FALSE DOMESTICITY: HIDDEN SECRETS IN MARIA EDGEWORTH'S "HARRY AND LUCY CONCLUDED"

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides information concerning the recent discovery of a signed, first-edition copy of Maria Edgeworth's *Harry and Lucy Concluded*. In order to address the historical, literary, and societal implications of the find, the thesis investigates the identity of the novel's original owner in connection with Edgeworth's political beliefs and cognitive writing strategies. As an eccentric inventor and member of the British parliament, the original owner of the text also gains additional significance as the inspiration for characters in Edgeworth's *Harry and Lucy Concluded* and Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield.*

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who have done their utmost in encouraging their children to learn as much as possible about the world around them.

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I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my committee chair, Dr. Claudia Nelson, and my committee members, Dr. Elizabeth Robinson and Dr. David Hudson, for their constant encouragement and support throughout my research. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Kathryn Rix and Dr. Philip Salmon with the History of Parliament project for providing access to information that helped me in identifying key Rotch sources for my work, and to Kevin O' Sullivan of Texas A&M University's Cushing Library. Several others who have provided significant help along the way include—but are not limited to—Paulette Hoelscher, Christine Brown, Dr. Mary Ann O'Farrell, and Dr. Susan Egenolf. Many thanks must also go to my wonderful parents, siblings, grandparents, family members and friends for their love and encouragement throughout this process.

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Contributors

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Containing handwritten marginalia and the mysterious fragment of a letter, a remarkable first-edition copy of Maria Edgeworth's *Harry and Lucy Concluded* has recently been brought to light within the circulating collections of Rice University. First discovered by the graduate student authoring this thesis (who received the text through inter-library loan) and Dr. Elizabeth Robinson of Texas A&M University, this four-volume Edgeworth text from 1825 reveals a highly complex view of period British societal practices. From the provenance and marginalia of the physical text to the conflicting written content of the story, this thesis examines the ways in which *Harry and Lucy Concluded* highlights an under-investigated nineteenth century historical realm—a realm where "outlying" women such as Edgeworth can both maintain and undermine our modern understanding of patriarchy through adolescent education, political involvement, and false domesticity.

In order to set the stage for the discussion of Edgeworth's political affiliations, the opening chapter of this thesis delves into matters associated with the initial owner of the physical text. Beginning with the hand-penned dedication of "B. Rotch Esq., from the author," I present research establishing the identity of the owner of the set as Benjamin Rotch, a French-born barrister of American Quaker heritage (who eventually held office as a member of the British Parliament). Verified through Edgeworth's

personal letters as the anonymous young inventor mentioned by the co-protagonist Harry in glowing details, Rotch appears to have been a highly eccentric—if not influential—individual.

Further external evidence on Rotch additionally suggests that the text under examination for this thesis provides a contrasting portrayal to his later role as the inspiration for a Dickensian villain, juxtaposing Edgeworth's positive viewpoint with the less-than-enthusiastic descriptions of Mr. Creakle presented by Dickens in the pages of *David Copperfield*. As these two characters have yet to be connected by scholars (due to the anonymity of Rotch within the Edgeworth text), this thesis provides ground-breaking research highlighting Edgeworth's Rotch as the proto-basis for a key Dickensian character. Whereas Dickens portrays Rotch in a poor light based on the complexities arising from personal differences of opinion, Edgeworth's representation of Rotch as a young man is idealistic, encouraging the child reader to view him as a positive role model for both the male and female protagonists. However, through the investigation of his connection with Dickens, this chapter will endeavor to further ascertain the nature of Rotch's involvement with Edgeworth in matters of political reform.

In its historical capacity as a physical artifact, this copy of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* bears lingering traces of the original owner's presence that indicate a more-than-passing interest in the contents of the novel. Indeed, one of the most intriguing aspects of this work is the section containing the information about Rotch himself: while the rest of the pages of the novel are pristine, those that comprise the portion describing his own life are covered with age spots (indicating frequent reading and handling).

Numerous instances of marginalia reflect an unusual acceptance of Edgeworth as a scientifically credible woman writer, with all four volumes displaying a hand-made table of contents in order to allow the reader a better access to specific scientific concepts. In addition, there are also inclusions of marginalia that hint at some of Rotch's own personal inventions (although the analysis of said marginalia is speculative in nature as the result of being partially obscured by the rebinding process). Combined with the evidence from Edgeworth's personal letters, these instances of marginalia demonstrate that Rotch both accepted Edgeworth as a scientific authority and allowed her to influence the development of his projects concerning patent law reform. This historical evidence in turn provides a means of transitioning into the next chapter, which primarily concerns Edgeworth's involvement in the political sphere.

While Edgeworth's work in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* plays a substantial part in shaping the juvenile culture of the Victorian Age, her work is also largely defined by the tenets of Enlightenment philosophy. Therefore, it is only natural that most of her works would reflect the period's ever-growing emphasis on the importance of domesticity within the family unit. The second chapter of the project endeavors to further the stated goals of the thesis by asking the reader to reevaluate our modern understanding of the role of women in eighteenth and nineteenth century political spheres through the lens of domesticity. Using Edgeworth's personal actions as a case study, this chapter investigates a cultural realm in which women could claim that it was useless to try to become involved in politics while simultaneously mentioning their day of political canvassing in the next breath. Through the connections established with the

first chapter, this section will endeavor to primarily explore Edgeworth's personal convictions concerning domesticity and politics while at the same time examining how individuals such as Rotch provided her with access and influence over the higher echelons of British politics.

Indeed, as one of the few identifiable women to observe the workings of Parliament during the period, Edgeworth herself displays a conflicting predilection for maintaining the surface expectations of polite society while pushing boundaries to promote the acceptance of modern advancements. Striking an uncertain balance between an affinity for the establishment and a desire to achieve revolutionary results in education and politics, Edgeworth's personal convictions remain something of an enigma. And yet, through the investigation of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* in comparison with other Edgeworth works intended for adult audiences, it is clear that Edgeworth is often able to navigate less-than-certain cultural spaces through the medium of satire and feminine artifice.

This discussion transitions into the third chapter of the thesis, which predominantly seeks to understand the various lessons presented by Edgeworth in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* from the perspective of cognitive studies in children's literature (particularly as they relate to the creation and transmission of the ideal role of young girls and women in pre-Victorian society). Modes of feminine agency, specifically relating to the acquiring of power by means of manipulation, are highlighted throughout Edgeworth's work, employing the societal assumptions concerning womanhood to control unsuspecting male figures. This in turn creates a significant question for the

modern scholar of the nineteenth century: if women are indeed propagating their own domestic shackles, as it were, what purpose could the creation of such an ostensibly limited existence serve? Furthermore, can it be possible that written evidence has created a fictional understanding of history that is ultimately at odds with actual period behavior?

This chapter utilizes cognitive elements to analyze the means of transmitting knowledge to the child audience as presented specifically in *Harry and Lucy Concluded*, exploring how Lucy—the young female protagonist—is seemingly inculcated with a sense of inferiority. One such example may be seen in the following passage, where Edgeworth writes:

> When women pretend to understand what they do not, whether about science or anything else, they are absurd and ridiculous. And if they talk even of what they understand, merely to display their knowledge, they must be troublesome and disagreeable. Therefore they should take care not to do so. They should be particularly cautious of talking on scientific subjects, because they seldom obtain accurate knowledge; they are, therefore, likely to make mistakes, and to be either troublesome in asking questions, or ridiculous in showing ignorance and conceit. (*Concluded* 1:8)

However, while such statements appear to conflict with the beliefs of modern feminist principles, the fact that Edgeworth herself is presenting scientific

knowledge to the reader through her role as a female author renders this advice as less definitive in scope.

On the whole, it must be acknowledged that Edgeworth's personal experiences factor largely into the creation process for her writings. With stories like *Harry and Lucy Concluded* written to entertain a vast number of younger siblings, Edgeworth was also apparently encouraged to pursue writing about childhood subjects as the result of "having for many years before her eyes the conduct of a judicious mother in the education of a large family" (*Practical* x). Edgeworth specifically cites this maternal influence in a treatise on *Practical Education* (a two-volume work produced jointly with her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth), recognizing her stepmother's input in writing and editing a chapter on *Obedience* prior to her death. Based on the wording of the text, it is apparent that the recognition of feminine authorship implies that the reader may accept these contributions to the book as being from believable "domestic" experts on the various subjects addressed.

As Edgeworth's own participation in contemporary political discourse ultimately finds expression through both female and male characters within her novels, it is intriguing that the ideological influences pertaining to the shaping of the adolescent mind are primarily represented as being within the "domestic" province of the female figure. This in turn uses the influence provided by domesticity to circumvent a cultural and political system which repeatedly emphasized the work of male authors, providing Edgeworth with the means to achieve status as a woman writer. Rather than concealing

the manuscript's true authorship on the basis of gender and publishing the work solely under the name of R. L. Edgeworth, female identity is instead used to foster credibility.

This thesis additionally examines Edgeworth in her capacity as an author who participates in the intentional creation, maintenance, and transmission of nineteenth century ideological concepts of female inferiority. As a result, it is thus necessary to evaluate the lessons being presented to the adolescent audience of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* in light of a comprehensive picture of Edgeworth's life and works. It is also increasingly clear that the full extent of the female power associated with domesticity itself has been largely unrecognized. Indeed, it can be difficult to accept many of the didactic scenarios at face-value when the personal actions of the author often appear to veer in a different direction.

We must then ask the question: is it possible to better understand nineteenth century feminine political influence when viewed through the lens of statecraft (the act of governing) versus statesmanship (the act of holding office as a politician)? As historian Simon Morgan notes in his work *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century*:

> Much recent work on the public sphere continues to mention women as only an excluded or marginalized group who had to fight even for the scanty access to the "public" [sphere] that they were allowed… [However,] women were very much a part of this process of organic growth, constantly testing, negotiating, and remaking boundaries. (Morgan 4)

In much the same way that modern corporations choose to "buy" a politician and influence the decision-making process, I investigate the extent to which Edgeworth and other women of the period intentionally remained in the shadows in a role of political puppet-master. Although Edgeworth was active as a writer in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I discuss these recurring issues primarily through the lens of the nineteenth century based on the 1825 publication date for *Harry and Lucy Concluded*.

As a whole, the organization of this information and the topics discussed at length in the thesis are intended to provide a comprehensive look at the circumstances surrounding the creation of this first edition volume of *Harry and Lucy Concluded.* Although didactic in tone, the work still became popular among youthful audiences and proved to be influential for other successive children's texts. Based on the discovery of a single book, this thesis endeavors to present the reader with new findings that ultimately challenge our accepted knowledge concerning Maria Edgeworth and nineteenth century historical culture.

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CHAPTER II

FINDING MR. ROTCH: THE PARLIAMENTARY PROVENANCE OF *HARRY AND LUCY CONCLUDED*

From the simple flyleaf dedication penned by Maria Edgeworth to the surprising revelations unearthed by this copy's provenance, this 1825 first-edition of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* reveals new and groundbreaking developments for the modern Edgeworth scholar. While it must be admitted that the reader needs very little external information in order to understand the four-volume text at a basic reading level, determining the initial owner of this work is useful in unraveling vital aspects of Edgeworth's life and authorship. Moreover, in consideration of her frequent use of realism, the potential opportunity for identifying the real-life elements of her work through a close analysis of this text is a matter of no small significance. As a result, establishing the provenance of this unique copy through historical evidence, marginalia, and in-text data brings to light Edgeworth's relationship with an unusual member of the British parliament—a discovery that subsequently points to the early portrayal of a Dickensian villain within the pages of *Harry and Lucy Concluded*.

Introducing Benjamin Rotch, Esq.

When one attempts to identify the individual history of the copy, what is striking about this work is the unusual physical appearance of the set. Lacking the typical binding and trimmed pages associated with other copies of *Harry and Lucy Concluded*, the plain brown cardboard covers and ragged paper edges of the volumes (Fig. 2.1.) are

at odds with the more polished versions of the text. Indeed, the lackluster appearance of the overall text suggests in turn that the original owner may have been one of the scientific "friends" Edgeworth mentions as having provided feedback during the writing process (*Literary Bio* 167).

Fig. 2.1. External appearance of the copy.

Each of the separate volumes of this copy of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* displays a hand-written table of contents, providing a swifter access to specific information within the novel. Although numerous educational subjects appear during the course of the work, an analysis of the topics selected for these personal indices aids in determining what features the owner preferred easy access to (ideally revealing further information concerning the individual's character). While a significant portion of these markings have been partially obscured through library cataloguing and spine-rebinding processes, it is still possible to accurately interpret the majority of the marginalia that appears throughout the set. Other notations, such as the mysterious spiraling figures drawn in pencil, remain inconclusive, lost to poor handwriting, erasure, and the passage of time.

Although the novel itself is intended to address the learning needs of a child audience, it is obvious that this copy of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* reflects adult, rather than child, ownership. As previously mentioned, the marginalia exhibited throughout the four-volume set (which will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter), provides evidence that points to the initial possessor of the text as a scientifically-minded individual—one who was interested in the modern advances discussed in Edgeworth's forthcoming work. However, the most valuable clue to establishing the novel's provenance is an inscription written by Edgeworth on the flyleaf of the first volume in the set: "To B. Rotch, Esq., from the author" (Fig. 2.2.)

Based on the information provided in the dedication, further investigation within Edgeworth's personal correspondence reveals a promising candidate for the novel's

ownership. In an 1828 letter to longtime American correspondent Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Edgeworth wrote approvingly: “The passage you copied for me about models and patents is excellent. I have sent it to Mr. Rotch, the inventor of the patent fid…Mr. Rotch is at this moment doing his utmost to have the patent laws of England improved” (*Concluded* 3:77). Although Edgeworth fails to specify Rotch’s first name during the course of the letter—presumably from the assumption that this information would be enough to allow recognition on the part of Lazarus—she does provide a key identifier concerning Rotch’s contributions to science that aid in the investigative process. By combining the information contained in this letter within a search parameter of the respective time period (in addition to using the term “Esq.” or “Esquire” as a noteworthy feature of the inscription), it is much easier to narrow the list of potential candidates, thereby ascertaining the book’s ownership.

Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry indicates that the initial possessor of this copy of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* was one Benjamin Rotch, an Englishman who pursued the occupation of barrister-at-law and eventually served as a Member of Parliament for Knaresborough (Burke 1149). Additional research establishes this same Benjamin Rotch as the 1823 inventor of the patented lever fid—an invention intended to decrease the hazards associated with raising and lowering the masts of ships—which further supports the claim of ownership based on the contents of Edgeworth’s letter to Lazarus (Harland et al. 220). Yet another factor that aids in strengthening the evidence for ownership by this particular Benjamin Rotch is derived from an obscure sentence in John M. Bullard’s *The Rotches*, wherein the author includes

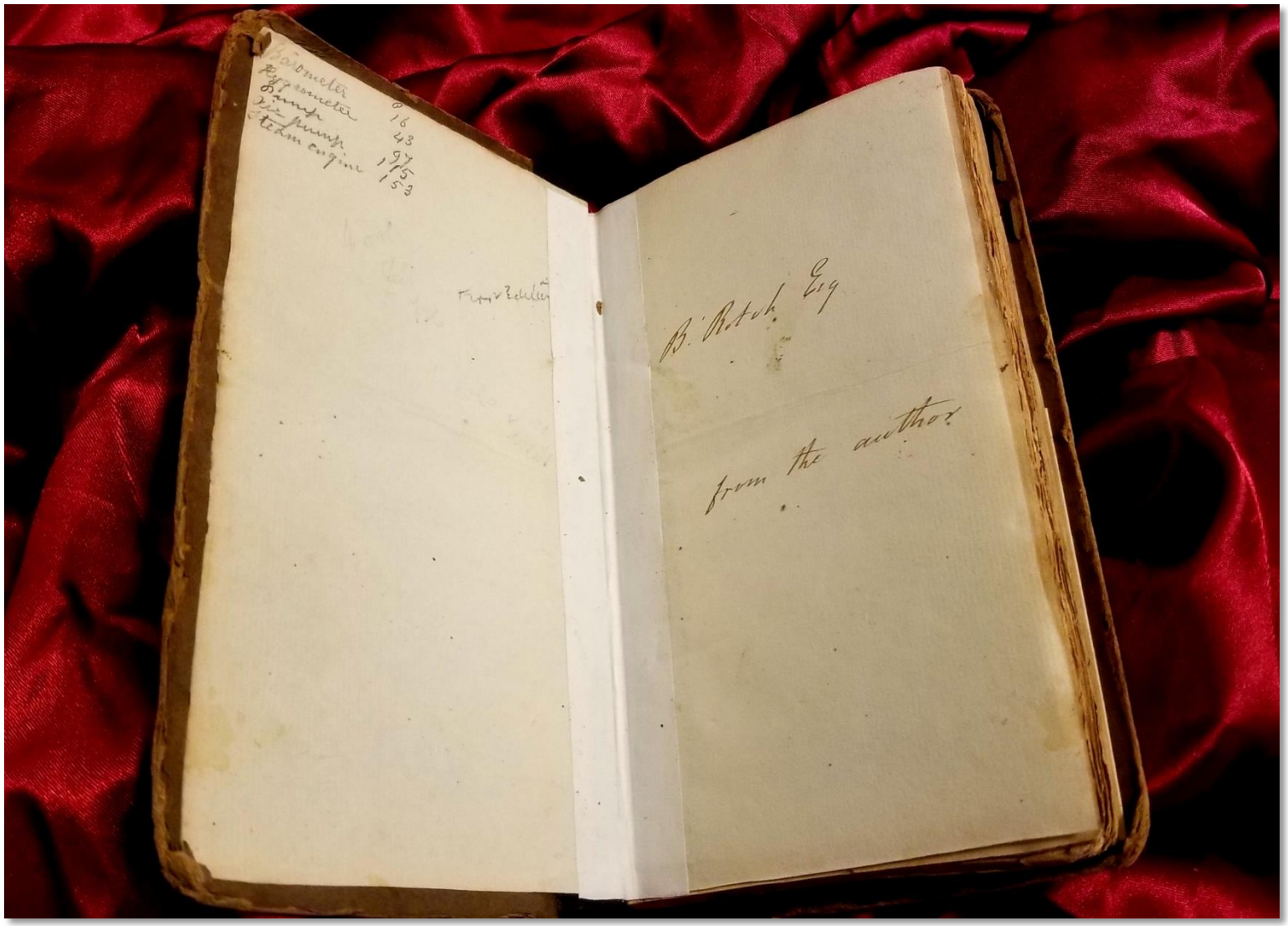


Fig. 2.2. Dedication written by Maria Edgeworth. Other markings include a table of contents, and a bookseller's notation of "first edition."

a side note concerning Rotch's younger sister Maria, who "married in England, but one of her children settled in Texas" (Bullard 135). In light of the fact that Benjamin Rotch and his wife Isabella had no surviving progeny, it is possible to hypothesize that this book written by Edgeworth was eventually passed down to Rotch's nephew Herbert Langston prior to his arrival in Galveston, Texas (which would then allow for the ultimate transition of the text to the Rice University Libraries in nearby Houston).

If this Benjamin Rotch is indeed the owner of the novel, as the mounting evidence seems to indicate, the resulting literary and political circumstances are highly significant. However, in order to better explore the far-reaching impact of an established association between Rotch and Edgeworth, it is first necessary to address the considerable history and influential societal network surrounding the Rotch family itself. For, despite their British residency in the early part of the nineteenth century, the Rotch family had a history that was deeply rooted in American soil—or, to be more accurate, in the American seas.

An affluent whaling family from the island of Nantucket, the Rotches were openly acknowledged as the most successful figures in the American industry as early as the first half of the eighteenth century. As Joseph L. McDevitt observes in *The House of Rotch: Massachusetts Whaling Merchants 1734-1828*: "No other family was as influential in directing the American whaling industry's development and expansion. The Rotches were to whaling what Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller were to steel and oil" (McDevitt 2). However, when the Boston Tea Party embroiled two Rotch ships, the *Dartmouth* and the *Beaver,* in the patriotic destruction of the East India

Company's tea, the resulting financial losses deeply affected the direction of the family's business concerns (Byers 203).[1]

In addition to the increasing number of financial problems caused by the onset of the American Revolution, the Rotches experienced dramatic hardships as a result of their religious convictions. Seeking to follow their strong Quaker principles by remaining neutral during the conflict—albeit with an eye to keeping the lucrative whale fishery operational—the Rotch family and their neighbors declared their intent of "active obedience and passive suffering" in the face of political pressures (Bullard 176). This lack of open affiliation caused both American and British forces to view the residents of Nantucket with distrust, leaving the islanders caught in the middle and plundered by whatever forces happened to be in the vicinity.

Based on the direct results of the war and the economic depression that followed, the Rotch family was forced to consider developing their fleet outside American waters in order to salvage what remained of the family fortunes and prestige. As Edward Byers notes in *The Nation of Nantucket: Society and Politics in an Early American Commercial Center 1660-1820,* the American Revolution had "virtually destroyed Nantucket's whaling industry, leaving serious economic depression and social dislocation when peace returned. Over 85 percent of the island's fleet had been captured or destroyed by 1783" (229). Desperate—and loyal to the island of Nantucket itself

[1] Despite having proceeded on the legal advice of John Adams himself, much of the public blame for the entire episode—and the subsequent closure of Boston Harbor—was laid at the feet of the hapless Francis Rotch for his management as the owner-representative of the ships (and for agreeing to allow the ships to transport the tea from England as a return cargo in the face of known political opposition) (McDevitt 175).

ahead of any nationalistic ties—the Rotch family patriarch, William Rotch, and other leading members of Nantucket society even went so far as to call for an attempt at secession from the newly formed United States of America (Byers 233-34). When this drastic measure to revive the whale fishery failed, William Rotch realized that the only viable option lay in sending his son—Benjamin Rotch, Senior—to seek trade agreements outside American waters.

In light of the fact that both the French and British lacked the necessary skilled workers to expand their own whaling industries, competition between the two countries to meet the Rotch terms for setting up a fishery bid fair to restore the family's losses occasioned by the war. Yet while the financial losses in the New World had played a key role in the ultimate decision to leave America for the opportunities afforded by the Old World, it is evident that Rotch's immediate family still maintained enough wealth to move in a fairly high level of society. In a letter to family in Nantucket concerning the development of the fishery in Dunkirk, William Rotch observed:

> Before I close my letter I will give thee a short sketch of the light or importance of the fishery in the Eyes of this nation, by this thou may judge, of the great importance and influence of the great man and his son…[Rotch, Senior] had a Meeting at Paris with the Minister of State, the Marquis La Fyate,[2] and [Thomas] Jefferson the American ambassador." (qtd. Bullard 231)

[2] The Marquis de Lafayette

Although the bloody chaos of the French Revolution soon prompted moving their business from to Dunkirk to Wales, the family's socioeconomic standing continued to increase at a rapid pace.

Due to the status afforded by the economic importance of the whale fishery in both France and Britain, Rotch, Senior and his wife found themselves operating within a social network far removed from their quiet Quaker existence on Nantucket. Writings that remain from Benjamin Rotch's older sister, Eliza Rotch Farrar, describe childhood memories of close encounters with such important historical figures as Robespierre or Lord Nelson and the notorious Lady Hamilton—who, knowing her Quaker hostess's feelings on the subject, made an unannounced call on the Rotch family house at Milford Haven in Wales and deliberately walked in without knocking, as "that bold woman was resolved that it should not be said that Mrs. Rotch would not receive her" (qtd. Bullard 326). Indeed, Farrar herself claimed memories of overhearing Sir William Hamilton familiarly reading or quoting passages from Lord Nelson's love letters out loud to her father on several occasions, apparently unaffected by the adultery of his wife (Bullard 325).

In addition to the "society" resulting from the celebrated guests who regularly visited the Rotches in their home at Castle Hall, popular American artist and close family friend Benjamin West (who later immortalized Rotch, Senior as the demoniac's father in his 1811 painting *Christ Healing the Sick*) managed to procure for the family a personal meeting with King George III (Bullard 145). As the Rotches' Quaker scruples prevented their appearance at court, West used his influence as the president of the

Royal Academy to request that the Royal Family's private preview of a new exhibition at Somerset House be expanded to include the Rotches. Yet although the family still managed to outwardly maintain their Quaker roots while navigating the dissipations and follies of high society, the distance from the isolated Quaker community on Nantucket had taken a certain toll: several of the younger generation, Benjamin Rotch in particular, appear to have relinquished their Quaker faith during the course of their lifetime.

Born under the shadow of the guillotine in revolutionary France on November 29, 1793, Benjamin Rotch seems to have been a highly unconventional character with a widely varied field of interests and hobbies that ranged from mechanics to mesmerism. The unusual stories associated with Rotch in both childhood and adulthood paint the picture of a man who appears as exactly the type of eccentric intellectual that would have appealed to Edgeworth. Initially, Farrar describes the life of her younger brother by noting that

> Ben wished to go to college and study law, but my father's Quaker prejudices were opposed to this, and for some time he was allowed to amuse himself with writing verses, endangering his life by hoisting a sail on an Indian birch canoe, and skimming over the haven to the astonishment of everyone who saw his frail bark; practicing the flute, riding, yachting, and making experiments in natural philosophy. (qtd. Bullard 131)

Based on Farrar's information concerning the latter pastime, it is easy to hazard a guess that the arrival of a "small menagerie" of flying squirrels and llamas—imported to

England from South America by means of Rotch, Senior's home voyage to Nantucket—were the direct result of supporting the eager young Rotch's eclectic scientific pursuits (McDevitt 531).

While this wide range of extraordinary interests appears to have pursued Rotch into later life—occasionally with detrimental results—it is clear that the overwhelming passion of his life centered on scientific discoveries. When one considers the popular maritime inventions of his uncle, Francis Rotch, and his own father's passionate interest in mechanical developments, it is less than surprising that Benjamin Rotch also displayed an interest in scientific innovations from a very young age. References are made to Rotch's "famous flying machine," a hazy invention of which family biographer (and Rotch descendant) John Bullard laments: "Would that we could know more of that flying machine, the toy of a boy in Wales a hundred and twenty years before boys everywhere, inspired by actual planes swooping over their heads, began to devise toy gliders" (Bullard 131). With at least one early creation receiving minor acclaim, Rotch's first successful device—the previously mentioned patent lever fid— was developed while he was apparently still in his teens, bringing him both widespread attention and a medal from the Society of Arts (*Concluded* 3:71).

It should be noted here that the existence of this maritime invention, made possible in part by Rotch's early proximity to the family business, does not reflect Rotch's participation in the whaling industry as a career—far from it. As previously stated, Rotch himself displayed an open preference for the law, and secretly rejoiced when another round of family financial troubles created the opportunity to overcome his

father's Quaker scruples and begin his legal studies. Because of his strong scientific interests, the emerging field of patent law quickly gained his attention and heart, as he sought to address the rising problems of creating modern, Industrial Age patents within a world of outdated legal standards. On the whole, these professional experiences as a barrister did much to influence Rotch's later transition into the world of politics (which will be discussed further in the following chapter).

Using the persuasive skills derived from his occupation, Rotch appears to have been a highly convincing orator, capable of inspiring admiration in even the most vociferous critics. For example, despite George Laval Chesterton's[3] complaints that "Our equanimity was disturbed, nay, the very peace of our lives would be poisoned by the strange and unaccountable views of some one busy and intemperate individual…a man, who, to say the least, would resort to any wily expedient to attain his own ends," he was still forced to acknowledge that "Mr. Rotch was gifted with rare natural eloquence" (Chesterton 190-91). In later years, Rotch was able to further employ this rhetorical talent by authoring an educational pamphlet concerning *Suggestions for the Prevention of Juvenile Depravity*—which, in light of the fact that it was published in her lifetime, may have been directly influenced by Edgeworth's advice.

Although it is uncertain how Rotch and Edgeworth first came into contact, it is clear that mutual scientific interests and the influential profile of the Rotch family allow for several means of acquaintance, not the least of which result from their overlapping social networks. Based on Rotch's visibility as a rising young member of the scientific

[3] The Governor of Cold Bath Fields Prison and a long-time associate of Benjamin Rotch.

and legal community, it is possible that Edgeworth may have been introduced at a social gathering of the intellectual elite by mutual friends (or perhaps simply began corresponding with him on her own initiative). It is also possible that the two may have met through the earlier connections of Maria's father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, in his position as a member of the Irish gentry.

In her writings, Farrar recounts the tale of a visit by her father, Benjamin Rotch Senior, to Ireland as early as 1797, in which he brought letters of introduction to the members of the Irish nobility and landed gentry (Bullard 336). Averring that her father had never been allowed to stay at an inn during his entire time in Ireland, Farrar noted "My father's hospitality knew no bounds, and our house was filled with the greatest variety of visitors…we often had the company of the Irish members of Parliament, on their way to and from London. My father had travelled in Ireland and been so hospitably treated that he was glad to pay every attention to those who brought letters from his friends in that country" (qtd. Bullard 328). Such information suggests that Rotch, Senior and Richard Lovell Edgeworth may have become acquainted during this period, which would have then given Maria Edgeworth the excuse to write Rotch concerning scientific matters in his capacity as a long-standing acquaintance.

Another potential means of connection between Benjamin Rotch and Edgeworth is their mutual friend, Elizabeth Fry. A "Friend" in more ways than one, Fry employed her Quaker beliefs by advocating for prison reform, working tirelessly to provide change for those caught in an endless cycle of poverty and vice. Although Rotch's involvement with prison reform came during a later period in his life, the relatively small Quaker

denomination in England and his father's known acquaintance[4] with the celebrated Fry establishes the possibility that Rotch's introduction to Edgeworth may have come through her. Edgeworth herself had become acquainted with Fry in a visit to Newgate Prison in March of 1822, shortly before the commencement of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* (Colvin 373). While the close proximity of this meeting with the novel's 1825 publication date creates the strong chance that this may have been the definitive moment of meeting Rotch, the primary factor in doubting this theory is that Edgeworth fails to mention Quakerism as a related construct in the relevant portions of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* (which can imply that Edgeworth either sought to avoid dealings with the sometime-controversial religion or that she had no idea of Rotch's Quaker heritage).

