

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

"IF THEIR GENIUS LEADS THEM NATURALLY TO IT:"
LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU AND THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's writings on the issue of the education of women, an eighteenth-century English aristocrat who produced an extensive body of letters and other literature. I focus primarily on a number of letters which Montagu wrote to her daughter, the Countess of Bute, during the early 1750s, discussing the education appropriate for the countess' daughters. My approach to these texts involves an awareness of the historical context in which Montagu wrote, particularly of early eighteenth-century educational theory as it was influenced by the writing of John Locke. The thesis is also informed by poststructuralist feminist theory, especially by Judith Butler's ideas concerning normative gender boundaries, subjectivity, and the possibility of a resisting subject. I suggest that Montagu, while constrained by the construction of gender which underpins her culture, employs rhetorical strategies that subvert notions of appropriate gender roles current in her society. Overall, the thesis seeks to elucidate the ways in which the educable female subject postulated by Montagu differs from, and is similar to, the types of female subjectivity already available within her

social and historical context.

The first chapter of the thesis focuses on *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by John Locke. These texts were highly influential in encouraging the more progressive tendencies in eighteenth-century thought on education, yet had substantial mainstream appeal. Locke's works offer a paradigm against which the subversive nature of Montagu's ideas can be understood. While Locke has long occupied a significant position within the history of philosophy, his *Education* has received comparatively little critical study, with the issue of gender in this text being almost entirely overlooked.

My second chapter engages Montagu's letters on the education of her granddaughters directly, considering the tensions and awkward moments in the texts as areas of conflict between the disruptive potential of her ideas and her need to present her ideas to her audience in a manner which remained intelligible within her social context. As with Locke, relatively little critical work has been written on this subject; consequently, the thesis presents a new perspective on Montagu's thought, focussing on her vision of the educable female subject.

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INTRODUCTION

There is nothing so like the Education of a Woman of Quality as that of a Prince.

-Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,
8 March 1753

So wrote Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to her daughter, the Countess of Bute, commenting on the current fashion in the education of daughters. This remark forms only part of a substantial body of thought that Montagu composed over a number of years, developing her belief that young, upper-class women ought to receive an academically-focussed education, with a particular concentration on literature, if their natural inclinations prompted an interest in this direction. This opinion, however, hardly expressed the common sentiments of the period. Indeed, in the above-quoted passage, Montagu uses her comparison to point out what she considers the frivolous nature of the training typically provided to the daughters of the leisured classes.

While data on the general educational level of early eighteenth-century women is difficult to procure, it is possible to gain an overall sense of the social context out of which Montagu was writing. Though basic literacy among the women of the genteel and professional classes of the period was about 81% (Vickery 259), schooling for girls remained a contentious issue. For the most part, girls tended to receive

training at home (343 n. 86). The boarding schools for the daughters of the gentry tended to emphasize "polite accomplishments" (Laurence 170) such as "dancing, playing musical instruments, singing and foreign languages" (170), rather than academic subjects. Boys learned mathematics, theology, and classical languages, but the feminine curriculum instead "concentrated on the kinds of accomplishments considered necessary to secure a husband" (170). Indeed, concerning the education of women in the early eighteenth century, the "principal debate . . . was whether it should be ornamental . . . or useful" (Browne 104), whether women should be trained to be good companions for men, or good mothers and heads of households; the development of the mind for its own sake did not enter into the question. Indeed, even though she was the eldest daughter of the Duke of Kingston, born into wealth which could afford the best education, Montagu herself only obtained her formidable knowledge of ancient and modern literature by means of a determined auto-didacticism (*Montagu* xvii).

Statistics can offer only a partial picture of the educational situation for eighteenth-century women, however. In order to set Montagu's ideas within a broader cultural context, one must investigate the dominant strain of thought about educational theory in the period. Though the eighteenth century saw the publication of numerous works relating to the raising of children (Ezell 141), the text which towered over

all these writings was John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). Locke was, for his immediate successors, the seminal thinker on all aspects of education, widely consulted and respected (Ezell 147). His work provides a basis with which to establish a sense of mainstream progressive thinking about education and gender through the first half of the eighteenth century. From this starting point, Montagu's letters can be seen in relation to her culture's Lockean inheritance; her work represents neither a straightforward reply to the *Education*, nor a mere redaction of its content with a female focus, but a creative response to the gender assumptions and anxieties which underlie Locke's text. The first chapter of this thesis examines the idea of woman in Locke's theory of personal identity and in the *Education*, while the second chapter considers Montagu's attempts to subvert conventional notions of gender in her thoughts on the education of women. A brief postscript offers an overview of the relationship between these two works, Montagu's letters functioning as an articulation of the dangerous supplement, the educated woman, which haunts Locke's text.

CHAPTER ONE

Some Thoughts Concerning Subjectivity; or, Paradigmatic Locke: the *Education*, Personhood, and Gender

After its publication in 1693, John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* came to dominate discussion of the instruction of children in the eighteenth century. Indeed, the increase of the treatment of this subject within the popular literature of the period is a measure of the influence which Locke's text had on those who followed him. Many contemporary historians of educational theory, however, have tended to dismiss early eighteenth-century thinkers as uninterested in issues of child development. Modern scholars have thus focussed their attention on the writing of the latter half of the century, inaccurately "declaring that childhood was of little interest to writers of previous generations" (Ezell 139); for this reason, Locke's *Education* has not received the same attention as have the works of Rousseau and of later theorists. Similarly, those interested in the history of philosophy have been inclined to overlook the *Education* in favour of Locke's more specifically philosophic works. As Kevin L. Cope observes in his recent survey of Lockean thought, *John Locke Revisited*, "[t]o date, critical and speculative interest in this work has been

minimal" (19); most commentators and biographers merely offer a brief summary of the text as a parenthetical counterpart to the more major writings. The comparatively "miscellaneous quality" (20) of Locke's method and style in this work has resulted in a certain amount of "misunderstanding and neglect" (20) of the *Education* by later philosophers.

Yet, Cope argues quite reasonably, in spite of its apparent peculiarities, the text must "be rediscovered and appreciated for the seminal work that it is" (19), particularly because of its influential role in the development of educational theories. The early eighteenth century, which Margaret Ezell has called the "Age of Education" (141), saw a dramatic rise in the dissemination of ideas about the upbringing of children within the books and periodicals directed toward fashionable society. That which "had been confined previously to learned treatises[,] . . . invaded the territory of polite literature and popular journalism" (141), a shift in interest which "was spearheaded largely by the writings of one man, John Locke" (141). The concept of a child's character being shaped by its environment and its caregivers, as well as the notion of purposefully moulding an individual into a particular kind of subject, acquired new force in the period. Indeed, Locke's educational theory provided eighteenth-century readers with a steady diet of texts concerned with the formation of character, while his images and terms became the "current jargon" (148) for the

thinkers of the day. It is necessary to note, however, that *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* offered to the early eighteenth-century reading public ideas on education which were by no means wholly new (Ezell 141), but which nonetheless clearly departed from a number of received traditions. Perhaps the most significant tendency toward change in Locke's thought is the movement away from a theologically based educational paradigm to one which is primarily concerned with civic responsibility. For instance, while Milton in "Of Education" assumes that learning attempts to mitigate the sinfulness of the human character which resulted from the fall of Adam and Eve (141), Locke focuses on a social morality that seeks to produce "vertuous, useful, and able Men in their distinct Callings" (*Education* 112, "Epistle Dedicatory"). This alteration in tone is significant, for the removal of original sin as a primary reason for education has the potential to remove a certain gender bias from the core of learning itself; education becomes a social duty rather than the unfortunate consequence of feminine frailty - though women continue to be prevented from acting as civil agents. As will be seen, Locke departs in other ways, too, from more misogynistic traditions. Overall, the *Education* contains a combination of radical ideas and more conventionally accepted thought, a mixture which had wide public appeal among its first readers. Indeed, the impact of his writing was so significant that Margaret Ezell concludes that "it would have

been virtually impossible for a literate person to have been unaware of Locke's theories on children" (148-9).

Nevertheless, despite its contemporary popularity, the *Education* has fallen out of favour in more recent times. It may be that the generic oddity of the work - primarily an edited version of letters written to Edward and Mary Clarke of Chipley during the mid-1680s - contributes to its neglect by modern scholars. Indeed, the prose often seems to move from one idea to the next more by means of spontaneous association than by any formally structured logic. A notable example of this idiosyncratic connection of thoughts occurs near the opening of the text as Locke recommends various practices intended to strengthen a child's constitution, beginning with clothing and footwear calculated to inure the body to temperature change, then moving on to the value of swimming lessons and of playing in the open air (116-23, §5-10). Dropped into the midst of this advice is the comment that while the "principal Aim" (117, §6) of the discourse is the upbringing of a "young Gentleman" (117, §6), the method can also be applied to "the Education of *Daughters*" (117, §6). Locke adds, in an offhand manner, that though "the Difference of Sex requires different Treatment" (117, §6), the basic principles remain the same and the appropriate alterations to his system "will be no hard Matter to distinguish" (117, §6). Slightly later, in another rather parenthetical moment, he remarks that "the nearer [girls] come to the Hardships of

their Brothers in their Education, the greater Advantage will they receive from it all . . . of their Lives" (122, §9); he then abruptly turns his attention to the importance of "[p]laying in the open Air" (122, §10), offering no explanation of the connection between the two matters. Thus, tracing the movement of thought through even the preliminary sections of the *Education* illustrates the curious interplay of concerns by which the text is woven together, as one thread of ideas dominates, then temporarily yields to another tangentially related one.

