

Placing Jemima: women writers of the 1790s and the eighteenth-century prostitution narrative

VIVIEN JONES

ABSTRACT When, in Wollstonecraft's novel *Wrongs of Woman* (1798), the ex-prostitute and prison warder Jemima is moved to tell her story, she speaks out of a long tradition of similar narratives. From at least the 1720s and Defoe's pamphlet *Some Considerations upon Streetwalkers* (1726), first-person narratives by prostitutes and/or victims of seduction were a standard topos of sentimental literature. In its classic sentimental form, the seduction narrative discovers, and seeks to contain, the prostitute as redeemable victim. During the 1790s, versions of that sentimental reformist narrative are remobilised as part of a renewed interest in the prostitution issue. Writers concerned with women's social and educational status use the numbers of women entering prostitution as an argument for extending employment opportunities. The argument is found in the work of, among others, Wollstonecraft herself, Mary Hays, Priscilla Wakefield and Hannah More. This article places Wollstonecraft's treatment of Jemima – together with stories of "fallen" women in Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799), and Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796) – within the context of eighteenth-century reform literature and the narratives it generated. It explores ways in which these self-consciously radical novels of the 1790s rewrite that inherited narrative "tradition", and negotiate its political implications.

I cannot avoid feeling the most lively compassion for those unfortunate females who are broken off from society, and by one error torn from all those affections and relationships that improve the heart and mind. It does not frequently even deserve the name of error; for many innocent girls become the dupes of a sincere, affectionate heart, and still more are, as it may emphatically be termed, ruined before they know the difference between virtue and vice: – and thus prepared by their education for infamy, they become infamous. Asylums and Magdalens are not the proper remedies for these abuses. It is justice, not charity, that is wanting in the world!

A woman who has lost her honour, imagines that she cannot fall lower, and as for recovering her former station, it is impossible; no exertion can wash this stain away. Losing thus every spur, and having no other means of support, prostitution becomes her only refuge, and the character is quickly depraved by circumstances over which the poor wretch has little power ... [1]

In 1799, this passage from Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was approvingly quoted in an anonymous tract, entitled *Thoughts on Alleviating the Miseries attendant upon Common Prostitution*. The tract advocates precisely the kind of "charity" which Wollstonecraft rejects as the "proper remedy" for the problem of female prostitution. *Thoughts on ... Common Prostitution* is addressed to men, to "those for whose enjoyment the fairest flowers of prostitution have been torn from their abodes of native innocence"; and it speaks on behalf of the prostitutes themselves who, it claims, "never tell their grief". It concludes with a scheme for a private subscription charity, the ultimate goal of which will be a class-differentiated system of relief: the aims are, on the one hand, to establish "Large Penitentiary Houses ... in which females of a lower cast might receive kind and consoling treatment, and be brought back to habits of decency"; and on the other, to provide "small pensions" for "those unfortunates" born to "superior prospects in life".[2]

Thoughts on ... Common Prostitution is one of numerous pamphlets, articles, letters to newspapers and polemical narratives which mark a renewed urgency in attention to the prostitution issue, particularly in London, during the 1790s. A willingness to quote Wollstonecraft with approval in 1799 does suggest radical sympathies, but in terms of attitudes and policy, *Thoughts* is unexceptional. In its conventional representation of prostitutes as objects of sentimental pity, and in its class-directed remedies for the problem, it reiterates evangelical and reformist orthodoxies with their focus, in Wollstonecraft's terms, on "charity" rather than "justice", on palliation rather than a radical restructuring of social and sexual economies.

Wollstonecraft's own treatment of the figure of the prostitute – in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, at least – is notoriously problematic. Keen to demonstrate the effects of inadequate education, she can nevertheless condemn prostitutes in conventionally sensationalist terms as "glorifying in their shame", "more audaciously lewd than men"[3]; and the narrative evoked in the passage from *Rights of Woman* is the same as that which structures *Thoughts on ... Common Prostitution*. But within that common structure, Wollstonecraft significantly alters the language of sentimental melodrama: in *Thoughts*, prostitutes are "fairest flowers ... torn from their abodes of native innocence"; in Wollstonecraft's more constructivist version they are "unfortunate females ... torn from all those affections and relationships that improve the heart and mind". And at the end of the final sentence, a passage omitted by the author of *Thoughts on ... Common Prostitution*, Wollstonecraft envisages some hope of escape from the prostitute's inexorable fate – albeit only for the exceptional woman blessed with enough "sense" and "spirit" to maintain control over "circumstances". The full sentence reads: "Losing thus every spur, and having no other means of support, prostitution becomes her only refuge, and the character is quickly depraved by

circumstances over which the poor wretch has little power, unless she possesses an uncommon portion of sense and loftiness of spirit". Wollstonecraft goes on to expose a causal link between prostitution and the system of heterosexual relations in which "women ... are always taught to look up to man for a maintenance, and to consider their persons as the proper return for his exertions to support them".[4] This, too, is omitted by the author of *Thoughts*.

Nevertheless, this selective appropriation of Wollstonecraft's feminist text for the cause of private charity points up the uneasy continuities between what Laurie Langbauer describes as Wollstonecraft's "complex and divided" response to prostitution, and the attitudes of much more conservative commentators on class and sexual difference.[5] From our present perspective, with feminist anti-pornography campaigners, particularly in the United States, in dangerous alliances with the fundamentalist Right, it raises the recurrent strategic problem of feminism's vulnerability to political misappropriation on questions of sexuality and sexual practice.[6] I shall not be exploring this current context any further here, but it is this problematic which motivates my historical focus on issues of radicalism and sexuality in the 1790s. In the second half of the essay, I shall be looking at three novels in which radical women writers address the prostitution question: Wollstonecraft's own *Wrongs of Woman* (posthumously published in 1798), Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796), and Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799). My concern is with the ways in which, in writing novels, the self-consciously radical women of the period reshape the popular fictional forms which they inherit. How far do they succeed in reworking those sexual and psychic narratives to revolutionary effect?[7]

I

Published in the second half of the turbulent, reformist and repressive 1790s, my three novels are part of that renewed politicisation of prostitution – both as polemical metaphor and as social fact – which has been recognised in several recent studies of the period. The sexual vocabularies which dominate political controversies in the wake of the French Revolution have been well documented: depending on the writer's point of view, either radicalism or aristocracy is rhetorically identified with prostitution and corruption. Gary Kelly has recently pointed out the relevance of the growing concern with prostitution during the economic crises of the mid-1790s to an understanding of revolutionary women's writing. And in her comprehensive account of eighteenth-century charity movements, Donna Andrew claims that the 1790s saw a significant shift in representations of the prostitute in the literature of social reform: from the innocent victim of sentimental narrative, the redeemable Magdalen, to the source of contagion which must be locked away from public sight or contact in penitentiaries.[8]