In any case, while the exact circumstances surrounding Edgeworth's introduction to Rotch are far from certain, the overwhelming number of these inter-connected networks of mutual acquaintances strengthens the case that this Benjamin Rotch is none other than the enigmatic B. Rotch Esq. of the novel's inscription. However, while the speculative nature of the previous evidence admittedly still leaves room for doubt (especially when considering that Rotch, Senior also used the designation of "Benjamin Rotch, Esq."), written evidence within the text itself lends weight to the claims of the younger Benjamin Rotch's ownership.

[4] Joseph Fry had proposed to Elizabeth Gurney and been refused; Rotch, Senior took an active part in convincing Elizabeth to the match with his friend (qtd. Bullard 142).

In-Text Evidence for Benjamin Rotch's Ownership

Within the text of *Harry and Lucy Concluded,* Edgeworth details the widely recognized scientific accomplishments of an unnamed inventor, a young lawyer with a turn for the mechanical whose invention of the "patent fid"—a lever-like invention intended to prevent accidents when lowering the top masts of ships—will potentially save hundreds of lives. The text enthusiastically praises the discovery, with the protagonists exclaiming:

> "How happy the man who must have made this invention must be!" said Harry. "And his sisters, and father and mother," said Lucy; "how glad they must be to see it succeed so well, and to see how useful it is." "An invention useful to all of the British Navy," said Harry. "What a grand thing!" After pausing and considering for some time, Harry added, "Yet he was once a boy like me…trying little mechanical experiments. (*Concluded* 3:77)

Edgeworth herself directly acknowledges the presence of Rotch within the story outside of the novel, referencing "Mr. Rotch, the inventor of the patent fid (mentioned in Harry and Lucy, to which I ought to be ashamed to refer)" in the previously cited 1828 letter to Lazarus (MacDonald 153). Although it is likely that period audiences would have recognized the "fictional" anonymous character based on the contextual information provided within the novel, the obscurity of the invention in the mind of the modern reader (as well as the rare historical traces that remain of Rotch's fid) imply that the inscription in the copy of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* currently under observation

provides the most decisive link in revealing Rotch as one of Edgeworth's real-life characters. Without this inscription and the letter to Lazarus, the character of the anonymous inventor remains hidden.

At the same time that this unique copy provides the key to Rotch's presence in the novel, Edgeworth's description of the anonymous inventor in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* does much to validate Rotch's historical legacy. In their 2013 article for *The Mariner's Mirror: The International Quarterly Journal of The Society for Nautical Research,* John Harland et al. challenge the idea of Rotch's invention of the lever fid, noting: "By default he must be credited for its invention, given the absence of any other known claimant, but we harbour some reservations about this. First, it is much more likely the idea would have been invented by a seafarer rather than a landsman; second, the wording of his application is cautiously lawyerly" (Harland et al. 220). However, what Harland and his co-authors fail to take into account with this skepticism is the naturally occurring maritime knowledge Rotch would have possessed through his early proximity to the family whaling business. Furthermore, the contents of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* lend even more evidence in justification of Rotch's identity as the inventor, as Harry declares of the fid: "'But now I will tell you another wonder—that this was not found out by any sailor, or captain, or admiral, or seaman of any kind; but by a landsman, as the captain said to papa: and what is more, he belongs to a profession quite away from the sea—he is a lawyer.' 'A lawyer!' Lucy exclaimed" (*Concluded* 3:67). In addition to the historical confirmation provided by these in-text discoveries, the cultural

implications of the work's written contents are further heightened through traces of marginalia left by the work's initial owner.

Marginalia and Meaning

A close reading of the marginalia present throughout the four volumes lends a great deal of support to establishing the proposed Benjamin Rotch as the original owner of the text. For example, the partially occluded circles drawn in the back of one volume (Fig. 2.3) hint at Rotch's invention of the "cyclograph"—a gadget alternately referenced by different names—which he invented to aid in drawing circles without a radius (Bullard 131). Indeed, much of the marginalia in the work is consistent with Rotch's

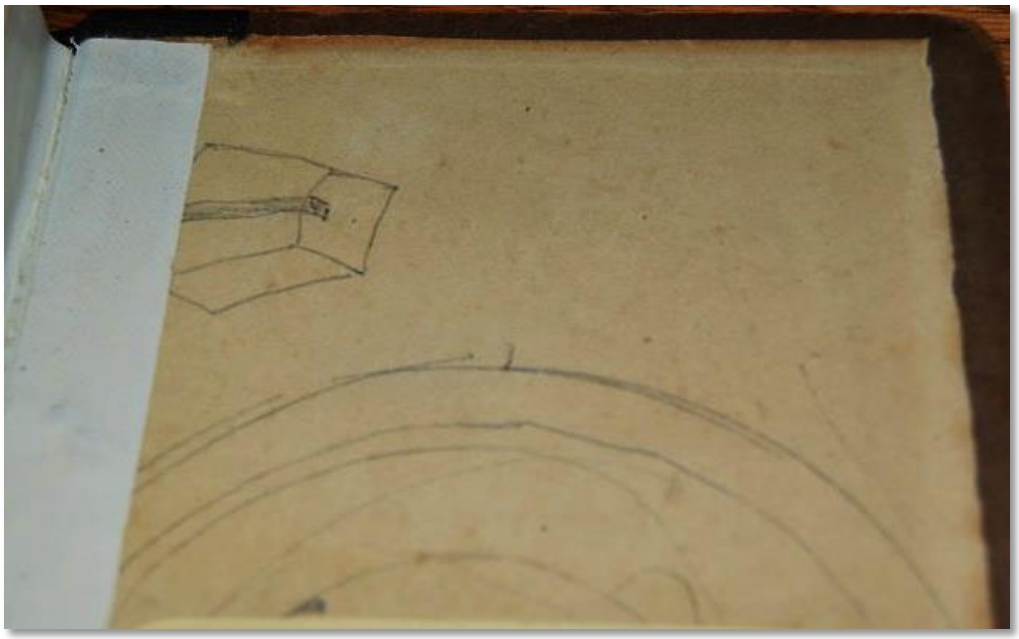


Fig. 2.3. Although partially covered by a paper library card holder, it is possible that these circles were drawn with Rotch's cyclograph.

known scientific interests. The overwhelming trend visible in the listed topics concerns mechanical scientific innovations of the Industrial Age (although there are a few select outliers).

Aside from Edgeworth's delicately penned inscription on the flyleaf, there is only one other definitive instance of her writing on the book itself. Although the strong resemblance in handwriting suggests that she is responsible for at least one additional table of contents (Fig. 2.4.), one hesitates to make the claim that she authored more than the previously mentioned example without further proof from handwriting experts.

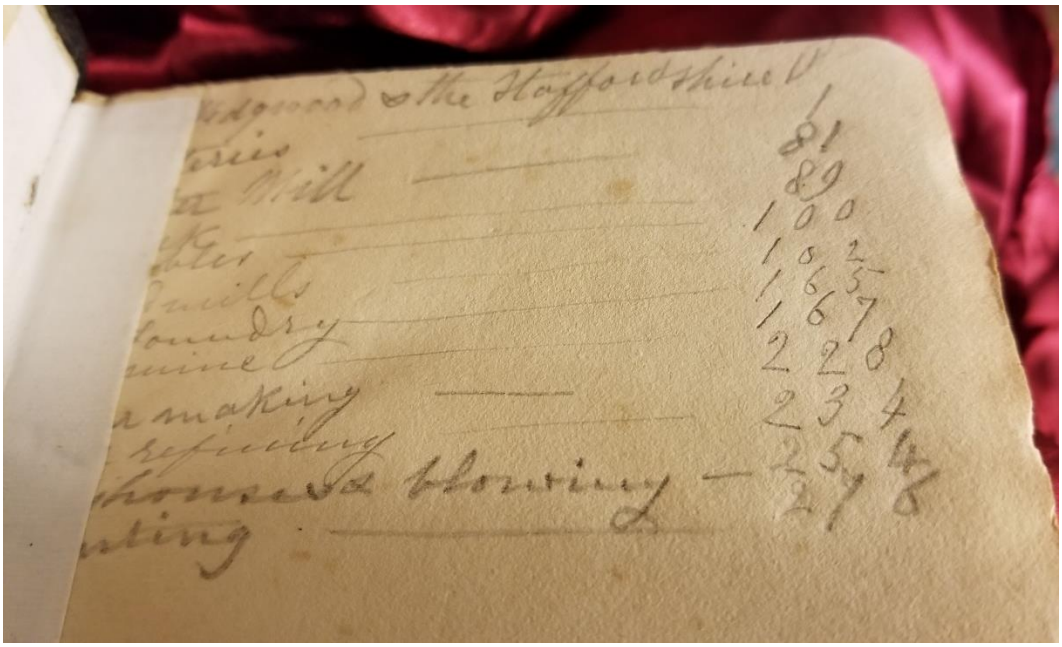


Fig. 2.4. Sample table of contents page. With the exception of the first volume, the table of contents that appear to have been created by Edgeworth are written with a dashed line that visually connects the topic at hand with the page numbers.

In the more obvious case, an ink inscription displays the word "Electricity" followed by the listing of a specific page number associated with the topic in the same ink as the "To

B. Rotch Esq. from the author" inscription (Fig. 2.5.). Although there are many subjects that appear throughout the work, as previously mentioned, it is intriguing that this is the scientific area that Edgeworth appears to believe that the book's recipient will find the most useful. When combining Farrar's observation that "Our school room in the summer house became the scene of [Rotch's] experiments, and the brass handle of the

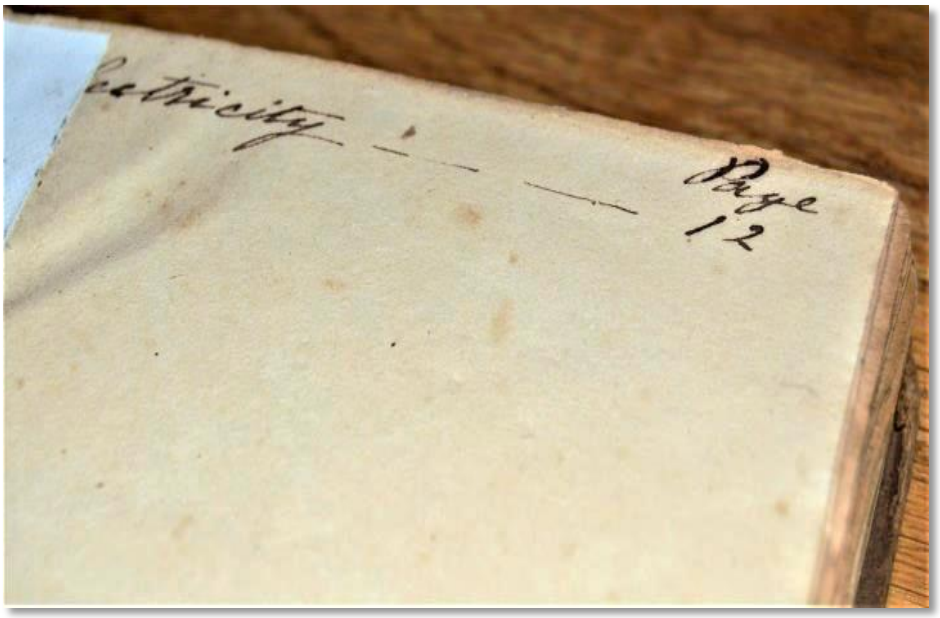


Fig. 2.5. Although two other tables of contents use this system of dashes aligned with the page number, this ink notation is the closest match to the ink and handwriting of Edgeworth's inscription.

door was often charged with electricity, to startle some one of the family or alarm a countryman," with Edgeworth's reputation as something of a humorous wit, one suspects that Edgeworth may have been privy to stories of these experiments at the time of penning the dedication (Bullard 131). However, while this is the only other conclusive

example of Edgeworth's handwriting on the book itself, one of the most unique inclusions of Edgeworthian marginalia within this copy of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* comes from a source external to the work itself.

Pressed carefully between the pages of the third volume of *Harry and Lucy Concluded*, a much-folded piece of paper invokes traces of the former correspondence between Rotch and Edgeworth (Fig. 2.6). Approximately two square inches in size, this scrap of writing shows the portion of only a single word written in Edgeworth's flowing script (either "menth" or "minth," although the former option appears more accurate) (Fig. 2.7).

Fig. 2.6. This image depicts the folded note as it appeared within the third volume; however, the page location is not original. While failing to note the original location of the note prior to examining it, the placement in the third volume suggests the original site would have been within the section concerning the information about Rotch. It has been suggested by Kevin O'Sullivan, Special Collections Curator for Texas A&M University's Cushing Library, that the even division between the lighter and darker portions indicate that the paper may have been used as a bookmark extending beyond the pages of the copy.

Here, the torn—possibly burnt—appearance of the outer edges of the fragment is a matter of no small speculation, calling into question the nature and contents of the original letter. Although the twenty-plus year difference in Rotch and Edgeworth's respective ages would appear to preclude a letter of a romantic nature, most of Edgeworth's correspondents tended to save letters from her as a proof of having received the notice of such a celebrated author and it is unusual that none of the letters between the two parties appear to have survived.