These passages, however, also highlight the complex function of gender within the work, suggesting by their awkward placement the ambivalent position of the female subject within the text. Indeed, the thought of the young gentlewoman - rather than the young gentleman - seems to discomfit the authorial voice which struggles to control the disruptive possibilities that the education of a daughter introduces. The female subject thus appears in the prose at unexpected moments, destabilizing by its very presence the assumptions with which Locke attempts to underpin his work. For instance, he begins from a position of near gender-neutrality: while admitting that his priority is the young gentleman, the author nonetheless appears to suppose that his ideas can be reasonably applied to the upbringing of female children - it is only in certain areas where "the Difference of Sex requires different Treatment" (117, §6). That Locke

regards it as necessary to clarify this matter indicates both that he is aware that his audience might not share his assumption of the similar educational capacities of boys and girls, and that he begins his treatise committed to the idea. Further evidence of his ongoing belief in the educative likeness of the sexes can be seen in Locke's letter to Mary Clarke in which he remarks vis à vis girls' upbringing that he "acknowledge[s] no difference of sex in [a woman's] mind relating . . . to truth, virtue and obedience" (February 1685; 344)¹. Consequently, he thinks it "well to have no thing altered in it [instruction] from what is [written for the son]" (February 1685; 344). Gender difference, following this paradigm, thus becomes a rather vexed question as Locke largely eliminates naturally imposed intellectual limitations based on sex. The mind, envisioned as "white Paper, or Wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases" (325, §216), does not function as the origin of gender difference, nor does it necessitate different instruction on account of sex, but instead acquires a particular imprint, or shape, as a result of the educational method employed; the sexes do not require different training, they are taught to expect different training. Beginning his treatise by assuming the similarity of the intellectual potential of children regardless of sex, Locke thus conjures up a female subject who shares at least a

¹ Page numbers for letters are cited from *The Educational Writings of John Locke*.

substantial proportion of the intellectual capacity of her male counterpart, and whose difference originates primarily in her upbringing rather than in her nature.

A consideration of the way in which Locke conceives of individual identity and of the relationship between body and soul in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* provides further insight into the treatment of gender difference in his educational theory. Finally published in 1690, the *Essay* represents the culmination of almost twenty years of thought, the project having begun with two manuscript drafts in 1671 and revised steadily from 1683 onward (Nidditch xiii). These dates mark the work as generally contemporaneous with the *Education* and suggest that the two texts derive from a similar theoretical basis; certainly Locke refers to an essay, *De Intellectu*, in his correspondence with Edward Clarke in 1685 (xiii). Both the published works evince a concern with the means by which the human intellect interacts with its environment and with itself, though the *Essay* approaches the matter from the standpoint of a more exhaustive systematic empiricism. John Dunn, in his biographical study of Locke, even describes the *Education* simply as expressing "more practically" (63) the ideas discussed in an abstract form in the *Essay*. While accounting the former merely as a sort of crib for the latter seems rather to oversimplify the relationship between the two texts, the remark nevertheless

implies the possible light which the one volume might shed on the underlying assumptions of the other. The methodical elucidation of "the workings of normal sense- or inner-experience" (Nidditch ix) in the *Essay* - an exploration which contributed "as much to psychology as to philosophy" (Axtell 50) - provides "an implicit theory of education" (51) that impinges on and is developed by the *Education*. The editor of a modern collection of Locke's educational writings, James L. Axtell, points to three fundamental concepts which link the two works. Specifically, these are: "an insistence upon the early formation of firm habits of mind and body . . . in the child's formative years" (54); the importance of the association of ideas in developing proper reasoning skills and in avoiding "the undue Connexion of Ideas in the Minds of young People" (*Essay* 2.33.8); and the notion that languages cannot be adequately mastered through the study of grammar alone, but must "be learn'd by roat" (*Education* 276, §168), a principle which Axtell sees as deriving from the "whole analysis of words" (56) that constitutes in the third book of the *Essay*. Such shared characteristics help to delineate the close relationship between the two works, with the *Education* acting as "the explicit application of the philosophy of knowledge latent within the *Essay*" (51). However, a further point of resemblance is also worth considering, though the influence of this aspect of the theoretical model on the

educational theory may at first appear less obvious.

The chapter entitled "Of Identity and Diversity" in the second book of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* offers a cogent statement of Locke's conception of the human subject as a reasoning being. His principal concerns in this section are the ways in which human selfhood differs from, or is similar to, the identity that we attribute to other forms of life, and the means by which a systematic explanation of the constituent parts of an individual's subjectivity may be ascertained. Beginning with the premise that "Identity and Diversity are relations and ways of comparing" (2.27.2), Locke demonstrates the impossibility of having "two Bodies be in the same place at the same time . . . it being a contradiction, that two or more should be one" (2.27.2). As a consequence, any sort of individuated being, whether simple or complex in make-up, must "in any instant of its Existence . . . [be] the same with it self" (2.27.3). After laying this groundwork, the chapter progresses to a consideration of the identity of living creatures. Locke declares that it is not merely "Unity of Substance that comprehends all sorts of Identity" (2.27.7), but that in the case of plants and animals identity rests in the "participation of the same continued Life, by constantly fleeting Particles of Matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body" (2.27.6). So, too, for the entity which Locke terms a Man, a creature that he defines as "a living organized Body . . . which . . . is nothing else but .

. . . an Animal of such a certain Form" (2.27.8).

The matter of identity, however, becomes more complicated in the case of humanity because, according to Locke, a human being has not only an identity as a Man, parallel to the kind of identity annexed to an animal, but an identity as a Person as well. A Person, as the *Essay* defines the term, is an entity which can reason, reflect on itself, and is conscious that it does so. This last point is crucial as Lockean thought assumes a priori that consciousness accompanies, and is a necessary prerequisite to, thinking. Thus, Locke states:

. . . we must consider what *Person* stands for; which, I think, is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, that same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it: It being impossible for any one to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive . . . And by this every one is to himself, that which he calls *self* . . . (2.27.9)

This notion of Personhood stands alongside both the "idea of a man" and the idea of a "soul-substance" (Thiel 181), it "being one thing to be the same *Substance*, another the same *Man*, and a third the same *Person*" (*Essay* 2.27.7). These precise

distinctions lead to a tripartite model² of the human subject, a proposal which, as Christopher Fox observes, renders "human identity itself . . . an equivocal term" (30). Locke realizes the ambiguity that could result from his suggestion; therefore, he emphasizes that the entire issue of identity must be "carefully attended to" (2.27.7) in order to "prevent[] a great deal of that Confusion, which often occurs about this Matter . . . especially concerning Personal Identity" (2.27.7). Notably, as if captivated by the complexities which this latter category presents, it is the notion of personhood that occupies the majority of Locke's attention throughout the chapter.

This problematic subjectivity proved a controversial claim in its own time, however, not on account of its tripartite structure, but because Locke located his single criterion for personal identity in consciousness, rather than in any aspect of soul-substance (Fox 30). The soul remains, in his theory, an obscure entity; the human subject has "no knowledge of its real essence" (Thiel 181). Its operations, a matter which Locke leaves largely indeterminate, seem to be attended by consciousness, yet no aspect of this soul-substance itself actually provides any unity to the subject's mental and physical actions through time (184). Instead,

² While Locke does make this triple distinction, it is important to note that sameness of substance is relevant only for non-living beings. Any living entity is, in Lockean thought, constantly shifting matter through its body, a process which eliminates the possibility of sameness of substance.

substance, as Locke frequently terms the soul, appears to be almost incidental to consciousness, for he explains that selfhood as a "conscious thinking thing . . . is concern'd for it self, as far as that consciousness extends" (*Essay* 2.27.17), but no further. Thus, the task of ensuring the continuance of a coherent subject is accorded to a consciousness which, as a result of its presence in all acts of perception and cognition, organizes the person as a diachronic unity. Put more simply, "whatever has the consciousness of present and past Actions, is the same Person to whom they both belong" (*Essay* 2.27.16).

These actions, the accumulated mass of our daily experiences, form the basis of a consistent self-consciousness which "account[s] for moral and theological responsibility" (Fox 32); for Locke, there is in

this *personal Identity* . . . founded all the Right and Justice of Reward and Punishment . . . for which every one is concerned for *himself*, not mattering what becomes of any Substance, not joined to, or affected with that consciousness. (*Essay* 2.27.18)

As a result of founding the identity of the person in the subject's perception of quotidian reality, the creation of the person becomes an act of self-constitution; only a particular individual can experience his own daily life, hence that subject's personal identity can be accessible to himself alone

(Thiel 186). This self-referentiality appears to render the person entirely unknowable to others, a possibility which Locke seems to acknowledge in his hypothetical case of the prince and the cobbler. In his imagined example, the soul of a deceased prince, maintaining a consciousness of his past life, enters a cobbler's body. According to the logic of identity in the *Essay*, the individual thus animated "would be the same Person with the Prince, accountable only for the Prince's Actions" (2.27.15), though this same entity would be a different man from the prince. Consequently, while the corporal is integral to the idea of a man, personhood is not dependent on the body. As Udo Thiel succinctly states, "since personality is not even a given object to myself, it cannot be an object for others either" (186); bodily properties, even if altered completely over the course of time, thus offer no reliable indication of the person, though they most likely form some aspect of the identity of the conscious self. Nevertheless, the relationship between the corporal and the personal is possible only through consciousness as no inherent link exists to connect them.

The complex interdependence of consciousness, man, soul, and person in Lockean thought raises a number of puzzle cases however. Christopher Fox outlines several significant questions which the *Essay's* theory of identity attempts to answer: these problematic instances include considering whether two persons can share the same soul and whether the

same man may be different persons (34). Using Locke's own reasoning, the first case can be regarded as impossible (*Essay* 2.27.14), but the second situation could certainly occur, if the subject's consciousness were transferred or lost (2.27.19-20). Though the idea of transference is primarily a speculative one, the notion of a lost sense of self has practical application, particularly in instances of amnesia and senility (Fox 36-7). While these representative puzzles sufficiently rehearse the *Essay's* own theoretical agenda concerning identity and human responsibility at the Resurrection (37), Fox does not attempt to press the boundaries of this model of human subjectivity or to investigate its underlying consequences. This lack of interrogation is unfortunate, for Locke constructs a subject that has an identity which, in its self-constituted nature, has a significant potential for fluidity; yet issues which are raised by this new paradigm are often left undiscussed, conspicuous by their absence from the text. Perhaps the most obvious example of a question that remains unuttered is the place of gender within personal identity. How does the gendered subject fit into the tripartite structure of subjectivity that Locke proposes? To put the question in terms of the test cases which appear in the *Essay*, one might ask whether the personal identity of a man - a human animal which is gendered male - could be transferred to a woman - that is, a subject which is corporally female? If this query

seems more hypothetical than practical, then an alternative inquiry may provide a more obviously useful set of responses: how does Lockean consciousness relate to, and contribute to, the construction of personal gender?

