Lady Isabel's wish to receive nothing from him and pays the servants as well as the house's rent in advance without her knowledge, apparently distrusting her ability to extricate herself from these difficulties (cf. ibid., 296). His financial support would, moreover, be only an 'excuse', a way to circumvent responsibility since he would be, emotionally as well as physically, an "absent father" (Strange, 4 & Tosh, 129). His eagerness to leave his mistress and child alone makes him a "[c]oward" (cf. ibid., 308) in the eyes of Lord Mount Severn, who stands symbolically for respectable society in this case.

According to evangelical advice literature, Francis Levison would be considered the enemy of domestic and parental happiness. Hannah More maintains a point of view similar to that of Lord Mount Severn when she calls out "libertine" (27) male conduct and utters her regret that this kind of behaviour is often more admired than hated (cf. ibid.).[379] Initially, the reader can spot a similar tendency in Isabel, who cannot help her growing attraction even though she is aware of the danger Levison poses to her status as respectable wife and mother (cf. Wood, *EL*, 219). Levison embodies a danger to maternity, not only for Isabel, but also for other

[379] William Cobbett adds that the tendency to play with women's feelings is usually the result of male vanity, which, again, fits very well to the character of Frances Levison as depicted in the novel: "[I]f you know you are here sowing the seeds of disappointment; and if you, keeping your previous engagement or greater liking a secret, persevere, in spite of the admonitions of conscience, you are guilty of deliberate deception, injustice and cruelty: you make to God an ungrateful return for those endowments which have enabled you to achieve this inglorious and unmanly triumph; and if, as is frequently the case, you *glory* in such triumph, you may have person, riches, talents to excite envy; but every just and humane man will abhor your heart" (140, original emphasis).

women. Lady Mount Severn, for example, falls for the seducer as well, even though she is even more than Isabel aware of Francis Levison's history. She is prepared to disregard her children, her husband and her duties as housewife in order to receive some attention from the libertine, although her feeling is not reciprocated. It is interesting to note that even though Isabel and Lady Mount Severn are depicted as quite opposed to each other in their morality as well as in their respective attachment to their children, both are prepared to risk their reputation and their children's affection for an openly immoral, undomestic and unpaternal man. Hannah More speaks of the same kind of 'moral paradox' when she describes "that delicate women" (27) often tolerate and even like the attention of a man who has an immoral reputation. The result is, as More states, that "the unhappy partner of his crime" (ibid.) remains in an outcast state, while *he* is allowed to re-enter society and potentially cause the shattering of more families. Even though More stresses the supposed justification of the seduced woman's punishment, she also calls out the double standard behind this system (cf. ibid.). It is apparent that More considers especially upper-class masculinity with its laxer codes, particularly regarding domestic masculinity, a danger to domestic harmony and maternal happiness (cf. ibid., 28).[380] The presentation of Levison as a cause of the children's isolation from their mothers, particularly in Isabel's case, supports Cobbett's as well as More's assumption about culpability in cases of adultery. Both authors regard the man as the primary initiator and consequently the first culprit, arguing that the man's superior position as inherently paternal authority, voice of reason and role model should forestall compromising the domestic ideal (cf. 90). The case of Isabel appears to reflect the inherent injustice of the concept quite accurately – contrary to Lady Mount Severn's history, which does not include punishment of immorality and maternal neglect.[381]

[380] This becomes apparent, for instance, in More's vehement rejection of the upper-class practice of men duelling over their female conquest, which sometimes happened in the context of extra-marital affairs (cf. 28). She states here that, in her opinion, not the man accepting the challenge but the one refusing to participate in these practices is closer to the masculine ideal because he "fears God" and not "man" (ibid.).

[381] She does not require any special attention from Levison or any other man to neglect her children and her husband, to whom she, if at all, feels only superficially attached (cf. Wood, *EL*, 113), and her happiness and reputation are not greatly affected by her dealings with the aristocratic seducer. As a result, she is allowed to keep her position as wife and mother and suffers no damages throughout the novel, while Isabel is parted from her children and utterly ruined. The difference in fate is due, of course, to the opposing ways in which the two women react to the domestic danger posed by

Francis Levison is not just an irresponsible seducer who refuses to adopt the paternal position in the life of his illegitimate son; his second child, legitimately born by his wife, is equally ignored and experiences only a diminished form of maternal love as well. For the sake of his corrupted father, Lady Levison regrets the birth of her child, wishing that he "had never been born […] [u]nless he had had a different father" (ibid., 453). She thus forestalls the formation of a mother-child bond that would be considered 'healthy' and 'natural' and one of the many "promptings of nature" (Beeton, 478) by advice literature. Awareness of her husband's harmful influence on her relationship to her child and on her own wellbeing causes Lady Levison to wish to leave her husband, but she is afraid that he might mistreat her child if she should take this step, as the custody law of that time was likely to force her to leave him with his father (cf. ibid.). This dilemma invites a comparison with Helen Huntingdon's predicament in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*; however, fear of potential physical harm for the child is not the only anxiety that plagues Lady Levison. She contemplates the realistic possibility that her child, being the son of an accused murderer, will bear the burden of his father's transgression (cf. ibid., 560), just as Isabel knew that her son would be branded through her and Francis Levison's breach of norms. Lady Levison's final sentence in the novel is an accusation of her husband who "'has done […] [her] deep, irredeemable wrong [and] […] has entailed upon his child an inheritance of shame which can never be thrown off'" (ibid.). In consequence, she wishes to "change […] [the] child's name" (ibid.) so that there would be less visible connection to his transgressive father, thus disrupting the "father-to-son model" (Brejon de Lavergnée, 90) deliberately. Her intention is contrasted to Barbara's wish to be able to name her son after her husband and her disappointment at the impossibility (cf. ibid., 413). Indirectly, the two husbands are characterised through this distinction:

Francis Levison. Isabel's middle-class sentimentality leaves her unprotected against Francis Levison's aristocratic schemes and his slogan "[a]ll stratagems are fair in love and war" (ibid. 294). It is true that both women have a noble standing in society and are both mothers of sons, but this is where the similarities end. Lady Mount Severn possesses the truly aristocratic attitude towards husband and family, which means that she does not regard them as sacrosanct safe domestic haven and the only true source of happiness (also a reason for her boredom at home in Castle Marling). This materialistic view of domestic arrangements makes her less vulnerable to emotional attacks by seducers like Francis Levison, who shares her worldview where home and family are concerned. William Cobbett, as well, comments on the loss of true "modesty" in the modern times (nineteenth century) and attempts to unveil the hypocrisy behind the, according to him, 'false' delicacy which he terms "modesty in the *word* and grossness in the *thought*" (239, original emphasis). The character of the noble Lady Mount Severn's depiction in the novel appears to be modelled after this description.

While Carlyle's name is 'sought after', presented as an honour for his son to bear, Levison is a disgrace to his offspring, providing them with the worst possible introduction into their social sphere (in the case of Lady Levison's child) or excluding them from this social sphere from the very start (in the case of Isabel's illegitimate son). In William Cobbett's words, Levison has become a "disgrace [to] those whom it was his bounden duty to assist in making happy" (223), and this disgrace clings to his name. Even if the wish for a final separation from Levison as husband and father is prompted by concern for the child's wellbeing, it is pictured as diametrically opposed to the seemingly idyllic domesticity in East Lynne, and this is reflected in Barbara's reaction to Lady Levison's request.

Barbara cannot understand the disappointed mother's wish to separate herself from the father of her child and thus underlines that she "believes, in line with the law up to 1857, that a man may divorce his wife, while a woman may not divorce her husband" (Simpson, 596). William Cobbett, contrarily to Barbara's more decorous opinion, proclaims that cruelty and maltreatment of wife and children can never be excused and are a sufficient reason for divorce (cf. 224). The 'bad husband', a complete antithesis to domestic fatherhood, has, according to Cobbett, forfeited his patriarchal rights and privileges, since he is to be driven "from your house" (ibid.), and consequently loses his status as master. This description also fits to the depiction of Captain Levison as the ultimate antithesis to middle-class morality and the domestic perception of fatherhood. As such he does not fit into the bourgeoise, respectable environment of East Lynne and West Lynne. The mob aggression and the physical assault that he later suffers at the hands of the outraged population of West Lynne is to remind him of his violation of the ideal of protector and father figure: "What have he done with Lady Isabel? […] West Lynne don't want him: It have got a better man: it won't have a villain" (Wood, *EL*, 465). The election shows that Levison, due to his upbringing, lifestyle and past, is considered unfit for such ultimately paternal tasks as assuming authority over others and protecting the interests of his community, while Carlyle is again portrayed as the 'better man' (cf. Kucich, 162). The fact that Levison's accusers belong to the lower-middle to lower classes and are arguably born and bred with the domestic ideal in mind enhances the antagonism between the two characters. MacDonald confirms the idea that this scene especially indicates that "Levison [is perceived] as a threat to social stability and morality in West Lynne" (51). The unconditional hate that is

thrown into Levison's face functions, in Jay's opinion, as the "most telling punishment" (xxii) of the criminal, the degenerate aristocrat who ultimately loses not only his freedom but also his inherited status due to extravagance and immorality (cf. Wynne, 68-71).

Despite these instances of poetic justice, Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* both maintains and challenges traditional middle-class conceptions of proper femininity and masculinity and the related functions of motherhood and fatherhood "to create a more complete and textured image of the society" (Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 8). Simpson goes even further with her statement that "upon examination, Wood's *East Lynne* destabilizes the value of the ideal Victorian family and offers a potent antidote to the 'familimania' found in other sensation fiction" (586). We, as the audience, are meant to have sympathies with an essentially "flawed" (MacDonald, 45) heroine who violates the Victorian norms of maternity by leaving her children (cf. Steere, 63), and, in spite of the presence of a typical aristocratic villain, we are also confronted with a problematic vision of middle-class paternal power in Archibald Carlyle, calling into question the moral middle-class, domestic message which is also present in the text (cf. ibid.; cf. Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 8).

8. "[S]o young, and yet so wicked": Mary Brunton's *Emmeline* as the 'other' Isabel Vane

In Mary Brunton's posthumously published and unfinished novel *Emmeline* (1819), readers are confronted with an exceptionally explicit didactic message which emphatically seeks to separate motherhood from immorality through the indirect mention of adultery and the results of the breaking of a marriage and a divorce – circumstances which appear to link the story in some respects to Isabel Vane's fate in Wood's *East Lynne* (cf. Friedman, 123; cf. Lorenzo Modia, 111). However, this depiction of motherhood overshadowed by social transgression was published *prior* to Wood's Victorian scandal: Mary Brunton, a contemporary of Jane Austen, has always stood in the shadow of this famous author, her novels being largely forgotten today, even though in her day they were highly popular (cf. Friedman, 115-116). Her works are often considered to have an important place "in the formation and

development of the so-called female novel" (Lorenzo Modia, 111), and, despite its posthumous publication and its fragmented nature, *Emmeline* was in high demand with the contemporary readership and "ran into multiple editions" (ibid., 121) directly after its first appearance on the market. Like most of Brunton's other works, her tale of a "young, and yet so wicked" (Brunton, 27) mother is often considered "overly didactic" (ibid.), which is among the reasons for the author's lack of popularity among modern audiences. In Brunton's novel, emotional motherhood is not allowed to coexist with thoughtless, passionate love, which has separated the mother, the eponymous heroine, from her children. As in the case of Isabel Vane, the 'fallen woman' is not allowed to be a mother anymore and, in denying her nature, is punished by continuous emotional pain and isolation (cf. ibid., 123) that appears even more tragic because the novel is unfinished, and the ending is therefore left open, whereas in *East Lynne* the possibility of redemption and a consequent sense of closure is achieved through Isabel's death. The unhappy fate of Emmeline is described as inescapable, predestined and compulsory: a 'natural' consequence of her choices from which she, despite her attempts to avoid disaster, cannot run. Brunton's audience is thus presented with a clear warning not to tread in the protagonist's footsteps and commit similar mistakes, because retribution is inevitable and redemption, in contrast to Isabel Vane's fate, unachievable (cf. ibid.). The events that lead to the breaking up of Emmeline's first marriage to Mr Devereux are never explicitly named or described, presumably for reasons of 'delicacy' and prudence, since *Emmeline* is not a sensation novel, in contrast to *East Lynne*. The effect of this choice is that the reader is kept in ignorance of possible 'excuses' for Emmeline's transgression, and her maternal energy during her marriage is, in contrast to Isabel Vane, questioned from the start. This might be a possible reason why Emmeline, despite her inherent feminine softness (cf. Brunton, 4), is not allowed to reunite with her children and, at least to the reader's knowledge, remains unredeemed and undelivered from her maternal suffering.[382] The crucial difference is the circumstance that Isabel's main asset is her willingness to sacrifice, whereas Emmeline does not have, or is denied, the opportunity to practice maternal/female

[382] Even though we cannot be sure that the relationship of Emmeline and Sir Sidney de Clifford prior to Emmeline's break-up had been physical, any other kind of attachment to another man, especially since it led to a divorce, would be considered adultery as well by the authors of advice literature and will be treated as such in the following chapter.

sacrifice and, consequently is punished by having to forego the possibility of achieving redemption.

8.1 Misplaced "Sensitivity", Forbidden Marital "Rapture" and the Severance of Maternal Ties

Right at the start of the novel, the contrasts between the 'what is' (the present state) and the 'what should be' (the ideal state) is laid out for the reader in an unmistakable way. The protagonist is introduced in the manner late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century heroines often were: as a beautiful, impressionable girl totally devoted to her future husband, who is described as her strength and social pillar (cf. Brunton, 3). Likewise, the nature around the setting, a wedding-scene, reflects the idealised image by being lovely and serene and thus presents the – deliberately misleading – picture that 'everything is as it should be': "The drews [sic] were sparkling in the summer sun, the birds sang in full chorus, the antic sports of animals testified activity and joy, and gladness seemed the nature of every living thing" (ibid.). Emmeline herself, at first glance, matches this pastoral idyll, since she is described as "the loveliest bride" (ibid.), as modest and "the softest of her sex" (ibid., 4). Outer beauty and softness and submissiveness seem to align in Emmeline's case, which, even according to advice literature, should make her perfect for the position of a wife and mother (cf. Gilroy, 23). For instance, in *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, John Gregory suggests that "softness and sensibility of heart" (18) are to be rated among the most important female qualities, and William Cobbett praises "*innate* modesty" (221, original emphasis) as one of the essential ingredients of femininity and prerequisites of normative maternity.

Nevertheless, the outer appearance of Emmeline's modesty is the catch that exemplifies her dethronement from the ideal – her apparently maidenly "sigh" (Brunton, 4) is not due to the expected "rapture" (ibid.) at the thought of being united with the personification of masculinity, her future husband, nor is it the result of the conventional "maidenly fears" (ibid.). Rather, the reason bans her once and for all from any claim she might have had to the ideal happiness that the first description of her suggests, since the cause of the emotion is a "bitter recollection" (ibid.) of her first wedding. Friedman confirms that Emmeline is presented as "scrupulously moral and sensitive" (123) throughout the novel, similar to Isabel, who, however, in contrast to Emmeline, has ample opportunity to prove this

"sensitivity", mainly through exhibiting her maternal attachment, whether in action or in thought, during her exile. In consequence, Emmeline's "sensitivity" is depicted as less well-founded and slightly superficial, and a contemporary audience especially would have less reason to feel for and with her, thus enhancing the binary opposition of virtue and transgression in Brunton's novel. This idea is mirrored in the circumstance that her surroundings generally disregard her "sensitivity" and innocent appearance and, despite not knowing her personally, call her "wicked" (Brunton, 27). The discourse surrounding Emmeline's re-marriage and her separation from her children sparks resemblances but also striking differences to the marriage and custody debate around the figure of Lady Caroline Norton in the 1830s: Norton was, in opposition to Emmeline, able to present herself still as a "domestic figure" by denying the accusation of adultery and disclosing her victim status through the "expose[ure] [of] her husband's cruelty and her own efforts to restore domestic peace and privacy" (Gruner, 309). Emmeline is portrayed in a fundamentally different manner: Her abandoned husband is the domestic figure while she is the disruptor of peace and has thus no right to public sympathy. The didactic nature of the novel thus manages to cast the importance of domestic values in an even more drastic light, and the dilemma of the audience's sympathy for the mother in question is potentially lessened. Lorenzo Modia explains that Brunton's "moral views on the passions and self-control" (114), which are perceptible in many of her novels, turn her tale practically into a conduct book, suited "particularly for young ladies" (ibid.).

The narrator mentions Emmeline's wish to "atone for [her] error" (ibid., 5), indicating that she still believes in the righteousness of the domestic ideal which she abandoned. However, her deliberate attempts to assure herself that this righteousness can be regained during her second marriage is presented as entirely unconvincing, an attempt to deceive herself, which is exposed through the novel's fatalistic tone. Since Mary Brunton was an author often considered to display strong Protestant, even Calvinist, tendencies in her writings (cf. Lorenzo Modia, 112), the similarities to the intensely evangelical Hannah More are not entirely surprising. Hannah More and William Cobbett both confirm the irreparability of the ideal once lost; a woman who has committed adultery should never, as More states, be reinstated in a position similar to her former dignity, because absolving her from guilt would mean belittling the weight of the mistake, even denying the fault itself

(cf. ibid., 44), and thereby questioning the moral system of society. More explains that the husband is allowed to "forgive […] her offence" (ibid.) because, according to More's evangelical perspective, it is his duty as a Christian person to be merciful. She also condones the husband ensuring her further physical and psychological safety by providing her with "his advice, protection, and fortune, together with everything which can alleviate the misery of her situation" (ibid.), except for contact with her children, whose sole guardian he remains. His 'generosity' is socially accepted because it reflects positively on the moral disposition of the husband, especially in direct comparison with the immoral behaviour of his adulterous wife. Just as Emmeline's first husband is depicted as entirely virtuous and honourable, the husband in More's idealised picture is set on a pedestal of moral superiority which can only be lowered or even destroyed by further contact with his wife, who, symbolically as well as physically, stands for the loss of virtue. A husband who disregards norms like these is, according to More, "an unrelenting savage" (44), who allows for a potential "vindication" of adultery" (ibid.).

William Cobbett, as well, condemns the reintegration of adulterous women into emotional acceptance, family life and society, because they have committed an offence that is against 'nature' and cannot, therefore, be repaired. He states that "nature shuts her [the adulterous woman] out of the pale of its influence, and condemns her to the just detestation of those whom it formerly bade love her as their own life" (202). This statement is brought to life in Brunton's description of the illicit-lover-become-husband, Sir Sidney: Even on their wedding day, Emmeline notices a change in his personality and a decided deviation from the expected behaviour of a bridegroom: "It was a graceful figure, which, with head bent downwards, and looks fixed on the earth, was slowly and thoughtfully approaching her dwelling. 'Is that the step of a bridegroom?' thought Emmeline" (Brunton, 5-6). Later on, this impression is reinforced through the description of Sir Sidney's character as "proud", but noble, with a strong desire for "domestic happiness" (ibid., 7) and family togetherness. Contrary to Isabel and Levison's affair, whose description is largely skipped in Wood's novel, the arguably rather sensual nature of the first period of Emmeline and Sir Sidney's marriage, which pictures them 'lost to pleasure', trying to shut out any thoughts of the past or the future, including any mention of Emmeline's motherhood, is presented more explicitly: "She, too, had moments which realized all her dreams of rapture, when she saw De Clifford happy,

and felt that she was herself his happiness" (ibid., 14-15). Their initial relationship appears to illustrate Cobbett's admonitions regarding a woman who is able to forget her children's needs, albeit temporarily, in favour of sensual pleasure, even during marriage:

> they must excuse me, at any rate, if I do not stop even at love of ease and want of maternal affection, and if I express my fear, that, superadded to the unjustifiable motives, there is one which is calculated to excite disgust; namely, a desire to be quickly freed from that restraint which the child imposes, and to *hasten back*, unbridled and undisfigured, to those enjoyments, to have an eagerness for which, or to wish to excite a desire for which, a really delicate woman will shudder at the thought of being suspected (233, original emphasis).

Besides the want of "delicacy" that is implied by Cobbett, their marital pleasure is depicted as vain and brittle, foreshadowing that "when moments of rapture are subtracted, life has yet long years for apathy" (Brunton, 15). Emmeline's thoughts of her children intrude upon her mind in intensifying strength and increasingly disturb the superficial pleasure of the newlyweds, leading Sir Sidney to regard his excuses for Emmeline's 'inexcusable' behaviour, i.e. leaving children and husband, as signs of his own masculine weakness – he has, "though he acknowledged it not to himself, sunk in his own esteem" (ibid., 6) and violated his family pride. Several of his subordinates appear to be of the same opinion, feeling that their own status is diminished through their master's previously blameless reputation being compromised (cf. ibid., 28).

His choice to ignore the standards of respectability by marrying a divorced woman does not only affect himself or his wife but his whole family, including his mother. This is apparent in her reaction to his nuptials in which "grief, shame, and maternal love, were ill disguised by the language of cold displeasure" (ibid., 8). Her response illustrates how the breach in the mother-child bond is caused by the son's violation of social norms which force her to step back from the position as mother: "[S]he informed him that, by taking a last leave of his paternal mansion, she had left him at liberty to replace her with his bride, without injury to the spotless fame of his sister, or the feelings of those whose pride and whose hopes had perished in his fall" (ibid.).[383] The parental ties are severed, and the union is pictured as

[383] His mother's decision mirrors the idea that respectable motherhood cannot be brought into contact with a woman like Emmeline, who, through leaving her own children, has come to embody

unblessed and instable because of the missing social and family framework and support. Drawing on the ideal of this framework, William Cobbett, as well, urges his readers to honour their parents through gratefulness and good behaviour (cf. 21) and be the "props of […] [their] old age" (225), an issue that once again highlights De Clifford's, but also his lover's, offence, implying the rhetorical question: 'If they are denying his mother these advantages, how can they be fit to be parents themselves?' Sir Sidney is again made aware of this broken family foundation when he contemplates the lonely rooms in his residence, remembering his childhood spent in a happy family circle (cf. Brunton, 31). Emmeline attempts to assure him that a similar happiness can be achieved again, with them as parents, but his first reaction to her endeavours is a painful "contraction" (ibid.) of his brow which proves his innate, subconscious, conviction that the same level of family happiness cannot be achieved again, since their union is tainted and, therefore, unfit for parenthood. However, he does not admit these thoughts in front of his wife or even himself at first (cf. ibid., 35), causing them to live with secrets in a state of denial and dishonesty that further strains their relationship, eventually causing "tormenting" "irritation" (ibid., 42) and a final loss of attraction (cf. ibid., 47) on his part.[384] In contrast to Levison, Sir Sidney longs to become a domestic "decent man" (Friedman, 123) similar to Mr Devereux, the father of Emmeline's children, but is denied the opportunity to exercise his paternal instincts, as a result of his transgression. Brunton's novel is evidently not written at the peak of Victorian middle-class morality like *East Lynne*, and therefore Sir Sidney is not, unlike Levison, a synonym for a decadent aristocratic masculinity which is about to go extinct: On the contrary, he still has the chance to achieve "a brave man's death [which] might shed glory on his tarnished name" (Brunton, 97) by deciding to leave his home for the army.