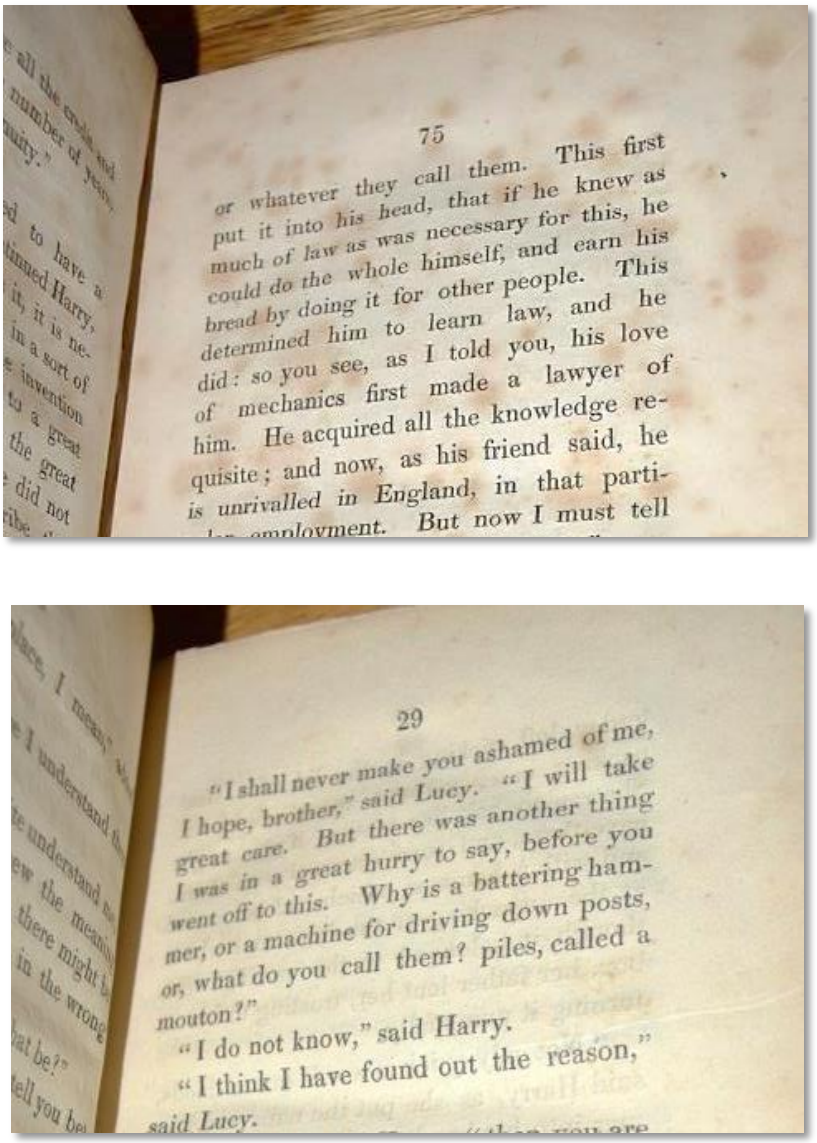
While one ultimately considers the possibility that this letter was destroyed as the result of indifference, a logical analysis of the available evidence appears to rule out this

Fig. 2.7. This photo displays the unfolded note. The handwriting closely matches Edgeworth's inscription; however, it is difficult to ascertain the word in question.

option. To begin with, the significant location of this fragment within the third volume of the novel—i.e. the book concerning the biographical details about Rotch himself—displays a certain level of intentionality. In addition, although Rotch (or his heirs) chose to destroy the contents of the letter, the relationship with Edgeworth appears to have been valued in that the small fragment of an otherwise completely ruined letter was preserved as a memento of the interaction. As Edgeworth herself made it clear to those that she corresponded with that she strongly disapproved of the publication of private letters, it is entirely possible that the letters to Rotch were destroyed in deference to her known preferences. However, the question then becomes: given that the correspondence between the two was not a secret (it was openly referenced in Edgeworth's letters to Lazarus and Farrar at a minimum), why would a private letter need to be destroyed?

While the answer to this thought-provoking question remains unclear, one humorous final observation that can be made of the work concerns a feature which unconsciously reflects more of Rotch's personal character than he might have wished recorded for posterity. Despite the fact that the pages of the work itself remain in fairly pristine condition throughout the entire set, it is only within the biographical portion of the work (a span of approximately ten to fifteen pages within the third volume) that thousands of brown, circular age spots are observable—indicating a high level of reading (Fig. 2.8.). Although it is natural to assume that this section would have received a high degree of use when displayed to proud family members, it is clear from the number of age spots that Rotch's favorite interaction with the novel involved reading the portion

concerning his own achievements. This behavior in turn contrasts Edgeworth's positive portrayal of Rotch with the scathing words of later-life critics, such as Charles Dickens.



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or whatever they call them. This first put it into his head, that if he knew as much of law as was necessary for this, he could do the whole himself, and earn his bread by doing it for other people. This determined him to learn law, and he did: so you see, as I told you, his love of mechanics first made a lawyer of him. He acquired all the knowledge requisite; and now, as his friend said, he is unrivalled in England, in that parti-

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"I shall never make you ashamed of me, I hope, brother," said Lucy. "I will take great care. But there was another thing I was in a great hurry to say, before you went off to this. Why is a battering hammer, or a machine for driving down posts, or, what do you call them? piles, called a mouton?"

"I do not know," said Harry.

"I think I have found out the reason," said Lucy.

Fig. 2.8. Comparison between the state of a page within the section concerning Rotch's life and accomplishments alongside a representative page from elsewhere in the novel.

The Dickens Factor

Albeit something of a side-note to the circumstances of Rotch's life, evidence suggests that Edgeworth's anonymous portrayal of Rotch was merely the first instance of his appearance within the pages of nineteenth century British literature. A strong case has been made that Dickens employed his iconic work *David Copperfield* as a means to pay off old scores and frustrations against Rotch by slyly using him as the character basis for one of the novel's well-known figures: young David's headmaster, Mr. Creakle. A dictatorial figure fond of delivering punishment, Mr. Creakle reappears near the end of the novel as the head of a prison—and appears to have been duped into believing the innocence of two of the novel's more hardened criminal characters, Uriah Heep and Littimer. As Phillip Collins observes in *Dickens and Crime: "*Mr. Creakle, it will be remembered, was a Middlesex Magistrate…why then did Dickens in the novel, and in his manuscript Number-plan for it, carefully specify the Middlesex Magistrates as his butts? Dickens was, I suspect, engaging in a private joke here, against his old enemy Benjamin Rotch" (162). Although the two shared a mutual interest in prison reform and societal improvement, with Dickens initially referring to Rotch as "Mr. Rotch the magistrate who is a very good man, and takes infinite pains in the prisons—though I doubt his understanding of the company he finds there," interactions between the two men declined at a rapid pace (Collins 162-163).

In an 1848 letter to Angela Burdett-Coutts, a longtime friend closely associated with his social reform projects, Dickens wrote: "In case you should, by any evil chance, encounter a magistrate of the name of Rotch, let me advise you to say nothing to

him…For whatever is said to him, he is as certain to pervert, if it should suit his purpose, as the sun is to rise tomorrow morning" (qtd. Johnson 118). Due to the intense debate between the opposing factions within the Cold Bath Fields prison system, as well as the fact that both Dickens and Rotch were excitable, somewhat capricious individuals, it is less than surprising that their natures would clash.

Given the recognized autobiographical nature of the work, a strong case can be made for Rotch's presence in *David Copperfield* as the prison-warden version of Creakle. While some may argue that this circumstance is less than believable due to the obvious referencing of Dickens' tyrannical former schoolmaster in the portrayal of Creakle as the headmaster of David's school, it should be noted that (in the same way that characters such as Miss Mowcher are transformed from their sinister origins during the course of the story) the Creakle of the latter portion of the novel bears slight resemblance to the atrocious figure in the earlier pages of the work. As Collins notes,

> If I am right in seeing Rotch as an underlying, though unrecognised, subject of the [second] Creakle episode, this is a further example of a trick of Dickens' mind…Every reader of Dickens is aware of his satire on identifiable social institutions…What had not been noticed is that Dickens sometimes also indulges in private jokes, even at the expense of the consistency of his satire. He introduces personal references which, though topical, were neither spotted, nor meant to be spotted… "they delighted Dickens himself and stimulated his zest in writing." (163)

Based on Dickens's heavy emphasis on Creakle's credulity as a prison warden concerning the reformed nature of Uriah Heep and Littimer, it is highly probable that Rotch forms the basis for the later installment of the character.

For his involvement with Cold Bath Fields prison as a magistrate, Rotch's zeal for temperance and reform gave him a reputation of naively believing all "prisoner promises" of starting life anew. Referred to as "Drinkwater Rotch, the Sheep-Shearing Magistrate, Rotch formulated schemes of aiding any prisoners vowing a pledge of temperance to find a new life in Australia, to the point of declaring Cold Bath Fields an alcohol-free prison and ordering in sheep for the prisoners to practice shearing as occupational training for their new lives in Australia (Chesterton 198-99). As George Chesterton wryly comments:

> Hostilities were proclaimed against porter, and the evening in-staying guard was constrained to accept coffee as a substitute. The gate warder was removed from his post to avert the intrusion of beer, and a *professing* convert to teetotalism was advanced to that post over the heads of upwards of sixty men, his seniors in standing, and unquestionably his superiors in qualification. In short, disorganization prevailed, espionage was encouraged…no sooner had a prisoner subscribed to teetotalism, than he easily convinced Mr. Rotch of his "innocence." (Chesterton 197)

On the whole, this historical account concerning Rotch's actions is closely aligned with descriptions of Creakle's prison in *David Copperfield,* of which Dickens has David observe: "I found a great many foxes, disparaging whole vineyards of inaccessible

grapes; but I found very few foxes I would trust in reach of a bunch. Above all, I found that the most professing men were the greatest objects of interest" (706). Based on such phraseology, it is easy to for the reader to understand Creakle and his model prison as a Dickensian caricature of Rotch's magistracy at Cold Bath Fields.

In light of the fact that both Dickens and Edgeworth rely on elements of realism for the creation of their respective writings, the opportunity to compare the two works results in an interesting character "timeline" within the bounds of nineteenth-century British literature. When juxtaposing the representations within the two novels, is apparent that the older Rotch portrayed by Dickens is at odds with the quasi-heroic figure of the celebrated young inventor depicted by Edgeworth in 1825. While Edgeworth's character interpretation encourages the reader to view Rotch as an idealized role model—a shining example of what is possible though a "modern" scientific education and hard work—Dickens's Rotch is anything but ideal, ending in an obscure career with a dark past of inflicting trauma on others. Indeed, it is symbolic that Edgeworth died during the serialization of *David Copperfield,* as if her passing signified the final transition of her *Harry and Lucy Concluded* hero into the man who had insisted that it was not "to be tolerated that Mr. Charles Dickens should walk into the prison when he pleased" (qtd. Chesterton 186).

Conclusion

On the whole, the younger version of Benjamin Rotch appears to have been the type of individual who would have interested Edgeworth based on his exhibition of enlightened thinking and educational curiosity. With a fascination for the scientific,

Rotch combined the puritan-esque values of his Quaker heritage with a strong desire for reform—something that, if not derived from Edgeworth herself, would have at the least appealed to her sense of values. If the owner of this copy of the *Harry and Lucy Concluded* text is indeed the parliamentary Benjamin Rotch (which appears to be substantiated by the overwhelming amount of evidence), Rotch's treatment of Edgeworth's novel is culturally and historically significant. Rather than ignoring Edgeworth's work—viewing it as being produced by a woman overstepping her proper "place" in society—the marginalia within this work indicates that Rotch seems to have been inspired (or the very at least repeatedly entertained) by the topics covered in *Harry and Lucy Concluded*. Further evidence also indicates that Rotch and Edgeworth's relationship was at odds with the modern stereotype of the socially and politically repressed nineteenth century woman, particularly when it came to Edgeworth's involvement within the political sphere.

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CHAPTER III

"ALL IS SO OUT OF PLACE NOW THAT I HAVE GOT OUT OF MINE": EDGEWORTH, POLITICS, AND THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

A close reading of Edgeworth's fictional female characters and her personal life does much to reveal women as historically active participants within social and political spheres of influence. Created by a popular female author dealing with subjects ranging from everyday Irish life to the latest developments of science and industry, Edgeworth's writings often reveal the means by which ordinary women of the period were able to exercise control over their surrounding environment. By placing women in a position of equality within the home and citing the need for enhanced female education throughout her writings, Edgeworth also subtly interrupts understood gender norms in a manner that many women could replicate in their day-to-day lives. On the whole, Edgeworth's private letters, published texts, and relationships with well-known public figures demonstrate the use of domesticity as a "mask" for female political involvement, highlighting the ways in which women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries deliberately created and maintained "patriarchal" constructs in order to advance their own societal and political agendas.

Expanding the Feminist Lens

At first glance, the idea of categorizing Edgeworth as a feminist author can appear to be widely inconsistent with the principles of modern feminism. Based on her frequent claims to a lack of interest in politics and apparent contentment to remain at

home under the influence of her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, an initial impression of Edgeworth suggests a conservative individual who would have had little to do with the idea of women's rights. In addition, her repeated emphasis on the domestic sphere as a woman's natural place serves to further classify her in the present day mind as a passeé author intent on maintaining the status quo.

As Dannie Leigh Chalk has observed in *Comparative Gender in Maria Edgeworth's Belinda,* "Maria Edgeworth is a problematic figure for literary scholars. She is an emblem of bourgeois values for many, a progressivist to others. Feminist scholars interpret her variously as a radical anti-patriarchist and antiessentialist and conversely as a conservative polemicist enmeshed in the project of validating patriarchy and paternalism" (131). Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace goes so far as to accuse Edgeworth of being complicit in the patriarchal system by privileging the voice of her father above her own creativity, arguing that Edgeworth's most progressive moments may also be her "most complicitous" due to her investment in patriarchal categories and models (Kowaleski-Wallace 108). Nevertheless, a close observation of Edgeworth's oeuvre demonstrates that the issues associated with women and their overall place in society play a consistent thematic role throughout her works.

When examining the seeming ambiguity of Edgeworth's political views for women, one must begin by taking into account the multi-faceted nature of nearly every aspect of her character. This can include everything from the multi-ethnic formation of her identity as an Anglo-Irish individual inspired by French Enlightenment thought, to her somewhat controversial status as a woman moving within an international circle of

the political and literary elite. Offering political commentary in one breath while disavowing her political interests in another, Edgeworth resists easy categorization by remaining both stubbornly progressive and conservative at the same time. Indeed, it is here, within the realm of the political, that Edgeworth is at her most complex: exercising a far-reaching, international influence in society while still maintaining a domestic identity.

On the whole, authors such as Edgeworth are reflective of an under-investigated dimension of historical culture in regards to feminist "outliers," namely the group of women that recent scholarship recognizes as having existed outside of the realm of traditional feminism. These women can best be described as those who played by the rules and adhered to stated societal boundaries in order to exploit the system—displaying that period culture could and did sanction women in positions of leadership without requiring the radical stance on feminism advocated by individuals such as Mary Wollstonecraft (Myers 53). While their subtle approach appears to have been highly effective in retrospect, this technique of professed conformity can be difficult to interpret from the vantage point of the present in that it creates an easily overlooked version of feminist control.

In addressing Edgeworth's participation in an alternative version of feminism during this era, this thesis does not intend to imply that women of the period enjoyed a total and absolute freedom. Rather, it intends to demonstrate that many previously unexplored avenues of political thought and control were available to women, and that the previous classification of the so-called "private" and "public" spheres is highly

inaccurate. Furthermore, through the examination of Edgeworthian feminism, I also address the period fashion of women controlling others through fictions of female weakness and inferiority, creating a mask for one's self-interests.

In the quest to understand the "patriarchal" limitations for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women, it is first necessary to recognize that there were openly acknowledged failures in the collective societal application of such a system during the period. In addition to the idealization of Queen Victoria as both the ruler of the British Empire and a domestic mother-figure, recent historical evidence has come to light showing that domestically minded women also had access to voting and public office. Known instances exist of women running for elected office against male candidates (with the voting support of both men and women), as well as holding public positions ranging in importance from sexton to the Commissioner of Sewers (Richardson 84).

In their work *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat*, Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson observe that educated middle-class women were adept at building their own intellectual and political networks, which could extend across the Atlantic and the Continent through both ideological and political activity (Gleadle and Richardson 12-13). Furthermore, Gleadle and Richardson contend that the female political involvement of the period "must be understood not only in the context of female association (as one tradition of feminist scholarship has stressed) but should also be analysed with reference to mixed-sex networks" (12-13). Through social connections created in ballrooms, salons, and even private dinner parties, women of the upper levels of society often had ready access to leading political figures. Based on her status as a

popular novelist, Edgeworth herself is known to have enjoyed a wide range of international connections among the political, intellectual, and social elite of the day.