Surely the means toward elucidating this matter lies in a consideration of the relation of consciousness to the self and to external reality. To return to the basic principles that underpin the chapter on identity, the human subject which Locke theorizes has a threefold structure. Of these related aspects of the individual, two appear to be given, in the sense that they exist from the genesis of the particular human entity; thus, there is a man, a "living organized Body" (2.27.8), and there is a soul, an "immaterial Substance" (2.27.16) which form part of the human subject from the moment of its inception. Though the *Essay* does not explicitly make any statement on gender in this context, one is left to assume that the man, being a principally corporal element, possesses a particular sex. By contrast, sex specificity in the soul seems unlikely or at least irrelevant, not on account of its immaterial nature, but because, from a Lockean standpoint, "we have . . . no knowledge of its real essence" (Thiel 181) and, therefore, no way of knowing of its true relation to the sex of the man. The third aspect of this model of subjectivity (and the one that principally interests Locke), person, is only a possibility at the birth of the individual, and is constructed after that originary moment. Personhood thus

develops through the interaction of the evolving self with its environment; the medium that allows this exchange to occur is consciousness. For this reason, person must be seen as "a unity which is not first given and then known, but exists only by virtue of its being constituted by consciousness" (Thiel 184). As Locke does not at any point describe the person as a sexed entity, one must ask whether personal identity is a gendered identity at all. Certainly, as a result of its self-constituting nature, personality cannot commence with any a priori characteristic such as gender, but must be established as one becomes conscious of oneself. Yet, as the *man* seems to be a sexed entity, and as the *body* can be "united to the self by consciousness" (Thiel 187) - "the Limbs of his Body is to every one a part of *himself*" (*Essay* 2.27.11 and 18), it appears to be likely that a growing conscious awareness would include a perception of the body's sexual specificity. Furthermore, consciousness should allow the individual to perceive others' responses to bodily form, responses which, in any practical context, would vary depending on the sex of the subject. Thus, a sense of one's own gender could develop through the daily experience that is used by consciousness to construct the self. It becomes possible, consequently, to see gender as a kind of acquired behaviour (as personhood itself could be regarded) derived from a subject's environment, rather than a purely inherent attribute; this type of constructed identity might be regarded as "a temporal process

which operates through the reiteration of norms" (*Bodies That Matter* 10), gradually naturalizing an individual selfhood. While designating Locke as some sort of pioneering radical constructivist would be anachronistic and extreme, the general flexibility of his notion of personhood allows for the possibility of the disruption of any claims regarding the essential character of gender identity. The removal of the assumption of 'natural' differences of disposition between the sexes poses a significant threat to many traditional social norms, a consequence which may offer some explanation of why Locke remains silent about the relationship of gender to consciousness.

Yet, particularly in the early sections of the *Education*, the issue of gender and education reappears several times. Locke seems to feel constrained to note the - apparently obvious - differences between the educational possibilities of sons and of daughters. Likeness in the intellectual potential of the genders seemingly cannot be considered without reference to some characteristics that differentiate them. Notably, the basic similarity of the developmental pattern of the sexes is not simply remarked on once in section six; rather, the matter returns at the end of section nine where it is articulated in more detail. Thus elaborated upon, that which distinguishes the sexes comes to overshadow and to limit the implications of equally educable male and female subjects. In the first instance therefore,

the authorial voice simply declares that the distinctions in training appropriate for the two sexes are "no hard Matter" (117, §6) to discern, giving the reader a sense that any variations appropriate to the sexes can be considered comparatively trivial.

Nevertheless, two competing interests seem to lie behind this comment: both the desire to theorize mental development as not predetermined by sexual difference, and the opposing wish to retain some control over gender boundaries by at least implying the existence of some reliably observable, perhaps even naturally endowed, form of gender differentiation. Seeming, however, to feel that the issue requires yet more clarification, Locke goes somewhat further in section nine, recommending a routine of outdoor play for girls as well as for boys - with the caveat that "greater Regard be to be had to Beauty in the Daughters" (122, §9). As if unsettled by the possibility of a blurring of the limits of the genders, the authorial voice attempts to define once more the bounds of the female subject, trying to restrict the effect of the assumption of the similarity of the sexes' respective intellectual capacities by focussing attention on areas which provide seemingly natural or observable instances of gender difference. Thus, in the ninth section, a concern with future physical attractiveness distinguishes the educational regimen for girls while a prospective "Man of Business" (122, §9) need not concern himself about exposure "to the Sun and Wind, for

fear of his Complexion" (121, §9), unless he is so unfortunate as to be trained to become what the text sneeringly refers to as "a *Beau*" (122, §9). Here, the bodily reality of the female subject is used to draw her back into the economics of gender relations, reinscribing the girl, and her education, within the bounds of social expectations. Unlike the young man of business, who can afford a sunburn, the value of the young gentlewoman focuses on the unsullied nature of her corporal being; her business is her body.

This distraction in the focus of the text, rejecting the female subject's future mental state for her future physical state, presents a suggestive example of the potential conflict between theoretical model and social practice which threatens the stability of gender relations within the *Education*. The origin of this internal contention lies principally in the idea of educating a daughter like a son, a possibility which disrupts certain normative matrices of identity and sexual relations, challenging a patriarchal framework in which girls are expected to learn to function as exchangeable signifiers within a heterosexual economy of desire. Heteronormativity sustains this system by providing a stable collection of binary oppositions which defines individuals and renders them intelligible to society. As Judith Butler points out, essential to this concept of the formation of identity within patriarchal discourse is the assumption that gender "can denote a *unity* of experience, of sex, gender, and desire"

(*Gender Trouble* 22). Within this triad of signifiers, sex becomes naturalized as a necessary precursor to gender, which is understood as a "psychic and/or cultural designation of the self" (22), and to desire, which is designated as appropriate only when heterosexual. However, not only is this causal relation assumed, but also a reciprocal connection between gender and desire, wherein one mirrors or articulates the other (22); thus, a particular gender, defined by an individual's sex, invokes a particular kind of desire and vice versa - no other possibility is intelligible within the logic of this system. The identity of any person, male or female, rests upon the maintenance of "a stable and oppositional heterosexuality" (22). One might say, for instance, that a female subject is a woman only to the extent that she reiterates the socially intelligible gestures which make her not a man; the reverse formula holds for a male subject. In order for an individual to remain a valid subject, the bounds which circumscribe the two accepted genders must continue to be enforced by a cultural practice which produces and naturalizes an "institutional heterosexuality" (22) within a "binary gender system" (22). Organized along the limits of gender, all permissible subjectivities constitute themselves through a series of 'natural' dyadic relations at the centre of which is the differentiation of the term designated masculine from the term designated feminine (23); gender in this case appears to be an ontological state, rather than an

effect of a set of naturalized assumptions which consolidate heterosexual hegemony (32-3).

Butler's theory provides a helpful framework for considering the uneasy position of the female subject in Locke's texts. Using her analysis of the construction of identity in male-dominated social structures, the full extent of the consequences of the *Education's* initial position on the similarity of the educability of the genders becomes apparent: perhaps the most obvious effect of the idea is the potential for the complete denaturalization of the concept of gender. Specifically, if gender in a traditionally patriarchal society is constituted by a series of binary oppositions which are regarded as separating feminine from masculine, then any breach of these divisions undermines the validity of the entire set. By downplaying any possibility of difference in the educational methods necessary for raising boys and girls, Locke's theory implicitly questions the intrinsic need, or naturalness, of separating individuals into two groups based on their sex. Gender, rather than representing an incontestable originary state, thus begins to have the appearance of a learned phenomenon; or, to borrow a phrase from Butler, a "sedimented effect of a reiterative . . . practice" (*Bodies That Matter* 10). That this disruption of social norms finds expression through a critique of conventional beliefs about upbringing makes it even more threatening, however, for education is inextricably connected

to the formation of the subject. Thus, a theory which holds at its centre an assumption which threatens to dissolve gender difference - a founding principle of heteronormative society - is presented as a means of shaping subjects who will continue that society. Instability of gender identity is, therefore, established within the Lockean subject, and, by extension, within the culture which that individual inhabits, from its inception.

The political consequence of the privileging of heterosexual desire by patriarchal discourse can be seen in the establishment of a heteronormative matrix that marginalizes certain types of individuals while empowering others. A notable example of the effect of this mode of discursive power is the institution of an order that regards women as "objects of exchange" (*Gender Trouble* 38) within a socio-economic system which reinforces the primacy of the masculine. Thus, the gendered binary opposition also represents a pair of terms in which the female is considered dependent on the male for identity, unable even to choose the authority to which she is subordinated. A woman who usurps a masculine prerogative, such as education, not only undermines any social system that relies on the clear differentiation of gender in order to sustain itself, but also dissolves the hierarchical ordering of the gender categories themselves. Though supposedly a 'naturally' inferior creature, she nevertheless demonstrates herself capable of penetrating a

sphere to which she does not belong, and of possessing the potential for self-determination which is the result of that act. This situation proves problematic for a social economy that depends on the objectification of the female body as a form of commodity, one which lacks any genuine personal identity save that which it receives from its possessor. Hence, Locke's omission of the issue of gender in the *Essay* becomes more intelligible: asserting the possibility that a Person could also be a woman compels the recognition of that individual's existence as a rational, conscious being who can ultimately construct her own independent sense of self. The role of female as marketable commodity does not agree well with this contention, creating a paradox which Locke leaves shrouded in silence.

In the *Education*, however, the issue of gender becomes more difficult, for, in this work, Locke's theory comes squarely up against social practice. His inclusion of girls as almost equal partners within his educational program offers the possibility of the disruption of the sexual hierarchy, and of the collapse of a clear causal relationship between sex, gender, and desire. While the *Essay* simply silences questions concerning gender, the *Education* must find another approach; thus, in contrast to the former, this work spends its early sections returning to the notion of educating girls, attempting to define exactly the limits of this disturbing idea. In the end, it is through the determined re-embodiment

of the female person as woman that Locke stems the flow of disruptive possibilities. Noting the necessity that "greater Regard be to be had to Beauty in the Daughters" (*Education* 122, §9), he manages to turn the focus of the text from the development of the girl's character to the care for the future function of her body. This reference to the importance of female appearance serves to remind the reader that the role for which a woman was trained depended almost exclusively on the management, and manipulation, of the physical. It is as an object, the body displayed to its greatest advantage, that the young woman is expected inspire male desire, encouraging hopes of possession by functioning as a valuable artifact without personal identity. The only person of significance in the situation is the "Man of Business" (122, §9) who purchases the commodity he pleases. Therefore, Locke's educational theory falters when confronted by the issue of the educable female subject; the threat posed by this blurring of gender boundaries is, however, suppressed through a renewed focus on the traditional role of the embodied female subject, rather than on the female subject as person.