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the opposite of motherhood. The idea of Emmeline being presented as the opposite of respectable motherhood will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter.

[384] It is mentioned that De Clifford soon becomes bored in her society from which he has come to expect "cheerfulness" and "amusement" (Brunton, 59). According to advice texts, for example *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct,* it was the wife's duty to provide these to her husband when he came home after accomplishing his professional duties. (cf. M.C., 21). Emmeline, however, can no longer comply with and fulfil the tasks expected of a wife – her anxiety and her guilt have compromised her abilities, and she is pictured as a 'wifely failure'.

8.2 Dealing with the "Brand of Shame": Emmeline as the antithesis of respectable motherhood

From the moment she left her husband's home, a woman in Emmeline's position would have known that she would very likely be unable to see her children ever again. As mentioned in the case of Archibald Carlyle, common morale went so far as to imply that the injured husband would be committing a crime, especially towards the children, if he chose to ignore these rules, and "the sooner they [the children] forget her [the adulterous mother] the better, and the farther they are from her, the sooner that will be" (Cobbett, 205). More's disgust for reinstalled 'fallen' wives is inherently linked to her protectiveness concerning the 'ideal' family, in which the very idea of immorality should never be condoned or brought in connection with the children, who could turn against "order and virtue" (More, 46). A mother who once broke her marital vow was seen as no longer able to be trusted to fulfil the promise to educate her children, because, according to More, the "most solemn covenant that can be made with man" (ibid., 44) has been violated. Moreover, in More's opinion, all virtuous ladies are insulted by the fact that they would have to welcome a sinful woman into their own ranks, thereby belittling their own virtue (cf. ibid.). The implications of her legal and social situation are, however, only starting to become tangible to Emmeline well into the first third of the novel: It is primarily her ex-husband's, Mr Devereux's, letter, which she receives in the midst of her honeymoon, that brings the sad reality home to her and, for the first time lets the reader see her maternal distress: "'Wretch that I am!' she cried, 'I shall never return! – My boy! my boy [sic]! I shall never see thee more!' and [sic] she wrung her hands in bitterness. 'They are no longer accounted mine,' she cried – 'they are not even named to me!'" (Brunton, 18). As in Wood's *East Lynne*, the highly emotional and sentimental tone is evidently meant to contribute to the didactic impact of the depiction of motherly despair (cf. Lorenzo Modia, 114) facing the legally and morally enforced separation from her offspring. However, since Emmeline's children are, in contrast to Isabel Vane's, never individualised, Emmeline's maternal longings remain rather abstract and are solely focussed on her own person, who is at the centre of emotional torment: Her motherhood is isolated from its object (the children) from the very beginning, and this isolation is unrelieved by the redemptive suffering which Isabel experiences in her children's

presence and which contains a rather cathartic effect, which Emmeline misses out on.

In didactic tales from the long nineteenth century, characters who committed mistakes against the sanctity of marriage were punished severely for breaking the established rules; in literature, this was often achieved through the plot structure which either implicated the death of the sinful heroine or wallowed in their eternal misery and regret (cf. Ross, "Female Education", 76). Especially in late eighteenth- and earlier nineteenth-century novels, like *Emmeline*, the importance of the moral value was often especially highlighted, because these didactic messages were regarded as the only justification for witing fiction – a fact that, according to Monnickendam, was certainly very well known to the Presbyterian author Mary Brunton, who was more than familiar with evangelical rhetoric (cf. 108). The moralistic author Hannah More explains why this system of 'literary punishment' is necessary to prevent moral transgression: If the retribution is missing, the false behavioural patterns might easily be confused as being acceptable or even downright positive ("For, from admiring to adopting, the step is short, and the progress rapid; and it is in the moral as in the natural world, the motion, in the case of minds as well as of bodies, is accelerated on a nearer approach to the centre to which they are tending"; 47). The process of Emmeline's punishment starts with guilt towards her father, her first husband (cf. Brunton, 16-17), "many a regret" (ibid., 35) at the loss of her children as well as with the first hints at social isolation.

Isolation is a form of punishment which is even more prominent in *Emmeline* than it is in Wood's *East Lynne*, maybe also because the cast of characters actually appearing in Emmeline's environment is smaller by far, and this circumstance underlines her social seclusion. Sir Sidney is the first to notice the fact that his wife is avoided by their neighbours and that society condemns her to "unbroken […] solitude" (ibid., 40) by releasing the newlywed couple from all usual social obligations within their community (cf. Friedman, 123). Advice literature such as *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* supports especially the mothers in the neighbourhood in their social anxiety. In this conduct book, the need to set strict rules and the importance of role models for children are mentioned as well, together with the warning that a lack of or a wrong interpretation of rules will lead to "trouble" (M.C., 142). Visiting Emmeline and thereby reintegrating her into society would have meant accepting that shame or even condone it, and this is a risk that

Mrs Ashley, Emmeline's neighbour, is not prepared to take (cf. Brunton, 61). Isolation causes boredom in the first place, and boredom results in Emmeline's wandering thoughts, which provoke her to remember the separation from her children, whose presence is associated with diversion and activity – the present is contrasted with the past. In opposition to Isabel Vane, who only becomes active after her official separation from her children and works hard to re-establish togetherness, Emmeline becomes inactive after her separation and is apathetic in her isolation. However, just as in the case of Isabel Vane, a lack of activeness engenders a sense of uselessness in Emmeline, from which she, in contrast to her husband, who still has his occupations in the realm of the public sphere, his "professional studies" (Brunton, 55), cannot escape. The private sphere becomes her prison and Sir Sidney's professional life, just like Carlyle's, is closed off to the wife and mother. Friedman describes the sequences dealing with Emmeline's involuntary seclusion as "tak[ing] on a claustrophobically narrow focus" (123), foreshadowing her mental instability. Her sense of isolation is heightened by the circumstances that her husband is, after a certain period of time, more or less forgiven by his neighbours and is allowed to pay them visits as a normal respected member of their community, while his wife is not:

> Mr Ashley [the neighbour] had *a wife and daughters*, whose hesitation to visit her [Emmeline] was not yet conquered. An apology, however, was made for this omission, on the score of lame coach-horses and bad roads; and De Clifford went to Mr Ashley's. As he rode off, Emmeline stood gazing after him in a fit of melancholy musing (Brunton, 61, emphasis added).

The standards according to which both are judged differ completely, and Emmeline's fall from the expected standards of morality is deemed much more consequential than her husband's. This observation echoes William Cobbett's assumption that "[t]o be sure, infidelity in a man is less heinous than infidelity in the wife" (198). The passage quoted above emphasises that Mrs Ashley, as a mother, much more than her husband fears the 'contamination' of a lack of respectability that emanates from Emmeline and is afraid that her neighbour might provide a wrong example for her daughters, which was not an uncommon fear at the time (cf. Holmes, 41).

Another aspect which is highlighted is Emmeline's mental decline, a state of almost-depression brought about by what Friedman calls Emmeline's

"hypersensitiv[ity]" (123). Drawings of her children, their names "blotted with tears" (Brunton, 83), convey the impression that Emmeline's self-control has long since crumbled and that she has no control over her emotions.[385] In contrast to Isabel, who is very active, especially during her emotional outburst regarding, for example, William's death, Emmeline's emotionality mirrors her passivity and her incapability to redeem herself even though she attempts to ignore her isolated state at first:

> [B]ut she shook it off, and began to amuse herself with a book […], till the remembrance of her father, of her friends, of *her children*, stole upon her, – her hands dropped *idly* on her lap, her body remained motionless, her mind *passive* in that *melancholy* dream which clothes creation in darkness, and loves to have it so (ibid., 61, emphasis added).

It is interesting to note that Emmeline's mind connects her children with social acceptance; together with her friends and her father they were part of a social life that she once had. Her children and her position as mother made her respectable in the eyes of the public since she conformed to the expected role of a woman and represented, in Martha Mears' words, the "perfection of her [the woman's] being" (4). Emmeline is aware that she has rejected this perfection by accepting the separation from her children in favour of the presence of her lover. The didactic lesson that rejection of motherhood leads to melancholy and cannot bring a woman happiness and/or domestic harmony becomes more than ever apparent in this sequence:[386] "'Oh, I deserve this, and a thousand times more!' she cried. 'A *curse* lies upon me'" (Brunton, 49, emphasis added). Emmeline's words echo Cobbett's ideas, who, in his turn, calls the 'fallen woman' a "curse" (205) for her whole family, worsening her status even more by making her an active cause of harm rather than a victim (cf. Monnickendam, 98).

Emmeline's tendency to cling to her victim status (despite the acknowledgement of guilt) through her word choice ("A curse lies upon *me*") again emphasises her passivity, and her passive victimization is named by her almost as an excuse for her continued inactivity in the face of guilt. Even though submission

[385] Of course, this scene is meant to emphasise the stereotype of 'emotional women' who are unable to keep their own feelings in check (cf. Damer, 212). Emmeline evidently departs from the ideal of emotional moderation.

[386] The fear of the loss of her husband's affection and respect (cf. Brunton, 78) aggravates her mental state, causing her constant "anxiety" (ibid., 47) to overshadow her attractiveness, which again causes distance between the spouses, especially on his part. Emmeline recognises this as retribution:

to fate and passivity were usually regarded as necessary ingredients in model female behaviour (cf. Adams, 504), complete inactivity was also very often seen in a rather critical light. The physician William Buchan utters his general dislike for prolonged "inactivity", which could cause "weak nerves" as well as "nervous diseases" (67), and Hannah More adds that inactivity could cause not only physical but also moral weakness because inactivity of the mind as well as the body could be regarded as a sign of inherent selfishness (cf. 10). Inactivity is a shortcoming neither Isabel Vane nor the runaway mother Helen Huntingdon can be accused of: Both women work hard for the sake of their offspring, whereas Emmeline only suffers. Emmeline's wallowing in her distress caused by maternal isolation could be read in this context as a selfish refusal to accept the consequences and separate from her lover willingly, as Isabel does. Her declining mental health can be regarded as indirect confirmation of Buchan's and More's argumentation. Emmeline's decline underlines the morale of the novel, showing that transgressions can only have negative effects, and a superficial acknowledgement of guilt is not sufficient as atonement.

Sir Sidney's disillusionment with Emmeline (cf. Brunton, 81) is intensified through the appearance of a 'rival' figure on the premises, Mrs Villiers, a model wife and mother, who shows what Emmeline is unable to be. Mrs Villiers is not only depicted as an exemplary mother, but also a witty, intelligent and active society woman (cf. Brunton, 63-66). Sir Sidney meets her at the Ashleys' party, from which his wife was excluded and, coming home, praises her as very "entertaining" and mentions that his mother always thought of her as "the best woman living" (ibid., 63). As Shannon Brick explains, "the addressee's basis for belief necessarily involves the credibility of the teller" (507), and we, as readers, are asked in this instance to accede to society's, De Clifford's and his mother's standards of womanhood. Sir Sidney is apparently unconscious of the fact that he just slighted his wife's image by highlighting her own social as well as domestic disqualification through the contrast with the 'model mother'. Emmeline, however, is aware of this slight, knowing that, due to her growing depression, she is "not at that moment very entertaining" (Brunton, 63). Even though her inactivity sets them apart, Emeline's melancholy, at least, can be compared to Isabel's, and even Helen Huntingdon's subdued spirits and their consequent lack of maternal suitability, according to Cobbett's paradigm that joyless caretakers are unfit for childcare (cf. 257), and that "[a] greater curse than a wife of this description, it would be somewhat difficult to

find; […] I hate a dull, melancholy, moping thing" (99). According to Cobbett, the only "remedy" is, however, "arms full of children" (128) – something that is denied to Emmeline.

Both Emmeline's self-perception and the way she is perceived by her husband are influenced by the presence of Mrs Villiers as the personification of respectability, fulfilled motherhood and domestic harmony, as her appearance in church illustrates: "As Mrs Villiers walked out of church, attended by her *numerous and blooming family*, and a train of decent domestics, Emmeline thought she had never before seen such simple *unpretending dignity* of mien" (ibid. 66, emphasis added). Mrs Villiers possesses the dignity of a married woman and a mother while Emmeline lacks it and therefore suffers from a damaged sense of self-worth, even being "ashamed that her two splendid footmen should be able to contrast her situation with that of Mrs Villiers" (ibid.). She especially envies Mrs Villiers' mother-child bond, which Isabella Beeton terms the "pride and delight" (478) of a woman, and thus feels unworthy and unaccepted: Watching "their children address them [the Villiers] with confiding gesture, and owe to their assistance an increase of innocent joy" causes her "mortal sickness of the soul" (Brunton, 86.). Even though Mrs Villiers and her children are idealised, yet rather flat representations of the ideal, their sole purpose within the plot, namely to emphasise Emmeline's maternal guilt, is fulfilled. It is interesting to observe that, despite her feeling inadequate, Emmeline wishes for Mrs Villiers' acquaintance. The reason is her wish to terminate her isolation and to diminish the "brand of [maternal] shame" (Cobbett, 200) by profiting from the respectability of the epitome of respectable maternity (cf. Brunton, 67).[387] Unexpectedly, Emmeline's wish to "dance attendance" on her neighbour does not meet with De Clifford's approval, who regards it as another slight for his dignity (cf. ibid., 68-70). His admission that his "mortifications shall be at home to-day" (ibid., 70) shows that the realisation that his wife is eternally inferior to another man's spouse has spoiled his wish to socialise. His masculinity as head of the household is affected by her inadequacy as wife and mother and,

[387] Since Emmeline is not allowed to have any respectable friends, she is eventually approached by objectionable and socially inferior acquaintances, who, due to her past, treat her as one of their own. The gossipy Mrs Jenkinson, a former housekeeper, furnishes her with a detailed account of "the number, ages, and dispositions of her children" (Brunton, 74). Despite this focus on her motherly role, she is pictured as slightly vulgar and the opposite of the ladylike, composed Mrs Villiers (cf. ibid.). The fact that Emmeline accepts such companionship sinks her even lower in the eyes of her husband, who experiences it, again, as a betrayal of his family's honour (cf. ibid., 77).

consequently, spurns his perception of the inadequacy of his own person. Mears, More (cf. 29 & 29) as well as Cobbett highlight the safe-keeping of masculinity and its importance for maintaining the domestic ideal (cf.180). Sir Sidney's awareness of this ideal results in a growing resentment towards his wife.

Emmeline is provided with a glimpse of 'false' hope when she is obliged to take care of Mrs Villiers' injured son Harry. who has had an accident; it is an occasion to be useful, relieve her boredom and a possibility to practice her starved motherly feelings and a chance to grow closer to her admired model figure (cf. ibid., 91). Indeed, in connection to her son's accident, Mrs Villiers exhibits her closeness to her children for the first time in a more explicit and human way:[388] "'Harry! my [sic] dear Harry!' was all that her ashy lips could utter, as she pressed them a thousand times to the face of her senseless child" (ibid., 90). This exhibition of the mother-child bond obviously causes Emmeline to feel a bond of maternal suffering, a sense of female collegiality, thinking that her "heart […] [is] with them all" (ibid., 91). Due to these signs of broken isolation, she feels "for the moment as if restored to her better self, – as if she could once more claim faint affinity with the worthier part of womankind" (ibid.). Shared maternal suffering, she wishes to believe, causes a loyalty that exceeds social conventions, but such a scenario would contradict the didactic message of the text that broken respectability cannot be regained. The circumstance that Emmeline feels temporarily strengthened through the opportunity of maternal expression can be compared to Isabel's activity as governess of her own children; however, in Emmeline's case, the sequence only serves to make Emmeline's fall even more tragic and inevitable because it is not her own child that causes the temporary relief. The presence of the real mother, who rejects Emmeline's approaches, once again determines the tone of tragedy, of renewed, and again lost, hope. The inevitability of fate and moral justice is hammered into the reader's mind with Mrs Villiers' words

> 'Lovely, miserable thing!' she thought, 'must thou, so formed to adorn virtue, charm only to disguise the deformity of vice! […] Unhappy victim of a sentence wise as it is terrible! - But the nobler the victim, the more solemn the

[388] Despite being absent at the time of the accident, Mrs Villiers is never blamed for negligence, and the reader is left to suppose that she was called away due to some 'virtuous errand' because descriptions of her character as well as her overall function in the text never let the reader cast any doubt on her perfect motherhood.

> warning! I must not help thee to hide the brand that warns others from thy crime and thy punishment' (ibid., 93-94).

Once again, Emmeline is reduced to an entirely passive figure, a 'victim', robbed of the validation of activity and the gratification of motherly emotions, and this time her fate is steady in its decline. The fact that Mrs Villiers uses the 'thou' form lends this passage an almost biblical tone, underlining the idea that she is proclaiming 'social and moral commandments' which, when transgressed, cause repulsion from heaven as well as from a fulfilled domestic and social life. William Cobbett reiterates this social reality by stating that mistakes such as Emmeline's, "cut […] her off for life from every thing [sic] connected with female purity; […] brand […] her with infamy to her latest breath" (203). The fatalistic inevitability is very strongly visible in this sequence, and Friedman confirms that, from the beginning to the (unfinished) ending of the novel, it is made emphatically clear to the reader that "Emmeline's moral blemish is irreversible" (123). Despite the fact that the novel is unfinished, the last sentence from the author's outline makes it clear that, in any case, the ending would not have been a happy one for the protagonist: "It was lost – and Emmeline was left *alone*" (Brunton, 100, original emphasis). The last thoughts remain isolation and punishment as an inescapable result of transgression. Even though Isabel Vane's transgression is depicted as irreversible as well, she achieves spiritual hopes and the expectation of a timely reunification with at least one of her children after her death through her fierce determination to be with him: "I am going to William" (Wood, *EL*, 616). Death and forgiveness are denied to the tragic, passive Emmeline, emphasising the 'living hell' of an isolated life after her transgression. Even though Emmeline is more fatalistic and slightly less pitiable than the sensational Victorian mother figure Isabel Vane, Friedman reveals that this presentation of a morally failed heroine was "both conservative and revolutionary" (123) in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and caused some readers to realise the "moral contradiction […]" (Monnickendam, 98) within the text's message. We, as readers, are invited, even forced, to identify with the 'fallen' woman and the 'bad' mother, to experience her "mental torment" (ibid.) and descend into hopeless depression, which arguably feels even more realistic for a modern audience because of today's awareness of mental illness and its consequences.

9. Sensational hazards of total maternal devotion in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Emily Fox-Seton*-series: *The Making of a Marchioness* and *The Methods of Lady Walderhurst*

Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel *The Making of a Marchioness* (1901), frequently referred to as "Burnett's best novel for adults" (Godbee, 117 & cf. Lurie, *Garden,* 79), and its sequel *The Methods of Lady Walderhurst* (1902) present the readership with a female protagonist who, on the one hand, is very unlike the ideal mother and, on the other hand, inherently personifies the "ideal of selflessness" (Pedersen, 110) in every detail.[389] Emily Fox-Seton is an outsider to the social sphere that she was born into and, due to her kindness and simple-mindedness, she is taken advantage of in her subservient position (cf. Burnett, *The Making of a Marchioness*, 3-5 & cf. Mitchell, 47), from which she is eventually rescued by a rather selfish nobleman who makes her his wife without any pre-existing romantic feelings. Later on, Emily becomes a mother, who, due to her self-negating devotion to her husband and the knowledge of his need for an heir, is willing to sacrifice not only every kind of comfort but also her life in the defence of her unborn child against opportunistic relatives. In his essay "Historical Dreamscapes and the Vicissitudes of Class: From *A Lady of Quality* to *The Methods of Lady Walderhurst*", Thomas Recchio describes Emily's marital bond as characterised by "inequality", because her "love for Walderhurst is mixed with intense gratitude" (125) for his role as 'saviour' during the first stage of their acquaintance, when his proposal offers her a way out of employment. The role allocation highlighted in this image of masculine saviour and devoted, sacrificial motherhood, appears to suggest that the novel, dedicated to "[t]he lady reader" (anon., *The Athenaeum*, 807), possesses distinctive didactic elements.