In light of the fact that her frequent emphasis on the importance of domestic affairs and the supposed futility of women in politics has provided past support for reading Edgeworth as a non-feminist author, it should be noted that such an interpretation is at odds with both her persona and the period understanding of the term "domesticity." Given that men had previously occupied space as supreme rulers of the domestic sphere, the move to identify women as the rightful heirs of "home and hearth" constituted a significant feminist claim. In her work *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel*, Eve Taylor Bannet observes that the topic of domestic family life was one of the most important political subjects of Edgeworth's day for both radical and conservative women writers alike: rather than focusing on issues such as job losses or women's increasing inability to support themselves, instead, the standard model for family dynamics took center stage as a hotly debated topic (Bannet 2). Although all agreed on the vital importance of the family as an important micro-political unit of British society, views naturally differed when it came to defining a woman's place within that domain.

The question of the times was a significant one: should men retain the final say in all areas of life as the "Master of the House" or did women have a claim to ruling their home and their husbands? Categorizing the voices of women authors of the period as Egalitarians (those who argued that women were equal to men in every respect) or

Matriarchs (those who chose to take the attitude that women were superior to men), Bannet notes:

> While retaining a firm belief in domestic, social, and political hierarchy and appearing more conventional than they were, Matriarchs taught ladies how to obtain and deploy ascendancy over men, over their families, and over their inferiors, which they thought was the ladies' due. Egalitarians, on the other hand, preached independence from all subordination, both at home and abroad, and sought to level hierarchies both in the family and the state. (Bannet 2)

In their decision to emphasize the importance of calm domesticity over rampant defiance, Bannet contends that "matriarchal" public women of the period, such as Edgeworth, thereby taught private women a practical means to reclaim their lives from men by embracing a leadership role in the governance of the family unit.

It is a common occurrence for women writers endorsing this "matriarchal" feminist approach to be treated as less-than-ideal figures of history. From a feminist viewpoint, we are often encouraged to view these women (if indeed they appear on our horizons at all) as the foolish captives of a brainwashing culture—or worse, representatives of a culture where fear and potential ostracism prevent the voicing of a more open opinion. However, it should be noted that the women who rejected the Wollstonecraft approach to feminism usually did so from a position of comparative intellectual and educational equality with their more strident counterparts. In reality,

rather than existing in an apolitical or powerless state, these women merely endorsed a different methodology to achieve their feminist goals.

As opposed to a totalitarian system of complete male dominance over the female element, a significant portion of British society revolved around the *appearance* of male control—an appearance that women such as Edgeworth had helped to both create and maintain. As Dame Agatha Christie comments of the period in her memoirs:

> You've got to hand it to Victorian women, they got their menfolk where they wanted them. They established their frailty, delicacy, sensibility…Did they lead miserable servile lives, downtrodden and oppressed? Such is not *my* recollection of them. All of my grandmother's friends seem to me in retrospect singularly resilient and almost invariably successful in getting their own way. They were tough, self-willed, and remarkably well-read and well-informed… "Your father knows best, dear," was the public formula. The real approach came privately. (Christie 122)

While some may argue that the fact that women resorted to such tactics implies a distinct power imbalance—and admittedly there were very real limitations placed on women of the period—it is also clear that the mask of domesticity allowed women to wield a far greater amount of influence and control than has been previously surmised.

Edgeworth in particular is an excellent example of the misunderstood nature of the "domestic" woman as a powerful political element in British society. Living at home

and helping to bring up a large number of step-siblings, Edgeworth's personal character and writings were largely shaped by her family life—a point that many scholars reference in attributing patriarchal influences. Yet, while her father appears to have been a somewhat domineering individual (and can be read as a patriarchal influence based on the control he exercised over her authorship in his capacity as her father), it should be noted that R.L. Edgeworth's ideology widely diverged from period standards in that he advocated an equal education for women and encouraged his daughter in her public career. As he had achieved a strong scientific and social standing in his own right prior to the rise of his daughter's career, R.L. Edgeworth's defense of his daughter's right to an education from the moment of her birth—as well as his insistence that his daughter push herself to write and publish materials under her own name—would seem to reflect more of a progressive approach than a patriarchal mindset.

Maria Edgeworth's ability to move between the so-called "private" and "public" spheres is an excellent example of the flexibility of *stated* cultural boundaries in real life. Indeed, Bannet observes that "Women writers of novels, conduct books, and tracts were far from marginal to the eighteenth-century literary scene….The novel in particular was so heavily dominated by women writers that men sometimes complained it was more profitable to publish novels under a woman's name" (1). Moreover, Edgeworth herself was able to transcend such boundaries by employing the beliefs associated with domesticity to justify her own emergence and presence as a female novelist, particularly as an author writing educational texts for an adolescent audience.

Political Elements and False Domesticity in Edgeworth's Writings

On the whole, the prescribed roles of men and women as depicted by women writers (particularly within the pages of children's literature) are historically revealing in that these texts are byproducts of the same culture they seek to influence. In addition, the less-than-subtle didacticism of this literary period makes it easy for the modern researcher to ascertain the mores and behaviors that authors such as Edgeworth sought to instill within their young audiences when viewed through the lens of period texts such as *Harry and Lucy Concluded*. In her book *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment, and Nation,* Irish scholar Clíona Ó Gallchoir discusses the wide acceptance of Edgeworth's writings as historically factual texts, yet comments that "[t]he [historical] evidence is highly unreliable unless it is informed by an understanding of how the culture of the period both permitted women access to the public sphere in the form of writing and publication, and placed specific, gendered demands on this form of public presence" (4). Through a closer observation of the didactic instruction and modes of agency provided to female characters in Edgeworth's texts, it is possible for the modern scholar to investigate the degree to which the quiet, passive ideal of domesticity existed only as a fashionable mask for female power.

To begin with, an emphasis on feminine agency within the defined area of the domestic sphere is often juxtaposed in Edgeworth's work with a bewildering process of educational indoctrination for the reader—one that often appears to promote and undermine feminist principles at the same time. For example, while Edgeworth clearly intends for the reader to view both Harry and Lucy as less-than-perfect child characters

and allows Lucy access to the controversial realm of scientific knowledge, it is significant that most of the spoken reproofs in the novel are directed towards the young female protagonist rather than the male. And yet, in contrast to the apparent superiority of Harry, many of the societal boundaries affecting Lucy are typically established by a *female* character in the novel (or by Edgeworth's personal views in her role as a female author) as opposed to a patriarchal male figure.

As one instance of such contradictory phenomena, when Lucy expresses the problem of not "getting on" with her brother Harry as well as she has in past years, it is the mother, rather than the father, whom the reader observes teaching Lucy that "You should not expect to go fast; you must be content to go slowly, and you must submit to be inferior to your brother for some time. This may mortify you, my dear, but it cannot be avoided, you must bear it" (*Concluded* 1:5-6). Rather than having a patriarchal male present a lesson of female inferiority, Edgeworth instead transmits these ideas through the medium of a mother/daughter relationship. Here, this distancing of the female child figure from the maturing male character is a resulting byproduct of a joint parental decision to persuade Lucy to study less science and more "necessary" female accomplishments; however, even as Edgeworth portrays the adult female role as being equal in authority to the male role, this would seem to be undermined by the manner in which Lucy is perceived by the reader as "scientifically"/ intellectually outdistanced by the male figure of her brother.

If accepted by readers at face value, instances such as this can be understood as ones that promote a narrative of female inferiority, further complicating our

understanding of both Edgeworth and the historical context. If women of the period were indeed propagating their own domestic shackles, as it were, what purpose could such an ostensibly limited existence serve? After all, such authorial decisions on the part of Edgeworth would certainly appear to promote the concept of male superiority, encouraging female-child readers who identify with Lucy to accept negative behavioral and mental standards.

However, as a female author dealing primarily with subjects relating to science and industry in this novel, Edgeworth essentially refutes any claims that women should withdraw from scientific matters through the example set by her personal identity. Therefore, when viewing such uncomfortable language, one must take into account Edgeworth's ultimate intent: namely, to impart scientific knowledge to boys and girls alike. In addition, if there are any readers who may perhaps object to Lucy's—and thus Edgeworth's—pursuit of scientific knowledge, Edgeworth boldly states that "All that can be said or thought upon the subject by the other sex, is comprised in the Edinburgh wit's declaration 'I do not care how blue a lady's stockings may be, if her petticoats are but long enough'" (*Concluded* 1: xiv). The question for the modern scholar then becomes: were such passages understood at the time as intentionally false or ironic, read as simply a matter of form, or would such statements have been implicitly believed by the audience? After all, when we consider that this work was intended for children, it is unlikely that young readers would have understood the hidden significance of a deliberately insincere message.

In a similar vein, one must also observe the reverse implications engendered by Edgeworth's work. Given that the moralistic lessons were created to address "problems" within society by impressing certain values on the mind of the reader, the frequency of repeated directives instructing fictional—and thereby actual—girls like Lucy in lessons of quiet, feminine passivity indicates that such behavior was partially idealized as opposed to being normative in practice. Furthermore, when considering the known discrepancy between the overall number of educated males and that of educated females during the period, it is apparent that the celebrity of female authors such as Edgeworth is due in large part to an enthusiastic acceptance on the part of her male readership (despite her portrayal of educated, feminist women). In the same manner, in contradistinction to those who insisted that education, literature and politics ought to be a wholly masculine space, such arguments can thereby imply that these areas did *not* already exist in a state that completely excluded women.

While on the surface works such as *Harry and Lucy Concluded* may appear to comply with the stated patriarchal system, additional historical evidence contained within the subtext of her novels implies that Edgeworth understood eighteenth- and nineteenth-century society as a much more intricate cultural environment. Modes of feminine agency, specifically relating to the acquiring of power by means of manipulation, are distinctly highlighted throughout the pages of Edgeworth's works, employing the stated societal perceptions concerning womanhood to control unsuspecting male figures. Rather than defining female power based on the limited opportunities to achieve and hold a visible, public office, what is instead revealed is a

female system of statecraft and "puppetry" that allowed women to wield power over men in a manner akin to a skilled courtier manipulating a monarch.

As previously mentioned, Edgeworth's texts often reflect the employment of femininity and domesticity as an artificial mask for circumventing societal practices, controlling the male figure through feminine artifice. For example, the emphasis on *wit* as a disconcerting feminine attribute possessed by the child figure of Lucy (a quality that her brother Harry cannot comprehend) can in some ways be seen as a parallel feature that age has fully developed in Edgeworth's adult female characters such as Lady Geraldine in the 1809 novel *Ennui.* When Lucy exclaims "You really are so slow, Harry, about wit," or "It is so easy that if you do not see it at first, I cannot make you understand," she establishes her superiority and confidence in an area that confuses Harry (*Concluded* 1:28, 25). Similarly, in *Ennui*, the reader observes the manner in which Lady Geraldine displays the use of flirtatious jest and misdirection in order to exercise power over such hapless male beings as Lord Glenthorne, Craiglethorpe, Captain Andrews, Lord Kilrush, and O'Toole, to specify a few by name (*Ennui* 220). If considering these men in the role of potential suitors/male superiors, this ought to be a social dynamic in which Lady Geraldine exhibits a lack of control as the submissive, disenfranchised female expected to marry for financial benefits, understanding her own identity only as it connects with that of her future husband. Yet Edgeworth demonstrates that this is clearly not the case.

Lady Geraldine's assertive behavior incurs no real censure, no apologist statements intended to allay the concerns of the novel's audience (implying a certain

level of reader acceptance despite being presented with a non-standard fictional character). As key Edgeworth scholar Marilyn Butler notes in her introduction for *Castle Rackrent* and *Ennui:* "Edgeworth is everywhere a strong resister of stereotyping, and all her tales use individualized women who are often unusually energetic and articulate" (*Ennui* 50). Vivacious and opinionated, Lady Geraldine stands in stark contrast to the ideals of a quiet, docile feminine form, exclaiming: "O! My dear countrywomen, let us never stoop to admire and imitate these second-hand airs and graces, follies and vices. Let us dare to be ourselves!"(*Ennui* 50). Moreover, Edgeworth also indicates in this novel that even within the character of a seemingly quiet and docile woman there is the capacity for exercising power over the male element.

Cringing and subservient in appearance, the aged nurse Ellinor of *Ennui* is discovered to be responsible for substituting her own child for the legitimate heir to the Glenthorne title, breaking the hereditary chain established by period customs of primogeniture. Here, with a single action, a lower-class female figure is now responsible for circumventing the normative systemic practices of an aristocratic, "male-dominated" society, undermining the very foundations of the British aristocracy. In addition, this subterfuge is only exposed when revealed by Ellinor herself when claiming her domestically linked identity as the true mother of the novel's protagonist, as opposed to being discovered by a more intelligent male figure in a position of authority. Thus, Edgeworth allows Ellinor a means of situational power beyond her gender and class level—a power based on her domestic identity.

These authorial decisions by Edgeworth associate the female figure of Ellinor within the accepted sphere of the domestic through the actions of child-raising; however, it is accepted by both the author and the reader that Ellinor's actions place her somewhere outside of the realm of the innocent, angelic female figure—albeit without the firm establishment of villain-status. In view of the fact that Ellinor has purportedly carried out the deed for the betterment of her son, Edgeworth thus creates a dichotomy within the principles of domestic ideology, contrasting the positive claims of a mother-son relationship with questions of truth and morality. Yet although Edgeworth and her fictional female characters avoid aggressive challenges to the status quo, it is obvious by their behavior that they are able to employ what might be termed as "statecraft": controlling the man's puppet strings behind the scenes.

In keeping with Ó Gallchoir's earlier point, texts like *Ennui*, *Helen,* or *Harry and Lucy Concluded* highlight the manner in which women of the period were able to navigate the stated cultural norms that supposedly excluded women from the political realm. As an example, in the second volume of *Harry and Lucy Concluded*, Edgeworth describes the convenient arrival of family friend Mrs. Frankland, who happens to walk through the door immediately after a discussion on the production of Wedgwood ceramic-ware, bearing gifts of Wedgwood medallions for the children (*Concluded* 2:40). Although Edgeworth's ostensible purpose in including this scene is to display some of the Wedgwood materials circulating during the time period for the child reader, there is arguably a deeper significance than that which initially meets the eye.

While subtle, there are significant moments within this scene that are consistent with historical female political involvement and agitation, invoking the abolitionist movement in particular. It is important to note that it is to *Lucy* that the Wedgwood anti-slavery medallion is given, rather than to Harry as the male, suggesting her future ability to participate in political and social processes. Despite the engraved words on the medallion pleading "Am I not a man and a brother?", Edgeworth opts to create a situation in which Mrs. Frankland ignores the obvious "man and brother" in the room and presents this token—portraying a submissive figure in chains—to the young female protagonist (*Concluded* 2:141). Although a connection may arguably be drawn between the girl and the imagery of a slave in bondage, it is clear that Mrs. Frankland can and would have been understood by a reader of the period as a direct participant in the political sphere, advocating for the abolitionist movement by handing out these anti-slavery medallions. Furthermore, Edgeworth's portrayal of Mrs. Frankland and her activism depicts a normal, everyday, domestically minded woman whose utter respectability is made manifest throughout the story.