As a way of assessing the relationship of my three novels to these debates, I shall be focussing on their use of an inherited plot paradigm: the classic sentimental narrative of the seduced woman. When Jemima, the ex-prostitute and prison warder, is moved to tell her story in Wollstonecraft's *Wrongs of Woman*, she speaks out of a long tradition of similar narratives. From at least the

1720s and Defoe's pamphlet *Some Considerations upon Streetwalkers* (1726), first-person testimonies, fictional or otherwise, by prostitutes and/or victims of seduction were a popular sentimental topos. These popular narratives are inseparable from the politics of reform and regulation. Defoe's pamphlet is a significantly representative document here, since the conjunction of regulation with sentiment is evident in its very form: it is split between, on the one hand, a utilitarian polemic against "audacious Harlots" who are "past Redemption", a waste of reproductive and productive labour; and on the other, an appended autobiographical letter from a condemned streetwalker, the victim of dastardly upper-class masculinity.[9] The personal testimony of the letter evokes pity rather than utilitarian indignation: imaginative sympathy becomes the mechanism which invites reform, and which draws the prostitute back into the social body. In the mid-century, that sentimental impulse in Defoe became the hallmark of the emergent charity movement, one of the major achievements of which was Jonas Hanway's Magdalen House for Penitent Prostitutes, established in 1758. Here again, in campaigns to establish and then maintain the Magdalen House, mechanisms of discipline and control are justified and mediated through redemptive first-person narratives – most famously, perhaps, in the *Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House* (1760) (variously attributed to Barbara Montagu and to Sarah Fielding). The prostitutes in *Histories ... of the Penitents* are fallen innocents, tremblingly sensible of their own undeserving condition. It is this quality of sensibility which establishes them as proper objects of middle-class pity.

Thomas Laqueur's categorisation of the novel as a form of "humanitarian narrative" is useful here. Laqueur places the novel under this heading alongside "the autopsy, the clinical report, and the social inquiry":

Beginning in the eighteenth century, a new cluster of narratives came to speak in extraordinarily detailed fashion about the pains and deaths of ordinary people in such a way as to make apparent the causal chains that might connect the actions of its readers with the suffering of its subjects.[10]

And he goes on to pose the question of "why the moral franchise is extended at any given time to one group but not another". In the mid-century, prostitutes certainly became recipients of that "moral franchise".[11] The prostitute is a disturbingly liminal figure, inhabiting the carefully policed, but largely spurious, ideological boundaries between the public world of commerce and the private sphere of sexuality and domesticity, between the economic and the erotic. In a period of entrepreneurial expansion and of social mobility – often achieved through the "licensed prostitution" of marriage – the prostitute's poverty and exploitation on the one hand, and her status as independent sexual tradeswoman on the other, make her a site of multiple cultural anxieties. Thus the story of the penitent, suffering and redeemable prostitute, who is almost invariably the victim of a man from a higher class, became a comforting cultural myth; through this figure, the object of pity and charity, disruptive sexual energies, class antagonisms and commercial guilt could appear to be morally contained.[12]

In Laqueur's account, the humanitarian narrative creates "a sense of property in the objects of compassion". Indeed, he suggests, its ideal subject is

dead and thus available for control by the reader: “Humanitarianism, while devoted to saving human lives, focuses its attention most powerfully on the dead and becomes a guide to the mastery of death”.^[13] In popular seduction narratives, including those attached to the Magdalen House project, the women are already dead or they are effectively so: lost to their former selves and/or made the property of the reader by means of the sentimental fictional contract. One possible trajectory within the seduction paradigm was always the woman’s fall into absolute vice, as with “lovely Laura”, the protagonist in a conventional narrative poem of 1787:

*At last with loose discourse, and gold applied,
Unto her fortune she turn’d satisfied;
Now lost to ev’ry virtue, lost to shame,
Pleas’d with the sin, abhorring but the name,
Once lovely LAURA, smiling on the streets,
Becomes the sport of ev’ry fool she meets.*^[14]

In such representations, pity is based on the impossibility of recovering a happier past, rather than on a recognition of the potential for a return to acceptable femininity. In a familiar move, lust and luxury (“with ... gold applied”) are designated female. In contrast, the sentimental prostitute’s capacity for disgust, penitence – or simply having the decency to die – proves her to be a creature of sensibility, truly feminine after all:

*... to her sad fate left, condemn’d to rove
The lawless paths of desultory love;
Will not her tortur’d bosom throb the more,
Whene’er she thinks on what she was before,
And finds recoiling from the insidious joy
A secret canker ev’ry rose destroy.
While all that memory’s sorcery can dispense,
Shall add new pangs to loss of innocence.*^[15]

This capacity for remorse signals the prostitute’s actual or honorary middle-class status, and the point of identification with the reader. For the female reader especially, identification carries the threat of a similar susceptibility, the threat that she too, in Wollstonecraft’s words, might be the “dupe of a sincere, affectionate heart”.^[16] But the effect of the formulaic sentimental narrative is to hold that disturbing possibility at bay, to maintain a controlling distance between the feeling observer and the object of pity.

In Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771) or Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), the presence of the (male) feeling observer within the text exposes the moral ambivalence and susceptibility of that position. In the Miss Atkins episode in *The Man of Feeling*, for example, in which the man of feeling returns a seduced woman to her family, Miss Atkins’s father initially assumes that Harley is her seducer rather than her saviour: “he started back a few paces; his look assumed a furious wildness! he laid his hand on his sword. ... ‘Villain,’ he cried”.^[17] In spite of the obvious mistake, the episode is a discomfiting reminder that the feeling observer’s relation with the object of his pity can be ambivalently

motivated. But in the formulaic narrative poems from which I have just quoted, or in *Histories ... of the Penitents*, the reader remains safely outside the text, protected by their prior knowledge of the narrative's inevitable progress. In *Histories ... of the Penitents*, for example, the four individual narratives are versions (very good versions) of familiar paradigms. The experienced reader is therefore well able to recognize moments of danger, moments that very often have to do with the protagonist's inability to understand or negotiate social differences. In the first story, for example, the heroine is in service in an upper-class household and (never having read *Pamela*, it would seem) fatally confuses social with moral authority. Having allowed herself to be seduced by her employer's son, she begins to "treat that as a privilege, which I had looked upon as the greatest misfortune", because she overhears such behaviour condoned, for women as well as men, by her mistress's friends: "when Ladies ... confirmed his doctrine, how could I avoid suspecting myself of those ill-grounded prejudices of which he so often accused me!" [18] In an equally formulaic situation, the heroine of the third tale, newly arrived in London, fails to recognize a bawd figure who is very obviously descended from, among countless others, Mother Needham in Plate 1 of Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress*:

I was so much awed by the presence of so great a Lady, as I fancied her, that I stood dropping my little country court'sies at the door, as fast as could be, without attempting to speak. [19]

Through a recognition of the prostitute's misguided susceptibility, the reader is absolved from similar excess. She or he exerts only right-minded sympathy, an expression of superior knowledge rather than simple identification. That knowing sympathy is then made publicly evident through charitable subscription to the Magdalen House itself, a form of material redemption over which readers can exercise some control. In this form, the fictional and charitable contracts leave markers of gender and class difference largely undisturbed.[20]

As I have suggested, the 1790s represents a new moment of crisis in this story of anxious redemption. It is also the moment at which prostitution becomes for the first time explicitly a feminist issue, through the radical Dissenting inheritance of writers like Wollstonecraft and Hays, and the work of more cautiously pragmatic, and more conservative, advocates of reform such as Priscilla Wakefield and Mary Ann Radcliffe.[21] The work of Wakefield and Radcliffe helps bring into focus some of the significant differences within the literature of reform. Their contribution is to expose the story of economic injustice which is always the more or less explicit subject of the conventional sexual narrative, where the blame for female ruin is attributed to innocence and the libertine's sexual opportunism. In Wakefield and Radcliffe's accounts, prostitution is about work and dependency. It is primarily a question of the gendered division of labour, of the inadequate employment opportunities which reduce women to the "absolute necessity of bartering their virtue for bread" because, in Wollstonecraft's words, they are "always taught to look up to man for a maintenance".[22] Echoing a series of features which appeared in *The Times* in the 1780s, Wakefield and Radcliffe make very specific attacks on men's

usurpation of female occupations. As Wakefield puts it in her *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex*,

were the multitudes of men, who are constantly employed in measuring linen, gauze, ribbons, and lace; selling perfumes and cosmetics; setting a value on feathers and trinkets; and displaying their talents in praising the elegance of bonnets and caps – to withdraw, they might benefit the community, by exchanging such frivolous avocations for something more worthy of the masculine character, and, by this measure, afford an opportunity of gaining a creditable livelihood to many destitute women, whom a dreadful necessity drives to the business of prostitution. [23]

Wakefield plays down the seduction narrative, and her version of prostitution is doubtless much closer to the actuality of many women's experience, than is the story of irredeemable ruin. Wakefield's unsensationalist account corresponds, for example, to Bridget Hill's description of the "part-time, seasonal" nature of prostitution for many poor women.[24]

In spite of its still deeply conventional gender demarcation, Wakefield's stress on specific economic inequalities thus gives a significantly different slant to the generalised attacks on luxury, effeminacy and moral depravity which characterise many reformist texts of the period. Colquhoun's well-known *Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis* (1796), for example, attributed crime and prostitution to the "corruption of manners" and an "atrocious and criminal Confederacy". Similarly, *The Evils of Adultery and Prostitution*, which Wollstonecraft reviewed for the *Analytical Review* in 1792, blamed "that effeminacy and refined sentiment, which modern improvements have produced" and urged male chastity. Wollstonecraft, not surprisingly, observed that this tract "seldom extend[s] to the root of the evils, whose progress the author attempts to mark".[25] *The Evils of Adultery and Prostitution* is an example of that hardening of attitudes noted by Andrew. Symptomatically, it uses the *Laura*-type narrative, the fall into irredeemable vice, to argue for social and moral reform. Here pity turns very quickly into alarmist revulsion:

The situation of a betrayed and deluded female, is of all others the most to be pitied: despised by her acquaintance and forsaken by her friends, cast off and shunned, even to abhorrence, by him who first loved and then ruined her; the sincerest repentance can never again raise her to her rank in society. To what, or whom can she turn? ... throwing off all the modesty of her sex, she grows hardened and impudent in wickedness, and this drives her to the most desperate extremes. When a woman once loses her character, there is no length to which she is not capable of going. [26]

And the writer goes on to advocate "confinement and hard labour" as appropriate punishments (p. 64).

Ironically, it was just such texts which warned women away from work in precisely the occupations Wakefield recommends. In effect, they suggest, women working in these consumerist trades are always already prostitutes: the "vain, idle, and trifling" – and, of course, public – business of milliners and mantua-makers "renders them an easy prey to the wiles of seduction".[27] Even

the more liberal *Thoughts on ... Common Prostitution*, the text with which I began, sees women's work as primarily a site of danger:

Maidservants in private families, chamber-maids at inns, and female milliners, are, from innumerable temptations and opportunities, made the frequent prey of their young masters, fellow-servants, passengers, and customers. [28]

This writer advocates not hard labour but, at least for those born to "superior prospects in life", no labour at all. As I pointed out earlier, the projected charity will provide these women with pensions, while lower-class women are to be "furnished with opportunities of earning a comfortable subsistence in any way in which they may testify a wish to be employed" (p. 49). Fallen middle-class women are thus given access to the "moral franchise", but remain firmly outside economic enfranchisement. Like many women who wrote reformist texts in the later eighteenth century, Wakefield draws on Scottish Enlightenment theories of political economy, and offers a much more systematic categorisation by class. The second half of *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* is organised into chapters devoted to the kinds of work appropriate to women in each of four social groups. And, importantly, Wakefield uses theories of the division of labour and the market to urge women of all classes to consider work as "a means of procuring a respectable support". Her feminist programme is announced in her description of contents for chapter five: "The necessity of women being educated for the exercise of lucrative employments shown, and the absurdity of a woman honourably earning a support, being excluded from society, exposed".[29]

Mary Ann Radcliffe's *The Female Advocate* was written from bitter personal experience of precisely that need to earn "a support", and her polemic is melodramatic rather than systematic. For Radcliffe, the usurpation of women's labour opportunities is nothing less than "oppression": this "evil precedent, is not only robbing poor females of their birth-rights ... but is actually robbing the whole country of its right". In an interestingly symptomatic passage, sexual and economic inequality are conflated:

how much greater the sensations of pity, when it appears, the greatest part of the distress we see, is not through a vicious or depraved disposition, but absolute compulsion; through the encouragement given to a destructive custom, which permits men to enjoy a privilege, which nature never assigned them; and thereby encouraging vice to predominate, and holding virtue in fetters.[30]

At first sight, this is a standard attack on male sexual licence; but the male "privilege" here is not libertinism but, again, employability. For Radcliffe and Wakefield, then, if women are victims, it is of an economic rather than simply a sexual double standard. They claim rights to "independence", to the public identity of work, not just for the redeemed lower-class prostitute, as does the author of *Thoughts on ... Common Prostitution*, but for women of all classes.