The two successive novels were regarded as quite "pleasant" (anon., *The Academy*) but by no means brilliant pieces of society literature, with the first novel, *The Making of a Marchioness*, by and large receiving more praise.[390] *The Bookman*,

[389] Even though the two novels were at first published independently, they were later on sold in joint form under the title *Emily Fox-Seton. Being "The Making of a Marchioness" and "The Methods of Lady Walderhurst."*

[390] Even though it was frequently singled out as the better and the more 'natural' of the two novels, even the first part did not escape criticism altogether. The edition of *The Athenaeum* published on

published in December 1901, for instance, attributes the common preference of the first part to the dominant public perception of the too unrealistic, sensational and melodramatic nature of the "diabolical attempts on her [the pregnant Emily's] life" (anon., 98).[391] *The Athenaeum*, as well, overall supports this assessment of the novels, stating very explicitly that "[w]e cannot say much in praise of the way this [the latter] part of her story is unfolded. Perhaps, however, the author's numerous admirers will not be hypercritical, but will enjoy her story without analyzing it" (anon., 807). More recent research and reviews dedicated to Burnett's frequently forgotten novels for adults usually present a more differentiated and complex view of an exploited female heroine behind the "Cinderella plot" (Mitchell, 47).[392] According to Charlotte Mitchell's review from 2001, Burnett entertains her readership with a deconstructed fairy tale, set in early twentieth-century England, which makes it clear for everyone that "marquises are not fairy princes" (ibid.) and that there is an unemotional and even "sordid reality" (ibid.) connected to Edwardian society that opposes the Victorian sentimentalism represented by Emily as a bride and a mother-to-be (cf. Goode, 537). Alison Lurie confirms that Burnett's tale(s) can be regarded as a "modern fairy story" (*Garden*, 79) containing an abundance of "stock-characters" (ibid., 84), also borrowed from sensation fiction, who nevertheless spark a sense of underlying realism (cf. ibid., "Introduction", viii) in their portrait of even well-born women's harsh reality (cf. ibid., *Garden*, 87). John Goode likewise emphasises the "sharply ironic poise" (537) in the narrative presentation of Emily and her environment, which enables comments on depictions of traditional role allocation as well as the conflicting realisation of norms by the characters. This chapter will include an examination of Emily and her husband's

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December 14, 1901, describes the depiction of Emily's life in genteel poverty as containing "small discrepancies" (807) to reality and mentions that "[i]t is easy to see that comely, wholesome Emily is a *persona gratissima* with her author" (ibid., original emphasis).

[391] The anonymous author of the review admits that once the marquis returns and the struggle against the deceitful relatives is over, the "natural note" (*The Bookman*, 98) of the first part returns. In his 2022 essay on "Historical Dreamscapes and the Vicissitudes of Class: From *A Lady of Quality* to *The Methods of Lady Walderhurst*", Recchio confirms the categorisation of the second novel, *The Methods of Lady Walderhurst*, as a sensation novel (cf. 121) and explains his view that the author's choice to shift genres from one novel to the next restores a little semblance of equality to the very unequal union (cf. 125) and gradually allows for "genuine affection" (126) to develop. American reviews of both novels were generally kinder than British reviews (cf. ibid., 122).

[392] Recchio also mentions that, in accordance with the Cinderella plot, especially the first novel conforms to the "trope of the odd, redundant, woman" (122), because Emily "[w]ith no father, no brother, no husband and no profession […] has no clear social place of her own, hence her redundancy" (123). However, Lurie argues that Emily is Cinderella "with a difference" (*Garden*, 79), being neither beautiful, young nor clever (cf. ibid.).

parental characteristics, their wish for a child as well as their attitude towards their offspring.

9.1 Emily: humble and devoted wife or energetic and fierce maternal force?

Emily's "heartfelt humbleness of spirit" (Burnett, *The Making*, 3), her inherent simplicity and "frank and grateful" (5) nature are among the very first characteristics to be established in *The Making of a Marchioness*. Her humility and kindness make her expect and believe the best of every acquaintance, which renders her generally quite happy in her situation, even if people are evidently misusing her kindness and disregarding her comfort (cf. ibid., 31). This selfless humility (cf. Lurie, *Garden*, 81) generally implies that she is a person with an abundance of the maternal qualities prescribed in advice manuals: Hannah More, for example, judges a woman who practices humility as far more deserving of social recognition than women who are "distinguished for wit and genius" (xiii), since humbleness features as proof of an inherently selfless, sacrificial nature.[393] As mentioned in the context

[393] Spirituality and religion are mentioned openly a few times in both novels, and these occasions serve to highlight the disposition of the respective characters. For example, Emily, as Lady Walderhurst, says The Lord's Prayer when she suspects being pregnant but fears a disappointment of her hopes (*The Methods*, 89). It is also made clear that she is a conventionally devout person, saying "the Litany on Sundays" (ibid., 71), accepting faith very much as she was taught without questioning it, since it is revealed that her idea of God is "of the simplest kind" (ibid.) and thus rather childlike. This thought correlates with the common perception of her as not being very clever (ibid., 63). Moreover, the reader learns that her concept of divine power comes very close to her vision of her husband, whom she regards as "[o]mnipotent" (ibid.). The circumstance that she reveres both God and the marquis almost equally tells the readers a lot about the hierarchies in her marriage. Emily unquestioningly accepts both faith and her husband's inherent superiority and patriarchal power and subordinates herself to both equally as a matter of course. Hannah More would appreciate this attitude since it is her goal to help reinstall religiousness in modern women and help them return to the practice of what she considers true devotion (cf. x & 3-4). The fact that Hannah More's early Victorian thoughts fit in comparatively well with Emily's attitude, though she should strictly speaking be considered an Edwardian woman, is striking and reflects the circumstance that Emily is pictured as rather old-fashioned in her demeanour. Dr Warren, who treats her during her pregnancy, in fact calls her "Mid-Victorian" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 126) after their first meeting. The equally mid-Victorian Mrs Isabella Beeton also considers religious devotion a basis for a good Victorian household (cf. 7), and Gorham confirms that religious practices, such as prayers and Sunday "litany[s]" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 71), as Emily is saying, belonged to middle-class Victorian life (cf. Gorham, 9). This again underlines Emily's rather bourgeois sentimentality and attachment to her husband as well as her preference of her home over grand societal appearances (cf. *The Methods*, 90). In this, she differs considerably from her husband, who, even though not particularly social, is very much inclined to stress his own dignity and is exceptionally unemotional (cf. ibid., 69). The difference between them appears to confirm opinions such as those of John Gregory; the late-eighteenth-century author also supposes that women are more inclined towards religious devotion and are more ready to keep their faith, even if their husband is not particularly devout (cf. 9). Emily is definitively at odds with the late-Victorian and Edwardian trend towards secularisation (cf. Gorham, 4). Her charitable attitude, for example towards the Osborns and their

of *Emmeline*, Gregory considers "softness and sensibility of heart" (18) to be qualities which denote a woman's femininity and which enable her to surpass men in religious devotion (cf. ibid.). These ideas appear to confirm Emily's ingrained suitability for traditional normative motherhood in a way which is indeed striking, considering that More as well as Gregory are eighteenth-century authors and represent the middle-class ideals of their time, whereas Emily is an Edwardian upper-class woman who has to leave the strict boundaries of her sphere to earn a living. The circumstance that Emily conforms to the middle-class ideal in most practical aspects, being economical and skilled in needlework (cf. Burnett, *The Making*, 9) as well as generally capable in household matters (cf. *The Methods of Lady Walderhurst*, 63), is consistent with this observation. Alluding to the middle-class ideal of housewifery, *Cassell's Household Guide* describes economy in all household matters as a central quality of the good mother, regardless of her class (cf. 33), and Gregory commends economy as an essential female quality which is indicative of "good sense" and "taste" (42). In addition, Gisborne as well as Cobbett communicate their opinion that needlework, one of Emily's central skills, is to be counted among the tasks which best display the feminine domestic attributes of good judgement and patience (cf. Cobbett, 41; Gisborne, 18). During Lady Maria's garden party, the guests, particularly the guests' children, combinedly expect Emily to amuse them and manage their needs, which she does without complaint or any expectation of a reward (cf. Burnett, *The Making*, 30). The reader is allowed to conclude that, regarding practical accomplishments, and willingness to work hard and patiently, Emily appears to be the 'perfect housewife' and thus entirely suitable for maternal performance as the middle-class ideal prescribes it: "'She's a worker,

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unborn child (Burnett, *The Methods*, 84), is also considered a particularly Victorian trait that endeavoured to make up for the results of increasingly globalised capitalism by focussing on 'old-fashioned' religious values (cf. Gorham, 4). Her frequent reading in the Bible and of The Book of Common Prayer during her pregnancy (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 143) is also in line with common concepts of respectable religious devotion. Gorham confirms that "[m]iddle-class Victorians attended services on Sunday, but just as important, both for maintaining religious belief and for strengthening family solidarity, were such rituals as family prayers and bible readings, customs that were observed in many middle-class households" (18-19). Mrs Beeton, for example, starts her advice manual with a Bible quotation describing the ideal mistress of a household (cf. 7), and according to Thomas Gisborne the Bible functions as a perfect guide to the duties of both men and women in an every-day context (cf. 376). Again, the connection between Emily and middle-class norms and customs is established. Through Emily's middle-class respectability and devotion, the upper class, to which she undoubtedly belongs according to her status (Burnett, *The Methods*, 5), is rendered more respectable and less immoral and cold than they were often regarded by Evangelical writers (cf. More xiii & Cobbett, 313).

that Miss Fox-Seton,' one [of the servants] said to the other. 'I never seen one [sic] that was a lady fall to as she does'" (ibid.). As this comment suggests, Emily is depicted as capable, modest and pleasant manager of social gatherings and entertainment, despite the toughness of her work.

Besides moral diligence, Emily appears to have an inherent emotional and authoritative bond with children, enjoying their company even prior to her marriage, as if anticipating her later mother-child bond. She sorts the prizes for the children's race at the garden party, trying to prevent "disappointing" (ibid., 31) any child and sets "an example" (ibid.) in domestic industry, as Lady Maria recognises, already presenting a role model for the children. Moreover, the children treat "her as […] an omnipotent and benign being", because she "represent[s] law and order" (ibid., 33). Emily's compassion as well as her authority are, in line with the standards of *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct*, perfect prerequisites for maternal household management: "[T]he correct thing […] [is] [t]o remember that the lady who rules the household must have *absolute authority* in it and rule as absolute queen. *No comfort or order can be obtained without this*" (M.C., 11, emphasis added). Emily's position of housewifely authority in front of servants and children is established without the help of status, without a particular financial background and without an impressive outer appearance (cf. Burnett, *The Making*, 33), which emphasises her 'natural' authority and suggests that maternal behaviour is part of Emily's 'nature'.[394] This 'natural maternity' is also depicted as the cause of her compassion with the pregnant Hester, the wife of the inimical Captain Osborn, and her satisfaction in the preparation for the child's arrival (cf. ibid., *The Methods*, 91), even though it is not her own and she has only recently been acquainted with the mother-to-be. In addition to Emily's actions, the imagery employed in the text likewise accentuates her maternal tenderness. In one instance, Emily is described as "alone in a room and brood[ing] over it [a letter from her husband] as a mother might brood over a new-born child" (ibid., 144), and in another scene, her husband remembers her as having "nice, little feminine emotions" (ibid., 146). All these passages serve to establish Emily firmly as a maternal figure in the readers' mind –

[394] Another example of Emily's caring qualities and natural concern for others is her considerate treatment of the servants, who soon become "attached to Lady Walderhurst" (Burnett, 140), and her consideration for people who are deemed 'outsiders' by society, such as Hester Osborn, because of her colonial background and skin colour (ibid., 99).

though a maternal figure who is slightly out of touch with her time and place, adhering to a more Victorian middle-class ideal of maternal modesty. According to John Goode's review of Burnett's novel, the understating word "nice", which is very often used in connection to Emily's character, further underlines the "ironic dimension" (537) of the text, because, according to Goode, the word really denotes the exploitability of the heroine (cf. ibid. & cf. Lurie, *Garden*, 81) since she and her old-fashioned ideas of morality and goodness do not align with the rather cold and materialistic Edwardian Britain, and this assessment already circumscribes her later maternal struggle with the materialistic aspirations of her antagonistic relatives.

As Burnett's novel strongly insinuates, Emily's good health is another excellent prerequisite for motherhood. Her robust disposition leads Osborn, her nephew-in-law after her marriage to the marquis, to describe her as "a strong woman" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 63) and Hester Osborn to picture her as "fine [and] healthy" (ibid., 73). Hester, indeed, draws the connection between robustness and maternity right away: "'She'll have a son!' she cried. 'And then it won't matter whether *he* [the marquis] dies or not'" (ibid.). Captain Osborn, the marquis' heir presumptive, is aware that Walderhurst desperately desires an heir to prevent him, the disliked nephew, from gaining control over the estates and, therefore, remarks rather cynically that "Walderhurst got a good deal for his money" (ibid., 63) because of his wife's strong physique. Osborn's comment arguably objectifies Emmeline as a birthing machine, which correlates with Osborn's villainous and violent depiction within the novel, but also hints at the rather tactical nature of Walderhust's motives for marrying Emily.[395] Despite the deliberately debasing and problematic wording and the careless devaluation in Captain Osborn's utterance, the physician Thomas Bull would agree to the essence of this stance. He states in his work *Hints to Mothers* (1847) that uncertain health and physical frailty "may give rise to a state of health producing miscarriage" (123). The best preventive measure, in his argumentation, would be simple living and exercise, while those who indulge

[395] It is made very clear in several passages that Captain Osborn frequently abuses his wife, endangering not only Hester's but also his own unborn child's life (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 155-156). Recchio describes the depiction of the Osborns and their villainous intent as another "nod […] to the sensation genre by introducing two character types familiar to readers of Wilkie Collins, the drunken impoverished heir to an estate who will do anything to obtain it (think Sir Percival Gylde from *The Woman in White*) and the oriental other bent on using occult arts and even violence to procure a treasure (think of the Indian jugglers intent on returning the gem to India in *The Moonstone*)" (126).

themselves will become feeble and give birth to feeble children (cf. ibid.). The style of living recommended by Bull comes, in fact, very close to Emily's hard-working, simple life prior to her engagement to the marquis and thus again implies her fitness for motherhood. Emily's good health, furthermore, initiates the 'battle of the unborn children' in the novel – the contention about the future of fragile Hester and strong Emily's future children. Osborn's cussingly uttered remark that "our son might have been in it [the line of inheritance]" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 73) but is deprived of this chance by Emily's mere healthy presence and the possibility of a pregnancy highlights this antagonism. Indeed, Hester's apparent insecurity regarding the question whether their potential son, "lives to be born" (ibid.) confirms that, in contrast to Emily's future offspring, she is by no means assured that her own baby will survive.[396] The result of the contention between Hester and Emily's unborn children and the health and disposition of their mothers is visualised in the description of the two babies, Hester Osborn's daughter and Emily's son, who are both born towards the end of the narrative. While the offspring of the drunk, decadent and violent Captain and his fragile and emotionally unstable wife is "a puny, ugly and tiny girl" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 155), Emily's son is, in Lady Maria's words, "a huge, fat, overgrown thing with enormous cheeks" (ibid., 154), and Emily's 'natural' tendency to give birth to extremely healthy (male) children is confirmed through the birth of her second child, who is as "robust" (ibid., 156) as the first one. Additionally, it must be observed that Emily successively becomes the mother of two sons, while 'poor Hester' has 'only' one girl. The birth of sons is naturally meant to highlight the security and stability that has come to the Walderhurst family with the help of Emily's fertility (cf. Pool, 90).[397] Hester herself sums up this situation for the innocent Emily, who is yet ignorant of the 'battle of the unborn children' and her importance in this antagonism: "*Can't* you see? But for *you* my son would be what Walderhurst is – my son, not yours" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 122, original emphasis). The emphasis on 'you', on Emily's person, not even her son, again underlines the significance of pregnancy for women's position in a patriarchal society.

[396] In the end, Hester gives birth to a daughter (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 155).
[397] While Osborn's child was still unborn, it represented a threat to Walderhurst's ambitions to keep the estate in his own line (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 68). Once she is born and turns out to be a girl, she has become negligible but, as her mother states, "[s]he saved herself disappointment by being a girl" (ibid., 155).

One factor contributing to Hester and her new-born daughter's physical frailty could be the circumstance that the Osborns are, due to their financial restrictions during a major part of her pregnancy, living in a poorer neighbourhood which is said to be quite unhealthy (cf. ibid., 68). Authors of advice literature, such as Thomas Bull or the midwife Martha Mears, emphatically state that bad air harms both the child and the mother (cf. Mears, 42 & Bull, 83), and Mears advocates, if at all possible, a change of location (cf. ibid.).[398] Implying the potential accuracy of Mears' advice, pregnant Hester becomes even more "frail" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 93), being unable to relocate initially. At the same time, her behaviour and temperament become "more fierce" (ibid.), which, according to most advice texts, could have an aggravating effect on her feeble disposition. Mears warns against a violent temper and negative emotions such as anger, stating that anger acts "like a tempest, break[ing] it [the constitution] down at once, - [sic] shivering the nervous system - swell[ing] the torrent of blood, - [sic] tear[ing] the frail texture of the veins, - [sic] and often with apoplectic suddenness hurries its wretched victim to the grave" (Mears, 30). The results of anger and violent negative emotions are presented as being potentially fatal for both the child and the mother (cf. ibid.), but they were also, according to Gilroy, perceived as a lack of "bodily self-discipline" (20; cf. chapter 3.2) and an indicator of 'uncivilised tendencies' (cf. Mears, 30). This perception coincides with descriptions of Hester's 'exoticism' due to her Indian background and her general 'un-Englishness', being insultingly called a "little half-breed woman" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 91) by Lady Maria and described as "savage" (ibid., 93) during her emotional outbursts. Hester's connection to colonised India, as opposed to Emily's Englishness, turns her into a figure who stands in the tradition of the stereotype of "the oriental other" (Recchio, 126) and of "the return of the colonial repressed to disrupt the order of 'civilized' English life" (Pykett, "The Fantastic", 228) that was often used in Victorian Gothic literature.[399] Hester's portrayal underlines the recreation of the rather "simple ideological binary of the degenerate aristocrat and devilish oriental against the

[398] Through Emily's charitableness Hester is indeed able to move to the much healthier environment of Kennel farm, near the Walderhurst estate in the country (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 75). Emily is, accordingly, shown to be aware of the dangers an unhealthy environment poses to a pregnant woman (cf. ibid., 70).

[399] As Recchio confirms, Burnett introduces many oppositions into the *Emily Fox-Seton*-novels, especially into the second text, "invok[ing] the seedy and the rarified, the criminal and the domestic, the lunatic and the ordinary" (127).

morally superior and innocent landed proprietor and his chosen bride" (Recchio, 127-128), which, however, shifts in favour of Hester in the further course of the narrative. The presentation of the villains also, as Lurie remarks, conforms to the picture of villainous stock-characters in Victorian melodrama (cf. *Garden*, 84), while at the same time seemingly confirming Hester's maternal unsuitability regarding health and emotional disposition. But not only Hester's temperament and the poor financial state of the couple are presented as dangerous for the unborn child. Martha Mears would consider Captain Osborn's behaviour an aggravating factor in the precarious situation of his wife and child's health. Ideally, the midwife states, the husband should help to calm the highly sensitive pregnant woman down and treat any occasional outbursts of temper with consideration (cf. 32). Osborn, who frequently incites domestic quarrels, represents the opposite to this caring ideal of a father-to-be, frequently being the cause of his wife's anger, or at least an intensifying agent for her emotion (cf. Burnett, "The Methods", 93), and even threatening her with physical violence (cf. ibid., 156).

Even though Hester is portrayed as less suited to the role of a mother than Emily, she is still depicted as caring in certain respects, primarily in her concern for the future of her child. Alison Lurie claims that "[t]he development of Hester's character is one of the best things in the book" (*Garden*, 85), and this is certainly true. Being forced to watch the security and quiet luxury surrounding Emily is a reminder not only of her own but also of her child's lack of security, as she thinks the difference in wealth and lifestyle "mattered so much more now – so much more to Hester than she had known it could matter even in those days when as a girl she had thirstily longed for it [financial comfort]" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 84). The sight of Emily buying baby clothes and evidently enjoying this activity, as well as Emily's endorsement of the possibility of her own motherhood, angers her because she knows that Emily's gain will deprive herself and her child of social security and stability: "'*You* look at them [the baby clothes] as if the sight of them made you hungry, or as if you had bought them for yourself" (ibid., 85, original emphasis). While Emily is embracing her first motherly feelings when buying the clothes and only knows how "*nice* [it was] to buy them" (ibid., original emphasis) and how "*happy*" (ibid., original emphasis) she is in her new experiences, Hester is one stage further, plagued by jealousy at the comparison of the different futures of their children. Hester's depiction as 'exotic other', her moral ambiguity but also her

portrayal as an ultimately very human figure is meant to highlight the idea that, as Recchio puts it, "character types are produced by the projection of others; then by defining characters' actions and the degree to which those actions are motivated by a relationship rather than purely self-interest" (128). The bond that ultimately develops between Hester and Emily due to "their shared pregnancies", creating "solidarity" (ibid., 130) and leading to Hester's support of Emily, calls out the stereotypical nature of the character type, emphasised through maxims promoted in advice literature, which she at first appears to embody. The prejudiced views connected to so-called 'exotic types' is even stronger in Burnett's description of Hester's ayah, Ameerah, who is perceived "in the most stereotypical racial and cultural terms" (ibid., 128) by other characters and thus, as Lurie terms it, "combin[es] the standard roles of sinister foreigner and untrustworthy servant" (*Garden*, 84) popular in melodrama; though one could argue that her untrustworthiness to others is only caused by her fierce loyalty to her mistress.[400]

[400] Even though Hester might not be presented as the ideal motherly figure, she is not the complete opposite either. Ameerah, her one-time nanny, on the other hand, is portrayed as the opposite to motherhood in some instances – taking, instead of giving life – and as an even deadlier enemy than Captain Osborn. On the whole, she is portrayed as an ambiguous figure who kills without hesitation if it serves her purpose and helps illegitimate mothers to the means of abortion (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 109) but also protects her former nursling with a fierce motherly energy as her "surrogate mother" (Recchio, 130), eventually causing the "ignominious" (Lurie, *Garden*, 85) death of the main villain, Captain Osborn, and liberating Hester from years of enduring domestic violence (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 156-157). Reccio confirms: "Ameerah […] is connected to the idea of the occult, ancient powers of the mysterious East […] [and]will stop at nothing to serve Mrs. Osborn's interest" (129). In her mysterious, elusive ambiguity, Ameerah is the representative of, as Patrick Brantlinger puts it, the "imperial Gothic" (227). "[T]he hint that supernatural forces are at work" (Lurie, *Garden*, 85) in her secretive violence, her folk wisdom and knowledge, is incomprehensible for western medicine and reminds of "the connections between imperialism and other aspects of late Victorian and Edwardian culture […] [as well as], the link with occultism [which] is especially symptomatic of the anxieties that attended the climax of the British Empire" (Brantlinger, 227-228 & cf. Pykett, "The Fantastic", 228). These anxieties are mirrored in the attitude of the other characters with respect to Ameerah, and it is striking that except towards her mistress, Ameerah is rarely depicted as submissive or passive. The authorial narration even allows the readers to catch glimpses of Ameerah's thoughts, and thus, even though she remains mysterious due to folk-wisdom, we are brought closer to understanding her. When questioned by other servants, she only "gave such answers as satisfied herself […]. She was perfectly aware of the opinions of her fellow servitors. She knew all about them while they knew nothing whatsoever about her. Her limited English could be used as a means of baffling them" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 109). Her limitations due to the language barrier and her ethnicity, which are perceived as disadvantages by other characters, are actually used by her to gain power and outsmart those who are considered more powerful at first glance. Even more than Hester, Ameerah represents "the return of the colonial repressed" which "disrupt[s] the order of 'civilized' English life" (Pykett, "The Fantastic", 228) and presents a direct threat to Emily's very 'English' motherhood. All in all, we get the impression that Ameerah is a force who is to be reckoned with, and she uses this force to express her motherly energy, which, even though not based on biological kinship, is presented as strong, if not stronger, considering the lengths she is willing to go to save Hester. It is interesting to note that Hodgson Burnett frequently uses India and characters from that region, even if they have a British background, to create

In contrast to the 'uncivilised', violent and 'exotic' atmosphere in the Osborn home, Emily, residing in Walderhurst country estate, is pictured as the epitome of respectability and Britishness, and her unaffected attitude and "candid feeling" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 63) equip her excellently, even in the eyes of her enemy Captain Osborn, to grow into "a strapping British matron" (ibid.). The fact that her maternal predisposition makes her a representative of celebrated 'national' qualities and fit to become the image of British womanhood, is again corroborated by Mears' ideas, who, reversing the argumentation, describes unmaternal women as strangely "un-English" and "uncivilised" (Gilroy, 23 & cf. Mears, 140). Emily's sacrificial acceptance of loneliness and vulnerability during her husband's stay in India (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 97) fits the British ideal perfectly, since her loyalty to her husband's "affairs of importance" (ibid., 77) in the British colonies would have been appreciated by those who argued that loyal citizens have to acknowledge the superior claim of the empire's security and financial stability as prerequisite of the security of the ideal British family (cf. Recchio, 129).