Locke's gender vexations do not end at this point in the *Education*. Though a number of his central developmental metaphors do not favour either gender - for instance, the notion that the young pupil's mind is "white Paper, or Wax, to be moulded . . . as one pleases" (325, §216), or the image of the student as a "Seed-Plat" that, well-weeded by the tutor,

produces "Fruits . . . in its season" (184, §85; cited in Ezell, 149 and 151) - in at least one significant instance gendered imagery does occur. Indeed, by the eleventh section of the work, even his imagery has been affected by the text's ambivalent position concerning female subjectivity. Once again allowing the movement of the ideas in the text to follow a rather associative strain, Locke opens this part of his work with the casual, almost absent-minded remark about "One thing the Mention of the Girls brings into my Mind" (123, §11) before admonishing the reader to ensure that "your Son's Cloths be never made strait" (123, §11). Notably, no mention of "the Girls" has been made in the previous section at all, yet they clearly remain an unavoidable area of concern, prompting a disorderly series of responses at unexpected moments. The matter of girls itself does not reappear, but the gendering of Locke's images offers an instructive parallel commentary on the text's ambivalence about the issue. Thus, discussing restrictive clothing for children, the authorial voice instructs the audience to

Let Nature have Scope to fashion the Body as *she* thinks best. *She* works of her self a great deal better and exacter, than we can direct *her* . . . and [we] should be afraid to put Nature out of *her* way in fashioning the Parts (123, §11 - emphasis added).

He continues, nevertheless, by remarking authoritatively that

if Women were themselves to frame the Bodies of their Children in their Wombs, as they often endeavour to mend their Shapes . . . we should as certainly have no perfect Children born . . . This Consideration should methinks keep busie People (I will not say ignorant Nurses and Bodice-makers) from meddling in a Matter they understand not . . . (123, §11)

The feminine has an odd, paradoxical role in these two passages. In what seems rather like a strange twist on the angel-whore dichotomy, the female first functions as the personification of Nature: a benevolent, health-bestowing, creator figure; then, within lines of this image, the female is humanized into a sinister caregiver: an ignorant, harmful, and destructive presence. At this point in the text then, the feminine principle has ceased to be in any way individuated, acting instead only as a symbolic entity rather than as a realizable subject.

The issue of gender, therefore, represents a significant aspect of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. However, the matter remains sublimated, for Locke's primarily articulated concern in the work is the disciplining of the developing subject in order that the pupil may gain self-control. As the text summarizes,

To make a good, a wise, and a vertuous Man, 'tis fit he should learn to cross his Appetite, and deny his Inclination . . . when ever his Reason advises the contrary, and his Duty requires it (151, §52).

The young man becomes a self-governing individual, who is then able to govern others. This method of training reminds one of Foucault's dictum that "[d]iscipline 'makes' individuals" (*Discipline and Punish*, 170). Further, Locke's notion of the pupil learning, "under the Eye and Direction of the Tutor" (159, §66), to assume the role of "an ordinary Gentleman" (325, § 216), seems a utilitarian anticipation of the Foucauldian formulation that discipline "is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (170). For the *Education*, however, the acquisition of self-discipline also has a protective quality. In order to become "an Useful and Able Man" (166, §70), the student must be "fortified with Resolution . . . to secure his Vertue" (166, §70) against "the contagion of Rudeness and Vice, which is so every where in fashion" (165, §70). Without being thus sheltered, both literally and psychologically according to Locke, in the early years, the young man will be susceptible of falling "into some ruinous course" (166, §70) before he is "sufficiently acquainted with the Dangers of Conversation, and has Steadiness enough not to yield to every Temptation" (167, §70). The individual's learning and self-control must function as a protection from the perils of the world once the child has departed the safe confines of the paternal house and left the care of the tutor's disciplinary observation.

Once again, however, Locke's theory founders on the

issue of gender. As Barbara Whittum Schroeder observes, the *Education's* chief "aim . . . is to produce subjects who can govern themselves and others" (2). It is this latter objective which eliminates women, and many men, from a Lockean subjectivity. As females were excluded from the political and the civil spheres of influence, the reasons for raising them to act as, and consider themselves as, independent, self-governing individuals are few. One might argue that Locke believed that educated women would be better mothers, an assertion which finds only slender support within the text. He seems, rather, to have had strong doubts about female influence in a child's upbringing, consistently warning

. . . the Women to consider, viz. That most Children's Constitutions are either spoiled, or at least harmed, by *Cockering and Tenderness*. (116, §4)

Human femininity, and especially all that is maternal, consistently represents the cause of "Indispositions, and . . . a tender weakly Constitution" (133, §22) which undermine natural strength of the body (124; §12); it seems, at times, that the only safe mother is a suitably silent mother nature. The influence of women on the young child is thus portrayed as possibly harmful, even fatal. In the end, whether as caregiver, or as student, the female subject presents difficulties for Locke's theory of education. She functions

as an unruly figure within his system, potentially disruptive of his methods and occupying an ambiguous position as a self-governing person. The educable female subject problematizes the disciplinary agenda of the *Education*, presenting an undisciplined figure in an ordered social landscape, the dangerous supplement to a paradigmatic text.

CHAPTER TWO

More Thoughts Concerning Subjectivity; or, Problematic Montagu: the Education Letters, Subjectivation, and Resistance

To turn from the work of John Locke to the writing of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu compels a shift in perspective; from the authoritative, the canonical, and the unconstrainedly public, one moves instead into the sphere of the intellectually marginalized, the unaccepted, and the necessarily private. For the author of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* enjoyed a "respectability and authority" (Ezell 155) accorded to few other educational thinkers of the period, becoming "one of the most important influences in changing attitudes toward . . . child-rearing practices in the eighteenth century" (155). Montagu, on the other hand, wrote her letters on the education of girls only for the benefit of a small family circle³ - indeed, principally her daughter - who not infrequently ignored, or openly disagreed with, her advice (3 June 1753; 3:31).⁴

Though an aristocrat in her own right, and married to a

³ Locke's *Education*, of course, also began as a series of personal letters. For Montagu, however, publication of her work was not possible because of her status and gender.

⁴ All letter dates given are in New Style (used on the Continent throughout the period, and in England after 1752), unless noted by the abbreviation O.S.

man who would become one of the wealthiest in England (*Montagu xvii*), Montagu held a position in society which Isobel Grundy has described as "anomalous" ("Books" 1) quite adequately epitomizes Montagu's position within her society. Willingly flouting convention, especially in later life (*Montagu 587*), she engaged in pastimes and meditated on ideas with an eagerness which manifests a progressiveness of thought that rivals many notable individuals of far greater formal education. Indeed, throughout her life, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu indulged privately in scholarly pursuits and literary repartee, though these occupations eventually brought her public derision (*Montagu 346*). Largely self-educated, she held strong views on the education of women, believing that gender should not limit an individual's possibilities for intellectual advancement. Certainly this view constitutes an anomaly; yet, by performing the multiple roles of wife, mother, author, scholar, foreign traveller, and first Western proponent of polio inoculation, she acquired a life experience that set her apart from most of her contemporaries, male and female alike. Indeed, by the time she took pen in hand in order to express her thoughts on the intellectual avenues that should be open to her granddaughters, she had lived as an expatriot for almost fifteen years, moving from one great city to another before settling for a time on a small estate in northern Italy (487). These peripatetic habits brought a wealth of varied social opportunities, from conversing over

dinner with the wife of a Grand Vizier (18 April 1717 O.S.; 1:347) to exchanging increasingly slanderous poetic barbs with Alexander Pope (*Montagu* 329-55), which allowed her an unusual amount of intellectual space to develop and to explore a wide range of thought, including ideas concerning the social constraints and the possibilities for personal achievement that affect women's lives.

Considering the substantial and diverse accomplishments of her life, however, it is necessary to recall that she writes in a voice which can hardly be considered representative of all, or even of a majority of, women's realities. Hers is a singular experience, and the modern notion of feminist sisterhood plays little role in it; of greater importance by far, for Montagu, is the need to write in a way that remains intelligible within her own social context, to sound rational (that most normative of terms) while challenging beliefs which most of her contemporaries found eminently rational. Thus, she treads a fine line, deploying the techniques of educated, masculine argumentation, but using these to undermine the foundations of the male-dominated system that established them. One of the instances in which she most clearly engages this matter appears in a number of her letters to her daughter, Lady Bute. Though in these pieces of writing Montagu attempts to understate the most radical aspects of her ideas about female education, apparently acceding to certain patriarchal notions of

femininity, she manages nevertheless to challenge and to subvert those beliefs which circumscribe women's educational possibilities.

In considering Montagu's ideas on the education of women, the question of her awareness of other works on the subject arises. More specifically, her familiarity with the dominant text on the upbringing of children, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, is a reasonable query. The evidence surrounding this matter remains largely circumstantial; however, it is worth noting the sheer popularity of Locke's work during the eighteenth century. While many of the earlier seventeenth-century educational theorists were consigned to comparative obscurity, Locke's "was an extremely popular book, going through more than a dozen editions before midcentury" (Ezell 147). Furthermore, many of his images and ideas on child development began to appear in the popular literature of the period, adapted, or perhaps coerced into, verse; two notable instances of Lockean thought appearing in poetic works are seen in James Thomson's *Spring* and Richard Blackmore's *Creation* (148). Thus, even had Montagu no direct experience of Locke's text, she almost certainly could not have avoided a general awareness of his principles of child-rearing. Spending her adolescence on her father's estate at Thoresby Park, moreover, also permitted her access to one of the great private libraries in the country. A record of its holdings, the *Catalogus Bibliothecae Kingstonianae*, which was printed

for the family early in the eighteenth century, lists 1200 manuscripts and thousands of books; Isobel Grundy notes that a contemporary visitor, Jean-Bernard Le Blanc, considered the library to be "a scholar's paradise" (*Montagu* 17 n. 15). A collection such as this one would no doubt have contained all of Locke's principal works. Indeed, as both Duke and philosopher had strong Whig sympathies, the likelihood of the latter's books finding an honoured place at Thoresby is even greater. As a girl, Montagu spent "five or six hours a day" ("Books" 3) delving into the paternal library. Later in her life, she possessed a respectable collection of her own which included texts by Locke.⁵ At some point in her reading life then, she most likely became acquainted with *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. That she might also have read the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* seems probable, a possibility that prompts one to wonder momentarily what her thoughts on the tripartite structure of the human subject, and its relation to the idea of woman, might have been. At any rate, it appears reasonable to conclude that as Montagu wrote to her daughter, articulating her opinions on her granddaughters' educations, she would have had at least some knowledge of the ideas of John Locke.