There are many ways in which the work of Wakefield and Radcliffe supports things as they are. In the passage above from Radcliffe, "virtue in fetters" evokes anti-slavery rhetoric, but it also perpetuates an idealised and passive femininity. Wakefield, particularly, works explicitly from within the

tradition of Hannah More's ideal domestic female, whose task it is to bring about "the improvement of public morals, and the increase of public happiness". Throughout her programme of education, Wakefield is much closer to More than to Wollstonecraft, wary of "exceeding the most exact limits of modesty and decorum".[31] But the insistence on the inseparability of sexual and economic rights cuts against that orthodoxy. On the question of prostitution it necessarily disrupts the tyranny of sexual identity, the privatised feelings and, to a more limited extent, the class hierarchies, which underpin the standard sentimental narrative of fallen womanhood.

II

What, then, of the ways in which the prostitution issue manifests itself in fictional texts? I want now to turn to my three novels, in which self-consciously radical women appropriate the standard sentimental narrative. How far do these fictions succeed in rewriting the familiar story of what Susan Staves has called the "British Seduced Maiden", and in disturbing the terms of the sentimental contract? To what extent do they invite "justice, not charity" as Wollstonecraft demanded, and transform the eighteenth-century humanitarian narrative into the new political fiction which, in Rajan's definition "allows us not to be locked into the text of things as they are"?[32]

Elizabeth Inchbald's sentimental protagonist in *Nature and Art* is Hannah Primrose, a cottager's daughter ruined by the male establishment of Church and Law: her seducer's father is a bishop; her seducer himself becomes a judge. Like many writers of sentimental reformist texts, Inchbald thus makes her literary allegiance immediately clear. Her heroine combines the name of Goldsmith's innocent sentimental hero from *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) with the figure of the "poor, houseless, shivering female" whose story is briefly sketched in *The Deserted Village*. [33] At one point, indeed, Hannah enacts a line from Goldsmith's poem – "Near her betrayer's door she lays her head" – when she finds herself outside her former lover's door in London. Like Goldsmith's nameless woman:

*... she found her trembling knees had sunk, and her wearied head was reclined,
against the pillars that guarded William's door.*

*At the sudden recollection where she was, a swell of passion, composed of
horror, of despair, and love, gave re-animated strength to her failing limbs
... [34]*

It is a moment of crisis in the narrative: the impossibility of any romantic reconciliation signals the beginning of the final stage of degradation, and the moment is marked by an authorial intervention explaining why Hannah's history merits our attention:

*Had these miseries, common to the unhappy prostitute, been alone the
punishment of Hannah – had her crimes and sufferings ended in distress like
this, her story had not perhaps been selected for a public recital; for it had been
no other than the customary history of thousands of her sex. But Hannah had a*

destiny yet more severe. – Unhappily, she was endowed with a mind so sensibly alive to every joy, and every sorrow...; so liable to excess in passion, that once perverted, there was no degree of error from which it would with firmness revolt. (vol. 2, pp. 131-2)

The claim for uniqueness is disingenuous: Hannah's ultimate fall into crime echoes the tragic trajectory of excessive sensibility already seen in *Laura*, and in the more punitive reform texts. Inchbald's readiness to make such a figure into the heroine of a middle-class novel is less usual, however – even if Hannah's criminal career lasts for only two paragraphs and is characterised mainly by incompetence brought on by her moral doubts. What this version of the story does provide, is the opportunity to stage a wonderfully melodramatic court-room confrontation in which Hannah's seducer is the judge who condemns her to death:

... when William placed the fatal velvet on his head, and rose to pronounce her sentence – she started with a kind of convulsive motion – retreated a step or two back, and lifting up her hands, with a scream exclaimed –

“Oh! not from you!” (vol. 2, p. 43)

Drawing on her experience as a dramatist, as well as on the precedent for court-room scenes already established in the radical novel by Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, Inchbald makes a very obvious plea for “justice, not charity”. But, with the exception of this inarticulate cry, Hannah never pleads her own cause publicly: she remains the passive victim of sexual injustice. The reader, however, is granted emotional revenge when, in a moment of rare textual self-consciousness, William picks up a cheap pamphlet containing Hannah's final confession, a popular version of this very fiction, and so learns the identity of the woman he has condemned to death in all senses. Then, in a final cruel twist, he is also deprived of reconciliation with their son, who dies of grief at his mother's fate.

In her review of *Nature and Art*, Wollstonecraft described Hannah's story as “particularly affecting”, and acknowledged that “the catastrophe [gave] point to a benevolent system of morality”. However, she also objected that “the incidents, not being shaded into each other, sometimes appear improbable”.^[35] Perhaps the most “particularly affecting” aspect of Hannah's story is Inchbald's free indirect representation of her confused responses to William's attentions, in the early part of the novel:

for William, what would not Hannah forfeit? The dignity, the innocence of her own mind, love soon encouraged her to fancy she could easily forego – and this same overpowering influence at times so forcibly possessed her, that she even felt a momentary transport in the idea “of so precious a sacrifice to him”. (vol. 1, p. 144)

In various ways, Hannah's story prefigures that of George Eliot's Hetty Sorrel in *Adam Bede*. And not least in these passages which briefly give a particularised subjectivity to this inarticulate, uneducated heroine, for whom, again like Eliot, the authorial voice makes a special plea: to the “unprejudiced reader, whose liberal observations are not confined to stations, but who consider all mankind

alike deserving your investigation”.[36] Marilyn Butler has argued that the psychological realism in *Nature and Art* is distinct from the points at which Inchbald is “writing as a progressive”,[37] but this is to underestimate the potential for such realism to problematise and so politicise the formulaic events of the conventional sentimental narrative, with its safely distancing effect on the feeling reader. The problem, rather, is that this narrative technique does not go far enough in Inchbald’s novel: unlike Eliot, and unlike the more immediately contemporary *Thoughts ... on Common Prostitution*, for example, it introduces, but then withdraws from, the painful and daring topic of infanticide. Hannah’s abandoned baby is saved by William’s cousin Henry, who has just returned from a noble, savage upbringing on a desert island and is thus a figure of innocent moral commentary, reminiscent of Robert Bage’s Hermsprong. Inchbald thus avoids the risk of a sympathetic psychological portrait of the mother as murderer.[38] As in the narratives in *Histories ... of the Penitents*, motherhood is confirmed as a sentimental ideal. Furthermore, the subjective narrative is not sustained: as her experience becomes increasingly distressing, the representation of Hannah becomes more generalised until, as with the subjects of Laqueur’s humanitarian narrative, she is not just literally, but also effectively, dead.