Besides "beauty, and rank, and talents" the evangelical author Hannah More counts "virtue" (More, 6) as an essential characteristic of the British woman and the central feature of her supposed superiority over 'foreign women' (cf. ibid.). In accordance with such assessments, the humble Emily is depicted as inherently modest and utterly 'respectable'. Even in situations where suspicions of moral questionability might be unavoidable for an uninitiated onlooker, such as during her stay in London without a husband while being pregnant, Emily gives the impression of "impeccableness [sic]" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 127), as the doctor treating her during her pregnancy notices.[401] Apart from the doctor, Mrs Cupp, who helps Emily during her pregnancy, also proclaims that her mistress could not be anything else than respectable: "[S]he looks just what she was born,– a respectable female" (ibid., 131). In his advice text from 1829, William Cobbett already draws the connection

differences to England and 'Englishness'. This can be spotted in, for example, in her novels for children, *A Little Princess* (1905) and *The Secret Garden* (1911). Here, both female main characters grew up in colonial India and are consequently perceived as decidedly 'different' by their English acquaintances, although Sarah in *A Little Princess* and Mary in *The Secret Garden* are completely dissimilar in other respects, one being admired, pretty and altogether 'nice' and the other being plain, sullen and rather introverted.

[401] Since she is fleeing from her home with any anonymous identity in order to keep herself and the baby safe, she does not disclose the name of her husband and, as the doctor's wife confirms, it is a ready assumption that her situation is the "tragic, but prosaic" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 127) fate of "a governess or companion in some great house" (ibid.) who has fallen pregnant 'by accident'.

between women's "sacred reserve as to their *persons*" (238, original emphasis) and good motherhood and thus implicitly strengthens the resemblances between Emily and the British maternal ideal: According to Cobbett, a mother who intends to be respected and cherished by her children and her environment must be "impeccable" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 127) in order to be able to raise her children in accordance with the moral ideal, which she herself, just like Emily, must embody.

Even though Emily is modest and caring, she, at least at a first glance, appears to deviate from the ideal to some extent, and she herself is very much aware of this. Lurie confirms this when she states that Emily is too stupid, "too old and rather too large for a fairy tale heroine" (79), whom she otherwise resembles in "her simplicity and goodness" (ibid., 81). Yet, Mitchell observes in her review of Burnett's text that the emphasis put on Emily's simple-mindedness creates an "ironic distance between author and character" (47). This comment appears justified, insofar as Emily is constantly reduced to a figure in need of advice or saving, thus playing, as Recchio puts it, "the role of the passive victim" (129). However, her humble awareness of these very 'flaws', being already over thirty and "*far* from clever" (Burnett, *The Making*, 45, original emphasis) are converted into an asset, because of her 'touching helplessness' and its connections to traditional femininity; Emily's unintellectual mind is called an advantage by Doctor Warren, for instance, who notices this deficit during her pregnancy, but does so in a way which aligns her with the ideal of quiet and unobtrusive selflessness (cf. ibid., *The Methods*, 135). Emily's age, though, causes a departure from the ideal, which is not as easily argued out of the way: Most girls of her time entered matrimony and motherhood very young, and 34 would be far beyond the age which would be considered the ideal marrying and childbearing age, which would thus be reckoned a severe disadvantage in public perception (cf. ibid., 90). William Cobbett, for example, states that he "never should have married an *old* one [woman]" (92, original emphasis) even if she possessed all desirable qualities. Recchio confirms that Emily's age underlines her precarious position from the very start and sets the stakes higher because it makes her even more "a kind of social nonentity in danger each day of falling into abject poverty" and causing social "invisibility" (123). However, not in every single passage is her age connotated in a directly negative way: Compared with her husband's advanced age, she could still be considered 'young' and not without hopes of fulfilling her husband's wish for an heir, being, as he notices "a fine creature, and *only* thirty-

four" (Burnett, *The Making*, 77, emphasis added) and thus still a considerable danger to the Osborns' hopes of inheriting.

Within the novel, Emily's age is also addressed in the context of her already 'spinster-like' mindset, which is unacquainted with and unused "to the mystery of birth" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 83), and this "awe" (ibid., 89) and fascination bring her even closer to the pregnant Hester Osborn. Despite Emily's evident wish for a child, at that moment primarily to fulfil her husband's aspirations, she is also troubled by "fear" (ibid.) of not being thought worthy of the 'honour' of bearing children. This circumstance highlights Emily's low self-esteem as well as her opinion that motherhood is a badge of distinction, which, in her opinion, is unsuitable for her own unobtrusive and simple character. Moreover, she appears to think of herself still as an 'outsider' to the realm of family and status (cf. ibid.); motherhood would open the gates for her to become 'an insider' and finally complete her transition from impoverished spinster to aristocratic matriarch. William Cobbett confirms in his advice text that children should in all circles of social life be considered the firmest bond between husband and wife, the "strongest tie […]" (133), which helps the couple to emerge from troubled times as a 'joined force'. Even though this description might be an idealised and romanticised middle-class depiction of family life, it helps to explain Emily's sentimental belief that a child, the fulfilment of her husband's wish, would bring her closer to him, enable her to repay what she assumes is his generosity in 'rescuing her' from the harsh world of employment and restore at least the semblance of equality, which could lead to a harmonious union. The authorial narration brings the reader closer to Emily's feeling of "anxious yearning", but also to the "wonders" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 89) she is experiencing at the thought that motherhood might ground her fate, which she still perceives as an unreal fairy tale: "There were such wonders in the world, and she, Emily Fox-Seton, no Emily Walderhurst, seemed to have become part of them [through pregnancy]" (ibid.). The fact that Emily first thinks of herself by her maiden name and then realises that she is actually married to the Marquis of Walderhurst emphasises the impression that only the conception of a child would allow her to fully embrace her new title – without any hopes of a child she would still be behind in the expectations, especially those of her husband, and be unable to leave her old life behind.

The circumstance that not only the marquis but also his subordinates regard a child as a validation of her presence is made evident when one housemaid remarks during a discussion of Mrs Osborn's pregnancy that "[i]t would be a fine thing for *us* if it was in *our* family" (ibid., 90, emphasis added). In this context, Emily's age is brought up again by the servants as an issue which does not *preclude* her having children, but which renders the situation somewhat more difficult (cf. ibid.). The fact that Emily's fertility can be the subject of a slightly derogatory discussion by persons who are socially inferior emphasises the dependency of women's social recognition upon motherhood and reproductivity in this patriarchal society, an idea which is strengthened by Jane Cupp's immediate defensive reaction to any perceived weakness in her mistress's position and her reaffirmation of her position: "'It is not for us,' said Jane stiffly, 'to discuss thirties or forties or fifties either, which are no business of ours. There is one gentleman, and him a marquis, as chose her over the heads of two beauties in their teens at least'" (ibid.). In this situation, the validation of a man, in particular one of high social status, is needed to restore the equilibrium in Emily's worth in the eyes of the onlookers. Again, at this point it seems suitable to mention Martha Mears' statement that motherhood is the "perfection of her [woman's] being" (4), which, in an inversion of the midwife's argumentation, means that without the experiences of motherhood, a woman has to remain eternally imperfect and incomplete – an assumption which coincides with the servants' way of arguing. The idea that the 'remnants of spinsterhood' are not only still clinging to Emily's self-perception but also to her public image is confirmed through the servants' conversation, and, since spinsterhood was generally regarded as a state of comparative failure in the eyes of society (cf. Gorham, 53), the need for Emily to rid herself of this association in order to complete the 'Cinderella-like' fairy tale (cf. Mitchell, 47) is firmly established. In addition, the fact that the jealous Hester Osborn considers Emily's person to be an embodiment of everything she has "the right to *hate* most on earth" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 122, original emphasis) proves that the pregnancy has elevated Emily also in the eyes of her enemies to a force that is more powerful and damaging to them than initially supposed – she has become a figure of real importance.

It is indeed remarkable that Hodgson Burnett's text is the only one among the works featuring pregnancy discussed in this thesis, such as Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant*, to dedicate a considerable amount of

space and detail to this topic, which was formerly though to be highly 'indelicate'. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Mrs Jennings' almost explicit reference to Charlotte's situation is used to characterise her as a blunt and slightly vulgar matron and in *The Tenant*, Helen's pregnancy is only vaguely hinted at and almost entirely avoided as a subject. Such a shift in attitude and interest could be attributed to the changing stance towards physical and medical topics from the Victorian to the Edwardian era, which tended to be more influenced by scientific progress (cf. Mechling, 171 & cf. Macvarish, 1182).

Emily's pregnancy is described as a time in which her true beauty becomes apparent, which correlates with the overall picture of pregnancy in advice texts, especially those from the late eighteenth century. Martha Mears describes pregnancy dramatically as a time in which "nature is […] attentive to her darling object, woman, when preparing her for the greatest purpose of perpetuating the human species" (4-5). Emily's improved appearance is even noticed by persons who know nothing of her state, such as Lady Maria, who remarks that her "looks are actually improving" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 90) and that she conveys a rather "etherealised" (ibid.) impression. Especially the last observation establishes pregnancy as a 'wonder', an almost supernatural occurrence, as which Emily herself certainly regards it as well (cf., ibid., 89). While the sensation of being pregnant is relatively new to Emily, her

> gladness was so devout that it was pure rejoicing. How could she have been calm, how could she have been conversational, while through her whole being there surged but one thought. She was sure that while she talked to people she would have been guilty of looking as if she was thinking of something not in the least connected to themselves (ibid., 96).

Pregnancy is pictured as removing Emily inwardly from prosaic everyday engagements and transporting her into a spiritual realm. Once more, Martha Mears' rather sentimental descriptions of pregnancy as a time in which women should stay away from all artificiality, especially in entertainment, steer clear of crowds and seek communion with nature in their pastimes (cf. 53) come to mind. The 'removal from the world' not only harks back to ideas of Romanticism but is also reminiscent of Victorian sentimentality in the context of pregnancy (Gilroy, 20) and reaffirms the impression that Emily is rather old-fashioned in her character make-up (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 126). In her review of Alison Lurie's analysis of *The Making*

of a Marchioness, Claudia Mills confirms that the sentimental depictions of the heroine and her state (pregnant as well as persecuted) make the novel appear "as simultaneously [a] modern fairy tale, [and an] updated Victorian melodrama" (*Garden*, 79 & cf. Mills "Garden", 182-183).[402]

Hester's cynical approach to the – for her – decidedly disadvantageous situation is very clearly contrasted to Emily's "romantically sentimental" (ibid., 96) disposition in more than one scene. Especially in her initial reaction to Emily's announcement of her pregnancy, Hester Osborn, with her ambiguous morality and her initially mocking and inimical attitude to Emily's sentimentality, appears to embody certain elements of the melodramatic female villain. She describes Emily's rather saintly appearance and awe, while bringing the news of her special state: "She's drivelling about it, drivelling! […] Her eyes were as big as saucers, and she looked at me as if she felt like the Virgin Mary after the Annunciation" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 95). Besides her cynicism, Hester is practical and, rather matter-of-factly, does not regard her pregnancy in a spiritual light and exhibits a rather cynical attitude that mocks the 'divine' rapture and sentimental awe Emily is experiencing. Through Hester's portrayal as an 'exotic' and mysterious but rather physical and sensuous woman, who has connections to non-Christian customs and lifestyles (cf. ibid., 59 & Recchio, 127-128), the disconnection from Emily's 'saintly' and respectable pregnancy is emphasised.[403] Again, Hester's ambiguous morality and her opposition to Emily's sentimentality makes the depiction of the two women appear close to what Lyn Pykett terms "the sin and sentiment school of domestic melodrama" ("The Fantastic", 220) from the Victorian era, and this probably contributed to the fact that many contemporary reviews saw the second novel as too melodramatic for a modern Edwardian audience (cf. anon., *The Bookman*, 98). In her state of sentimental awareness of her condition, Emily is unable to discern the negative emotions in Hester's reaction to the announcement of her pregnancy: She remains in "sweet, stupid unconsciousness of the other woman's heaving chest and glaring eyes" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 94), which underlines her simple but pure mind that again likens her to the ideal Victorian woman, who focuses on the

[402] The analysis covers both novels.
[403] Hester is first described as possessing an "interesting semi-Oriental way" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 59) and "having her charm, […] when she lifted the heavy lids of her long black eyes and fixed her gaze upon her hearer as she talked about the inner side of native life, of which she knew such curious, intimate things" (ibid.).

domestic ideal (cf. Gorham 4 & 49). The contrast of her "sweetness" with Hester's "glaring eyes" puts the two women once again into strong opposition, characterising Emily as an "angel in the house" (ibid., 4) while Hester is more likened to a *femme fatale* (cf. Gaillard, transl. Colette Windish, 168) and the 'exotic' opposite of civilised emotionality.[404]

Another aspect which underlines Emily's resemblance to the domestic ideal of the angel in the house (cf. Gorham, 4) is her attitude towards her pregnancy, which she perceives to be a rather delicate and ticklish topic. Her prude reservations to talk about her pregnancy are termed "stupid" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 96) by the heterodiegetic narrator, because the limited number of people included in the secret make her more vulnerable to harmful attacks on her body by her enemies (cf. ibid.). The description of "her big girl shyness", her "hyper-emotional[ity]" and her fear to be "hysterical" (ibid.) when confronted by others, fit very well into portrayals of pregnancy by many authors of advice literature. Cobbett mentions that "delicacy, that *innate* modesty, […] after all, is the *great charm*, the charm of charms, in the female sex" (221, original emphasis), an idea which is also highlighted by John Gregory (cf. 9, 16, 26, 45). Thomas Gisborne agrees that "delicacy of feeling" (32) is a quality that is especially associated with women and showcases their femininity. Particularly in matters of pregnancy and childbirth adhering to the principles of delicacy and modesty was thought to be indispensable. The midwife Martha Mears, consequently, promises at the start of her work that she will observe these principles when talking about pregnancy and physicality to avoid making any woman "blush" (8). *Cassell's Household Guide* shares a similar idea concerning the approach to all birth-related issues (cf. 10), and the physician Thomas Bull explicitly mentions that he considers "feelings of delicacy" (3) justified and commendable in his female patients, chiefly in the context of pregnancy; however, he admits that exaggerated qualms experienced by women in his practice could prevent them from telling the whole truth about their state and thus cause further problems (ibid., 8 & 100). To

[404] Gaillard described the obsession with the *femme fatale* in fin de siècle art and literature as follows: "Rather than calling it an obsession with the feminine, we should speak of a 'nightmare of the feminine,' since it is a succession of devil-worshipping witches, a parade that includes Salome, Heriodias, Judith, Delilah, Messalina, and Medea, without forgetting the various Omphales, Cleopatras, Queens of Sheba and Helens of Troy, who all used their malevolent powers to destroy men. Myths, legends, religious history all provide numerous figures to embody this fantasy of the fear of the feminine. Indeed, women are omnipresent in these representations, but mostly incarnated as a sex that both fascinates and terrifies" (transl. Colette Windish, 168). Hester's tendencies towards violence and her potential to be dangerous to Emily intensify the resemblance.

some extent, this objection mirrors the narratorial comment that Emily's delicate secrecy concerning her pregnancy is "stupid" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 96), making her vulnerable even though she does indeed consult a doctor and only refuses to talk about her state to her husband and Lady Maria.

The idea of female "asexuality" (Pool, 187), which is connected to the arguments related to delicacy and modesty and is obviously very much present in these passages, was the standard approach to female physicality during the Victorian period. Once more, Emily's inherent Victorianism connects her to this "ideal of female purity" (Gorham, 87) which was a fixed constituent in the ideal of the angel in the house (cf. ibid.). Connected to this idea is the fact that Emily is frequently mentioned to be naïve as a child and childlike in her appearance (Burnett, *The Methods*, 140). As Gorham explains, tales of Victorian women often chose to highlight the child in the person, rather than the adult, in order to avoid precarious topics and to maintain the notion of innocence and "female asexuality" (87). Emily's extreme emotionality, her tendency to cry and her fear of succumbing to hysterics (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 96) can also be connected to Martha Mears' warnings. The midwife considers hysterics to be common during pregnancy and "merely temporary symptoms" (22) which are not as dangerous as "convulsions" (ibid.), but could, in connection with a rebellious spirit, lead to complications during childbirth (ibid., 124-125). Since Emily is far from being rebellious during her pregnancy, this danger at least does not appear to apply to her case. Factors that would be considered advantageous in this context are Emily's own endeavours to control her emotions and specifically avoid any feeling that might lead to hysterics (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 96); she is determined to be "perfectly happy" (ibid., 97) but remains rather passive. She usually asks others to tell her what to do instead of suggesting a course of action on her own, which underlines that people constantly perceive her as infantile (cf. ibid., 130) and as a tragic figure whom they have to support.[405] This reminds the reader inadvertently of the concept of the 'damsel in

[405] Even the action of running away, which she decides to take according to Hester's advice, is initiated by her words "What must I do? […] I am afraid. Tell me" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 123). It is interesting that this helplessness and passivity is presented as the epitome of respectability and the only thing that prevents her situation from becoming "like a thing in a play" (ibid.) and thus unrespectable. After confiding in Dr Warren, she closes her story with a request that sounds similar to the one she put to Hester: "[I]t seems as if there were things that I must do. But now you will advise me" (ibid., 139). Since Dr Warren is a medical professional, the action of asking for information does not sound particularly unusual, but Emily in this case does not only wish for

distress', who is admirable because she displays moral fortitude and keeps her virtue in dangerous situations, but leaves the main acts of defiance against the antagonist, the physical acts of resistance, such as fighting, to the hero and other male helpers (cf. Modia, 116).[406] Emily's 'strength-through-weakness' is an ultimate affirmation of the Victorian ideal of domesticity. Recchio supports this statement by naming her reduced self-reliance as the reason for her description as "early Victorian" (121).[407]

Even during the earlier stages of Emily's pregnancy her adherence to rather simple advice proves to be of significance. The fashionable physician Sir Samuel, for example, warns her to avoid certain kinds of exercise such as horse-riding (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 93). Though her prudence might be called naive by midwives such as Mears, who remains somewhat critical towards the exclusive consultation of fashionable medical men who only echo society's dictates (cf. 66), ignoring the doctor's orders altogether would be called hybris. Thomas Bull, for example, writes in his work *Hints to Mothers* that if a pregnant woman rejects her doctor's advice it becomes "an act of disobedience [through which] she may blast every hope of success [by the death of the unborn]" (139). Indeed, this circumstance saves her own, and her unborn child's life, while destroying Captain Osborn's plan to stage a riding accident and cause either her or at least the unborn infant's death (cf. ibid. &

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medical counsel but also eagerly accepts all other advice concerning her situation and in doing so is "as biddable as a child" (ibid., 140), freely submitting herself not only to the doctor's but also to the man's authority and characterises herself as the opposite of "female tyranny" (Mears, 32), which in Martha Mears' argumentation is one of the most common factors to destroy domesticity.

[406] Lorenzo Modia describes the female protagonists of most eighteenth-century novels as "a young lady who over the course of the novel is pursued by a suitor, in a concerted attempt to seduce her and thus destroy her innocence" (116). It is true that Captain Osborn does not try to corrupt Emily's virtue, however, he does pursue her in an attempt to harm her. With regard to the common eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century trope of the damsel in distress, Jakup Lipski describes the female position in Gothic tales as an eternally subordinate role in which "[a]esthetic experience compensates for the real, thus distancing the female protagonist from mundane concerns and reinforcing their powerless position. Their escape to the realm of aesthetic pleasure might be interpreted as a distraction from attempting to exert any influence on the real world. They do not dream about changing their actual situation but enjoy escapist fantasies" (122). Interestingly, Emily also escapes into the realm of (historical) fantasy, for some moments likening herself to a powerful heroine, Dame Ellena, who fought for her loved ones (cf. Burnett, "The Methods", 100-101). Since these daydreams remain fantasies and Emily is brought back to reality very quickly by the presence of Captain Osborn, she is daunted immediately by his smirks – denoting the circumstance that her dreams of power are stupid (ibid., 101). The figure of a strong and independent Emily thus remains an escapist fantasy also for the reader.