It is perhaps important to note, however, that modern critics have only very partial access either to Montagu's

⁵ Grundy gives no indication of exactly which of Locke's texts Montagu owned, and I had no access to the original document listing the books.

writing or to her readers' reactions to it. A substantial quantity of her letters, as well as numerous other items composed for her own entertainment, have simply disappeared over the last two and a half centuries. In the introduction to a selection of Montagu's remaining epistolary output, Isobel Grundy outlines a lamentable history of a personal literature which suffered both from loss and from wilful destruction. The surviving sample of her familiar writing offers only a partial illustration of aspects of her style and her developing ideas.⁶ The specifics of missing missives aside, it nonetheless remains important to acknowledge the limitations of the correspondence available to modern scholars. Of the many different epistolary voices which Montagu assumed through her life, only a selection is now left for critical examination, diminishing the possibility of a complete understanding of the evolution of her thinking on issues related to gender.

The issue of gender probably played some role in the loss of Montagu's correspondence. Unlike Locke, who was able

⁶ The loss of some of her correspondence with her daughter occurred as a result of the vagaries of overseas transport; many letters "were lost in the post, unread even by their intended recipients" ("Selected Letters" xvii). Another two hundred, mostly written to her husband concerning their errant son, were consigned to the flames by her eldest grandson because he deemed them "likely to provoke gossip and scandal" (xvii). Her diary, what one might call a lifetime's worth of letters to oneself, met the same with fate. Of particular note in terms of loss is the complete absence of examples of her correspondence with many of her male friends, or with another of the literary women of the era, Mary Astell (xix). This latter recipient might well have prompted a considerable exchange on the topic of an educational program for women, a dialogue which would elucidate and offer an earlier context for the existing letters on the subject.

to gather his various letters to Edward Clarke together into a published work, such an opportunity was much less likely for a woman. Though she, "secretly wangling herself into print" (*Montagu* xix), did see a few poems published, her social status largely removed her from the commercial realm of writing for profit. She belonged, "by rank and practice, to an older world which published without printing" (200). Though she did keep copies of the letters written during her sojourn in Turkey, revising them throughout her life, even these were not printed until after her death (xx). The remainder, perceived as having no significance beyond the immediate, were left to their fate, perhaps treated in the long term more harshly because of the gender of their author (*Selected Letters* xvii); even posthumously, the concern for female reputation remained, muting the authorial voice that had spoken forth so firmly. Certainly, the history of the publication of Montagu's letters seems to have influenced the critical response to them. Though Robert Halsband edited *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* over thirty years ago, the only aspect of her correspondence to have received substantial critical treatment has been the *Turkish Embassy Letters*, the one area of her writing that had been widely recognized before the publication of her other works. Montagu's comments on women's education, though obviously unconventional for the period, have received remarkably little

critical attention, still less detailed analysis.

Some academic discussion of this matter has appeared in the work of a number of feminist historians of female learning. Phyllis Stock makes only slight mention of Montagu, noting her complaint to Lady Bute that women "are educated in the grossest ignorance, and no art omitted to stifle our natural reason . . ." (cited in Stock 101),⁷ while alluding to the broad range of subjects which the letter writer had earlier recommended for her granddaughters' study (28 January 1753; 3:20-4). Notably, Stock's text does not point out that the passage from which the first citation is drawn immediately follows one in which Montagu offers a firm endorsement of the patriarchal status quo. Specifically, Montagu states that she does "not complain of men for haveing engross'd the Government" (10 October 1753; 3:40), claiming instead that men, "[i]n excluding us from all degrees of power . . . preserve us from many Fatigues, many Dangers, and perhaps many Crimes" (3:40). She concludes the paragraph by avowing that she is "therefore very well satisfy'd with the state of Subjection we are placed in" (3:40). While these comments may voice a certain amount of aristocratic disdain for coarse labour, the sentiments nevertheless appear extraordinary, particularly counterposed with her denunciation of the

⁷ Stock actually misquotes the passage slightly, offers no specific information on her source material (either exact date or genre), and mistakes the year of composition - the letter was written to Lady Bute on the 10 October 1753. With this sort of scholarly precision, Montagu's work was perhaps safer left in obscurity.

stifling of women's "natural reason" in the subsequent paragraph. Even more notably, the entire sequence of thought on women's education opens with an anecdote remarking that:

the character of a learned Woman is far from being ridiculous in this Country [Italy], the greatest Familys being proud of having produc'd female Writers, and a Milanese Lady being now proffessor of Mathematics in the University of Bologna

To say Truth, there is no part of the World where our Sex is treated with so much contempt as in England. (3:39-40)

The remarks concerning the benefits of men assuming exclusive political power fall rather unexpectedly in between the narrative recounted above and the comment on the "grossest ignorance" of Englishwomen's educations; the odd switch from learning to politics disrupts the overall flow of the letter, leaving the reader to construct a clear connection for herself. This seeming awkwardness in logic receives no acknowledgement or commentary by Stock, who apparently regards Montagu merely as an unproblematic early bluestocking (102). Isobel Grundy, too, in her impressive new biography, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, also overlooks the surprising juxtaposition of Montagu's ideas, choosing instead to concentrate on the letter's "vehemently expounded" (517) protest against "England's exorbitant contempt" (517) for women. Reading the preference for subjection as a virtue, Grundy suggests that Montagu grants the right of public power to men in order to "imply[]" that women are not so power-hungry or sadistic as to

seek it" (517). Thus, the acceptance of female subjection becomes entirely a rhetorical device, employed merely as a stylistic manoeuver, but not representative of any contradiction in Montagu's thought. In this somewhat triumphalist interpretation, Grundy concludes that the letter presents a strong argument for the recognition of women in the public sphere, adding that "[t]his is not the tone of someone reconciled to a place in the shadows" (517). Yet the transition from the letter's protest against the wilful disempowerment of the female intellect in English society to its declaration of the satisfactory condition of women's subjection requires some consideration. Why does Montagu begin a paragraph condemning her culture's contempt for women, but end the section with an explicit endorsement of its subjection of them? And why does she abruptly shift the focus of her discourse from learned ladies to men's exclusive right to governmental power?

As in Locke's *Education*, the issue of gender, and the maintenance of proper gender roles, seems to provoke a certain amount of concern for Montagu. Fissures in the fabric of her text appear as she begins to destabilize the notion of exclusive acceptable social positions for men and for women, compelling her to attempt to limit the consequences of her ideas by arbitrarily circumscribing their scope. A dissolution of traditional binary oppositions that sustain the patriarchal hierarchy is initiated in this letter by Montagu's

complaint of the "highest Injustice" (10 October 1753; 3:40) of the notion that "the same Studies which raise the character of a Man should hurt that of a Woman" (3:40). By suggesting that like practices should have like effects on the characters of men and of women, the letter thus makes the claim that the sexes share at least one aspect of intellectual development; rather than defining each other by a series of opposed behaviours, the gender of individuals cannot be defined by their interest in study. Learning, in Montagu's scheme, crosses the socially prescribed boundary between men and women, equally open to both. The possibilities which arise from this assertion, of course, represent a significant threat to patriarchal culture. If learning does not differentiate the sexes, then other formerly gender-specific activities are also cast into doubt. In the letter, the potential political consequences of the breakdown of the sexual hierarchy underlie the oddly reactionary passage concerning female subjection, as Montagu works to mute the more radical effects of her assertion of the intellectual equality of the sexes.

The section of the letter that raises these disruptive ideas begins innocently enough, however, with Montagu constructing a brief narrative concerning the esteem that upper-class Italian culture accords to learned women. She writes:

. . . the character of a learned Woman is far from

being ridiculous in this Country, the greatest Familys being proud of having produce'd female Writers, and a Milanese Lady being now professor of Mathematics in the university of Bologna, invited thither by a most obliging Letter wrote by the present Pope, who desir'd her to accept of the Chair not as a recompense for her merit, but to do Honor to a Town which is under his protection. (10 October 1753; 3:39)

She creates an idealized vision of this society, in which academic females are viewed as ornaments of even "the greatest Familys" and "do Honor to a Town" by residing in it . The agenda that impels this description seems clear enough, but, as the authorial voice puts the previously unmentioned comparison between England and Italy into words, the prose suddenly changes course:

I do not complain of men for haveing engross'd the Government. In excluding us from all degrees of power, they preserve us from many Fatigues, many Dangers . . . The small proportion of Authority that has fallen to my share (only over a few children and Servants) has allwaies been a Burden and never a pleasure, and I believe every one finds it so who acts from a Maxim (I think an indispensable Duty) that whoever is under my power is under my protection. Those who find a joy in inflicting hardships and seeing objects of misery may have other sensations . . . (3:40)