This evidence is consistent with historian Simon Morgan's findings that "[t]he exclusion of women from the formal political sphere was by no means complete, and…the discourse of female influence and the language and institutional forms of organized philanthropy were successfully adapted to enable women to play an active role in the political process through extra-parliamentary agitation" (126). Given the casual, passing mention of this aspect of Mrs. Frankland's character and the lack of outrage on the part of parental readers, Edgeworth's clear intention for both Lucy and

the female child reader to pattern their behavior after Mrs. Frankland's example suggests a general acceptance of political advocacy as part of women's domain.

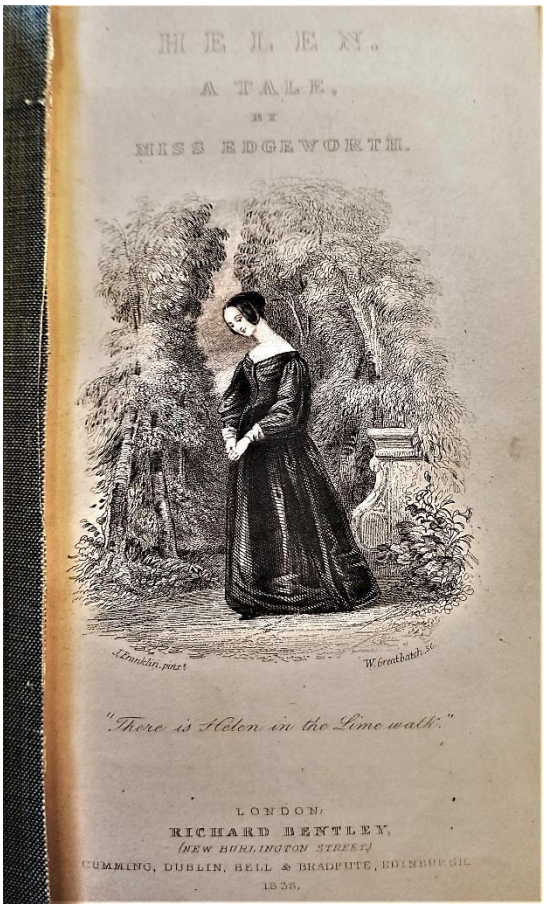

Fig. 3.1 Frontispiece to the 1838 edition of *Helen*. Although Helen is encouraged within the text to avoid being "namby-pamby" and participate in politics through personal influence, the accompanying visual provided in the text depicts Helen with her head bowed and hands clasped in an attitude of apparent submission, uniting political power with a self-imposed mask of quiet modesty.

In her final novel *Helen* (Fig. 2.1), Edgeworth goes so far as to have a female character inform the eponymous protagonist bluntly:

> Women are now so highly cultivated, and political subjects are at present of so much importance, of such high interest, to all human creatures who live together in society, you can hardly expect, Helen, that you, as a rational being, can go through the world as it now is, without forming any opinion on points of public importance. You cannot, I conceive, satisfy yourself with the common namby-pamby little missy phrase, 'ladies have nothing to do with politics.'…Female influence must, will, and ought to exist on political subjects as on all others; but this influence should always be domestic, not public—the customs of society have so ruled it. (260)

In this scene, the speaker, Lady Davenant, has revealed to Helen her own misguided attempts in pursuit of political involvement; however, it is important to observe that the real issue at hand is personal restraint in the attempt to exercise one's *existing* female influence in politics. Rather than claiming that women must search for the means to gain political voice, this passage provides yet another instance of one female character instructing another female character to employ a behind-the-scenes version of political influence in order to comply with the customs of society.

Edgeworth, Rotch, and Fictions of Political Absence

In November of 1831, Edgeworth wrote Rachel Mordecai Lazarus a long letter about the recent Reform Bill riots, concluding with: "I am surprised that I have written so much of what I scarcely ever write—*Politics*. But though I feel that it is not a woman's department and that as she can do nothing, she had better say nothing; yet all is

so out of place now that I have got out of mine" (MacDonald 215). Included in a private letter to another female educationalist (that is, outside the criticism of male readership or societal pressure), statements such as this imply that Edgeworth viewed her personal and authorial identity as being separate from the political realm. Frequent claims to a lack of political interest are included in other private correspondence, and indeed, it is possible that Edgeworth truthfully considered her own personal involvement in the political realm to be ineffective and/or nonexistent when compared to that of others of her acquaintance. As a result, she may have experienced a reluctance or lack of interest concerning political matters (particularly in the earlier stages of her writing). However, conflicting evidence calls into question her denial of interest in such matters over the course of her life.

Based on the contents of letters and the nature of her work, it is clear that Edgeworth did indeed participate in what the modern reader would classify as direct public and political involvement. In one letter to her sister Harriet Edgeworth Butler, Edgeworth details the day's work in canvassing for a local election, observing that "I hope I have done some good (and no harm) by coming home, as I have secured I hope Dermond's and Kelly's votes, to whom I drove out through the snow on the ground that day, and after deep struggling internally each gave me their promise" (qtd. Hurst 94). Other similar instances of public political involvement include published letters written for the local paper to advocate for the temperance movement, and abolitionist-inspired literature such as *The Grateful Negro.*

Certainly, it is known that Edgeworth is one of the few identifiable "ventilator" women of history. This term refers to a phenomenon arising from the exclusion of women from the chambers of the English Parliament: women who attended sessions of the British House of Commons were only able to do so by peeking through a ventilator grating to watch the events taking place. Edgeworth describes a dark, crowded space that lent an exhilarating air to the experience, stating:

> We went one night to the House of Commons—to the Ventilator…from what Lady Harrowby formerly told me, I thought we were to be squeezed into a hole. In the middle of the garret appears what seems a sentry box of boards the height of a common deal board—old chairs round it for us to stand upon—we got up—peeped over the top of the boards—saw the large chandelier blazing with lights immediately below—a grating of ironwork across from which it hangs veiled the light.…We felt proud to mark the vast difference between the English House of Commons and the French Chambre des deputés. (Colvin 369-371)

In this letter, the descriptive visual imagery and candid assessment of various politicians reveals more than the passing interest of the casual sightseer.

Evidence from the letter to Lazarus discussed in my previous chapter also serves to highlight Edgeworth's interest in matters of legislation. When Edgeworth informs Lazarus that "the passage you copied for me about models and patents is excellent. I have sent it to Mr. Rotch…[who] is at this moment doing his utmost to have the patent laws of England improved," she displays both her awareness of the current state of

affairs and her confidence in Rotch's appreciation of this document (MacDonald 153). Notwithstanding his role as an educated male moving in the upper echelons of the scientific and political community, Rotch appears to have treated Edgeworth as an equal, despite her sex and her repeated claims to scientific ignorance. Furthermore, it is also implied in the context of Edgeworth's letter to Lazarus that Rotch willingly accepted suggestions from both Edgeworth and Lazarus, thus highlighting a potential instance of Anglo-Irish and Jewish-American female influence over English political procedures.

Although some students today still accept the stereotype of nineteenth-century women as universally relegated by men to the category of those who, like children, were "seen and not heard," Rotch seems to have corresponded with Edgeworth in a way that promoted the mutual exchange of ideas. Edgeworth described Rotch in a letter to his sister, Eliza Farrar, as an individual whose "talents I have great reason to admire, and for whose kindness and agreeable letters I have equally great reason to be grateful" (Farrar 120). It is also intriguing to note Edgeworth's apparent influence over the development of Rotch's personal character and public works.

In light of the fact that Edgeworth's correspondence with Rotch evidently continued beyond the publication of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* (I base this claim on the comment to Farrar and the 1828 date for the letter to Lazarus), it is possible that Edgeworth may have been able to exert influence over other matters of legislation in addition to the proposed patent reform measures. Rotch's list of interests, as reflected in his personal life, appear suspiciously similar to the list of matters that also were near and dear to Edgeworth's heart, such as child education, reform, and the temperance

movement. It is possible that Rotch's pamphlet titled *Suggestions for the Prevention of Juvenile Depravity* may have been composed with recommendations from Edgeworth as well.

Here, it is likely that Rotch's acceptance of Edgeworth as an equal can be directly attributed to the influence of Nantucket Quaker society, where women had possessed freedom and influence over their surrounding men as far back as the early eighteenth century. In *The House of Rotch: Massachusetts Whaling Merchants 1734-1828*, J. L. McDevitt notes that "the frequent absence of the island's whalemen and mariners forced the women to assume many traditional male duties. They not only cared for the home and children, but managed routine business matters.…Nantucket men accepted the participation of women as equals in spiritual matters; the nature of whaling and maritime industries also mandated the acceptance of women in some business affairs" (47). Despite their distance from Nantucket's inadvertently progressive environment, the family's long history on the island would indicate that the English Rotches[5] were still culturally affected by the mores of a traditional Nantucket upbringing.

[5] Although some sources speculate on the means by which Rotch qualified for his position as a Member of Parliament, given his French citizenship by birth and his long American heritage, it is highly probable that he never found it necessary to apply for naturalization. In the entry concerning Rotch in *Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry*, the biographer specifically notes that Benjamin Rotch, Senior "was born, a British subject, in America before the independence of that country, and came over to England when twenty years old, a royalist, immediately after the revolution" (1149). While his father and other members of the family still considered themselves strongly entrenched in the American tradition, it is clear that Benjamin Rotch chose to emphasize the loyalty of his father to the British crown—failing to explain that, as Quakers considered themselves to be primarily the citizens of heaven, his father had been equally loyal to both countries. It is therefore possible that the reason behind the lack of documentary evidence for naturalization is a simple one: Rotch claimed that his inherited British citizenship pre-dated the American Revolution.

Summary

Cultural stereotypes of submissive feminine domesticity (namely the controversial "Angel in the House" ideal) have associated the term in the modern consciousness with discrimination against women in spite of the complexity of the historical circumstances. Indeed, the concept of domesticity itself has been misidentified at times as apolitical in nature. However, by choosing to situate women in a position of equality within the home and citing the necessity of improved female education standards, Edgeworth disrupts stated period gender norms throughout her writings in a manner that women readers of the day could easily replicate.

In juxtaposing the literary portrayals of womanhood from authors such as Edgeworth with historical evidence, it is possible to understand the quiet, seemingly passive female figure of popular novels as both an incomplete social concept and a skilled mask for personal power. Although critics such as Kowaleski-Wallace see Edgeworth as being complicit in a patriarchal system through this approach, and opposing scholars such as Mitzi Myers conversely argue that: "Mary Wollstonecraft's flamboyance sullied her feminism for generations of female readers…Edgeworthian feminism provided a readily imitated paradigm for women authors and readers," these arguments fail to fully take into account how women played an active role in shaping the tenets of the male "patriarchy" through both direct and indirect intervention (Myers 53).

Thus another significant question arises for the modern researcher: if individuals such as Edgeworth claimed that women were without a political voice, yet were open participants in what today would be considered political processes, how did these

women then define the term "political" during this historical period? Or, to be more specific: if the act of driving around the countryside for the purpose of electioneering did not fall under the classification of political involvement for women, should we then begin to question the societal definition of the term? Gleadle and Richardson note that while not all women were involved in politics, their contributions were real, accepted by society, and often required as a matter of course (20). They observe: "This is not to say that women's potential for political involvement was unrestricted…but we should also recognise that the barriers against their activities were not as inflexible as has been commonly assumed" (9). Morgan also cites the frequent participation of women in political events and rallies, and suggests that, while full voting rights were denied them, women were encouraged to contribute to the political process through influencing (or outright pressuring) the male voter. Further historical evidence from the period implies that women's influence over political processes was so well known during the period that many candidates openly courted the support of women over men in the hopes of winning the election.

If one examines the situation from Edgeworth's viewpoint, it is somewhat ironic that her frequent association between women and domesticity has sometimes proved to be a stumbling block to feminist interpretations of her character and works. Her complex personal identity and consistent views across a wide range of literary genres reveal her authorship as undeniably feminist in scope. Even as Edgeworth encourages a domestic life for women and repeatedly stresses the pleasures of such an existence, she clearly intends the realm of the domestic in her writings as a feminist space in which men and

women alike take an active part. Opting to forgo a flagrant or radical challenge to boundaries and societal expectations, Edgeworth instead seeks to improve the state of women by encouraging men and women to be equal partners in their day-to-day lives.

It is possible to interpret the situations in Edgeworth's work that appear to disparage women—such as the comments concerning Lucy's inferiority to Harry—as a nod to the existing appearances of the surrounding culture, a period form of what is now referred to as "political correctness." And yet, when one understands them in connection with Edgeworth's humorous *An Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification,* which describes the strategic ascendancy of female power by masking deliberate control tactics under the guise of feminine weakness, one begins to notice a pattern. Passages containing references to female inferiority can now potentially be read as containing a subtext of female control. On the whole, Edgeworth's writings provide compelling subtext evidence that implies a modern misconception about the nature and role of nineteenth-century womanhood, reflecting a conflicting version of education where women teach their daughters to both subvert cultural norms and describe themselves as inferior to men in order to exert control. As such, the cognitive processes designed for Edgeworth's intended child audiences establish conflicting feminist overtones even within juvenile novels such as *Harry and Lucy Concluded*.

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CHAPTER IV

FAKING FEMININITY: COGNITIVE APPROACHES TO *HARRY AND LUCY CONCLUDED*

In recent years, the works of female authors such as Edgeworth have been increasingly subjected to scrutiny for the manner in which they produce—and are produced by—historical standards of behavior. Sometimes viewed as exclusively patriarchal in tone, Edgeworth texts such as the 1825 *Harry and Lucy Concluded* can often appear to reinforce a system of female inferiority as opposed to being read as developing, proto-feminist works. However, through the lens of cognitive theory, this chapter examines the means of transmitting identity-based knowledge from adult to child, reading the character of Lucy in particular as a powerful, developing female figure rather than a docile prisoner of patriarchy. On the whole, a closer investigation of the novel's cognitive features and the correspondence with Rachel Mordecai Lazarus aid in establishing Edgeworth as an author interested in complex versions of childhood education and realism, subverting scripts of female "place" in order to challenge the schemas of pre-Victorian society.

Primarily designed to communicate scientific information to a child audience, *Harry and Lucy Concluded* is an excellent source of material for cognitive analysis. As Maria Nikolajeva observes: "More than any other art form, children's literature is employed for pragmatic purposes… [suggesting] that children's literature generally is

deliberately constructed to offer cognitive engagement (learning something from the text) rather than aesthetic… (enjoying the text as it is)" (32). In keeping with this approach, *Harry and Lucy Concluded* also seeks to instill certain "modern" ideologies and moralistic opinions within young readers; however, what is striking about this version of scholastic indoctrination is the manner in which Edgeworth consciously attempts to integrate early methods of cognitive theory.