[407] Recchio bases his position on Thomas Carlyle's two essays "Signs of the Times" (1829) and "Characteristics" (1831), which provide an account of the author's ideas of early Victorian consciousness. According to Recchio, these essays picture the "the good man or woman […] [to be] revealed through moral conduct that by definition is not self-seeking since such conduct must perforce be unselfconscious" (122).

122). Even though attempted murder is not listed by Mears, Emily's escape from death due to her adherence to the doctor's advice would be entirely suited to underline the midwife's argumentation that pregnant women should be humble enough to be aware of their restricted knowledge and "apply to proper persons" (ibid., 83) if any concerns or serious questions should arise. However, even though scientific knowledge certainly underwent a significant development in the course of the long nineteenth century, medical science was by no means becoming reliable (cf. Åström, 116), and early twentieth-century physicians, such as Emily's doctor Sir Samuel Brent and Dr Warren, might still be unsure in a not insignificant number of cases and share their predecessors' tendency to distrust physical exertion during pregnancy: While the mid-Victorian author Isabella Beeton permits dancing during pregnancy (cf. 492) and the late eighteenth-century text composed by Martha Mears counsels against inactiveness as a cause of "indolence" (cf. 70), which is, in her opinion, a particularly common danger among the upper classes, the physician Thomas Bull, just like Sir Samuel and Dr Warren, warns of "[v]iolent exercise and exertion" (121) as a potential cause of death of mother and child. Sir Samuel Brent argues that Emily, who has never before ridden in her life, should definitely not mount a horse during her pregnancy but should "take the greatest care of herself" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 94). A similar line of argument was employed by midwives such as the seventeenth-century French midwife Louise Bourgeois, who mentions that especially unaccustomed exercise is to be shunned, because the body is not used to it and might react in an unhealthy fashion (cf. 118). Martha Mears appears to share the notion of her earlier colleague when she mentions that the "dictates of nature" (66) are to be listened to. She equally argues that working women could bear more exercise because their body is used to this activity (cf. 68).[408] In accordance with the principles of such advice, Emily shuns horse riding but continues to go for walks on the estate, which, on the one hand, provides her with "fresh colour", denoting good health, but, on the other hand, serves her ill-wishers with yet another opportunity to lay 'traps' (Burnett, *The Methods*, 115-116). Such sensation-novel style dangers were indeed not foreseen by Martha Mears, who generally advises women "to embrace with eagerness every opportunity of taking a walk […] to breathe the pure, the virgin air, which is impregnated with the balmy

[408] A similar opinion is shared by the mid-Victorian *Cassell's Household Guide* (cf. 10).

essence of the sweetest plants and flowers" (43), since fresh air was considered one of the reasons for good health, mirrored in Emily's outer appearance as well. Lady Walderhurst is, in consequence, still to be regarded as a 'model' woman during her pregnancy, adhering to the 'rules' despite her melodramatic environment.

Though she gives the impression of being in good health and comparatively strong, devoutly listening to doctor's orders, and at least the first part of her pregnancy appears to be uncomplicated, Emily later suffers severe complications which, through they are not specified, almost cost her life (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 146-147). At the time of her son's birth, various measures are taken to prevent her situation from deteriorating, such as the thick straw-bed that is placed over the cobblestones on the street to hinder the noise from the passing carriages from disturbing the patient (cf. ibid., 146), and in the corridors of her home the "whispering of hushed voices" (ibid.) is the only sound. Again, the measures taken by Emily's attending medical staff appear to be in line with Mears' notions, which confirm that especially women with health problems during delivery are in need of a quiet environment:

> Let it be farther presumed, that the child and its appendages have been expelled without any injury to the parts; and that no inflammation, no dangerous haemorrhage has followed. Still the efforts attending the whole process will cause some degree of fever and a general irritation of the system, which *can only be appeased by rest, by the free admission of fresh air, the strictest cleanliness, and a temperate, and cooling regimen* (Mears, 130-131, emphasis added).

Mears' advice concerning the "free admission of fresh air", however, does not appear to be followed, since, as Walderhurst remarks entering his home without a clue as to the happenings, "'[t]he house smells like a hospital'" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 146). Obviously, this deviation from the rules laid down by the late eighteenth-century author can easily be explained with the advancement of medical science and the invention of antiseptics in the mid-Victorian period, which, in turn, would mean that the medical personnel treating Lady Walderhurst adheres to Mears' rule of "cleanliness".[409]

[409] Walderhurst clearly experiences these signs of a medical presence as uncomfortable, "gruesome, cleanly, unpleasant" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 146), because they denote disease and possible death. However, his uneasiness also causes him to fear for his wife and thus brings her emotionally closer to him.

The supposed competency of the medical attendants does not diminish Emily's exemplary status as the ideal of domestic maternal humility and especially of 'female sacrifice'. Emily's willingness to offer everything that is in her power for the sake of her child (cf. ibid., 139-140) leads to a disregard for her own comfort during her pregnancy with the sole purpose of ensuring a safe birth of Walderhurst's offspring.[410] Emily's dedication to the maxims of the ideal of maternal sacrifice also puts a certain stress on the hazardous circumstances surrounding her person. The extent of her devotion to the unborn child is emphasised by the threat from outside, which enhances the melodramatic character of her sacrifice (cf. Lurie, *Garden*, 85), mirrored in Emily's urgent request to Dr Warren: "'I want to be quite safe until after. I do not care for myself. I will bear anything or do anything. Only one thing matters. I shall be a good patient'" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 127). There are hints, however, that most of her sacrifice is done not primarily with her child in mind but with the desire to pay back her husband for what she perceives as benevolence towards her. The child was his wish, and, therefore, she considers her presence to serve the purpose of fulfilling this wish. Despite this drawback, the mere fact that she is willing not only to give up her comfort but also her life for that of her child fits very well into the narrative of many authors of advice literature. John Gregory, for instance, mentions the idea that sacrifice is, in his opinion, inherently connected to a virtuous woman's being, since "[y]our whole life is often a life of suffering" (10). William Cobbett, as well, praises "female heroism" in "maternal" (267) performance, in cases where mothers risk their own health for the prospect of keeping their child healthy, and this statement is, in fact, echoed by the fictional Doctor Warren, who calls Emily's determination during her pregnancy "very brave" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 139) and admires her "serenity" (ibid.) even in more complicated situations.

Although her sacrificial fighting spirit can hardly be separated from the context of the ideal of female sacrifice, Emily's heroism, going so far that she

[410] *The Saturday Review* from the 25th of January 1902 points out the extreme naivete of the protagonist and rejects the assumption that especially a pregnant lady "could be so amazingly unsuspicious of her husband's nearest relations" (anon., 115). The disbelief uttered by the authors of the review hint at the general conjecture that a pregnant woman's senses were heightened in order to allow for more protection of the unborn child. Hanson notes that these hypotheses included intensified "sensibility" (25) or even an increase in suspiciousness due to "maternal impressions" (ibid., 28). Martha Mears as well described the dangerous effects of "increased sensibility" (15) during pregnancy.

explicitly tells the doctors attending her delivery to save the child and not her if this decision had to be made (cf. ibid., 149), is one factor which, if examined a little more closely, elevates her from being 'just' a stereotypically submissive Victorian woman. The readership learns that during the first months of her pregnancy, Lady Walderhurst is particularly interested in one character from the Walderhursts' genealogy, the aforementioned Dame Ellena, who, while pregnant with the heir, defended the estate against inimical intruders during her husband's absence (cf. ibid., 100). Her "fierce" spirit that is "full of courage", "fearing naught" (ibid.) despite her pregnancy, impresses Emily deeply, and the reader gets the impression that she sees herself in the "marshalling" (ibid.) lady, fighting for her family. She evidently admires Ellena's strength and her confidence, feeling that, in Emily's words, "she could do anything […]. I daresay nothing could make her afraid, but the thought that something might go wrong while her husband was away. And strength was given her" (ibid., 101). Since her husband is equally absent, and she is equally pregnant with (presumably) an heir, she receives courage from the tale and exhibits this in "a fine sweep of heroic movement" (ibid.). Obviously, Emily is much too modest and self-effacing to suppose the strength to be the result of her own will, but, in line with her religious devotion, she considers her newfound confidence to be a gift that is linked with the purpose of protecting others, particularly the unborn child and her husband's ambition (cf. ibid., 142). In consequence, her wish to be strong for her child at once emancipates her from the notion of passive femininity but, at the same time, subjugates her to the 'greater purpose' of serving her husband.[411]

Despite this bondage to the figure of the patriarch, maternal feeling is presented as a factor providing strength and courage which causes women, through sacrifice, to achieve feats which are beyond their usual capabilities. Cobbett

[411] The topic of heroic maternity is also taken up, though in a slightly different context, in Burnett's earlier historical novel *A Lady of Quality* (1896) by depicting a "physically drained woman" (Recchio, 101) who is emotionally and physically suppressed as well as neglected by her husband and has to deliver the last of an extremely high number of children (cf. Burnett, "Quality", 15-17). Her heroic maternity is presented as a final act of rebellion against female suppression, in which she, fearing that her new-born daughter might suffer a fate similar to hers, attempts to suffocate her last daughter (cf. ibid. 17-18), sacrificing her own moral integrity for the fate of her child in order to "save her from the battle" (Recchio, 101) that awaits her in the patriarchal world. Sir Jeoffry's oppressed and tortured wife is aware of the fact that her husband will be the worst kind of father imaginable to her new born daughter: "'If she is beautiful, and has but her father, and no mother!' she whispered […], 'only evil can come to her. From her first hour – she will know naught else, poor heart!'" (Burnett, "Quality", 17).

likewise includes a similar idea, calling his wife, whom he presents as the epitome of motherhood on several occasions, "courageous" (304), especially when it comes to raising their children and the protection of the household. He also names her a "heroical […]" (ibid., 231) person, although it has to be noted that his ideal of "female heroism" (ibid., 267) is also inseparably connected to female sacrifice and does not refer to any act that might fall into the province of men, such as physical and financial protection (cf. ibid., 219). However, William Cobbett also refers to a situation in which the wife is required to act as a safeguard to her husband's assets and functions as the "guardian of his property; she preserves what would otherwise be lost to him" (ibid.), and it can therefore be assumed that he would approve Emily's intention to mirror Dame Ellena's heroism, since her accomplishments serve the purpose of securing the domestic sphere. Emily also "preserves what would otherwise be lost to him [Walderhurst]" (ibid.), meaning his child, under the risk of her own life and with the acceptance of physical pain. Resignation and passivity are here regarded to be the true form of female heroism, which would later yield the reward of domestic togetherness. Martha Mears, consequently, advises that "if they [pregnant women] are resigned to their pains, it is impossible to do wrong" (124-125). The almost supernatural strength and courage in such situations are, as Mears explains, due to the "peculiar care of Providence" (ibid., 125). Interestingly, Emily returns to her "silly and shy" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 101) self when she is confronted with the 'formidable' masculinity of her enemy, Captain Osborn, the epitome of anti-domesticity, who intends to destroy her dreams of marital bond and family. He mocks her admiration of Dame Ellena, daunts the remnants of a fighting spirit by ridiculing her confidence, and lets her know indirectly that he considers her a "sentimental, ramping idiot" (ibid.). Mears' mention of "Providence" as helper during pregnancy is, again, mirrored in Emily's trust in divine agency and confirms the nature of her sacrificial motherhood – her agency and courage being limited to the creation of a family under her husband's leadership and the establishment of domestic harmony.[412]

Emily's unconventionality as "fairy tale figure" (Lurie, *Garden*, 82) highlights, according to the novel's morale, the fickle nature of romance and the more enduring, stable happiness of every-day maternal sacrifice which shines

[412] Emily's resemblance to the concept of the Romantic child will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7.2.

especially because of its unobtrusiveness. Despite the rather conservative, essentially Victorian message, the discussions surrounding Emily's age, her suitability for motherhood, and her long unmarried state still manage to showcase the harsh reality of women's lives in a patriarchal regime and thus introduce the flickering light of controversy into the tale of the triumph of female sacrifice and domestic togetherness. This impression is strengthened by the fact that only during her closeness to death after giving birth Emily appears to gain a special kind of freedom that enables her for the first time to think only about herself and her own rest, drifting away into death:

> She was going, alone, further still. […] Emily Walderhurst, drifting out on a still, borderless, white sea, sinking gently as she floated, sinking in peaceful painlessness deeper and deeper in her drifting until the soft, cool water lapped her lips and, as she knew without fear, would soon cover them and her quiet face, hiding them for ever (Burnett, *The Methods*, 151-152).

This time of transcendence between the natural and the supernatural is the first time in Emily's life during which the reader experiences her to be free from the demands of others and to act entirely of her own accord, as neither mother nor wife. However, this period of separation is not lasting, since Emily, instead of completing the act of severance from the mundane world, is 'called back' by her husband and the father of her child (cf. ibid.).

9.2 Saving and domesticating the aristocratic bachelor – The Marquis of Walderhurst's proprietorial rights and the clash of egotism and sacrifice

Fatherhood is an important topic for the Marquis of Walderhurst, but despite his evident wish to become a father, he is depicted as being emotionally as well as practically ill-equipped for the role. Lurie describes him as "Emily's Prince Charming although he is almost totally without any personal charm" and therefore an "even less […] conventional fairy tale figure than Emily is" (*Garden*, 82). The fact that the Marquis of Walderhurst is an unemotional, rather selfish, and snobbish nobleman, set on securing his own line and caring only superficially for the woman at his side, is established rather early in the novel, during a conversation between Emily and her employer Lady Maria, who divulges that Walderhurst was never "in love with […] [his first wife] any more than he was in love with his housemaid"

(ibid.). [413] This sentence tells the readers a few very significant points. First, it reveals Walderhurst does not marry for love or passion, and, second, that he, being proud and traditional, would never consider an attachment to someone of inferior status, because his wife has to match his family image as 'just another element' of status-related representation. Lady Maria continues to provide context on the nobleman's circumstances: "As the child died, I believe he thinks it his duty to marry again" (ibid.). The child, in Lady Maria's argumentation, is not presented as an individualised human being, deeply loved by his parents; it is rather a commodity, a necessary social entity that enables Walderhurst to stabilise his state and continue his line.

As Pool confirms, estates such as Walderhurst's heavily relied on the birth of sons for the maintenance of both social and financial position (cf. 91). With the role of the heir still unoccupied, Walderhurst, intent on fulfilling the duties associated with his status, must marry, even though his unemotional disposition is averse to making "love to" (Burnett, *The Making*, 7) women (cf. Lurie, *Garden*, 82). This unemotionality is later on confirmed when he explains his reasons for marriage to Emily and mentions that he is "'not a marrying man […] but I must marry, and I like you better than any woman I have ever known. I do not generally like women. I am a selfish man, and I want an unselfish woman. Most women are as selfish as I am myself'" (Burnett, *The Making*, 45). The fact that the death of his first child is a significant factor in Walderhurst's choice of marriage over his comfort as a bachelor is later on confirmed as well, when it is mentioned that "[i]f Walderhurst's infant son had lived, or if Osborn [the heir presumptive] had been a refined, even if dull, fellow, there are ten chances to one his lordship would have chosen no second marchioness" (*The Methods*, 59). His inherent misanthropic, uncongenial and unsocial disposition is also exemplified in the fact that he enjoys Emily's "timidity" (ibid., 69) and her evident awe in his company, sparing him too much "connubial familiarity" (ibid.). Here we already gain the impression that he initially connects a

[413] This lady, herself rather unemotional, and occasionally carelessly ruthless towards Emily, describes Walderhurst rather similarly to herself if she were a man, and, therefore, there is obviously an element of unreliability involved in her narrative. However, later descriptions of Walderhurst's thoughts and actions through the heterodiegetic narrator confirm Lady Maria's version of his character. Both the selfish Lady Maria and Walderhurst are set into strong contrast to the emotional and compassionate Emily, who is ready to trust in the best in Walderhurst's character, despite being unacquainted with his disposition (cf. *The Making*, 7).

woman's worth with the advantages which she can offer him, thus confirming the traditional hierarchies between husband and wife (cf. Adams, 504). This suspicion is strengthened by the emphasis which is put on the fact that he considers his first wife, Audrey, a very negligible persona whose "child had not lived an hour" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 146). The one aspect that made Audrey worthy of mentioning is not her character, her mind, or even her social standing but the fact that "she had had a son" (ibid.). Her child, even if it passed away, validates Audrey Walderhurst's presence within the narrative. Even if there are also other characteristics tied to "dry, empty-headed" (ibid.) Audrey, the death of her child is presented as by far the most defining one and a mark of her final failure, especially for the emotionally unattached father.[414] Because of this failure, the late Audrey is doomed to remain an "evidently not […] much-beloved or regretted person" (ibid., 77).

The Marquis of Walderhurst is thereby depicted as an almost prototypical misogynist, treating women as servants who are there to realise his wishes and fulfil his needs. The reviewer John Goode corroborates this assessment of the marquis's character, specifying that Walderhurst's second marriage as well is rather an "acqui[sition]" of Emily (537) than anything else; Goode's choice of words again highlights the fact that the marquis's women are "exploitable" (ibid.) creatures. With Emily, Walderhurst's attitude is at first not much different:[415] He accepts her every effort to please him as a matter of fact (cf. ibid., *The Methods*, 55) and only invests effort in her when he thinks that his comfort will benefit from it. Ross confirms that, even according to the French philosopher Rousseau, pleasing the husband was indeed generally considered one of "the proper female goals in life" ("Female Education", 84), and the late-Victorian conduct book *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* seeks to establish a similar idea, exhorting married women to

[414] The importance of male offspring, especially in a feudal context, is also highlighted in Burnett's earlier historical novel *A Lady of Quality* (1896), which features a downright "brutal" (Recchio, 101) father who despises his wife because she failed to give birth to a male child and his daughters because of their gender (cf. Burnett, *A Lady of Quality*, 16). In this case, the conflict even more strongly emphasises the patriarchal need for continuation of the line because of the historical setting (cf. Recchio, 95) that allows for an even more drastic approach to the topic of paternal neglect of mother and child because of the distance that is created between audience and characters (cf. ibid.).
[415] That he treats his wife, from the first moment of their acquaintance, only with casual consideration is shown as he, observing Emily's selfless efforts to please others during the garden party, comments on "Poor Emily Fox-Seton" in a very "non-committal […]" (ibid., 31) way.

> be ready to please your husband in all matters, from the choice of your visitors to the choice of your gowns. For you to agree makes life a pleasure, and the surrendering of your own caprices occasionally is a very trifling price to pay for the sake of harmony; while if you disagree, then your union is a failure (M.C., 23-24).

Emily evidently succeeds in fulfilling this piece of advice not only through her pregnancy, because the marquis superficially warms up to her accommodating presence and pleasant outer appearance, stating: "He had certainly been quite right in deciding to ask her to marry him. If *she* had a son, he should congratulate *himself* greatly" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 68, emphasis added). All that matters to validate Emily and make her entirely worthy of the honour of his hand would be motherhood, and even in this case she is reduced to a helpmate, with the child in question being entirely *his* product, wherefore he is to be congratulated. Lady Maria confirms this when she vocalises her idea that the realisation of his fatherhood would make "[t]he man […] quite mad with gratified vanity" (ibid., 145). With her sole purpose to make her husband's "life a pleasure" and in line with the conduct book's maxims, Emily does everything to keep his 'wish' and 'his possession' safe, more like a guardian than as an actual mother. Walderhurst's patriarchal claim on the potential child mirrors the fact that during the nineteenth century, children were indeed treated as "property" (Broughton & Rogers, 9) of their fathers, a circumstance which was only mitigated in 1882 with the *Married Women's Property Act* (cf. ibid). It is, however, to be doubted that the rather old-fashioned perceptions of Emily and the marquis would take note of such 'comparatively modern' developments in family perception.

The narrative voice is certainly not altogether on the marquis's side, acknowledging his narrow-mindedness (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 77) and emphasising his strong fixation with the exclusion of Osborn from his inheritance. The text makes it clear that having an heir is basically his only 'passion', which "[a]ll the heat his cold nature held had concentrated" (ibid., 83) on. The potential child in his thought becomes his sign of 'winning' over his antagonist, a marker of his own superiority in a male-to-male contest with Osborn. His references to his yet unborn offspring as "a creature of his own flesh and blood" (ibid., 82) might be considered a reference to the idea, for example also expressed by William Cobbett, that fathers enjoy sons to be "*like*" (299, original emphasis) themselves because

they feel an inherent attachment and connection due to the "blood tie" (M.C., 29), which is also emphasised in *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* as something natural and 'right' for a parent to feel. However, the fact that he also calls the child "this thing" (ibid., 83) denotes that, despite his obsession with biological fatherhood, his thoughts do not conform to the paternal ideal presented in middle-class advice literature. In his aristocratic attitude concerning patrilineal succession, his mind disregards sentimental middle-class ideals of domestic togetherness and is less concerned with the child as an individual or as a symbol of 'family togetherness' and respectability, but more with the *idea* they represent in a social context; the child is a yet indeterminate and impersonal object. Like Emily's 'mid-Victorian' sentimental idea of parenthood, Walderhurst's primogenitary obsession is presented as antiquated and out of touch with time. Because of this notion, one can observe a certain similarity between his assumption that children serve as signifiers of status and the late eighteenth-century Lady Middleton's handling of her son when she brings him with her to social visits, treating him as a commodity, as a signifier of social position as well, while disregarding his personal feeling of shyness (cf. Austen, S & S, 31). The "marginality" (32) of the child mentioned by Cocks is emphasised, in Walderhurst's case, by the fact that the child as a person is yet only an idea, and, even if already conceived, which the reader cannot be sure of, in some ways underlines Walderhust's aristocratic abstraction of the 'child': His son is never materially present until the second-to-last chapter and, therefore, is never quite tangible.