Here, Montagu adopts a more conciliatory tone, using the shift in direction as an opportunity to indicate that she acknowledges the existence of clear bounds which limit the concept of the learned woman: thus, female educational

attainments do not threaten men's political hegemony, for the male prerogative of government preserves women's happiness, and even, perhaps, their health. The desire for power has never influenced her actions; rather, she prefers to avoid the burden of command. The process of thought which underpins the paragraph follows a series of logical conclusions derived from her own experience: authority is a burden; burden brings unhappiness; this unhappiness is inescapable because the burden constitutes a duty to others that is indispensable; therefore, it is preferable to avoid authority altogether. This conclusion circles back to the beginning of the argument, shifting all desire for power to men, who, presumably, find some pleasure in authority. It may be useful to recall at this point that the Lockean definition of the self includes the notion that the human being not only is a "conscious thinking thing" (*Essay* 2.27.17), but also is "capable of Happiness or Misery, and so is concern'd for it *self*" (2.27.341); that is, as a rational individual, the person seeks to avoid pain and to seek pleasure in life. Montagu, thus, claiming empirical investigation, establishes that authority does not embody a rational pursuit for her because possessing it would bring unhappiness. Oddly, the entire passage appears to be a type of appeal to nature, or at least, to the "natural reason" (3:40) which Montagu subsequently claims is stifled in most Englishwomen by their gender-limited education. By invoking the supposed naturalness of her

preference for subjection, she claims a certain authority for herself, implying that her sensibilities and ideas are not mere idiosyncrasy, but receive the sanction of a divinely-ordered creation. This rhetorical strategy also attempts to limit the disruptive effect inaugurated by the notion of learned women who also have a place in the public sphere; her rejection of political power implies, in essence, that there is a certain, natural limit to equality between the sexes. Notably, in this instance, she takes care to construct itself as more broadly representative than merely of the single, first-person subject. Rather, Montagu here speaks as a paradigmatic woman, including her female reader in the "us" who is excluded "from all degrees of power" (3:40). She, therefore, establishes political power as constitutive of gender difference, implying that the naturally reasonable, content, female subject eschews dominion over others, even as the male subject seeks that authority. The sexes' opposite inclinations are portrayed as complementary.

Montagu consistently constructs herself as a rational figure, a self-depiction that is exemplified by her effort to explain her disinterest in power as a logical consequence of the burdensome responsibilities of caring for others. One purpose of this portrayal of herself as a figure of reason is to reassure her audience, to demonstrate to her daughter and to her granddaughters that her ideas do not represent merely an irrational harangue that attacks the fundamental gender

assumptions which structure their society. Convincing her readers that she presents a sensible, and unthreatening, suggestion about women's educational possibilities is necessary in order for her thoughts even to seem intelligible within her cultural context. For this reason, the authorial voice in the letter attempts to control fully the potential impact of her conviction that engagement with academic studies should not differentiate the genders. In order to limit the disruptive possibilities entailed by this assertion, Montagu launches a kind of pre-emptive rhetorical strike, hastening to distance her notion of educational parity from any implication of the political equality of the sexes even before developing her own argument completely. Thus, one sees a disjunction in the flow of thought in her letter, as she shifts, midway through her protest against English "contempt" (3:40) for learned women, to acknowledging the appropriate "state of Subjection" (3:40) of her sex. Seemingly anxious about the reception of her comparison between Italian and English practices, she attempts to present herself as asking only for a relatively minor change to a cultural norm, only for the positive regard of "the Entertainment of my Closet" (3:40), a phrase which clearly downplays the significance of the activity. Yet, in her desire to present a reasoned defence of male political authority, while maintaining a more gender neutral attitude to education, Montagu overstates her case. When citing her own, relatively trivial instances of control

over others, she so determinedly denies any wish to have authority that she ends up claiming that even "a few children and Servants" constituted an unhappy burden for her. This contention has the unfortunate effect of positioning her not within the bounds of socially acceptable female behaviour, but even further outside the norm; thus, her rhetorical strategy has caused her to disavow that most feminine of spheres, the domestic. By overcompensating for her disruption of one oppositional gender practice, Montagu, in spite of her efforts to the contrary, destabilizes another instance of sexual differentiation, rendering herself not a figure of reason, but a woman with a culturally suspect desire for solitude.

The letter of 10 October 1753 offers some indication of the tense relationship between gender roles and women's education that appears in Montagu's writing. For her, naturally, the upbringing of female children was not simply a theoretical problem; she had a vested interest not only in the rearing of her own family, but as an object of gender discrimination herself. [Thus, she writes for the sake of her female family members as well as for her own sake. Yet, as a woman, writing and reasoned argumentation, the products of education, constitute an unusual, and even somewhat inappropriate, mode of expression for her. Each time she seeks to argue against the practice of denying women access to areas of knowledge traditionally reserved for men, therefore, she risks being regarded by the culture as a bizarre figure,

neither female nor male. Her society constructs femininity in such a manner as to render her protests unintelligible in terms of gender. As gender functions as a founding principle of heteronormative patriarchal society, Montagu's difficulty lies with her attempt to act outside the bounds of her culture, while remaining an intelligible subject within her culture. In her discussion of subjectivity in *The Psychic Life of Power*, Judith Butler considers the difficulties faced by a subject who seeks to offer resistance to the social and linguistic forces which shape it. Noting that the terms "individual" and "subject" are frequently considered as synonymous (10), Butler argues against this conflation of meaning, suggesting instead that the individual cannot be rendered intelligible - either in language or in society - until he or she has undergone the process of "subjectivation" (11). To become a subject allows one to enter into the "linguistic condition of [the individual's] existence and agency" (11). Yet at the same time, Butler points out, the inauguration of subjecthood also involves a subordination to an external power which delineates and produces subjectivity. This authority exists outside the individual, acting upon, and indeed enacting, the subject; thus, "one is dependent on power for one's very formation" (9). In order to come into being, the individual must be subordinated to the bounds and to the normative expectations imposed by culture. Subjugation to these "social categories guarantee[s] a recognizable and

enduring social existence" (20). The enforced adoption of "norms" (19) articulates the individual in a manner intelligible to others, indicating that subjection "consists precisely in "[a] fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose" (2), but which is necessary for existence.

Yet, for Butler, the individual does not remain simply a passive construction of power external to itself. Rather, once formed, the subject acquires its own agency and becomes able to wield power for its own purposes. In this way, power exerted on an individual enacts the possibility for that individual to exert power (11). The subject is therefore a site of ambivalence which "emerges both as the *effect* of a prior power and as the *condition* . . . for a radically conditioned form of agency" (14-15). This process, in which power initiates an agent subordinate to itself, would seem to indicate that subjectivity can only ever reiterate the forces which gave it shape, establishing a vicious circle in which the "agency of the subject appears to be an effect of its subordination" (12). Resistance to the forces which instantiate subjecthood thus appears impossible as any attempt to achieve empowerment simply represents a reinstatement of the dependency which first created the appearance of the individual's authority. However, a discontinuity can emerge between the power that is presupposed in the establishment of a subject and the power that is invoked by the subject. This slippage occurs because the "power that initiates the subject

fails to remain continuous with . . . the subject's agency" (12); that is, the lapse in time between subjectification and the rearticulation of authority by the individual permits the nature of power to be modified. As Butler notes, the assumption of control can be a complicated process in which the power adopted may be changed from, or even opposed to, its original state. Thus, from the act of appropriation may arise "an alteration . . . such that the power assumed . . . works against the power that made that assumption possible" (12).

Herein exists the opportunity for personal resistance: in the ambivalence of the subject's agency, it "exceeds the logic of non-contradiction" (17) by being simultaneously delimited by and expressive of power. This exceeding does not imply a complete freedom from the bounds which shaped the subject; rather, the individual can move beyond these limits only in a manner already conditioned by power. Thus, the subject "exceeds precisely that to which it is bound" (17), a circumstance which opens the way for opposition to the normative modes of behaviour imposed by society, while at the same time strictly limiting the extent of deviation from accepted practice.

This model of subjectivity raises some interesting issues concerning Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters on education, particularly the ones dated 28 January 1753 and 6 March 1753. As the informal epistolary style offers a particularly intimate representation of a single subject,

these writings provide a unique glimpse of the author's struggle with her own culture's constructions of femininity. Montagu's conception of the importance of education for women compels her to confront questions concerning gender and learning in a manner which problematizes conventional notions, yet her sense of audience constrains her ideas within certain socially acceptable bounds. Indeed, as Cynthia Lowenthal points out in *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter*, Lord Bute and his wife provide an "unsympathetic audience" (198) who can be easily "scandalized" (192) by the older woman's remarks; thus, the letters present a delicate balance between Montagu's desire to promote her own belief in the emancipation of the female mind and her desire not to alienate her readers so greatly that they refuse absolutely to enter into discourse with her ideas. In this way, the voice of the letters functions as a radically conditioned form of agency in which Montagu as subject remains at least in part subordinated to the expectations of her society.

The earlier of the two letters, for instance, advances a broad curriculum of study for the daughters of the Butes, including Latin, Greek, and English poetry (28 January 1753; 3:21-2); yet Montagu then instructs that the girl should "conceal whatever Learning she attains" (3:22) in order to avoid "that Fame which Men have engross'd to themselves" (3:22). While Lowenthal quite reasonably points out that this

comment allows Montagu to show that "learning itself is the valuable commodity" (198) which can provide her granddaughter with "extensive" amusement (28 January 1753; 3:21) and with a habit of life that "acknowledges the status quo without surrendering to its oppression" (Lowenthal 198), one must still note that Montagu seems willing to operate within a system which frowns on women who seek public acclaim. Furthermore, at the end of the paragraph she suddenly makes reference to her own life, stating that she herself never sought "any Reputation" (3:23), but "allwaies carefully avoided it, and ever thought it a misfortune" (3:23). This abrupt switch from a detached, instructive voice to a reflexive, even defensive, tone suggests that Montagu feels some anxiety about her role as an educated woman. Seeking to maintain authority, she upholds certain conventions of appropriate female behaviour, obliging her to align herself to some extent with convention. In this way, she gives way to certain societal pressures in order to preserve her status as a respectable, socially intelligible subject.