Given the developmental nature of children's literature during this time period, *Harry and Lucy Concluded* is highly significant for the emphasis Edgeworth places on the cognitive abilities of her youthful audience. Using the term "attention" to denote individual cognition within the text, Edgeworth continues to build on prior educational theories by exploring the ways in which learning can be easily conveyed to the child consciousness (Butler 169). As Mitzi Myers notes: "The Edgeworths were probably the first to record detailed accounts of just how children do develop and learn, for with all their era's faith in education and improvement, they tried to provide factual material for a science of education. Never abstract theorists, they advocate a pedagogy of realism" (54). By using the conversations of a young brother and sister as a calculated means to transmit knowledge, *Harry and Lucy Concluded* seeks to enlighten the nineteenth-century child reader on a wide variety of topics, ranging from botany and recent inventions to morality and politics.

In this attempt to painlessly transmit information to the young reader, Edgeworth clearly intended to expand on an internalized script of education previously developed by her father. As an educationalist, Richard Lovell Edgeworth had staunchly defended

the literary and scientific instruction of women, claiming that "I shall not, therefore, examine with much anxiety how far women are naturally inferior to us in either strength of mind or body. The strength of one has no necessary connection with the other, I may observe; and intellectual ability has ever conquered mere bodily strength from the times of Ajax and Ulysses to the present day" (*Letters* 46). A brilliant—yet reportedly self-absorbed—individual, Edgeworth's father pushed his daughter to succeed as a writer, and spent much of his time in personally attending to the education of his children along scientific principles. Although some felt that his pomposity and arrogance had a negative impact on his daughter, it must be admitted that the elder Edgeworth's role in actively promoting his daughter as a writer was unusual for the time.

In consideration of the period controversy concerning the education of women and girls, it is significant that Maria Edgeworth creates a realm in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* in which both genders have an ever-increasing access to knowledge. This use of male *and* female protagonists who are capable of learning and discussing scientific concepts is a particularly effective cognitive learning strategy. Utilizing the inquisitive dialogues between Harry and Lucy, Edgeworth allows for the formation of an empathetic relationship between the characters and the male or female child reader (who, presumably, is also in search of knowledge). By widening her prospective audience through expanded representation, Edgeworth grants her audience a means of cognitively mapping the educational experiences within the novel onto real-world scenarios.

In *Harry and Lucy Concluded*, Edgeworth initially sets up specific scripts of education through highlighted patterns of observation and leading questions. At the

beginning of the work, we see both children hesitantly asking for the answers to questions that they are not yet fully capable of expressing; by the end of the novel, Harry and Lucy alike are shrewd inquirers, capable of cross-examining the evidence in order to reach a logical conclusion. Although no formulaic rules are defined for the reader, there is an obvious blueprint to the protagonists' observations that allow for reasoned deductions in the real world. Here it is obvious that Edgeworth intends for child audiences to accept these scripts of empirical analysis and employ them in their own quest for knowledge—flexible tools that can function within a wide variety of subjects and settings. However, while Harry and Lucy are presented with a similar educational skill set, Edgeworth makes it clear that *all* scripts associated with education reflect specific variances (based on the societal expectations associated with one's gender). As Myers contends, Edgeworth's authorship as a whole "not only critiques general cultural attitudes and educational practices, but is especially noteworthy for its enlightened stance toward traditional notions of female education and gender ascription. Like Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth insists that the understanding and the heart must be educated at the same time, that girls too must be taught to think" (Myers 54). Although this process of acquiring rational thought can prove to be a lengthy procedure in an Edgeworth text, particularly on the part of the "bird-witted" Lucy of *Harry and Lucy Concluded*, Edgeworth ultimately highlights critical thinking as something Lucy must learn in order to come to terms with her own identity as a developing woman.

This equal opportunity access to knowledge is likewise meaningful when juxtaposed with the novel's parental roles, wherein Edgeworth again subtly challenges

the reader's perceptions concerning educational norms for women. Although both parents are well-educated and exert a high degree of influence over the adolescent learning process, it is clear that Harry and Lucy's mother in particular is integral to the cognitive learning experience. It is in her presence that Harry and Lucy are able to connect the various aspects of their observations, converting random facts into a comprehensive understanding (as they verbally relate to her the nature of their educational encounters). By relating these particulars aloud to their mother, they are then able to process the relationship between the assorted educational components and draw a conclusion.

As one example of such occurrences, Lucy's cognitive processing of the concept of crystallization proceeds through the following dialogue with her mother:

> "I understand this passage on crystallisation now, mamma, I think; it is very clear." "I do not in the least doubt that *it* is very clear, my dear," said her mother, "but are *you* very clear?"…"It must be a fluid," said Lucy. "Yes, mamma, before it can be crystallised, it must be a fluid. Therefore, begin by supposing a fluid. No, I believe, that first of all, before it becomes fluid the body should be a solid. Hey, Harry? Which shall I tell mamma to suppose, a fluid or solid?" "Settle it for yourself, Lucy, my dear," said her mother. "It cannot depend on what Harry thinks, but upon what really is the fact." (*Concluded* 2: 190-191).

A lengthy monologue by Lucy on the various aspects of crystallization follows (with the occasional addition by Harry), in which she "thinks through" the

learning process by verbally repeating information aloud to her mother. This phenomena is observable throughout the novel, with the mother as both the listening figure and the knowledgeable authority ready to provide correction if need be.

While admittedly an expansion of knowledge also occurs in the scenarios with the father-figure present, the teacher-learner relationship in these moments is essentially one-sided, whereas it can be argued that Harry and Lucy's mother takes a more interactive role in the learning process. Although the adults of the novel are less developed from a character standpoint, existing primarily as foils for the young protagonists, the children's mother appears to advantage in the text by offering a good deal of valuable insight. Through this creation of the educated, intelligent mother-figure, Edgeworth not only rewrites the nature of expectations for women, but provides also an identity that Lucy can then map onto her own conceptualizations of ideal womanhood.

Mothers and Cognitive Processing

Given that the novel produces an educational script that filters knowledge through the maternal figure, it must be noted that Edgeworth has included an integral cognitive process that is observable in real-world scenarios. In *The Mother of All Schemas: Creating Cognitive Dissonance in Children's Fantasy Literature Using the Mother Figure,* Einat Palkovich notes: "Established in infancy, and essential to the formation of other vital schemas…and often facilitator of our earliest reading events, the mother can no more be defamiliarized or unraveled from our notion of 'story' than it can be denied or removed from our notion of our thinking selves" (186-87). By representing

Harry and Lucy's mother as essential to the learning comprehension of the protagonists, Edgeworth ultimately creates a cognitive cycle that both reflects and produces this method of child learning.

On the whole, it is crucial to note that the educated female/mother-figure is closely related to a child's embodied experience with cognitive knowledge. Along with teaching Harry and Lucy about the newest scientific concepts of the day, Edgeworth also opts to introduce the children to the Burkean "sublime" (once considered the pinnacle of Enlightenment-based experiences) while in the presence of their mother. Although the male protagonist Harry is allowed the strongest encounter with the sublime as the children take in their first view of the seaside, Edgeworth alters potential scripts of male superiority by depicting this as a life-changing experience that only Harry's mother can truly understand. Edgeworth narrates the scene through Harry's viewpoint, commenting: "His mother seemed to know what he felt and thought, and to sympathize with him just as he wished. At first in silence, then expressing for him in words, that for which he could not find utterance. The ideas of boundless extent, duration, power; the feelings of awe, which create a sense of the sublime" (*Concluded* 2:6). Here, it is in the obvious absence of the male father-figure that Harry and Lucy are given an overwhelming cognitive experience—one that they are only able to process through the presence of their well-informed mother.

Although Lucy is also present in this moment and offers some measure of empathetic understanding, Edgeworth makes it clear that Lucy fails to completely grasp the full extent of the sublime experience. This lack of comprehension can be

symbolically attributed to Lucy's status as an "incomplete" woman—namely, a young girl who still remains in the early stages of the educational process. Although her erudite mother is able to put this encounter with the sublime into words for the children, Lucy's comparative lack of knowledge renders her incapable of wholly understanding the situation. Here, Harry's more advanced education renders him a better instrument for the sublime experience than Lucy; even if he cannot find words to express the torrent of emotions, he is capable of a higher level of cognition than Lucy in this moment. This does not imply that the child reader is encouraged to identify Lucy as a hopelessly ignorant figure; rather, Edgeworth suggests that without the education afforded to her mother, Lucy will ultimately lack the resources to cognitively understand the surrounding world.

All in all, the maternally based educational aspects in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* appear to realistically reflect mother-child learning practices of the nineteenth century. When providing feedback concerning her children's reaction to the novel, Edgeworth's longtime American correspondent Rachel Mordecai Lazarus wrote:

> Our daughters are charmed with the part they have read and heard, and what will please you still more, they are anxious to become more thoroughly acquainted with the subjects thus introduced to their notice. Amira, a fine little girl, ten years of age, earnestly inquires how old Harry and Lucy could be, to be so sensible and know so much; she seems to feel an alarming sense of inferiority, which I am sure will prove an incitement to a more eager pursuit of knowledge and more steady habits of attention. (MacDonald 102)

Such a description is unique in that it provides a look into the thought processes of period child audiences: in the same way that Harry and Lucy process knowledge by dialoguing with their fictional mother, this first-hand glimpse into the novel's reception by the actual children of the era also reflects the need to question and involve one's mother in order to cognitively comprehend a novel's contents. This trope within the novel does much to highlight the necessity of educating women, juxtaposing adult female literacy with the scholastic demands created by the next generation.

Concerning the frequent nature of this phenomenon in real life and literature, Palkovich observes: "The mother figure's role as a READING schema scaffold is often more primary in the reader's cognitive response than her role as a participant. She is, so to speak, more of a prop than an active character; that is, she is more likely to send the heroic reader off on a journey rather than accompanying him or becoming part of his adventures" (187). This argument is particularly applicable in the case of *Harry and Lucy Concluded,* as the mother is typically distanced from the protagonists in order to allow their youthful questions to proceed unchecked by the presence of the adult voice. Although their mother is present in scenes of traveling between locations and provides valuable guidance in moments where adult intervention is necessary (as in the previously mentioned experience with the sublime), her primary function is that of a wise foil, allowing the reader to envision the positive outcomes of universal female education.

In addition to the topics associated with improving the standard of female education, Edgeworth's principal purpose in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* is the cognitive transfer of scientific knowledge. Although Edgeworth had prior experience in creating

stories for children, this novel in particular proved a difficult challenge from a creative standpoint due to the amount of technical information necessary for its completion. In the attempt to produce this work as a sequel to an earlier *Harry and Lucy* tale written with her father in 1813, Edgeworth apparently found herself lacking when it came to the scientific detail required for the book. In a frustrated letter to Sir Walter Scott, Edgeworth wrote: "I have been this year and a half, the same more or less spellbound in stupidity, writing four minnikin volumes of a child's book…I have no science; and as to accuracy…I trust my friends have saved me from public shame" (qtd. Butler 167). As was the case with her protagonist Lucy, Edgeworth claimed that her capabilities as an author lay within the realm of "wit" as opposed to scientific fact. However, despite these shortcomings, what Edgeworth did have in abundance was experience in observing children and the ways in which they cognitively processed the world around them. With a large number of younger siblings as the result of her father's four marriages—the last to a woman a year younger than Edgeworth herself—there was an ever-ready supply of material to be drawn from. Moreover, letters exchanged with Rachel Mordecai Lazarus reveal Edgeworth's access to an unusual peer-review process, one that allowed for the novel to develop in keeping with the known reactions of child audiences.

The Cognitive Contributions of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus

While yet in the process of developing *Harry and Lucy Concluded,* Edgeworth sent copies of her earlier children's works to Lazarus and asked her to write of any observations or remarks she might hear on the part of her children. Although relatively young, Lazarus had married a widower with seven children and added to the number

over the course of correspondence (with one son bearing the honorary name of Marx Edgeworth). Edgeworth remarked: “For it is only by hearing the free observations of young readers that I can improve in future or correct the past. I am now writing a sequel to Harry and Lucy [that]…will be more scientific that the others” (MacDonald 34). By incorporating the reactions of children into the actual writing of the novel, Edgeworth sought to create a believable experience for young readers that would eventually immerse them within the learning process.

In response to Edgeworth's request for cognitive case studies, Lazarus promptly replied with a detailed response of her children’s reactions concerning “Frank,” “Rosamond,” and the first *Harry and Lucy* work which had been produced jointly with Edgeworth’s father, stating:

> Our youngest daughter, nine years of age, has been reading some of the second part of Harry and Lucy, which I found perfectly adapted to her comprehension. She was much pleased to find on a reperusal that she could in almost every instance anticipate Lucy’s replies. This will when completed be the most valuable scientifick work in our language for young persons (MacDonald 47).

By creating this multifaceted interaction with the child reader, author, and text prior to initial publication, Edgeworth was then able to involve child cognition at all levels of the reading process, in turn creating a more finished, believable product. Yet while Lazarus’s feedback is influential in the creation of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* and can

be directly identified within the text of the work itself,[6] the circumstances surrounding the situation are even more extraordinary.

In light of Edgeworth's early literary reliance on anti-Semitic stereotypes, the epistolary friendship and influence exerted by Lazarus and her children over the creative process for *Harry and Lucy Concluded* is remarkable. Although accepting Lazarus's children as normal, everyday children is taken for granted on the part of modern audiences, *Harry and Lucy Concluded* is perhaps one of the only works of mainstream nineteenth-century British fiction that deliberately allows minority children to have a voice in the formative creative process. Having grown up in a rural Virginia village that accepted her family with wide open arms, Lazarus herself had been involved in female education from a young age, idolizing the ideas and methodologies presented in *Practical Education*. Shocked after the creation of *The Absentee*'s Jewish villain—ironically, also bearing Lazarus's maiden name of Mordecai—she wrote politely to ask why the celebrated Miss Edgeworth chose to portray Jews in such a negative light. After a long introduction summarizing her admiration for the Edgeworth family, Maria in particular, Lazarus asked: "Relying on the good sense and candour of Miss Edgeworth I would ask, how can it be that she, who on all other subjects shows such justice and liberality, should on one alone appear biased by prejudice: should even instill that prejudice into the minds of youth!" (MacDonald 6). Horrified, Edgeworth immediately

[6]The scenes in volume 3 of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* concerning the hanging moss, cotton, "catydid" etc. are the direct results of Lazarus's letters with Edgeworth.

wrote back in profuse apology, which then began a long and confidentially chatty series of letters between the two women.[7]

While Edgeworth plays her typical non-confrontational role in *Harry and Lucy Concluded*—i.e. avoiding a direct reference to minority issues or any direct attempts to address Jewish children—it must be noted that the overall of Harry and Lucy is also rather vague in nature. Despite Edgeworth's own Irish origins, Harry and Lucy have no traits that identify them to the reader as specifically Irish. While it is obvious that they are British children, the number of scenes that take place within the English industrial landscape seem to reinforce a sense of English-ness as opposed to Irish-ness. And yet, there is also no open display of the pro-English propaganda that marked other works of the period, seeking to instill a nationalistic patriotism. Rather, Edgeworth appears to encourage the readers to link their own experiences with those of Harry and Lucy through universally understood experiences.