With his attention solely centred around the abstract idea of competitive and hegemonial fatherhood, Walderhurst remains ironically unaware of his wife's pregnant state. His inconsideration towards her during this time, his prolonged absence, his lack of communication and interest in her (Burnett, *The Methods*, 134) cannot be entirely excused by his ignorance, however, even if knowledge of the pregnancy would have aggravated his offence in a moralistic middle-class perspective. Walderhurst's lack of emotional empathy causes his wife to feel distressed and insecure (cf. ibid.). Emily's state of anxiety, for which he is at least partly responsible, is a frame of mind which should, according to advice literature, Mears in particular (cf. 27-8), be avoided at all costs. Not only the mother but also the child would be considered endangered by these effects, since, according to the author, "[l]angour, debility, and disease are the consequences; the difficulty of

childbirth is increased; and a puny, or distorted infant is sometimes brought forth – the victim of its mother's terror" (ibid., 28). Doctor Warren, treating Emily, appears to agree with Mears when he notes that "[a]nxiety might make her ill before she could receive a reply to a second letter [to Walderhurst]" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 137). Consequently, when Emily is sitting there "trembling" and "puzzled" (ibid., 134), the marquis's negligence for not immediately informing her about the reason that prevented him from writing, or instructing others to bring words from him, is to blame.[416] Due to the lack of news from her husband, Emily is deprived of sleep (cf. ibid., 137), which the doctor avers to be bad for her health, declaring that this state "must not go on" (ibid.). The marquis's conduct, despite the excuse of his temporary illness, is nevertheless directly opposed to the correct behaviour prescribed in Mears' advice text, in which she, as can be recalled, calls the duty of the husband to shelter his pregnant wife "sweet" (29), since it "calls him to sooth every care [of the pregnant woman]" as well as "to raise […] [her] depressed spirits" (ibid.) and further rather than hinder her health during pregnancy. Mears explains that such sensitive behaviour reaps its own benefits, because the husband would naturally feel better himself, having faithfully observed his duty towards wife and unborn child, thus supporting the ideal of patriarchal family togetherness (cf. ibid.). Needless to say, the Marquis of Walderhurst does not adhere to this ideal, neither "raising her spirits", nor deriving gratification from altruistic actions, since he believes his superior place as husband, and even potential father, to be independent from the middle-class family ideal. He will, however, remember parts of it later, when his son is already born, and it is almost too late to save his wife's life.

The marquis's absence during the crucial time of pregnancy does not only worsen his wife's psychological anxiety and, through this, puts her physical wellbeing at risk, it also allows other dangers to his wife and child's health to temporarily gain the upper hand. Only his absence enables Captain Osborn to come closer to her and set his traps, causing Emily to feel helpless and anxious, since the primary figure of male guidance and protection is out of reach, and she is too traditionally minded to think of herself as capable to deal with the situation alone without any male helper (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 101). Cobbett's argumentation

[416] Of course, his illness was, at least in parts, the reason for his later and most prolonged silence but this does not change the result, or the very minimal attention paid to his wife from the very start of their marriage.

appears to support Emily's perspective to some extent, when he states that the wife "brought him [the husband] *her person*; and by delivering that up to him, she established a claim to his careful protection of her to the end of her life" (219, original emphasis). Emily's "claim" is even stronger, since it is a double claim, standing also for the demands of her unborn child. Cobbett often depicts himself as the emotional and physical protector of his children (cf. 300) and this office, in his description, furthers family togetherness, the parent-child bond, and the experience of security at home. His opinion, and the most important maxim he intends to convey to his own son, closing his advice volume with it, is the counsel for men to "protect defenceless innocence against the attacks of powerful guilt" (355). During her almost fatal accident at the bridge, which has been tempered with in order to make Emily fall (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 116), Emily and her unborn child represent "defenceless innocence" while the cowardly instigator of the clandestine trap, Osborn, is "powerful guilt", here due to the conventional privileges of his gender and his superior physical strength, which he uses in order to set the trap.[417] Emily's later contemplation of her accident indicates that she is well aware of her own and her child's danger as well as of the identity of the guilty party, but her position as woman and as subordinate to her husband and his heir presumptive, Osborn, does not allow her to speak out:[418]

> What could she say, whom could she accuse, because a piece of rotten wood had given away? […] [W]hat would she appear to her husband, to Lady Maria, to anyone in the decorous world, if she told them that she believed that in a dignified English household, an English gentleman, even a deposed heir presumptive, was working out a subtle plot against her such as might adorn a melodrama? (ibid.).

The marquis' presence as a witness and a representative of paternal authority, able to draw his own conclusions, would have dispelled the doubts concerning Emily's reliability and her victimhood and prevented more attempts on the life of wife and child (cf. ibid., 120-121). Such instances reflect the authoritative position that the

[417] The feeling of being watched during her sleep makes Emily feels constantly restless and causes a decline in her health (cf. Burnett, *The Methods,* 107).

[418] Society would, without any closer look at the case, condemn her as a "hysterical" and "fussy" (ibid.) woman, and this attitude of the general public is reflected by the content of advice manuals, which often attributed so-called hysterical or fanciful behaviour in women as either due to trouble in their reproductive system (i.e. the uterus) (cf. Ehrenreich & English, 127) or excessive novel reading which, as Gorham explains, was judged to provide them with "too much stimulation" (89), causing damage to weak nerves and potentially affecting the health of mother and child (cf. 102).

'breadwinner' was meant to occupy in a patriarchal society (cf. Schneider, 34). It is presented as a natural reaction to her growing nervousness at the absence of a male confidante and protector that Emily finally decides to write to her husband, begging for his return (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 117 & cf. Recchio, 129).

Since the marquis cannot be reached, Dr Warren functions as surrogate male protector of the mother-to-be (cf. ibid., 124-127). The fact that Emily is forced to actively find another, temporary protector (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 101), whom her husband does not know, can be accounted for as failure on Walderhurst's part. Admittedly, this failure is, to some extent, mitigated by the circumstance that his absence is not in the name of amusement but concerns government matters in India which are "affairs of importance" (ibid., 77). Even though he is, to our knowledge, not on active military engagement, he is still working for his country, "serving England's colonial interest" (Recchio, 129), and can, therefore, be roughly equated to the soldier who is labouring for 'the greater family' and the monarch as the only human being considered to have precedence over the family at home. William Cobbett also admits that "[m]en must frequently be from home at all hours of the day and night. Sailors, soldiers, merchants, all men out of the common track of labour, and even some in the very lowest walks, are sometimes compelled by their affairs, or by circumstances, to be from their homes" (176). Authors of advice literature would, therefore, presumably not blame the marquis too much because he followed an order (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 77). What is presented as blameworthy, however, is his careless disregard of social rules and gender conventions for selfish reasons in believing his wife to be able to "take perfect care of herself" (ibid., 80) and being "rather glad" (ibid., 77) to escape his home and the constant reminders of his heirless state. Even though his trust in Emily's good sense and her capabilities could be read as a subtle acknowledgement of female strength and independence, the context disperses this hypothesis. The marquis only "congratulate[s] himself" (ibid., 80) for her 'feminine' advantages, again diminishing her worth as an independent person, and fails to acknowledge his own patriarchal responsibility.

Despite Walderhurst being depicted as a rather unpaternal character, the marquis exhibits some traces of personal development towards the end of the second novel which are indeed not unrelated to his approach to fatherhood. During

his absence, Walderhurst thinks of his wife with increasing regularity and, upon his return, the alarming signs of illness in his house cause him to feel anxiety for her, which hints that there might be some hope for the entirely emotionless and egotistical marquis. Preoccupied with his wife's precarious situation, he almost fails to notice the presence of his new born heir, for whom he had frantically longed in the past. The thought of her potential death as a sacrifice for his desire for a child appears to remind him for the first time of his emotional duties and lets him forget the abstract idea of 'a child as an heir and object of his hopes' over Emily as physical subject (cf. ibid., 147): "'Just now' he poured forth, 'I don't care whether there is a child or not. I want her – I care for nothing else'" (ibid., 149). It is interesting that only the perfect embodiment of the Victorian ideal, Emily in her martyrlike devotion, is finally able to touch the unemotional shell of the marquis and, in some ways, even save him. This argument appears to fit Recchio's statement that regarding Emily exclusively as a weak Victorian stereotype would mean to "ignore what Burnett presents as Emily's essential strength, a strength defined by her positive lack of self-consciousness" (121). According to this logic, Emily, standing firm in her moral integrity and her selflessness, does not only conform to the ideal, but is also a very strong woman who, unaware of her own strength, conquers even selfish masculinity. Yet, the 'saintlike' maternal saviour character appears to be nothing particularly revolutionary, but actually the basis of the middle-class ideal of domestic structures (cf. Langland, 113 & Dahmer, 211-13). The guardian-figure of the mother preserves not only her child from physical harm and moral danger, but also her husband, for whom she performs similar caring functions. This concept, as one can remember, is also included in Cobbett's writing, where he states that "[i]n short, now it is that you find that without wives, men are poor helpless mortals" (211) and dwells on the idea that the visual exhibition of female selflessness and maternal sacrifice strengthens the marital bond: "Did not this tend to rivet her to my heart? She was enduring this [pains during breastfeeding] *for me*" (229) – a description which uses similar imagery to Burnett's depiction of Emily's "supernatural endurance" (*The Methods*, 149) when she saves her son; John Gregory confirms this image of redeeming femininity:

> Your superior [sic] delicacy, your modesty, and the usual severity of your education, preserve you, in a great measure, from any temptation to those vices to which we [men] are most subjected. The natural softness and

> sensibility of your dispositions particularly fit you for the practise of those duties where the heart is chiefly concerned (9-10).

The depiction of Emily's saviour-like qualities, demonstrated during her pregnancy and early motherhood, also remind to some extent of the 'child-as-saviour' trope that had been popular since Romanticism, which would also match the fact that Emily is constantly presented as 'childlike' and obedient (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 140). Gavin describes the presentation of "childhood as a desirable state, distinct from adulthood, for which adults longed: a lost idealized clear-visioned, divinely pure" ("The Child", 8) condition. Within this logic, the Marquis of Walderhurst would be identified as the prototypical 'adult figure' who has lost his innocence and his pureness, giving way to cynical egotism, and Emily as the child-saviour, the figure who once more reminds him of the existence of purity and innocence connected to domesticity, and who finally causes his redemption (cf. Jarrar, 76). During the critical period of Emily's illness, the reader perceives a drastic change in Walderhurst's behaviour and in his priorities, which Lurie calls "[a] sort of miracle of psychological conversion" (*Garden*, 85). Recchio regards this change in Walderhurst's attitude as proof of his ultimate humanity, being able to "give […] himself to another in a relationship that obliterates self-conscious as the other takes precedence over self" (132). This is a principle that Emily had long since incorporated into her selfless nature, while the marquis still had to learn. Emily's inherent emotional and moral superiority is emphasised through her innocence, which addresses the need for him, her husband, to care for her, just as the Victorian child addresses the adult's duty to support them (cf. Hillel, 158). Since Emily, who is already 34, is still described as a child (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 140), her childhood appears completely independent of her age. It is a timeless attribute that again reminds the readership of the concept of the 'eternal child', who is the personification of preserved innocence and the adult longing to return to this state of purity (cf. McGillis, 101-109), but, at the same time, it is also strongly reminiscent of the Victorian ideal of female 'childlike' purity, which was forced onto the image of motherhood in order to maintain its 'innocence' (cf. Gorham, 87).

Emily's sacrifice has not only made possible the birth of a child and heir, but also brought her husband home and awakened him emotionally. Goode describes the ending of the novel as overladen with "nostalgia" for the bygone Victorian era and its family togetherness, which is depicted rather "sentimental[ly]" (537) as

caused by sacrificial motherhood. Mitchell describes the scene at Emily's deathbed when the marquis calls Emily back into reality in which she fulfils the role of wife and mother as showcasing the marquis's ability "to bring her back by the force of his passion" (47); however, I would perceive this way of assessing the situation as slightly missing the mark: The action of calling her name again, on the one hand, exhibits Walderhurst's proprietorial rights on her person, which enable him, as he firmly believes, to demand her back because she is necessary to him and his own comfort.[419] The picture of housewives as innate comforters of men is stressed by William Cobbett as well, who describes the importance of

> comforting, consoling, cheering up. And who can perform this office like *women*? who have for these occasions a language and sentiments which seem to have been invented for the purpose; and be they what they may as to general demeanour and character, they have all, upon these occasions, one common feeling, and that so amiable, so excellent, as to admit of no adequate description. (243, original emphasis)

On the other hand, Walderhurst's act of calling Emily back with all his will showcases the change that has been accomplished in his character through his wife's sacrificial energy, which now enables him to disregard others' opinion of his own dignity and be openly emotional as well as to ignore his own comfort for the chance to rescue her (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 152-154). Recchio supports the latter interpretation, describing Walderhurst's behaviour confronted with the potential death as "[t]he test of the reality and power of such a relationship" (132), which drives him to work actively for his own domestic happiness and acknowledge his wife's importance at least for this traditional purpose.

The potential father-son bond, which is foreshadowed in the last part of the novel, is only brought about by Emily's maternal sacrifice and his first domestic act in recalling the mother from death: The marquis is only able to meet his son and realise his newfound fatherhood after Emily is stable again and now suddenly, "desire[s] to feel its [his son's] warmth" and "realise[s] that if he had been alone with it [his son], he should have laid aside his eyeglass and touched its cheek with his lips" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 154). The fact that he is not used to these fatherly

[419] Lurie brings forth another point that is related to the process of name-calling, drawing a parallel between this scene and one of the crucial scenes in *The Secret Garden*, in which Mr Craven is called back to his home by the voice of his dead wife who obviously wills him to live, just as the marquis wants Emily to live (cf. 85).

emotions is exemplified by the circumstance that he still has the habit to refer to his son as an object. While Lady Maria refers to the child as "him" (ibid.), treating him as an individual, he first calls his child "the thing" and "the object" in his mind and uses the neutral pronoun "it" (ibid.), which arguably features as a remnant of his former attitude. His endeavours to maintain the semblance of emotional detachment is a futile attempt to hold on to his pride and to what is perceived by him as his masculine dignity, proving that he has not been raised with Cobbett's middle-class ideas of masculine fondness of children as desirable – not as a sign of weakness (cf. 180) but rather as a confirmation of male domestic authority. As Strange certifies, the aversion to displaying emotion publicly, even if it was towards one's own child, was far from unusual, especially in fathers belonging to the upper ranks of society and especially in the case of fathers with sons; the female presence of a daughter allowed for some kind of emotionality because it was regarded as inherently connected to the femininity of the girl (cf. 99).

Walderhurst's unplanned bursts of emotion and his newfound realisation of his attachment to his wife and child, however, are not presented negatively or 'effeminate' in the context of the novel. On the contrary, they are depicted as the first steps towards "family togetherness" (Broughton & Rogers, 2), a rather Victorian ideal, but an ideal that shows Emily's influence on him. Cobbett, again, urges especially upper-class fathers to establish an emotional connection with their children, instead of following the common upper-class habit of separation between adults and children in an attempt to keep up appearances, foregoing domestic happiness as a consequence (cf. 254). The author of *Everybody's Book of Good Conduct* appears to support Cobbett's opinion (cf. M.C., 27-30), confirming the assumption that the rigid separation of parent and children would be destructive for domestic happiness. Still, the marquis' "selfconscious[ness]" (ibid.) and his "awkward" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 154) feeling concerning his unexpected emotions for his offspring as well as his embarrassment at his wish to be close to the child are nothing surprising considering that he grew up in a class which did not celebrate domestic togetherness as much as the middle-class Victorian ideal, which is depicted in the advice texts, did. Moreover, masculine struggles to avoid behavioural patterns traditionally more associated with femininity, such as a demonstration of emotions, were increasing in the late-Victorian period and around the turn of the century in order to retain the image of patriarchal authority (cf.

Broughton & Rogers; cf. Tosh, 22): The marquis is, consequently, even in his paternal display, a product of his time, a late Victorian aristocratic bachelor intent on preserving his position, who is in the process of being converted to early Victorian middle-class domesticity through a saviour-like angel in the house. The family unity of the Walderhurst household is made complete through the news of the birth of Emily's second son in the very last chapter, which functions like an epilogue (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 156). Since the novel ends before the reader is able to gather more details about the Walderhursts' family life, it is impossible to say whether, for example, the marquis plays an active part in his sons' education, or whether the marchioness maintains her Victorian middle-class habits and goes against the customs of her rank, which would prompt her to leave the entertainment of her children purely to nannies and tutors.

Admittedly, the Walderhursts' treatment of the new born heir is in accordance with the standards of his social position. Directly after the birth of the marquis' son, several nurses are employed to look after the infant, sleeping not beside his mother, but in the nursery with "[t]wo women in attendance" (ibid., 154), who, as their unobtrusive appearance stresses, seem to be "trained and certified" (*Cassell's*, 10) just as *Cassell's Household Guide* advises. This circumstance, though, does not necessarily hint at a deliberate detachment from the child for reasons of rank or fashion, but is an arrangement that is partly to be explained with social custom and partly born out of necessity because of Emily's severe post-partum illness.[420] Even Isabella Beeton, who very much disapproved of the practice of wet-nursing (cf. 478), would see the necessity here that made such a practice acceptable even according to the domestic ideology. The midwife Martha Mears, overall sustaining a similar take on the matter, admits that there might be cases in which the mother is physically unfit to take care of the child immediately after birth (cf. 149). The nursery of Emily's son is, moreover, described in direct opposition to her sickbed, as a very cosy and utterly domestic place where "[l]ife had just begun" (Burnett, *The Methods*, 154) and that is furnished with a "soft linen hanging", a "lace-hung cradle", and "gold boxes and velvet brushes" (ibid.). It is so utterly feminine in its connotations that the marquis uneasiness upon visiting the nursery is increased while he is still feeling "abnormally moved" (ibid), which indirectly betrays his

[420] Even for evangelically minded middle-class families, a nursery was a common arrangement (cf. Pollock, 206).

growing interest in family life. The Walderhust nursery is certainly more luxurious and comfortable than the nursery described by *Cassell's Household Guide,* which only includes "[s]mall iron bedsteads" (110) which should be plain with little ornaments (ibid.). The difference could indicate that the wealth and representation of the family, rather than the principles of evangelical ideology, are presented here. In addition, the divergence could also suggest that the Walderhurst household regards the birth of the heir as a matter of importance, hinging the social life of the family upon the presence of the child and not wishing to emphasise the divide which separates the representative rooms from the traditional nursery and the servants' quarters.[421] What both *Cassell's* and the Walderhurst nursery have in common, however, is the emphasis on domesticity, the inherent safety and cosiness of the home. The guide mentions that to engage the children's intellect and emotions, the walls could be embellished with "[p]ictures, illustrative of Scripture subjects, domestic animals, and familiar scenes" (ibid.), depictions which inherently support the "domestic ideology" (Van Osselaer & Pasture, 8) in their relation to evangelical education and family togetherness. In the case of the Walderhurst nursery, the marquis' reluctant emotional conversion, which takes place in this room, hints at a similar 'education' in the way of domestic ideology, only this time the parent is educated and not primarily the child. On top of this association, the 'cozy' ambiance of the room presents the readership with a definite link to emotional parenthood and family togetherness, despite the markers of wealth and class.

The Marquis of Walderhurst is granted a character transformation by the plot, and his change, though taking place rather belatedly and far from being revolutionary, once again supports the pre-existing impression of a contrast between him and his relative, Captain Osborn. While Walderhurst is from the very start presented as dull and passionless, Osborn is passionate, full of barely controlled negative emotions and leads an unconventional life, a fact which is meant to convey his unreliability to the readership. The marquis ends as a father who reluctantly embraces paternal emotionality and domesticity, in opposition to Osborne, who stays a true antagonist by rejecting any association with the domestic ideal, mishandling his wife and child, a circumstance that ultimately leads to his death as

[421] However, since neither Emily nor the marquis are responsible for the furnishing, the description of the nursery tells us nothing about their parenting style but rather about either Lady Maria's taste and her perception of the position of Emily and Walderhurst's son.

a ‘literary punishment’ (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 57 & 156-157). In both cases, female support and the presence of children, whether born or unborn, have a severe impact on the contention, but only in one case they ultimately serve the purpose of family togetherness. Through the failure of an undomestic and unconventional household, the traditional way of family life and family togetherness is reaffirmed, and this message is further emphasised in the last chapter and its focus on Emily and her child. On top of the confirmation of the domestic ideal, the model of the separate spheres appears to be reasserted in the last scene of the novel, during which the marquis himself is suggestively absent (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 156-7). The idyllic park scene only features Emily, Hester and the mention of their children (cf. ibid.). What distinguishes this paternal nonappearance, however, from Walderhurst’s first absence is the fact that while his stay in India endangered Emily, this last scene serves to establish the women implicitly as mistresses of the secure, domestic sphere while the male head of the household returns into the public sphere to avoid a clash of traditional gender expectations (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 8).

Thus, the last scene superficially appears to be a reaffirmation of the ‘old order’, which is, however, disrupted by Hester’s shocking disclosure of her own guilt concerning the death of her husband, an act of revolt which surprisingly contradicts the otherwise conventional setting and is therefore even more shocking and impactful (cf. Burnett, *The Methods*, 157). Emily’s astonishingly understated reaction and lack of repulsion to the disclosure presents a striking hint at an indirect subversion of the patriarchal order, which is as unexpected as it is sudden, the only hint at shock being Emily’s “paling face”, which is, however, undercut by her prosaic action of eating a “buttered scone” (ibid.). Interestingly, the marquis’s absence during this part also enables this subversion, subtly suggesting the possibility that he might be an “absent father” (Strange, 4 & Tosh, 129) after all. Through his absence, he creates, as Downie terms it, a “moral vacuum” (745) which endangers the domestic ideal, enables the discussion of the moral ambiguity of Osborn’s death, but also, as Recchio sees it, leaves the women in possession of the field as “quietly triumphant” (130) victors. Thus, the novels’ dominant endorsement of the traditional norms of sacrificial maternity, the merits of emotional and protective paternity and the antidomestic and antagonistic nature of the vices of passion and greed is abruptly and astoundingly weakened in the last few sentences.