Wollstonecraft’s remarks on the “improbable” quality of the incidents in *Nature and Art* invite comparison with her own use of the same paradigm in *Wrongs of Woman*. Jemima’s story is characterised by a level of documentary realism which significantly differentiates it both from Inchbald’s novel and from most of the reformist texts which deploy the same sentimental narrative. This is not simply a function of such terrible details as Jemima’s self-induced abortion, or the suicide of the other seduced servant, who is dismissed at Jemima’s instigation. I would want to locate Wollstonecraft’s “realism” in her portrait of a “fallen” lower-class woman whose capacity for redemptive transformation is manifest, initially at least, in independent scepticism rather than in passive sensibility – and never in abject penitence. Indeed, Jemima is the source of hope to Maria, rather than the other way round:

Jemima could patiently bear of Maria’s confinement on false pretences; she had felt the crushing hand of power, hardened by the exercise of injustice, and ceased to wonder at the perversions of the understanding, which systematize oppression.[39]

The radical force of Wollstonecraft’s text is not simply a matter of realism over conventional sentimental melodrama: documentary detail does not in itself constitute a political statement. Rather, it lies in the novel’s reworking of the humanitarian narrative’s sentimental contract. Maria, the middle-class audience for Jemima’s narrative, is both present in the novel, and similarly, though not equally, the object of abuse. By drawing attention to the similarities – and the negotiated differences – between speaker and listener, Wollstonecraft’s feminism disturbs the instrumental power of the classic humanitarian audience.

Through the juxtaposition of Jemima both with Maria’s story and with other women’s testimonies to financial and physical abuse, the figure of the prostitute in *Wrongs of Woman* becomes the type of all women’s experience, as Laurie Langbauer points out.[40] Like the texts by Wakefield and Radcliffe, and

like Hays's *Victim of Prejudice*, Jemima's story, and those which surround it, are as much about the near-impossibility of economic survival for women as they are about love and sexuality. That gender identity is reinforced as Jemima and Maria, the working-class prostitute and the middle-class consumer of her narrative, offer each other mutual, rather than one-sided, redemption:

Jemima, more overcome by kindness than she had ever been by cruelty, hastened out of the room to conceal her emotions. (p. 119)

Active as love was in the heart of Maria, the story she had just heard made her thoughts take a wider range. ... she was led to consider the oppressed state of women, and to lament that she had given birth to a daughter. (p. 120)

The novel cannot wholly escape the class-based mechanisms of sentimentalism: Jemima's redemption is, after all, primarily signalled by the return of her natural capacity for feeling. Like the Magdalen penitents, she is thus recuperable for a middle-class ideal. But Jemima's narrative also politicises middle-class femininity ("[Maria] was led to consider the oppressed state of women"), one consequence of which is that she takes responsibility for Darnford's defence:

The being summoned to defend herself from a charge which she was determined to plead guilty to, was still galling, as it roused bitter reflections on the situation of women in society.

... She instructed [Darnford's] counsel to plead guilty to the charge of adultery; but to deny that of seduction. (p. 194; my emphasis) [41]

In refusing the role of passive victim, Maria writes female desire into the orthodox sentimental seduction narrative, the narrative to which, again, she and Jemima have been variously subjected.

In Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice*, the identification of the female condition as a state of prostitution is again made. But it is made through the first-person narrative of a woman who, paradoxically, proves the case precisely by managing, against all the odds, to avoid that conventionally inexorable fate. It is the heroine's mother and not Mary herself who is the prostitute figure in the novel. Mary's own narrative contains, and is dictated by, that of her mother, whose "vain imagination" was seduced by "fashion and fortune". Inevitably, she becomes the victim of male betrayal, and then – in her own words, learned from the most alarmist of contemporary reform literature – "a monster, cruel, relentless, ferocious", contaminating "those unfortunate victims whom, with practised allurements, I entangled in my snares".[42] She is finally hanged for her part in the murder of one of her clients.

Mary is pursued throughout her narrative by Sir Peter Osborne, who finally succeeds in abducting and raping her. It is at this moment, when Mary seems doomed to relive her mother's experience, that she is confronted by her mother in a dream. In her Clarissa-like state of derangement, she encounters a figure out of Gothic melodrama:

the visionary form of my wretched mother seemed to flit before me. One moment, methought I beheld her in the arms of her seducer, revelling in

licentious pleasure; the next, I saw her haggard, intoxicated, self-abandoned, joining in the midnight riot; ... Then, all pallid and ghastly, with clasped hands, streaming eyes, and agonizing earnestness, she seemed to urge me to take example from her fate! Her dying groans and reiterated warnings, in low, tremulous accents, continued to vibrate on my ear: they became fainter and fainter, when methought I rushed forward to clasp my hapless parent in a last embrace. I beheld the convulsive pangs, the gaspings, the struggles, the distortions of death. (p. 123)

In her edition of *The Victim of Prejudice*, Eleanor Ty offers an interesting psychoanalytic reading of this passage, as a representation of Mary's subconscious "desires to be linked with her mother and her disgrace" (p. xxi). I would want to stress the powerful dynamic of revulsion which is also present, a representation of the terrible inevitability of the mother's corruption, and of Mary's desperate attempt, in a world of "prejudice", to make her story significantly different. In fact, as I have already pointed out, Mary never becomes a prostitute. But neither does she achieve the independence for which she struggles.