Understanding Lucy

As with the case of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, many of the events within *Harry and Lucy Concluded* are based on the real-life experiences of Edgeworth's family and friends. For example, Harry's spinal injury and subsequent invalidism following the heroic rescue of an infant from a burning building bears a distinct resemblance to the forced recuperation of Edgeworth's young sister (also named Lucy), from a mysterious

[7] The correspondence initially begun by Lazarus and Edgeworth was continued by family members after their deaths, resulting in an unlikely correspondence between the Mordecai and Edgeworth families that spanned a period of one hundred and twenty-seven years (MacDonald xvi).

vertebral ailment that relegated her to a sofa for a significant period of time (MacDonald 76). In *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, Edgeworth scholar Marilyn Butler also observes that much of Lucy's journey in the novel can be directly associated with Edgeworth's own personal experiences. Furthermore, the descriptions of scenes in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* pertaining to industrialized landscapes are closely affiliated with known Edgeworth travels mentioned in letters to friends and family members, allowing the reader to draw conclusions concerning Edgeworth's own cognitive processes as she transitions real-life occurrences into written scenes and dialogue.

Yet, while Edgeworth displays a definite predilection for realism, metaphor plays a significant role in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* through the presence of the physically embodied journey that the young protagonists embark on. Even as Harry and Lucy's thirst for acquiring knowledge is symbolically representative of a progressive trek towards enlightenment, Edgeworth likewise includes a literal, tangible expedition that carries the brother and sister duo into various scenes of knowledge and industrial innovation. Here, the *bildungsroman*-esque vision of education is accompanied by the actual, spatially embodied movement of the protagonists. Representative of a growth of character through the presence of the journey, Harry and Lucy are able to increase their cognitive abilities through observing details in a variety of scenarios.

Through a schema of "the mother as educator", Edgeworth presents the child figure of Lucy with seemingly conflicting instructions concerning the "place" of women in the world at large. Lucy's initial education begins with her mother informing her: "You should not expect to go fast; you must be content to go slowly, and you must

submit to be inferior to your brother for some time. This may mortify you, my dear, but it cannot be avoided, you must bear it" (*Concluded* 1:5-6). When the young Lucy misidentifies a concept—thus creating a connection with the disparaged "scientific" women who air their opinions despite a lack of knowledge—Edgeworth provides a small justification for the faux pas though Harry, stating that this is a "scientific expression, not necessary for a woman to know" (*Concluded* 3:27). Yet, although she must learn to come to terms with the rather condescending concerns of her elder brother and other male characters within the novel, the most substantial boundaries that Lucy experiences are the direct result of her mother's influence.

The first warning given by Lucy's mother is then further enhanced through repeated cautions concerning the nature of women who attempt a scientific education, claiming that

> All will agree with your nameless gentleman, that when women pretend to understand what they do not, whether about science or anything else, they are absurd and ridiculous. And if they talk even of what they understand, merely to display their knowledge, they must be troublesome and disagreeable. Therefore they should take care not to do so. They should be particularly cautious of talking on scientific subjects, because they seldom obtain accurate knowledge; they are, therefore, likely to make mistakes, and to be either troublesome in asking questions, or ridiculous in showing ignorance and conceit. (*Concluded* 1:8)

It is within these moments that the reader observes the female figure of the mother—as opposed to the male/directly patriarchal figure of the father—as the one placing the direct limitations on Lucy.

Despite her own apparent grasp of scientific and scholarly concepts, it is clear that Lucy's forward-thinking mother has internalized certain scripts of behavior that she is seeking to instill in both her daughter and the female child reader. Moreover, the emphasis placed on repeating these warnings throughout the entire novel show that Lucy herself is aware of the dangers of airing her own knowledge in public. Initially making several condemnatory observations concerning other adult women in the novel as she attempts to cognitively define the script of what an educated woman should look like, Lucy experiences moments of great confusion as she tries to discern her "place" as a burgeoning woman.

Although both siblings experience growth during the learning process, it can be argued that Lucy experiences what is perhaps the most complex of the novel's educational experiences. Despite being presented with the opportunity for an education that previously has only been accessible to her brother, it is clear that there are certain areas that she is expected to have more difficulty in comprehending. In addition, while Lucy's lack of knowledge provides the novel's excuse for the lengthy explanations needed to satisfy a child reader's curiosity, any lack of expertise and/or comprehension on a given topic is typically understood as an attribute of her gender as opposed to her age.

For example, while the character of Mrs. Frankland is shown as a paragon of learning and virtue, Lucy's initial wish to grow into a woman "just like her" is tempered by the immediate onset of doubt. Recalling an instance where Mrs. Frankland provides the children with the Latin names of the flowers in her greenhouse, Lucy expresses to Harry a sense of uneasiness that such behavior could be construed as "pedantic." It is only after the children's mother assures them that this is not the case that the children are restored to a relieved confidence in the deportment of Mrs. Frankland, returning her to her pedestal as Lucy's ideal role model. Through the inclusion of such doubts, Edgeworth illuminates a cognitive script concerning the empirical appraisal of one's role models. Although this particular instance seeks to address common concerns of educated womanhood through the impressions of the child protagonist, Edgeworth also intends to address any negative assumptions that are being made on the part of the reader.

Although instances such as these can appear to support claims identifying Edgeworth as a subservient author under the thumb of a powerful patriarchal system, the need to repeat such instructions instead points to a complex interpretation of the nineteenth-century female role—one that essentially defies the binary classification of submissive or non-submissive womanhood. Although an argument could be made that Edgeworth voiced such sentiments in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* as a token acknowledgement of patriarchal societal practices, her relative isolation during the writing process, the height of her celebrity, and the absence of her deceased father (who had been supportive rather than limiting) make it highly likely that these are Edgeworth's own opinions on the subject.

While the admonitions of the dangers of "scientific women" appear to contradict the modern schemas associated with feminism and women's rights, it must be noted that these negative instructions are ultimately subverted through Edgeworth's own identity as a woman author dealing with scientific subjects. As Clìona Ó Gallchoir notes in *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment, and Nation*: "The positions of Irishness and femininity make for an engagement with the Enlightenment that is unique and that has so far lacked any form of description…Irishness and femininity were both unstable positions—together, however, their very instability had the potential to construct a position of unprecedented authority for the woman writer" (7). However, despite the resulting claim to authority, this instability of social position may be the best explanation for Edgeworth's complex approach to life, choosing to employ a diplomatic "both/and" technique as opposed to a divisive "either/or" methodology.

On the whole, the Edgeworthian definition of ideal womanhood forms a complicated behavioral script, blending together conflicting aspects of feminism and patriarchy with the domestic and the scholarly. For example, while Lucy is often encouraged to think of her future role as it pertains to home and family, it is clear that Edgeworth believed that this interaction with the domestic would provide women with a superior means of understanding scientific concepts. Richard Lovell Edgeworth in particular argued that the domestic experiences of women gave them an affinity for the sciences—especially chemistry. By continuing to argue that a knowledge of chemistry would be easily derived from the housewifely act of cooking, Maria Edgeworth reverses the script associated with domestic duties and instead uses it as a weapon against

detractors in order to justify female education by any means possible. Rather than denying the claims of home and family, Edgeworth instead sought to prove that education and domesticity were not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Here it must also be noted that, while girls in Edgeworth novels are not solely relegated to the private or domestic sphere, boys also derive their place in society from more than the public sphere. Indeed, Edgeworth appears to take this a step further by deliberately embracing intersections between the two modern constructs of "domestic" and "public" spheres. In the same way that Lucy is able to map an idealized version of the educated woman onto her life based on the example of her mother and women such as Mrs. Frankland and Lady Digby, Harry is also able to map a domesticized view of the male role based on the interactions with his father. As opposed to an isolated existence, Harry and Lucy's father displays a clear interest in the education of his children, subsequently becoming involved in the domestic realm through these interactions.

Further rewriting the scripts associated with the modern understanding of domesticity, Edgeworth also shows Harry attempting to do the elaborate needlework undertaken by his mother as a matter of principle. Although he understands the concept in theory, Harry finds himself unable to master the attempt and leaves the field in defeat, owning that more practice at another time would allow for a better execution. In the same vein, when Harry scorns to listen to a dinner conversation centered on the topic of women's hats, Edgeworth (through Lucy) reproves him for his lack of attention as "it was worth hearing…gentlemen listened as well as ladies" (*Concluded* 2:61). In moments like this, Edgeworth's work reflects an intersectionality between the alleged domestic

and public spheres that "flips the script," allowing Lucy to take the lead over Harry as the result of her superior knowledge of wit and expertise in mystifying, non-scientific matters such as sewing.

As Butler notes: "Towards the end [Edgeworth] does imply something about realism, by producing a book based on the idea that there may be two intellectual approaches to reality: the scientific or exact, and the literary or intuitive" (269). Yet in doing so, Edgeworth clearly affiliates the two approaches with specific, gendered figures. As the literary or intuitive character guided by "wit," Lucy derives a sense of educational authority from her place as young female, reigning supreme as the inherent ruler of the so-called domestic sphere. However, while Lucy's wit is shown to be a flaw if isolated from common sense, Harry's preference for exactness is also understood as a failing that prohibits him from cognitively understanding abstract thought. Through these characteristics, respectively identified as male and female traits by association, Edgeworth again highlights the inevitability of blurring the lines between spheres.

In *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth*, Mona Narain calls into question what she terms as the "commonplace of the 'separate spheres' theory in contemporary scholarship," which claims that late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century women writers (Edgeworth in particular) accepted the relegation of women to the domestic sphere and were principally concerned with private conduct in their writing (Nash 58). Narain further argues that a close examination of British literary and historical texts from the given period demonstrate that women were never excluded from the public sphere, despite the limitations that were placed on their means of accessing the spotlight (Nash

58). Such a claim is also endorsed by Ó Gallchoir, who declares: "The idea that the eighteenth century was characterized by the rigid division of public and private, as completely separate and gendered spheres, has been subject to increasing questioning and critique. Evidence is accumulating which indicates that educated and intellectual women contributed to a reconsideration of the meanings of public and private" (10).

Referencing the philosophies of Michel de Certeau, Jane Donawerth opines in her article "Poaching on Men's Philosophies of Rhetoric: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Rhetorical Theory by Women" that the classification of a specific demographic as being the dominated element in society does not necessarily indicate an automatic passivity. In her discussion of Maria Edgeworth, Eliza Farrar,[8] and Frances Willard, Donawerth argues: "Thus, the dominant in culture may offer a set of rules, but it is only a basis for improvisation for the multitude of others in society. Consumption is not the imposition of an ideology on a society; a group does not absorb what it consumes. Instead, the group makes what it consumes its own" (Donawerth 244). When considered in this light, Edgeworth's *Harry and Lucy Concluded* appears as both a resister and a supporter of the typical nineteenth-century educational scripts, representing in the figure of Lucy the complicated expectations of an ever-changing society.

From a developmental standpoint, the wide acceptance of Maria Edgeworth as an authority on childhood education speaks volumes concerning the nature of period societal practices. While there are countless vocal critics of female education that remain

[8] Although the connection between Benjamin Rotch and Edgeworth has only now come to light, Eliza Rotch Farrar appears to have been highly influenced by Edgeworth's work. Farrar's instructional book for girls titled *The Young Lady's Friend* enjoyed a wide popularity among American audiences, and bears a strong resemblance to Edgeworth's *Practical Education*.

in the historic record, the overwhelming acceptance and celebrity of the Edgeworths—particularly Maria—suggests the existence of an overlooked and ever-growing nineteenth-century "silent majority" that approved of the education of women. Yet, as Edgeworth herself observes in the preface to *Harry and Lucy Concluded*: "I have now stated all the objects of this book: how far they have been accomplished must be left to time, and parents, and, above all, to children to decide" (*Concluded* 1: xviii). After all, from a cognitive perspective, it is supremely fitting that the child reader should have the final word on the subject.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Despite its origins as a female-authored text for children, *Harry and Lucy Concluded* appears to have been widely accepted by both female and male audiences of all ages. In a December 1825 article for the *British Review* appraising the merits of Edgeworth's recently published work, the reporter states of the four-volume novel:

> The filial modesty of Miss E. would ascribe all the merit of the previous volumes, of which these are the sequel, to her father: but we must be permitted to believe that, in the former volumes as well as the present, there is a knowledge and perception of infant character that is essentially feminine: an intimacy with cradled thought, if we may so express ourselves, which the lordly sex, whatever may be their superiority in some other respects, cannot well attain. (446)

Rather than rejecting her work based on her status as a single, female author, this enthusiastic review of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* declares that Edgeworth's contributions to knowledge will improve humanity as a whole for the manner in which it seeks to educate the child reader.

Through such evaluations, it is possible to understand Edgeworth's status as a woman as having lent her an even greater credibility as a children's author during the period, transitioning the "restrictive" platform afforded her by the stated ideals of domesticity into a means of gaining a more substantive authorial

voice. However, this awareness of Edgeworth's contributions to children's literature is also closely connected with her popularity as an author of fictional novels for adults. As Mona Narain argues in her article "Not the Angel in the House: Intersections of the Public and Private in Maria Edgeworth's "Moral Tales" and "Practical Education," shifting the terms of scholarly evaluation in order to interpret Edgeworth's work through a comprehensive evaluation of both her "pedagogical prose" and fiction creates a new, more complex profile of the author as "as a strong advocate of feminine agency, an educator who sought to create some measure of equality for female education, and a writer who argued for the relevance of the private sphere for men" (Nash 69). For Edgeworth, whether the work is fictional or non-fictional in composition, for a child or adult audience, there is an overwhelming trend towards the educational/informative tale intended to improve the overall state of society.

When examining the role *Harry and Lucy Concluded* plays in both producing and in being produced by period culture, it appears that Edgeworth encourages the reader to link their own experiences with those of Harry and Lucy through universally understood scenarios. Overall, the text's participation in contemporary political discussion is conveyed through both female and male characters within the novel, yet the ideological influences pertaining to the shaping of the adolescent mind are primarily represented as being within the "domestic" province of the female figure. By examining the perplexing standards of education for Lucy within the context of Edgeworth's fictional and non-fictional writing, it is apparent that Edgeworth and her female

characters alike are able to wield a significant degree of power under the deliberately created guise of female weakness and inferiority. Ranging from the canvassing abolitionist to the outspoken debutante to the wide-eyed child, Edgeworth refuses to lock her female characters into a single, stereotypical role. In addition, although she chooses to emphasize the importance of domesticity, education, and even political influence as something that all women should possess, Edgeworth does so in a way that allows the reader to tailor these fictional examples to match their individual circumstances. Although the seeming ambiguity of her political views can create confusion when attempting to define Edgeworth's works as patriarchal or feminist in tone, it is apparent that the education and place of women in society are important throughout her lifetime.

While investigating the provenance and physical journey of this copy of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* has proved to be a fascinating process, there is much that still remains to be understood concerning the overall impact of Edgeworth's association with the Rotch family. Aside from the historical significance of Edgeworth's potential access to upper-level political influence through Benjamin Rotch, the discovery of a link with Eliza Farrar presents the possibility of a more direct Edgeworthian influence over American children's literature (and thus the development of American societal practices) than has been previously supposed. On the whole, this text exhibits a wealth of information concerning Edgeworth's personal convictions and thought processes, highlighting her friendship with—and evident admiration for—a man who would one day become the enemy of Charles Dickens himself.

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