10. Conclusion

As a modern as well as a historical genre, advice literature reflects contemporary ideals, usually promoted by dominant social groups, which support the literary form through a shared sense of belonging. As this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, fictional literary works as well reflect these ideals and concepts, though in a more differentiated, at times ambiguous form; they allow more room for discussion and controversies by setting the parenting standards of their century into various contexts, thereby sometimes questioning and problematising the ideals which they reflect, even though some works, as for example *Emmeline*, maintain a predominantly prescriptive character and allow a problematisation primarily through an active, sceptical analysis by the readership. The subject remains topical to this day since it helps us to discover and analyse hidden trends not only in the perception of parents and parenting today but also broader ideas concerning gender and society. As earlier research, such as, for example, the study of Rossmann Regaigon, has shown, provoking a critical reception was, of course, not the goal of advice texts and didactic novels since the intended audience should seek guidance to conform to certain largely unquestioned standards. Despite this authoritative approach, advice literature as a genre is shown to be very enduring, adapting to changing perspectives on its respective topics, guiding and leading its readership through its persuasive rhetoric and the emphasised authoritative presence of the author, and deliberately exciting emotions of alternately anxiety and reassurance (cf. Rossman Regaigon, 140); the advice texts chosen for this work have proven very valuable for the examination of underlying social pressure put on parental figures, which also motivates characters, mothers as well as fathers, in popular contemporary fiction, as this thesis has aimed to demonstrate.

As the analysis in this work has revealed, common topics related to maternity referred to in advice texts and taken up in the depiction of fictional characters are maternal, or more general, female sacrifice, maternal heroism, which is especially mentioned in William Cobbett's advice, the mother-child bond, the notion of 'natural' motherhood with its relation to maternal instincts and intuitions as a nurturing force, the function of the mother as spiritual as well as secular educator, role model and protector, but also maternal insecurities and anxieties and maternal

transgressions. Subjects addressed in arguments concerning paternity are considerably fewer, which also accounts for their limited presence in popular research, but they typically involve some or more of the following issues as well: the function of the father as educator and guardian, the debate around domestic fatherhood and paternal presence or absence, the emotional dilemma of masculine fatherhood and, on the negative side, paternal failure and/or fear of paternal feminisation. Though the general themes of paternity and maternity appear at a first glance to be somewhat similar, one can discern, as Broughton and Rogers' work has pointed out (cf. 1-6), a clear and strict boundary which meant to prevent the merging of female and male roles in everyday life, highlighted through such topics as domestic togetherness and ideal domestic happiness and harmony as well as the respective roles of each member of the nuclear family (as well as the servants) and other middle-class parenting values such as industry, productivity and modesty/frugality/economy.

One can notice a decided development from the late eighteenth to the final decades of the nineteenth century during which advice focussing entirely on morality, such as Hannah More's treatise, would fade away and make way for a more practical household-oriented type of advice, which nevertheless could still contain some forms of moral guidance (cf. Gorham, 66), a tendency which manifested itself in both professional and amateur advice. Practicability became a focus of so-called household manuals, such as *Cassell's Household Guide* and *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, with a main interest in household management, including economy, social conventions as well as child-rearing. They were less emotional than typically moralistic conduct books and less intimate than advice provided in the form of diaries or letters but nevertheless used sentimentality occasionally in their rhetoric to further persuasiveness. These manuals commonly promoted the importance of the household as the private centre of society, reflecting well-known middle class ethics regarding industriousness, frugality and domesticity, values which are, for example, represented by Gilbert Markham in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, who, as a dutiful son fills his father's position as a hard-working patriarchal breadwinner, forgoing his own ambitiousness, and thus incorporating many virtues of the rising middle classes (cf. Wynne, 61). Industriousness is usually depicted as reducing the risk of paternal "failure" (ibid. & cf. Gorham, 3), and studies such as Kucich's have noted that, while the upper-

class fathers, for instance Huntingdon and the earl of Mount Severn, fail at parenting and consequently socially and physically decline, representatives of "middle-class achievements" (168) like the diligent and moralistic Archibald Carlyle prosper. Just as the portrayal of ideal middle-class masculinity in Cobbett's advice text confirms, hard-work and industriousness were considered to be beneficial not only regarding status but also concerning health and reproductivity (cf. 99). Archibald Carlyle is the clear 'winner' of the battle for social survival, and this is also due to his being the father of an abundant and partially very healthy offspring.

Even though reproductivity was also an expected goal in the argumentations of advice for women, the co-dependence of motherhood and sexuality (cf. Hanson, 55) was usually ignored or circumnavigated since the feminine standard was in its core asexual, innocent and childlike, just as the character of Emily Walderhurst, mirroring the archetype of 'the angel in the house' (cf. Coffey, 163) with its focus on sacrificial maternity (cf. Langland, 113). In the context of middle-class industriousness, attributes like idleness and indolence, as stock-characteristics of upper-class lifestyle, are emphatically condemned by middle-class authors, both amateurs and professionals, since these vices were supposed to be causing hysteria and physical frailty, especially during pregnancy (cf. Buchan., 67), as well as being regarded as an indicator of moral weakness (cf. Mears, 70), endangering the mother's function as proper role model. This notion can be recognised in the portrayal of the weak and emotionally unstable Lady Isabel Vane and her difficult pregnancies. The virtue of self-control in every-day life and the consumption of entertainment (cf. ibid.) is praised by many authors who considered the poor health and even barrenness of the aristocracy, whose sole system depended on the presence of a male heir, to be destabilizing for society (cf. Hanson, 39). This argumentation can be found, though in modified form, in Hodgson Burnett's portrayal of Emily Walderhurst, who, through her hard-working life, which did not match her actual birth and status, has acquired resilience and robustness and is thus able to give birth to a healthy son and heir, sacrificing personal comfort.

As the close study of the respective advice texts has shown, maternal sacrifice was regarded as indispensable for the prevention of miscarriage and a stable continuum of society (cf. Gisborne, 17; Holmes & Nelson, 1) – again, a prominent topic in "The Methods of Lady Walderhurst". Fear, melancholy and anger are

hazardous, and the middle-class pregnant woman supposedly needs the husband's 'rational presence' to prevent her undesirable emotions to get the upper hand (cf. Mears, 27-30). This argumentation is largely challenged by literary representations since Helen Huntingdon as well as Charlotte Palmer and Emily Walderhurst manage quite well without their husbands' emotional and/or spatial presence, even though one could argue that Emily's survival post-partum is due to her husband's steady calling her back into life. The character coming the closest to this argumentation is Isabel Vane, who constantly longs for her husband's presence and whose melancholic disposition before and after childbirth comes closest to conventional descriptions of "female insanity" (Hanson, 24) during pregnancy. Mears' mindset of middle-class modesty also drives her to dissuade any pregnant lady from visiting the theatre, the opera or other places of noisy, crowded fashionable entertainment (cf. ibid, 33), a piece of advice which Austen's Charlotte Palmer constantly ignores without any harm to her physical state, embracing the public space and only retiring into the privacy of the domestic sphere when necessary. Mrs Palmer's pregnancy lets the readership experience an 'unbeautified' version of family life among the gentry which is nevertheless hopeful and essentially positive. Part of this is due to Mrs Palmer's unconventionality and her refusal to bow to certain elements of the maternal ideal. She does not completely ignore the demands of domestic advice, but despite the fact that her light-heartedness is often ridiculed, it is a surprisingly effective method of dealing with the conflicting demands of maternal ideals, actually 'ridiculing' the stereotype of female anxiety and irritability. Her behaviour is a proclamation of the maxim that striving for domestic harmony at any cost and under extreme sacrifices, does not necessarily fulfil its purpose of creating the desired state of harmony. With her depiction of Charlotte Palmer, Austen relativises the common depiction of a 'natural' mother-child bond as inevitably involving sacrifice.

As reflected in the content of advice texts, the exclusive praise for all that was 'natural' in childcare and the rigid defamation of all that could be considered artificial, grew less strict as the nineteenth century progressed (cf. Beeton, 478), mirroring the evolution of professionalisation, the headway of de-spiritualisation and scientification of life in general, while at the same time reaffirming the patriarchal social structure and maintaining a certain sentimentalised image of maternity as women's true calling – a process already acknowledged by Gorham

(cf., 66). As the analysis within this thesis has confirmed, a similar development can be detected in the description of pregnancy and birth in "The Methods of Lady Walderhurst" (1901), when Emily is attended by all kinds of professional support. However, despite the 'artificial help' she receives, Emily's profusion of maternal characteristics, whether practical or emotional, portray her as thoroughly suited for motherhood, according to the doctrines of advice texts. Rather than the amount of help, scientific and non-scientific, which she receives, the text portrays her age as a controversial issue for the characters in the novel. The topicality of Emily's age and her health within the tale also highlights the objectifying elements related to debates surrounding maternity and female social position which is also supported through the depiction of the contention between Hester Osborn and Emily's unborn children. The physical disposition of the respective children also highlights the characterisation of their parents and emphasises the superior constitution of the child of the steady, morally conforming and respectable Emily. She is, entirely in line with middle-class family propaganda, rewarded in the end with a united family, a plot development which appears obviously didactic, even though the heroine's Victorian sentimentalism is ridiculed from time to time (cf. Goode, 537). Hester's physical weakness and her "fierce" (Burnett, "The Methods", 93) temper, in accordance with the proclamations of most advice texts, appears to emphasise her daughter's losing position in the 'battle of the children'. The conflict reflects the dependency of women upon pregnancies and the gender of their children for security and status, and, conversely, also mirrors how pregnancies caused vulnerability and exposed women to potential male exploitation. Pregnancy also highlights Emily's adherence to the principles of Victorian sentimentality (cf. Gilroy, 20), which is contrasted to Hester's disillusioned cynicism (cf. Burnett, "The Methods", 96) and accentuates Emily's closeness to the idealised concept of the angel in the house (cf. Gorham, 4). Emily's passivity links her closely to the ideal of 'female sacrifice', but the fact that the main motivation for her self-effacing behaviour is gratitude towards her husband and not primarily care for her child modifies this assessment to some extent. Her desire to have the strength to save her son is a subtle marker of female agency, but simultaneously an indicator of her feminine conformity to the middle-class maternal ideal. The fact that Emily's loyalty to her own sacrifice only stops when she is close to death and able to rid

herself of the social bonds of wifehood and motherhood presents a rather subtle suggestion of the problematic nature of family relations.

As the analysis within this thesis has proven, sacrifice and duty are keywords tied to the topic of parenthood and ascribe proper comportment to both mothers and fathers though the method and manner to practice this sacrificial duty certainly differed in the idealised imagination of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors of advice literature. Superficiality was regarded as a common fault of upper-class female education, spreading into the middle classes, strongly censured by particularly middle-class educationalists, who usually blamed mothers for encouraging these 'vain' practices (cf. More, 58). Upper-class mothers were through their rank and the related focus on social representation less stereotypically 'domestic' and less directly concerned with childcare matters which commonly provoked the harshest criticism from middle-class moralists (cf. Hyams, 45). The social trend to follow upper-class aloofness from domesticity and parenting was seen as misleading women to neglect or even abandon the 'true' destiny of women: motherhood (cf. Ross, "Female Education", 84), a critique which is indirectly mirrored in the presentation of the socially ambitious Barbara in *East Lynne*, who has no problem in delegating her maternal duties. Servants as deputy child-caretakers were problematised by moralists but at the same time justified by common practice (cf. Graham, 41), as recommendations concerning special household arrangements from advice literature, for example the *Household Guide,* suggest. Upper-class mothers as 'casualties' of their own class-related luxury (cf. More, 3) as well as ambitious middle-class mothers, such as Barbara, usually were criticised by moralists for endorsing a distance to their offspring (cf. Gorham, 17). However, as an examination of both advice texts and fictional writings has revealed, mothers might be criticised for the delegation of duty in employing personnel, but nurses nevertheless firmly belonged to the social landscape of the day, often as indicators of social status (cf. ibid.) despite some advice texts proclaiming them a safety hazard (cf. Cobbett, 255), and a potentially 'uncivilized' influence (cf. *Cassell's*, 10). The rivalling claims of social representation and moralistic idealisation reflected the pressure put on society's mothers (cf. ibid.).

As has emerged from the analysis within this thesis, 'bad motherhood' can, according to the argumentations presented by advice literature, be generally described as the deliberate absence of sacrifice (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 1). Willing

maternal sacrifice for the reestablishment of the mother-child bond redeems Isabel, but not Emmeline, whose suffering is less voluntarily motivated; it is rather thrust upon her by society, and she is forced to accept it. Isabel's motherhood is shown in a rather contradictory light: On the one hand, the illegitimacy of her last child lets her sink even more in Mount Severn's respect, but it also drives her to cherish herself again because she is legitimised by the presence of a child who needs her (cf. Wood, *EL*, 433). By contrast, *Emmeline* is a rather fatalistic study of social revenge on a fallen mother; her apathetic unhappiness is depicted as the 'natural' result of her preference of passionate romantic love over wifely duty and maternal affection. Whereas in Isabel Vane's case, the children are individualised, Emmeline's offspring remains abstract and her motherhood, consequently deprived of its determining factor, is never individualised; Emmeline's maternal longings remain rather vague and disassociated: Maternity in Emmeline's case is involuntarily inexpressible, causing the impression that the didactic narrator, just like Mrs Villiers, the saintly neighbour, perversely pities and enjoys Emmeline's torment (cf. Brunton, 93-94).

As this thesis has demonstrated, *Emmeline's* didactic message suits most teachings of advice literature to perfection, and it is solely left to the reader's discernment to uncover the underlying mechanisms of social manipulation. The novel presents Emmeline's short 'taste of maternal expression' during her taking care of Mrs Villiers' son, as an aggravation of her motherly torment due to her lost mother-child bond, since her hopes for feelings of loyalty between mothers and for future maternal activity are disappointed, allowing the educational message of the text to remain uncontested. The moralistic anxiety that the violation of the mother's purity as well as her physical absence endangers the moral and corporeal welfare of the children along with the stability of the home (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 5) is also reflected in the fates of both Emmeline and Isabel, who leave their children with their ex-husbands, thus renouncing their position as model figures and endangering the continuum of stability (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 4).

But not only open immorality was regarded as a danger to domestic stability and a sign of 'bad motherhood'; as the findings of this thesis have established, bad household management could be viewed as a reflection of character. Even during Isabel's still 'respectable' days as married woman, her neglect of household matters, such as economy (cf. *Cassell's*, 33 & Cobbett, 181), is presented as foreshadowing

of her later fall. Isabel's bad health and high-strung sensitivity also affect her domestic and maternal performance, which is already discernible during her pregnancies (cf. Rosenman, 28), and hinders her from having the close mother-child bond she longs for (cf. Wood, *EL*, 197). Her maternity is painted as an inherently "melancholic" state, which contradicts the ideal of middle-class motherhood in advice literature, because depressive thoughts and languid inactivity were supposed to have a negative effect on one's offspring. Contrary to Cobbett's prescriptions, the birth of the baby does nothing to change Isabel's depressed state of mind or physical ability (cf. ibid., 176); this circumstance connotes the underlying problematic nature of the ideology of nineteenth-century middle-class domesticity, which denied its own ineffectiveness and contradictory demands (cf. Kucich, 180) and thus renders *East Lynne* a little less traditionally didactic and moralistic in its message than Brunton's *Emmeline*.

Another flaw which both Isabel and Helen Huntingdon are accused of committing is different from Isabel's domestic inactivity but no less debatable in its depiction. The charge of Helen Huntingdon's supposed violation of her position as domestic model figure refers, among other issues, to maternal indulgence and pampering (cf. Jarrar, 69) and highlights the fine line of 'correct' maternal behaviour. Advice literature commonly presents pampering as diametrically opposed to domestic discipline and self-control (cf. *Cassell's*, 142), a flaw which Isabel is guilty of as well, since her yearning for emotional closeness drives her to 'pamper' her offspring. In her eagerness to compensate the previous omission of maternal duties, she becomes slightly one-sided and egotistical by focussing exclusively on her own wish to repair the damage, and neglecting social appearances, parenting rules and domestic discipline. Mrs Markham as well is depicted as an overly indulgent mother, but, in contrast to Isabel and Helen, who both in some ways depart from the middle-class ideal, she confirms the existing patriarchal system within her family. She perceives her own importance especially through the existence of her sons, to whom she has a close mother-child bond, which causes her to forego on an objective view of their characters, especially in the case of her youngest son Fergus (cf. Brontë, 23). In consequence, her behaviour is presented as the source of her sons' character deficiencies and thus mirrors the convention that parents were in many cases held responsible for their children's character. The spoiling of their sons, the sense of self-importance which they derive

from them as well as their 'unfavourable' influence on them is a common ground between Mrs Markham and Mrs Hargrave, although the latter adds extravagance and ruthlessness to the fault of personal vanity and is thus even more depicted as a 'bad' mother. Not unlike Austen's Lady Middleton, Mrs Hargrave views her children as social resources and her 'pampering' aligns with this idea. In her aspiration towards an aristocratic lifestyle, Mrs Hargrave is decidedly less interested in domesticity and family togetherness than Mrs Markham. However, both represent flawed parenting influenced by the inherent gender inequality of their time which puts stress on the social restrictions of Victorian family life and the limited options available for women.

As a close examination of the primary literature, both fictional and non-fictional, has divulged, extreme maternal dominance over household and children, such as practiced by the surrogate mother Cornelia Carlyle, is another characteristic ascribed to faulty maternal practice. Cornelia's maternal interest in her half-brother indicates, besides her feelings, first and foremost her dominating disposition and her inclination to educate others according to her own moral principles. Her efficient reason-based householding and maternal concern is presented as clashing with Isabel's sentimental emotions and makes her appear more 'masculine', a notion that is supported by her social independence (cf. Wood, *EL*, 37-38). Barbara Carlyle is suspected of being too dominant, since her strength of will and activeness, which she shares with Cornelia, cause her to clash with the maternal ideal (cf. Fitzpatrick, "Separate Spheres", 4). Unlike Isabel, Barbara refuses the shackles of an exclusively private life and takes part in her husband's activities, preferring his company to the constant presence of the children. Barbara's pragmatic delegation of maternal duties is opposed to the idea that servants represent a hazard for children's health and safety and that the care of biological maternity is the best preserver of the infantile body and mind, as stated by Cobbett (cf. 272). Barbara's non-conformity with the ideal, her undermining of the contemporary picture of demure, passionless femininity, as well as her rejection of the concept of maternal sacrifice can arguably be read as early feminist criticism of the domestic ideal, and her doubts concerning the reasonability of the ideal of sentimental motherhood and the mother-child bond (cf. Wood, *EL*, 406-407 & 442) echo modern-day reflections on these subjects. According to her critics, Helen Huntingdon can also be accused of the fault of maternal dominance, although in a different way from Barbara.

Because her strength of character contrasts the weakness of her husband, it renders her 'unfeminine' while effeminising the husband and reducing his paternal authority, creating an imbalance in the social microcosm of the family (cf. Cobbett, 184). Helen juggles the demands of both male and female parental tasks, attempting to fulfil both ideals for necessity's sake, thus unintentionally violating them both (cf. Drewery, 343). Her motherhood can be called subversive, because Helen breaches the common divide between professionalism connected to breadwinning and domestic nurturing (cf. Lee, npag.) with her motherhood as essential motivator. A similar example of 'unfeminine' motherhood is Austen's Fanny Dashwood, who proves her strong determination to protect her son's financial and social opportunities with the means her social status and her education under the materialistic Mrs Ferrars have offered her. In consequence, this protection is not selfless at all but tied up with her own image, underlining her "selfishness" (Cox, "Faith", npag). The depiction of Fanny's as well as Helen's take on parenting is a strong indication that a realistic representation of a perfect embodiment of the ideal is impossible.

Mrs Dashwood's maternity is just as Fanny Dashwood's motherhood influenced by her surroundings and her status as a woman in a patriarchal world (cf. Wainwright, 197) in which motherhood is not an easy task: at once character-defining, norm-conforming as well as restricted in scope of action. Fanny and Mrs Dashwood exhibit different approaches to this challenge. Emotionality and reason should be balanced to conform both to gender expectations and practical demands, as an intensive study of the respective advice texts has shown, and especially this balance does not work in the case of Mrs Dashwood, who is openly biased towards emotions, while Fanny views maternity rationally and coldly as part of the system to which she belongs. Both mothers exemplify the conflict between ideal and reality, between inclination and social norms, which are often paradoxical in themselves. Lady Middleton as well is part of the social system; her values superficially align with the ideal of middle-class moralists such as Cobbett, but she shapes the ideal to fit her own inclinations, much like Fanny Dashwood, but on an even grander scale. She even has followers in her mothering methods who intend to profit from her position. As a social "tutoress […]" (Cobbett, 187) she personifies superficial status-related maternity. Her children are, consequently, a means to achieve her goal; the consequence of the social ideal in practical realisation, Lady

Middleton, uses this ideal in order to realise her own ends, much like Fanny, and thus causes the ideal to be led *at absurdum*. Mrs Jennings does not conform to the middle-class moralist ideal of maternal care either, by accepting some social privileges of her rank and financial background (cf. Mijares, npag.). She does not sacrifice her own comfort and pleasure, even if this pleasure shows her limits of rational empathy, being entirely devoid of social refinement and tact. Her kindness is her greatest asset and the determining factor that separates her expression of maternal behaviour from Mrs Ferrars' maternity (cf. Craig, 20), which is the reason why, ultimately, Mrs Ferrars and Mrs Jennings represent different versions of maternal failure, reminding the reader of the contrast between two other flawed mother figures: Brontë's Mrs Markham and Mrs Hargrave. Mrs Ferrars, just like Mrs Hargrave but more successfully, practices open maternal tyranny and interprets maternity as a form of competition between one's offspring for the social benefit of the mother. She treats her children solely according to the degree they please her.