Like Wollstonecraft's Maria, Mary writes her narrative from prison: "driven with ignominy from social intercourse, cut off from human sympathy, immured in the gloomy walls of a prison" (p. 3). Her situation echoes not just Wollstonecraft's novel, but Mary Ann Radcliffe's account in *The Female Advocate* of women imprisoned for casual prostitution under the Vagrancy Act:

what numbers of these poor objects have been dragged away by the ruthless hand of the unfeeling savage, to some loathsome prison, without regard to the more refined or delicate sensations of one or another? ... she, who so lately was looked upon as an ornament to her sex, until the pressure of misfortunes compelled her to seek for bread, to be at once confined in a dark prison There to have her ears grated with the rattling of bolts and bars, and all the adamantine fetters of misery. [43]

It also, of course, echoes the fate of her own mother. But Mary is in prison not for prostitution, but for debt. Like Hays's earlier novel, *The Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), *The Victim of Prejudice* blames the wrongs of woman – at an overt level, at least – on a combination of masculinity and class, rather than on the mother's transgression. The mechanisms of repression are made very clear in an overdetermined Edenic scene near the beginning of the novel: Mary's simultaneous fall into womanhood, and into the class system, is enacted when William, the childhood companion with whom she falls in love, persuades her to steal a "large and tempting cluster of grapes, of uncommon ripeness, bloom, and beauty" from the local aristocrat's greenhouse. This is the first time she encounters Sir Peter Osborne; on this occasion she escapes his clutches, but with her "hands and arms" proleptically "bruised, scratched, and streaming with blood" (p. 14). (The episode thus anticipates a later, more famous, violent rite of passage: Catherine Earnshaw's entry into Thrushcross in *Wuthering Heights*.) Under male direction, sexual and social desire are conflated with violence, as

William tempts Mary with class-marked luxury, and precipitates her into a fallen narrative in which she is prey to the apparently ubiquitous aristocrat.

In accordance with the conventional seduction narrative, going back through *Pamela* to the beginning of the century, Sir Peter is both sexual predator and landlord. But in *The Victim of Prejudice*, the oppression of sexual and class “dependency” is explored very specifically in terms of work opportunities. Evicted from her adopted home with a benevolent clergyman and his wife when Sir Peter gives the living to someone else, Mary is confident that she is “young, active, healthy, and able to labour” (p. 93), and sets off for the meritocracy of London, “the centre to which talents and accomplishments naturally resort” (p. 102). It is there that she is raped by Sir Peter, and even in the free labour market of the metropolis, it proves impossible to escape his influence. Mary’s career reads like a critique of, for example, Priscilla Wakefield’s confident advice that for middle-class women “[c]olouring of prints is a lucrative employment”; or of reformist texts which assured “fallen” women that, with repentance and reformation, a return to respectable work would be possible.[44] Under Sir Peter’s influence, Mary suffers sexual harassment from her employer in a print-shop, and she is denied at the last minute a post as lady’s travelling-companion. Hays’s directed use of the seduction narrative paradigm suggests that the emergent professional culture is still deeply infected by old structures of gender and class.[45] Mary does not, technically, become a prostitute; but the force of the novel’s equivocal doubling of mother and daughter is to draw attention to the arbitrariness of that label.[46]

As in the reformist tracts of the time, then, Hays uses the sentimental narrative powerfully and painfully to demonstrate women’s precarious social status, and the inadequacies of a legal system which refuses the possibility of redemption:

A sanguinary policy precludes reformation, defeating the dear-bought lessons of experience, and, by a legal process, assuming the arm of omnipotence, annihilates the being whom its negligence left destitute, and its institutions compelled to offend.[47]

Hays’s explicit polemic (spoken by Mary’s mother) again echoes Mary Ann Radcliffe’s angry deployment of sentiment:

Surely there cannot be any thing more wretchedly miserable than the situation of these poor women, who are prohibited from sharing in industry, or the common necessaries of life, or even tasting the very dregs of comfort. ... they linger out a wretched exile in this miserable dungeon, until the law hath had its course ... [48]

The sentimental narrative dictates Mary’s fall into prison. By stopping short of the expected fall into prostitution, Hays invokes that fate as polemical metaphor for women’s economic circumstances.

But the sentimental narrative also dictates a fall into guilt. In Hays’s novel, Mary’s failure finally to achieve the independence she longs for is in part a function of her failure to escape mentally from social “prejudice”: against her mother and against her own illegitimate status. It is she who refuses to “bring

dishonour as my only dowry to the arms of the man I love”, when she learns the circumstances of her birth (p. 75). In that sense, Mary becomes her own victim, as the internalised Gothic image of her ruined mother suggests. When her lover insists on the enlightenment belief that “virtue, talents, derive honour from no station”, Mary refers him to the power of custom: “who am I, that I should resist the united voice of mankind?” (p. 76).

As is also evident in the less radical tracts, the popular fictional paradigm restricts the roles and the narrative possibilities open to women. Like other novels by radical women of the 1790s, Hays’s novel struggles to expose that limitation. Ultimately, it could be argued, “prejudice” in *The Victim of Prejudice* is a function of Hays’s chosen form, of the residual sentimental narrative which shapes her heroine’s experience. Hays’s novel answers *Wrongs of Woman* by explicitly denying the alternative possibilities which can be glimpsed in the fragmented endings of Wollstonecraft’s unfinished text: a denial which must be due at least in part to the fact that *The Victim of Prejudice* was written after the publication and shocked reception of Godwin’s *Memoir*, and after Wollstonecraft’s own posthumous failure to escape narratives dictated by “the united voice of mankind”.

But in her novel, Wollstonecraft begins to defy that voice and those narratives. As I suggested earlier, Wollstonecraft’s prostitute refuses to play the abject penitent, just as Maria refuses the decorously passive role of seduced woman. And the context of prostitution reform makes clear how far the growing friendship between Maria and Jemima similarly defies orthodoxies. It directly contradicts the advice of writers like Hannah More, for example, for whom, in cases of sexual transgression at least, charity is very explicitly a mechanism of differentiation:

O ye to whom this address is particularly directed! ... while you resolutely persevere in making a stand against the encroachments of this crime, suffer not your firmness to be shaken by that affectation of charity, which is growing into a general substitute for principle. ... Pity the wretched women you dare not countenance; and bless HIM who has “made you to differ”. If unhappily she be your relation or friend, anxiously watch for the period when she shall be deserted by her betrayer; ... But if, through the Divine blessing on your patient endeavours, she should ever be awakened to remorse, be not anxious to restore the forlorn penitent to that society against whose laws she has so grievously offended; and remember, that her soliciting such a restoration, furnishes but too plain a proof that she is not the penitent your partiality would believe; since penitence is more anxious to make its peace with Heaven than with the world.[49]

The community of women – Jemima, Maria, and her female child – envisaged in the most optimistic of the novel’s projected endings thus makes a very particular polemical point against the most punitive versions of prostitution reform in the 1790s.[50] But Jemima’s stubborn working-class identity also questions the liberal dispensers of charitable feeling: when Maria and Darnford set up house, Jemima insists “on being considered as her house-keeper, and to receive the customary stipend. On no other terms would she remain with her friend” (p.