The issue of voice becomes still more complex, however. Indeed, the overall tone and style which Montagu chooses for her principal letters on education suggests both a subversion of patriarchal structures and an inescapable containment within them. Cynthia Lowenthal notes that these two pieces of writing resemble "essays in the mode of the *Spectator*" (190), adding that this form was the "most conducive to persuading"

(190) readers to her point of view. Furthermore, Montagu "concentrates on logic as her primary rhetorical strategy" (192), a tactic intended to gain the attention and respect of her son-in-law - a "man allowed a university education" (192) and the person who would have ultimate control over his daughters' education. Thus, for Montagu's aims to be realized, she must address Lord Bute in a manner he will acknowledge as reasonable; she must assume a masculine voice in order to speak to a male reader. Though this appropriation of genre/gender is certainly subversive, calling to attention by means of her own accomplishment the possibility that "Nature has not plac'd us [women] in an inferior Rank to Men" (6 March 1753; 3:27), an assertion which again raises the threat of the dissolution of gender norms, this disruption of cultural expectations cannot be viewed as a purely liberatory gesture. Rather, the subject articulating these letters must be regarded as a site of ambivalent response, for Montagu cannot simply choose to write in an expository mode. An element of necessity - one might even claim social coercion - exists which threatens to reject her claims of authority unless she speaks in a voice deemed suitable. After all, one might say that, in the eyes of her male reader at least, it is only her appropriately rational style which separates her from "the character of Lady -, or Lady -, or Mrs-" (28 January 1753; 3:23) who "are ridiculous, not because they have Learning but because they have it not" (3:23). Though a self-

educated woman (Rogers 93), Montagu is obliged to adopt the discourse of the dominant power; she may wish to set the educational agenda for her granddaughters, but she must speak to the man in charge on his own terms.

The use of masculine discourse, however, does not represent Montagu's only borrowing from the canon of male writing. Rather, one of her principal images of the development of the human intellect echoes the Lockean visualization of the growing child's mind as a garden which requires constant husbanding. Margaret Ezell observes that horticultural metaphors constitute the "most frequent images" (151) in *Some Thoughts Concerning Understanding*, used to figure "benign parental direction, specifically 'cultivation'" (151). For Locke, the image of the garden emphasizes the way in which bad habits can become entrenched in a child's character if the parent or tutor does not remain constantly vigilant. While this conception assumes that there exists the possibility for vice in any maturing intellect, this model regards the situation optimistically, believing that any vicious traits can be eliminated, providing that they are monitored by caregiver and struggled against from an early stage. The gardening motif appears in its fullest articulation at the conclusion of the eighty-fourth section of the *Education*. Speaking at this point of methods of punishment, Locke encourages his readers to observe their children carefully, correcting them with gentle means any time

vicious inclinations arise:

Thus one by one, as they appear'd, they might all be weeded out, without any Signs or Memory that ever they had been there. But we letting their Faults (by Indulging and Humouring our little Ones) grow up, till they are Sturdy and Numerous, and the Deformity of them makes us asham'd and uneasie, we are fain to come to the Plough and the Harrow, the Spade and the Pick-ax, must go deep to come at the Roots; and all the Force, Skill, and Diligence is scarce enough to cleanse the vitiated Seed-Plat overgrown with Weeds, and restore us the hopes of Fruits, to reward our pains in its season. (184, §84)

Interestingly, Locke does not gender this extended image; the garden could represent the mind of a boy or of a girl. In either case, the implication is that the cultivation of the mind is a natural process which requires the tending of a diligent monitor in order that the mature student may "reward our pains in its season." In other words, proper education necessitates the unremitting gaze of the disciplinary eye until the child has attained the self-discipline of an adult; an ill result, pictured as a kind of "Deformity," is as much the fault of the caregiver as of the youth. However, if the student's maturation is successfully fostered, then the family can look forward to "the hopes of Fruits" as the child becomes a respectable member of the community, and, more literally, dutifully ensures the prospect of another harvest.

Montagu's vision of the developing mind as a garden, by contrast, does not have the same cyclical movement to it. The

point of the horticultural metaphor in her letter is not to secure familial continuance; rather, the act of maintaining the garden becomes a life project for the individual. Thus, for Locke, the cultivation of the mind has a social purpose; whereas, for Montagu, it is a much more private task. She proposes academic pursuits for single women, as a means to cope with social isolation:

Whoever will cultivate their own mind will find full employment. Every virtue does not only require great care in the planting, but as much daily solicitude in cherishing as exotic fruits and flowers; the Vices and passions (which I am afraid are the natural product of the soil) demand perpetual weeding. Add to this the search after knowledge (every branch of which is entertaining), and the longest Life is too short for the pursuit of it . . . (6 March 1753; 3:25)

The ideas which this passage shares with Locke's are apparent. Of greater interest is the adjustments that Montagu makes in appropriating the metaphor. Though the *Education* does not specify the gender of the "Seed-Plat," the overall project of the text primarily remains the upbringing of the young gentleman; hence, by implication, the garden represents the male mind. Montagu, however, begins her letter by offering a "proposal of a learned Education for Daughters" (3:25), thus gendering her image of intellectual cultivation as undeniably female. This simple change in emphasis brings substantial theoretical consequences, for the naturalness that had been accorded to the idea of male education now is appropriated for

the notion of girls' scholarly achievement; in this rhetorical gesture, learned women become as natural a concept as learned men. Therefore, while Locke's use of the horticultural metaphor to represent his educational theory upholds traditional social patterns, reinscribing conventional patriarchal gender roles through succeeding generations, Montagu subverts this agenda, adjusting the garden image in order to dissolve one of the binary oppositions that delimits the sexual bounds of her society. Rather than a means to an end, education represents for this paradigm a lifetime activity, a pursuit that rewards the scholar with an ongoing, solitary diversion, which does not inscribe her within the demands of a male-dominated, heteronormative community.

Once again, Montagu destabilizes the notion of education as a necessary constituent of gender; learning here functions no longer as a prerogative of men, but evidences instead a character, regardless of sex, of intellectual refinement "which is utterly impossible for those that are blinded by prejudice" (3:25). She is not, however, able to disregard the strictures of her culture entirely. Though she may articulate the certainty that female education is no less natural than that regularly accorded to men, she is nonetheless compelled to acknowledge the marginal position of the learned woman, a figure whom normative society ostracizes because she disrupts social patterns, functioning as an ambivalent entity within a

system of determinate identities.⁸ Thus, for Montagu, not only is the pursuit of knowledge a solitary one, but, in further contrast to Locke's horticultural model of a child's upbringing, the one who tends the garden in Montagu's paradigm is the student herself; the girl doubles as the gardener. The lack of any mention of a tutor, or indeed of a caregiver of any sort, underlines the isolation that Montagu foresees as the fate of the female scholar. A daughter must educate herself because her parents see no need to do so, even perhaps disapproving of the idea, regarding it "as great a prophanation as the Clergy would do if the Laity should presume to exercise the functions of the priesthood" (3:25). The religious imagery here offers a particularly telling example of the anxiety that the culturally ambivalent figure of the educated female produces. With this single image, the learned woman is figured as truly transgressive, one who invades the bounds of a patriarchal institution that seeks to maintain male hegemony by monopolizing certain types of knowledge and ritual practice. By imagining education as a sacred precinct, Montagu acknowledges the substantial cultural investment that exists in the concept of the gendered education of the subject, illustrating by means of this comparison the potential intensity of the social rejection the educated woman faces. Therefore, the authorial voice in the

⁸ On a biographical note, Montagu herself embraced the solitude of the learned woman during her residence in northern Italy (*Montagu*, 477ff).

letters succeeds in destabilizing the conception of learning as an exclusively male pastime, but Montagu is unable to discover a way of integrating the education of daughters into mainstream society; rather, learning for girls remains a solitary, almost criminal, act.

The consequence of the enforced solitude of female education is the absence of a tutor, or any other monitor of the girl's intellectual development. Whereas in Locke's theory, the care-giver is expected to act as a positive role-model for the child, and to provide an external source of discipline until the youth has developed a suitable degree of self-control, in Montagu's model, the female student receives no such assistance. Indeed, the benign vision of parental authority that one sees in the *Education* is replaced by a much less positive sense of the family's role in a girl's education. Much of the time, Montagu suggests, parents do more harm than good, sacrificing the appropriate growth of their daughter's mind in order to fit her for a social position which suits their ambition or vanity:

It is the common Error of Builders and Parents to follow some Plan they think beautifull (and perhaps is so) without considering that nothing is beautifull that is misplac'd. Hence we see so many Edifices rais'd that the raisers can never inhabit, being too large for their Fortunes. Vistos are laid open over barren heaths, and apartments contriv'd for a coolness very agreable in Italy but killing in the North of Brittain. Thus every Woman endeavors to breed her Daughter a fine Lady,

qualifying her for a station in which she will
 never appear, and at the same time
 incapacitating her for that retirement to
 which she is destin'd.

(28 January 1753; 3:21)

The use of construction as a metaphor for child-rearing contrasts with the natural imagery that Montagu employed elsewhere. While in the *Education*, parental guidance is figured as a force that works with nature, encouraging the child's development as "in the Fountains of some Rivers, where a gentle Application of the Hand turns the flexible Waters into Channels . . . and by this little Direction . . . they receive different Tendencies" (114, §1), Montagu sees parents as frequently disregarding the dictates of nature, wasting or misusing their female children's potential while hindering their future happiness. Furthermore, her comparison of a girl's upbringing to the construction of a great manor also emphasizes the way in which daughters are raised to become objects, conditioned to be viewed and to be owned by men; thus, families train their female children to act as symbols of paternal wealth. These young women have no agency, but function merely as commodities which wait passively to be traded for familial profit. Retirement, on the other hand, removes the girl from this situation, permitting her an identity away from the male gaze. Thus, the image of building as a metaphor for the parentally supervised development of a girl's character, represents, for Montagu, a coercive force that constrains the young woman within the economy of

heteronormative society.