Despite the subversiveness of the figure of Helen Huntingdon, which this thesis has attempted to reflect on, didacticism is not wholly absent in Brontë's novel, although in a different form. The exhibition of maternal affection and sacrifice functions as a method of contrasting her to other, less maternal, characters in the novel. However, the notion of maternal escapism is also constantly linked to Helen's maternal sacrifice, thus mitigating the didactic harshness of the sacrificial ideal, since her bond with her son serves as an instrument of solace in times of marital hardship as well as aiding her endurance of psychological pain. The theme of isolation as the perfect surrounding for the realisation of the maternal ideal according to advice literature, which commonly portrays life in the country as ideal for raising children, is equally present in Brontë's text. However, the perfect picture of the 'united family' is once again exposed as deceitful by the novel since only in their incomplete form (without the destructive father) can Helen have a chance to realise this ideal. Again, this issue highlights how the ideal of domesticity is presented as elusive and unrealistic (cf. Pregent, 213), and the unveiling of the maternal ideal as paradoxical is a consequence of the delineation of her struggle. As reflected in the depiction of Helen's officially 'illegal' attempt to rescue her son from his degenerate father, the correct realisation of maternal sacrifice in problematic situations in everyday life remained a highly contested topic throughout the remainder of the century (cf. Berry, 35). The same ideal that obliges

Helen to depart from the path of social conformity condemns her for this same action. Reflecting the negative example of her husband she learns to make use of bourgeois ideology in order to achieve a goal that actually opposes this same ideology, which again hints at the inherent paradoxical nature of these standards. Victorian depictions of the sacralisation of the mother-child bond are portrayed as incompatible with conceptions of domestic harmony.

But not only mothers had to adhere to the socially prescribed gender ideal. As the examination of both fictional characters and the doctrines included in advice texts has revealed, masculine emotionality was on the one hand contested and on the other hand welcomed. Primarily when in private, Carlyle is able to display fatherly affection (cf. Wood, *EL*, 413), demonstrating his pride in his offspring, which reflects the traditional middle-class image of family togetherness. (cf. Cobbett, 180). However, *East Lynne* also mirrors that constant togetherness and family unity were sometimes unrealisable ideas (cf. Strange, 87), since the father's duty as breadwinner presupposed at least his occasional absence (cf. Cobbett, 176) and required the upkeep of the ideal of masculine 'rationality' and 'levelheadedness' which restricted emotional expression. Less controversial but even more problematic is Francis Levison's deliberate choice to be an "absent father" (Strange, 4 & Tosh, 129), his intentional refusal of any connection with his offspring in order to uphold his social aspirations. As adulterer and abandoning father, he is branded by his social environment, or at least he should be, according to the writings of, for example William Cobbett as well as Hannah More (cf. 90). By contrast, the adulterous Sir Sidney, with his potential and unacknowledged paternity, is portrayed as the 'better man', but an even more tragic figure because his 'fatal flaw' of breaking up his wife's first marriage and causing her to violate the bond with her children effectively condemns him to remain child- and heirless. However, in contrast to his wife, he is allowed to escape from his worries and potentially even to achieve the possibility of redemption (Brunton, 97) – a circumstance which highlights the double standard of male and female social morality.

Depictions of fatherhood, by contrast, might appear to reflect the image of the 'authoritative pillar' of masculine power; however, there is often an underlying edge to these portrayals which negates the ideal of absolute authority. Mr John Dashwood is maybe one of the fathers whose unlikability is hardly mitigated (cf. Craig, 27),

which is largely due to his broken promise and the consequent refusal to act as paternal protector (cf. Tarpley, 106). His disposition makes it impossible for him to be a 'real' father figure in the sense of the advice texts because he is presented as inherently immature and 'unmanly' without any real claim to authority confronted with his wife's superior will – she is the real provider and head of the household. Archibald Carlyle is another character who, despite his superficial portrayal as social paragon, is not free of underlying insecurities as his insistence on exercising authority suggests, caused – presumably – by Isabel's flight. As R. W. Connell writes in her study *Masculinities*, "[o]nce we recognize the institutional dimensions of gender [in this case related to the parental ideal] it is difficult to avoid the question: is it actually masculinity that is a problem in gender politics? Or is it rather the institutional arrangements [such as the Victorian domestic ideal] that produce inequality, and thus generate the tension that have brought 'masculinity' under scrutiny?" (42) As the arguments within this thesis have reflected, the precarious and insecure position of paternal authority (ibid., 3) was already visible to discerning eyes while the patriarchy was still dominating the social order, due to developments in economy and industry which widened the gap between home and place of work and emphasised the already existing dichotomy of public and private sphere, with the latter slowly detaching itself from direct paternal influence (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 7). This development is apparent in Wood's *East Lynne*, where Carlyle's demanding business in the public sphere reduces his active engagement at home and leaves Cornelia to reign absolute. Even in his second marriage, more 'modern' middle class ideals prevail, represented, for instance, through Barbara's segregating spatial arrangements. Such a development contradicted largely the ideas of moralist supporters of the domestic ideal (cf. Cobbett, 153): William Cobbett's ideas concerning emotional bonding and sentimental closeness between parents and children are no longer absolute, even though remnants are still recognisable, and practicability as well as social display have gained in importance (cf. Maunder, 62), which would be regarded in a rather critical light by Cobbett and other middle-class moralists.

As this thesis has aimed to demonstrate, portrayals of fatherhood are more varied than a first glance suggests and, similarly to maternal expressions, do not restrict themselves to biological fatherhood. Though he is a surrogate father (cf. Gruner, 308), Gilbert Markham fulfils the criteria of caring domestic fatherhood

exactly: He is a very paternal character, which is highlighted through his close relationship to animals, depicting him as caring, managing and 'breadwinning'. While introducing little Arthur to typically male professions and pastimes, he enhances their "growing bond" (Pike, 120). Even though he uses manipulative tactics, such as a deliberate display of paternal affection, in order to gain entrance to Helen's world (cf. King, 130), Gilbert is still characterised as honest in his affection and paternal motivation, which also aligns with the middle-class ideal of the continuation of paternal authority as basis for stability. Another example for a father whose paternity is not exclusively biologically motivated is Sir John Middleton, whose eagerness to care and provide lets him step into the place vacated by John Dashwood as provider figure for the Dashwood women, and thus John Dashwood's fault becomes Sir John Middleton's main virtue. While John Dashwood is essentially not a paternal figure according to the ideal, Sir John Middleton exhibits a 'general paternalism' (cf. ibid., 23), unlimited by biological bonds, which borders on patronising behaviour but is mitigated by his "good heart" (Austen, S & S, 33). Similarly, Colonel Brandon is no biological father at all but represents the paternal ideal in almost complete form. It is true that he neglects his duty as paternal guardian one time with disastrous results, but his only fault in the matter was his overly trusting attitude in the paternal competences of a person who proved to be incompetent (cf. ibid., 197). Set in direct contrast to the antagonistic rake Willoughby, Colonel Brandon stands almost as 'beacon' of paternal selflessness and protection. It is true, however, that the fact that even Brandon commits a 'parenting mistake' stresses the demanding social expectations of the parental status.

To confirm the varied depiction of fathers, especially in Austen's novel, the mysterious case of Mr Palmer, whose rudeness on the one hand and caring protectiveness on the other appear puzzling, has to be added to the list. He does not appear to adhere to the ideal depicted in advice literature, at least where his words in public are concerned, and seems indifferent to wife and child; thus, his portrayal is that of an emotionally distant father, unwilling to show pride in his offspring. This renders him 'unnatural' from the perspective of supporters of the domestic ideal. However, in the case of Mr Palmer, the ideal appears to be insufficient to judge him adequately, since he exhibits astonishing quick-thinking and even selfless care in emergencies (cf. Anderson & Kidd, 145). His paternalism seems to be

deliberately hidden from the public eye and only shows itself when a maintenance of a public image is no longer the primary concern. It is suggested that his tendency to hide his caring nature reflects an ultimately progressive neglect of the social reality of the ideals conveyed by society.

Respectable fathers were supposed to take an interest in their offspring as mirrors of their own persons (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 3 & cf. M.C., 29). Especially the idea of sons as duplicates of their father was widespread and is manifested for example in the transmission of the name according to the principles of the "father-to-son-model" (Brejon de Lavergnée 90)- Another father figure who exhibits rudeness and disinterest in children is much more straightforwardly 'bad' than Mr Palmer. There is never a question concerning his lack of paternal inclination and abilities. A son to befit this model is exactly what the Marquis of Walderhurst desires even though he is evidently not a paternal character, only superficially complying with the model of 'respectable' fatherhood, since his interest in the actual character of wife and child is depicted as minimal. His focus on the function of women as 'heir-producing' objects highlights the marquis' misogynist attitude towards women. As the argumentation within this thesis suggests, this is not the only aspect in which Walderhurst ignores the demands of the ideal of domestic harmony. He is, even if partly not due to his own fault, absent during Emily's pregnancy and causes her to be left without male protection and spiritual support, which, emphasised through his lack of communication (cf. "The Methods", 134), engenders her stress and insecurity as well as the need to replace him in his office as protector. 'Respectable' fatherhood is also a topic in the depiction of Archibald Carlyle and his son Archie, whose name is begrudged by Barbara, lamenting that her own son cannot achieve this direct connection with his father anymore. (cf. Wood, *EL*, 413).

The perception of marriage and fatherhood as backbone of society rendered paternal authority particularly important for the upkeep of the model of British citizenship (cf. Broughton & Rogers., 3), responsible for the prevention of revolution and moral mass corruption (cf. ibid., 7) brought about by the supposed effeminisation of men, and the lack of reproduction through long term bachelorhood and homosocial club life (cf. Tosh, 22 & Broughton & Rogers, 7; cf. Cobbett, 170). Part of this development can be noticed in Arthur Huntingdon's preference of male gatherings in London over his wife's company at home (cf. Ruggles, 131). His

prolonged absence is definitely not in the service of the family (cf. Broughton & Rogers, 4) but rather in the service of such 'separating' powers as gambling and drinking (cf. Schneider, 36), which eventually lead to his loss of authority at home and his later demise. Loss of authority and image is also one of the fears of the late-Victorian bachelor-by-nature, Walderhurst, who shrinks from sentimental, 'feminised' display of attachment to his own offspring. The fact that he is even able to silently admit to his wish for closeness with his son, however, hints at a final establishment of family unity, which is supported by the mention of the Walderhursts' second child, hinting at a prosperous family life (cf. Burnett, "The Methods". 156). The paternal Gilbert also exhibits some rather 'feminine'-associated characteristics, highlighted through his "fondness" of "children", though, in contrast to Walderhurst, he does not try to hide them but, in a more early-Victorian fashion, rather positions his domestic inclinations as confirmation of his suitability for the role as Helen's partner and little Arthur's stepfather. This, as a positive marker of domestic masculinity, also in Cobbett's argumentation, helps him in his endeavours to court Helen. Gilbert can achieve domestic happiness not with adherence to his masculine pursuits or insisting on his patriarchal rights but through his emotional affection to his wife, which hints at a reversal of traditional gender roles but also reflects middle-class domestic values at the same time. Such a depiction implies once more that ideal parenthood as described by middle-class rhetoric is conflicted in itself and cannot exist in the context of realist depictions of life. This deduction is to a certain extent corroborated by the portrayal of the gentlemen Hargrave, Hattersley and Lowborough who represent different versions of fatherhood and thus contribute to this conclusion from different vantage points; one starting with the will to be reformed and viewing fatherhood and husbandhood as a means to save himself (Lowborough), one getting reformed on the way despite opposing such a transformation initially (Hattersley), and one calculatingly using fatherhood for his own ends, exploiting the prescribed ideal of paternity together with the expectation it evokes to negate Helen's assumption of him as a member of a decadent drinking set (Hargrave) (cf. Brontë, 198). Just like the deterring example of the manipulative rude man in Cobbett's advice text, Hargrave exhibits dishonesty concerning his true disposition and disrespect towards Helen by manipulating her, utilising her maternal worries and her consternation at her husband's bad behaviour; his depiction gives rise to comments on the treatment of women, especially

mothers, in a society which continuously branded them as motivated solely by irrational emotions (cf. Hemingway, xxx).

Since the man was, according to the rules of respectable fatherhood, supposed to fulfil a model function, his behaviour was seen as responsible for the potential moral degradation of wife and children as well (cf. Cobbett, 170), a process which is especially feared by Helen. Huntingdon's affair and his potential fathering of an illegitimate child, viewed in the light of evangelical advice, amounts to a clear misuse of the God-given power of patriarchal superiority (cf. ibid.), mimicking "beast[ly]" (30) and dehumanising behaviour by deliberately negating the office as caretaker and guardian. As the deductions within this thesis have shown, the fact that the promiscuous and alcoholic father Huntingdon can actually make use of the domestic ideal and the social demands placed on mothers in order to impede any criticism of or hindrance for his own un-domestic lifestyle, again, lets the ideal of domesticity appear absurd and useless. As with excessive consumption of alcohol, male promiscuity often failed to excite the wide-spread public repudiation demanded by middle class moralists and evangelical authors such as Mears and More (More, 27), whose evangelical concept of 'religious masculinity' (cf. ibid. 26-27) was, to their dismay, often ignored or ridiculed in the higher ranks of society (cf. ibid.), even by women who should cherish bourgeois masculine values in order to lead a respectable life as wife and mother (cf. ibid.). This can be observed in Huntingdon's homosocial customs and Lady Lowborough's applause for these supposedly 'manly' habits, which Huntingdon also attempts to pass on to his son. As this thesis has shown, there is a discernible difference between the paternal ideal which advice literature, mostly dominated by middle-class values, represents and which is largely reflected through the father figures exhibiting moral integrity in the novel on the one hand, and the remnants of upper-class laxer morality of the fashionable society with its focus on status and the transmission of property and money on the other hand. The latter is expressed, for instance, in Mrs Jennings' remark concerning illegitimate children and the acceptance of male promiscuity by society, provided the man in question behaved 'gentlemanly' (Austen, S & S, 186).

Christian morality was indeed supposed to be traceable in nineteenth-century everyday life according to public standards, and issues which did not synthesise with it were either hushed up or shunned (cf. Gorham, 18). Families were assumed to fall directly under God's jurisdiction with the father acting as his deputy (cf.

Adams, 510), a concept which is mirrored to some extent in Archibald Carlyle's evangelical practices and which is continuously violated by Huntingdon. Evangelical ideas with their contempt for the 'too worldly' habits of the Anglican Church (cf. Mandal, 5) are mirrored for example in Carlyle's rejection of child christening festivities. His spiritual practices, which are rather austere, affect household management which, according to Cobbett, strengthens his patriarchal position, providing his supremacy with a proper justification (cf. 187). Carlyle's sober religious practices are interesting to observe, because he, having risen in the social ranks and acquired a landed estate to match his aspirations, is not principally against the public recognition of his rank and abilities. Arguably, Carlyle's religious principles still represent the remnants of his more traditional middle-class education and thus, again, highlight the fact that he is torn between his inherited values and the standards of his new position (cf. Schaffer, 229). As a religious *educator*, he sees it as his duty to converse with his offspring about religious matters (cf. Wood, *EL*, 582-583 & 589) with the intention of keeping up the ideal of a harmonious household, but this strategy does not always work out as planned, since he attempts to ignore reality and the lingering filial feelings of his children for their biological mother in order to keep up the pretence (cf. Wood, *EL*, 585). His evasive reply to his dying son's question about his mother illustrates his uneasiness with the topic of Isabel's redemption and hints at possible feelings of guilt. As this study has attempted to demonstrate, his feelings of guilt become even more apparent when he tries to avoid the accusation of having endangered his children's moral integrity by allowing them to be in touch with their morally compromised mother, as Cobbett would term it (cf. ibid., 623 & Cobbett, 205). Carlyle's paternal position is far from ideal despite its superficial appearance and Carlyle's endeavours and thus demonstrates how Victorian social ideals concerning family life veiled underlying fundamental conflicts.

Domestic ideals of childrearing and family life in the Victorian era usually emphasised the importance of Christian ideas (cf. Schneider, 35), a notion which could be further explored in other studies. This thesis unfortunately only allows a quick glimpse into the impactful relationship of Christian ideals and advice literature which underwent some changes over time, reflected, for example, in texts such as *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*. Even though the religious bias is shown to vary, counsel on childcare and domestic management is usually

still subsumed under the headline of Christian living (cf. Beeton, 7). If this way of thinking was not transmitted to the children, parents risked being called out as failures in their duty (cf. Jarrar, 61) and especially the deeply religious Helen Huntingdon is conscious of this circumstance which particularly concerned women. The accounts of discussions surrounding Helen's fitness as religious educator not only echo contemporary controversies within the Anglican Church (cf. Poteet, 255) but also highlight the interplay of these debates with parenting trends and the related problematisation of the 'teaching' of accustomed gender roles, since feminine influence is presented as morally superior to the lures of the masculine homosocial world, exposing the decadent model of masculinity, as well as the rather hypocritical demand for female spiritual perfection (cf. Gregory, 9). In particular care for the destiny of one's offspring demanded, according to this rhetoric, self-discipline and self-denial (cf. Holmes & Nelson, 1), which could only be endured with spiritual zeal and imploring divine supervision, as Elizabeth Gaskell's diary exemplifies (cf. "My Diary", 50) and as is mirrored in Isabel's acceptance of spiritual punishment for her transgression in order to become the teacher of her children. As has been briefly brought up in this thesis, childlike innocence and saviour characteristics, albeit less religiously motivated, could also be found in the concept of the Romantic child as a guiding character for adults who have already been corrupted by life. The mother Isabel is unable to return to the state of perfect innocence (cf. Gavin, "The Child", 9) and achieves redemption only through regaining some closeness to her children, specifically the ethereal William; subsequently, the co-dependency of innocence and corruption in the adult-child relationship could prove a fascinating topic for further exploration.

As this study has shown, the complicated nature of parenting ideals throughout the long nineteenth century can be explored through the combined analysis of advice texts and fictional literature. Numerous fictional characters confirm the ideals presented in conduct books and advice manuals; however, this very confirmation brings with itself other problems. Many characters, such as Helen Huntingdon, confirm and violate existing parenting rules at the same time, and this showcases the absurdity and uselessness of some parenting and gender ideals. Especially the model of maternity is exposed as an unachievable standard of illusionary perfection and even the less well-explored ideal of fatherhood is revealed as unable to meet the expectations of prevailing standards of masculinity.

Thus, it paradoxically may occur that parenting ideals from advice texts inadvertently encourage social transgression. Highly didactically motivated tales such as *Emmeline* divulge that the theme of maternal isolation and punishment has to be abstracted in the extreme to prevent an audience from sympathising too much with the fallen heroine suffering under the draconian methods to penalise maternal transgression, since the more redemptive depiction of Isabel in *East Lynne* has shown that public sympathy does not always align perfectly with bourgeoise values. The result is a potentially 'dangerous' (according to contemporary standards) mixture of traditional femininity and masculinity in an almost subversive context.

In conclusion, with the help of advice literature and various fictional texts from the long nineteenth century this study has demonstrated the fickle and deceptive nature of ideals on various new levels. Using the example of parenting ideals, the universal applicability of gender ideals has been put into question, since it turns out to represent a misleading picture of fixed role allocations in a familial context. These principles, showcased by advice texts, can indeed be recognised across the various depictions of fictional characters, not only protagonists but also minor characters. Yet, when these characters are shown to act in social situations mirroring real-life circumstances human actions and character traits, even in fiction, are not as easily classifiable as the simple 'rules' of parenting may make us expect. Especially the examination of various minor characters within this thesis has proved beneficial for revealing that not only the ideals but also quite radical departures from them are omnipresent in fiction, which hints at their presence in social discourses of the time. Interestingly, the various different approaches towards parenting and the numerous ways to fail in embodying the prescribed model highlight the diverse nature of parenting styles. This is even more noticeable when, as for example in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* or *Sense and Sensibility*, very different approaches to parenting are juxtaposed. Thus, the tension-laden reality of striving for perfection and the relative nature of 'perfection' are exposed.

However, it is also worth noting that, as this study has shown, these tensions and paradoxes are not just discernible in realist fiction such as *The Tenant*, or in novels with a tendency towards social satire, such as *Sense and Sensibility*, but they are equally present in highly polarising sensation novels, here exemplified by *East Lynne*, as well as in explicitly didactic texts such as *Emmeline*, and in fiction with

a seemingly conservative message, as the example of Hodgson-Burnett's two novellas illustrates, texts which – on the surface – appear to promote exclusively family togetherness.

Thus, this examination has disclosed the far-reaching crack within the models presented by advice literature, exhibited in well-known and widely read classics and in more obscure texts alike: Regardless of mode of writing, subgenre and degree of popularity, violations of the parenting ideal are ubiquitous, even if they vary in terms of intensity. There is in fact more than one way to violate the ideal, and even ostensibly norm-abiding parents, such as Mrs Markham and Lady Middleton to name just two, fail to live up to expectations, which can be read as a challenge of the ideals reiterated by advice texts and which suggests that the literary texts examined in this thesis are an expression of deep-seated anxieties concerning parenting and the consequences of wrong parenting in the long nineteenth century. This assumption could be confirmed by expanding the corpus of literary texts by including, for instance, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* (1866), or Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862).

As a closer look at parenting advice literature has demonstrated, the supposedly fixed boundary between the maternal feminine and the paternal masculine is questioned already by the fact that both female and male authors wrote advice literature and claim authority with regard to male and female parental figures. Fictional representations of maternal and paternal characters usually fail to stick exclusively to either the typically feminine or masculine traits of parenthood in their attempts to be acceptable parents. Thus, nineteenth-century discourses about parenting confirm that, as De Beauvoir puts it, the "snares of false objectivity", here manifested by means of the often-paradoxical rules of parenting advice, ultimately present an "idol" (267) for a concept that cannot be grasped in its full complexity and diversity. Thus, the 'one' true ideal of parenting appears to be a myth.

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