191). At one level, this other triad seems simply to reproduce existing social structures. But Maria lives with her lover “above disguise”; and Jemima maintains independence by insisting on a properly financial rather than merely a sentimental contract. Echoing *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft’s fictional prostitute demands “justice” rather than the seductive obligations of “charity”. It is also a demand for a new story.

Correspondence

Dr Vivien Jones, School of English, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, United Kingdom.

Notes

- [1] Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), *Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Marilyn Butler & Janet Todd, 7 vols (London: William Pickering, 1989), vol. 5, p. 140.
- [2] *Thoughts on Means of Alleviating the Miseries attendant upon Common Prostitution* (London, 1799), pp. 1, 49, 50.
- [3] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 192.
- [4] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- [5] Laurie Langbauer, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 110, and see also pp. 117-21. For a critique of the class basis of Wollstonecraft’s representation of prostitution, see Cora Kaplan, “Pandora’s Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism”, in *Sea Changes: Culture and Feminism* (London: Verso, 1986), pp. 147-176 (pp. 168-169).
- [6] See, for example, Carole S. Vance’s account of the appropriation of feminist anti-pornography rhetoric by the right-wing Meese Commission. Carole S. Vance (ed.), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, 2nd. ed. with a new introduction (London: Pandora, 1992), pp. xxvii-xxxii. For a useful account of the British context, see Linda Ruth Williams, “The Pornographic Subject: Feminism and Censorship in the 1990s” in Sally Ledger, Josephine McDonagh & Jane Spencer (eds), *Political Gender: Texts and Contexts* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp. 189-203, esp. pp. 192-194.
- [7] See also Vivien Jones, “‘The Tyranny of the Passions’: Feminism and Heterosexuality in the Fiction of Wollstonecraft and Hays” in Ledger, et al, *Political Gender*, pp. 173-88; “Women writing revolution: narratives of history and sexuality in Wollstonecraft and Williams” in Stephen Copley & John Whale (eds), *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts, 1780-1830* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 178-199.
- [8] Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790-1827* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) pp. 117, 147; Donna Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 187-194. See also Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Nicola Watson, *Revolution and the*

Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825: Intercepted Letters, Interrupted Seductions (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

- [9] Daniel Defoe, *Some Considerations upon Streetwalkers. With a Proposal for lessening the present Number of them. In Two Letters to a Member of Parliament* (London, 1726), pp. 2, 5, 16-18.
- [10] Thomas Laqueur, "Bodies, Details and the Humanitarian Narrative", in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 176-204 (pp. 176-177).
- [11] *Ibid.*, p. 204. On the shift in attitudes to prostitutes, see W. A. Speck, "The Harlot's Progress in Eighteenth-Century England", *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* ,3 (1980), pp. 127-39; Randolph Trumbach, "Modern Prostitution and Gender in *Fanny Hill*", in G. S. Rousseau & Roy Porter (eds), *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 69-85.
- [12] For a closely related discussion of some of these questions in the mid-century context, see Vivien Jones, "Scandalous Femininity: Prostitution and Eighteenth-Century Narrative" in Dario Castiglione & Lesley Sharpe (eds), *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Private and Public in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), pp. 54-70.
- [13] Laqueur, "Bodies, Details and the Humanitarian Narrative", pp. 179, 182.
- [14] *Laura; or, the Fall of Innocence: A Poem* (London, 1787), p. 23.
- [15] Robert Merry, A.M., *The Pains of Memory: A Poem* (London, 1796), pp. 10-11.
- [16] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 140. On the language of sensibility as "a language which tells of disorder and ambiguous susceptibility", see John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 237.
- [17] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (1771), ed. by Brian Vickers (Oxford: World's Classics, 1987), p. 66.
- [18] *Histories of some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House, as Supposed to be related by Themselves*, 2 vols (London, 1760), vol. 1, pp. 35, 36.
- [19] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 5.
- [20] Soon after the Magdalen House was established, Jonas Hanway wrote to the Bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu. He complained that pamphlets seemed insufficient in securing support for the project, and asked whether someone could write a novel to do the job. This is no doubt the source of *Histories... of the Penitents*. I am grateful to Gary Kelly for drawing my attention to this correspondence.
- [21] See Mary Hays, *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in behalf of Women* (1798); Priscilla Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798); Mary Ann Radcliffe, *The Female Advocate: Or, an Attempt to Recover the Rights of Women from Male Usurpation* (1799). I have, of course, described a very wide political spectrum here, ranging from the radicalism of Wollstonecraft to, in Wakefield's case, a conservative position quite close to that of Hannah More, whom I find it very difficult to think of as "feminist" – in spite of Kathryn Sutherland's excellent essay. See Kathryn Sutherland, "Hannah More's Counter-Revolutionary Feminism" in Kelvin Everest (ed.), *Revolution in Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), pp. 27-63.

- [22] Mary Ann Radcliffe, *The Female Advocate: Or, an Attempt to Recover the Rights of Women from Male Usurpation* (1799) in *The Memoirs of Mrs Mary Ann Radcliffe In Familiar Letters to Her Female Friend* (Edinburgh, 1810), p. 409; Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 140.
- [23] Priscilla Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798), 2nd. edn (London, 1817), pp. 122-123. Cf. *The Times*, November 10 1785: "The Legislature would do well to lay a heavy tax on shopmen, in all such branches as ought to afford employment to women. Linen-drapery, millinery, perfumery, and haberdashery, ought in particular to be subjected to such regulation". See also the editions for July 27 and October 25 1787.
- [24] Bridget Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 173.
- [25] P. Colquhoun, Esq., *A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis; Containing a Detail of the Various Crimes and Misdemeanors By which Public and Private Property and Security are, at present, injured and endangered: and Suggesting Remedies for their Prevention*, 5th. ed., revised and enlarged (London, 1797), pp. vi, xii[i]; *The Evils of Adultery and Prostitution: with an Inquiry into the Causes of their Present Alarming Increase, and some means recommended for Checking their Progress* (London, 1792), pp. iii-iv; *Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, vol. 7, p. 457.
- [26] *The Evils of Adultery and Prostitution*, pp. 22-23.
- [27] *Serious Thoughts on the Miseries of Seduction and Prostitution, with a Full Account of the Evils that Produce Them; plainly shewing. Seduction and Prostitution to be contrary to the Laws of Nature* (London, 1783), pp. 51-52.
- [28] *Thoughts on ... Common Prostitution*, p. 26.
- [29] Wakefield, *Reflections*, pp. vi-vii. The *Reflections* begins by acknowledging its debt to Adam Smith's *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776): "It is asserted by Doctor Adam Smith, that every individual is a burthen upon the society to which he belongs, who does not contribute his share of productive labour"; and it goes on to extend that imperative to women: "their sex cannot free them from the claim of the public for their proportion of usefulness" (pp. 1-2). Also relevant to Wakefield's method is John Millar's *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771, revised edn, 1779). This was also the moment at which the Magdalen House began similarly to draw on theories of rank, education and the division of labour, and to separate its clients "according to their birth, education, and behaviour, and ability to perform different kinds of work". See: *By-Laws and Regulations of the Magdalen Hospital* (London, 1802), p. 42.

On the connections between early British feminism and Scottish Enlightenment ideas, see Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860* (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 25-8, and "Virtue and Propriety: the Scottish Enlightenment and the Construction of Femininity", unpublished paper given at the "Feminism and Political Philosophy" conference, University of Amsterdam, 1990. For a discussion of Maria Edgeworth's use of Smith's ideas at the same period, see Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), ch. 6. For a useful survey of the fictional treatment of women, money, and employment in the period, which doesn't, however, deal with contemporary economic theories, see Edward Copeland, *Women Writing about Money: Women's Fiction in England, 1790-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

- [30] Radcliffe, *The Female Advocate*, pp. 430, 435, 426. Radcliffe had to support eight children after separating from her improvident husband. Wakefield, too, wrote to support her family when her husband's business failed.
- [31] Wakefield, *Reflections*, pp. 78, 6.
- [32] See Susan Staves, "British Seduced Maidens", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 14(2) (Winter, 1980-81), pp. 109-34; Tilottama Rajan, "Reading the Secrets of the Political Novel", *Studies in Romanticism*, 27 (1988), pp. 221-251 (p. 249).
- [33] Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village* (1770), ll. 326-36. This section from *The Deserted Village* is quoted as part of Appendix V to *Thoughts on ... Common Prostitution*. In *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Parson Primrose's daughter Olivia is of course only apparently seduced. The late arrival of a legal marriage licence restores her "to reputation, to friends and fortune" (Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, ed. by Stephen Coote [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986], p. 193).
- [34] Elizabeth Inchbald, *Nature and Art* (1796), facs. edn (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1994), vol. 2, p. 131; Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, l. 332. Sentimentalism is just one of several modes in Inchbald's novel. It is also characterised by a satiric wit reminiscent of early Austen. See, for example, the parodically sentimental death of Lady Clementina, William's mother and representative of the aristocracy: "she caught cold by wearing a new-fashioned dress that did not half cover her, wasted all away, and died the miserablest object you ever heard of" (vol. 2, p. 174).
- [35] *Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, vol. 7, p. 463.
- [36] Inchbald, *Nature and Art*, vol. 1, p. 139. Cf. George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (1859), chap. 17: "These fellow-mortals, every one, must be accepted as they are". Eliot's realism goes beyond Inchbald to reject "picturesque sentimental wretchedness". After writing this, I discovered that Margaret Anne Doody has pointed out the connection between *Nature and Art* and *Adam Bede*, though with a different emphasis. See Margaret Anne Doody, "George Eliot and the Eighteenth-Century Novel", *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 35 (1980), pp. 260-291 (pp. 274-275).
- [37] Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 32.
- [38] Infanticide features in the "First Stage of Misery" in *Thoughts on ... Common Prostitution*.
Tears, long strangers to her eyes, now gush forth as from a newly opened fountain, while she folds the baby in her embraces. At this instant its shrill cry calls back the whole tempest of her alarms. In the precipitancy of dismay she rolls it in the bed-clothes, to still the fatal sound that threatens to frustrate all her torturing labours, to betray her to the ignominy which she regards with terror bordering on madness. In her frenzy she heaps blankets and pillows over the struggling infant, and sinks fainting, breathless, senseless on the spot of her exertion. Oh! could she but die at that moment! To what a scene must she revive? With feeble limbs, and a faint recollection of the past, she searches amidst the heap on which she fell. The child is dead. – She – its mother – is its murderer. – Oh, horror! (pp. 7-8)
- [39] Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), *Mary and the Wrongs of Woman*, ed. by James Kinsley & Gary Kelly (Oxford: World's Classics, 1980), p. 80.
- [40] Langbauer, *Women and Romance*, p. 120.

- [41] Elaine Jordan's excellent paper, "Criminal Conversation: on *The Wrongs of Woman*" discusses the significance of "criminal conversation", of which Darnford is accused, within the history of divorce reform. Unpublished paper given at the "Mary Wollstonecraft in Sweden" conference, Uddevalla, Sweden, 1995.
- [42] Mary Hays, *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799), ed. by Eleanor Ty (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1994), pp. 63, 67.
- [43] Radcliffe, *The Female Advocate*, p. 414.
- [44] Wakefield, *Reflections*, p. 101. See also *Advice to Unmarried Women: To Recover and Reclaim the Fallen; And to Prevent the Fall of Others, Into the Snares and Consequences of Seduction* (London, 1791), pp. 24-27.
- [45] On the professionalisation of culture in the period, see Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution*. The representation of William Pelham, whom Mary loves, adds a further dimension to the novel's critique of aristocratic masculinity in relation to work. William, like Orlando in Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1794), is ill-equipped to achieve economic independence, having been spoiled by an education which trained him "by no means to degrade a long and illustrious line of ancestry by the practice of any profession or commercial employment" (Hays, p. 8).
- [46] On motifs of doubling and replication in the novel, see Eleanor Ty, "Editor's Introduction", pp. xx-xxiii.
- [47] Hays, *Victim of Prejudice*, pp. 68-69.
- [48] Radcliffe, *The Female Advocate*, p. 415.
- [49] Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, 2 vols. (London, 1799), vol. 1, pp. 53-55. Mary Hays's advice, in *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain* is rather different: "those who possess [virtue] in the most eminent degree, are not entitled upon that account, to despise or condemn too rigorously, that unfortunate portion of the sex who have fallen victims to vice" (*Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* [London, 1798], p. 234).
- [50] For a less positive reading, see Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800* (London: Virago, 1989), p. 251. See also Gary Kelly, *Revolutionary Feminism: The Mind and Career of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 222-223.