In a similar vein, Montagu suggests that those charged with the upbringing of a female child often impede the development of her reason by encouraging superstitious beliefs and other false ideas. She tells her daughter that many women

are blinded by prejudices, which are the certain effect of an ignorant Education. My own was one of the worst in the World, being exactly the same as Clarissa Harlow's, her pious Mrs. Norton so perfectly resembling my Governess . . . I could almost fancy the Author was acquainted with her. She took so much pains from my Infancy to fill my Head with superstitious Tales and false notions, it was none of her Fault I am not at this day afraid of Witches and Hobgoblins . . . (8 March 1753; 3:26-7)

Here, once again, the individuals who monitor the female child's education hamper her progress. Rather than acting as positive role-models who teach the student that the "use of knowledge in our Sex . . . is to moderate the passions" (28 January 1753; 3:22), governesses, Montagu contends, encourage a child's wild imaginings, allowing reason to be subordinated to the desire for the sensational. In this situation, the girl is no longer simply an object, but she is rendered an ineffective subject, never taught to discern reasoned argument from popular belief. Some of Montagu's derision for the child-care provided by servants, however, may derive from class snobbery as well as from actual experience. She told

her daughter, "the greatest examples I have known of Honor and Integrity has been amongst those of the highest Birth and Fortunes" (23 July 1753; 3:36), an attitude which largely eliminates the working class as a possible positive influence. She disliked Samuel Richardson's novels for much the same reason, blaming the author for promoting a "Levelling Principle" (3:36) which she felt characterized much of the prose fiction of the period (3:36). Class prejudice aside, Montagu clearly distrusts the influence of those figures, parental or otherwise, who traditionally monitor the intellectual development of young women. Though the force of this observation imposes a kind of discipline, producing a particular kind of subject by means of its objectifying gaze, the girl remains helpless, circumscribed within a system that denies her any real agency. Thus, while Foucault states that disciplinary power regards individuals "both as objects and instruments of its exercise" (*Discipline and Punish* 170), the female child is never permitted to attain this latter state of being; the discipline that initially subjects her never becomes a means by which she gains authority. Instead, she continues to be simply the object of patriarchal observation, denied the possibility of a fully realized subjecthood by a power which rejects a priori the idea of female self-discipline. The monitoring of her behaviour hence continues indefinitely as she is passed from one disciplinary regime to another.

In recognizing the solitude in which the educated woman must live, and in recommending to her granddaughter that she conceal her learning, Montagu attempts to subvert the system which refuses women an equal subjectivity with men. Rather than directly opposing the patriarchal supervision of femininity, she imposes an even stricter form of monitoring on the educated members of her own sex: a self-discipline of isolation and of dedication to study without any promise of reward. Thus, she turns the subject's ability to become an instrument of discipline entirely back on itself; the learned woman attains full subjectivity by becoming the object of her own disciplinary power, both producer and production of her authority. This self-control, in its limited scope and its austerity, is calculated not to threaten the power structures of male society. Drawing an analogy with religious practice, she tells her daughter, "I look upon my Grand daughters as a sort of Lay Nuns" (6 March 1753; 3:25), and later comments that she herself once felt her "true vocation was a monastery" (3:27);⁹ both comparisons not only note the solitude in which the educated woman lives, but also underline the voluntary rejection of worldly recognition that Montagu regards as

9 Montagu's use of the imagery of religious retreat probably owes something to Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (1694). In this work, Astell proposed the creation of a "Religious Retirement" (150), dedicated to "the service of GOD and improvement of their [women's] own Minds" (150). Montagu and Astell knew each other well; even "[a]t fifteen Lady Mary had been captivated by Astell's earnest intellectuality and the notion of a 'Protestant Monastery'" (Perry 272).

concomitant with study. The use of religious imagery also conveys a sense of the solemnity and respect which she accords to the pursuit of knowledge, though it implies, as well, that her own society lacks a mode of expression for women's intellectual energies (and, in an indirect way, ambitions) which is available in other cultures. Perhaps the most interesting parallel between the religious and the scholarly life proposed, however, is that both provide places exclusively for women within the context of patriarchal society. Thus, retirement, like a nunnery, functions as a socially-sanctioned area of limited female empowerment. The nuns, either Catholic or studious, are still constructed in terms of a male vision of propriety, and are subject to the constraints of movement and of association which institutional patriarchy imposes; yet the possibility remains that each learned woman can, in the solitary private sphere, act as her own monitor, achieving a highly conditioned, but still meaningful, subjectivity.]

The enforced solitude in which the education of a girl takes place affects the means by which the process of learning occurs. Unlike Locke, who writes four lengthy sections on the matter, the issue of a tutor is nonexistent for Montagu, for the lack of social sanction of female education requires that some other means for the transmission of knowledge be found; thus, she recommends reading, telling Lady Bute that "[i]f your Daughters are inclin'd to Love reading, do not check

their Inclination by hindering them of the diverting part of it" (January 1750; 2:448). She encourages knowledge of the classical languages as well as of English poetry, claiming that a familiarity with the latter can protect a young lady from social disaster by allowing her to recognize plagiarized love poetry (28 January 1753; 3:22). Montagu even narrates a supposed incident from her youth in which she was able to unmask the poetic deceit of a friend's lover, adding that "the poor Plagiary . . . would have escap'd any one of less universal reading than my selfe" (3:22). Though the humour of the anecdote is apparent, this anecdote nevertheless serves to illustrate the possibility of the formation of a group of women in which the female scholar is accepted, and even valued, as a member. In this vision of social relations, moreover, the man does not act as a figure of authority; rather, he is the deceitful and dangerous individual, a destabilizing presence from whom the women must protect themselves. With this suggestive alteration of gender roles, it is the educated woman who has the intellectual resources to defend her friends. This modification of convention suggests that, in Montagu's ideal, a flexibility of gender norms exists which permits the educated woman, though still a somewhat ambivalent figure, to have the option to participate in a community.

A further destabilizing of traditional roles occurs in this passage, however, for Montagu tells Lady Bute that:

You should encourage your Daughter to talk over with you what she reads, and as you are very capable of distinguishing, take care she does not mistake pert Folly for Wit and humour, or Rhyme for Poetry, which are the common Errors of young People, and have a train of ill Consequences. (3:22)

Here, the mother becomes a source of learning, a female tutor, teaching her daughter the expected curriculum of duties appropriate to a wife and mother, but acting instead as a replacement for the male tutor whom the girl is denied. Within this model of shared female experience, the mother no longer appears as a harmful agent of patriarchal interests, training her daughter to act as a passive showpiece; by contrast, this type of good mother aids the girl in refining her literary discernment, providing a positive role-model of a resisting reader. This portrait of motherhood contrasts sharply with Locke's ongoing injunctions against the deficiencies of "fond Mothers" (*Education* 119, §7). In a gesture which almost seems to prefigure Mary Wollstonecraft's concept of the educating mother in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Montagu creates an idealized version of a healthy, instructive relationship between parent and child, based on the older woman's assumption of a role normally accorded to a man. A kind of parallel system of education for girls is thus established in the shadow of the Lockean male version, thereby subverting some of the power of the educated gentleman by

eliminating his exclusive access to instruction.

However, in spite of this attempt to offer girls some educational parity with boys, women remain unable to gather direct life-experience in the way men can. For Montagu the reading of prose fiction comes to function as a means of compensating for this lack. Women may not be able to develop ideas and morals through a first-hand engagement with the public sphere, but can learn these by means of literature, she claims. As Grundy observes, for Montagu, "[k]nowledge of life is good; novels teach the knowledge of life" ("Trash" 307). She defends her taste for contemporary fiction to her daughter by remarking that authors of popular fiction reflect

the manners of the times . . . more truly . .
 . than . . . any Historian. As they write
 meerly to get money, they allwaies fall into
 the notions that are most acceptable to the
 present Taste. (23 July 1753; 3:35)

There is a considerable snobbery present, but the idea of the novel as useful and educative writing is intriguing nonetheless. The notion inverts contemporary devaluations of prose fiction, which was coming to be increasingly regarded as an "unproductive, unpoliced investment of time" (Grundy 306). Montagu, by contrast, believes that reading fortifies the mind against prejudice and provides mental exercise, for "People that do not read or work for a Livelihood have many hours they know not how to imploy, especially Women" (2:450). Rather

than prescribing handwork or some other domestic labour, she promotes reading, as well as study, because "Ignorance is as much the Fountain of Vice as Idleness, and indeed generally produces it" (2:450); books keep the mind active and informed. Her defence of fiction moved against the current of her times, which saw novel-reading as a questionable pastime, and "which was becoming steadily less acceptable for women" (Grundy 306). Fiction provides women, isolated in the private sphere, with too important a window on the world, Montagu feels, to surrender. By means of the novel, therefore, the female reader can partially subvert the constraints under which the expectations of society place her, gaining at least a mediated access to broader culture.

In these ways, Montagu attempts to conceive of possibilities for women's intellectual development, looking to move beyond mere protest at their oppression by patriarchal society. She creates, in her story of the plagiarizing lover, an idealized model of female interaction which focuses on the cultivation of young women's minds, rather than on any competition for patriarchal approval; valued recognition in this system comes from other women, while the attentions of men are depicted as worthless. Advocating the dissolution of some of the binary oppositions that sustain a rigidly heteronormative social structure, she imagines a female sphere of influence in which the enforced connection of sex, gender, and identity becomes less definite, broadening the range of

subjectivities available to women. Thus, the idea of educating girls is made intelligible by, but also inaugurates the possibility of, a rejection of the assumptions which heteronormativity deploys in order to construct the notion of woman as the opposing complement of the idea of man. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the privileging of learned education itself rests on values that derive from male-dominated culture; women appropriate that learning for their own use, but the intellectual hierarchy that assigns a superior value to formal education remains in place. Montagu as a subject who is instantiated by this system can only exceed the bounds of patriarchy in a way which continues to be conditioned by the forces which initially shaped her subjectivity; her idealized vision of women learning from women stays firmly tied to a culture which attempts to render this idea unthinkable.

In her letter, Montagu permits herself this momentary fantasy of empowerment before returning to a less optimistic tone. She returns to the general notion of the solitude of the intellectual woman, a state that is empowering in a particular way, but which nevertheless continues to contain her within a patriarchal power structure that demands her invisibility. It is perhaps also worth noting that the isolated state of those women who "cultivate their own mind[s]" parallels another piece of advice that Montagu offers to her granddaughter: that she hide her educational

attainments "as she would hide crookedness or lameness" (28 January 1753; 3:22). The metaphor, as Lowenthal notes, posits learning as "a handicap" (197), yet one which, if the girl is careful, can remain unobserved and, therefore, unridiculed. The use of deformity to represent female education, however, illustrates clearly the position of the learned woman within patriarchal culture, for such an individual does not fit within the accepted gender parameters of her society, calling into question the gender bounds which heteronormativity establishes. Though an intellectual female has the appearance of belonging to one sexual category, her appropriation of a characteristic associated with the opposite gender undermines the validity of the categories themselves. However, in the case of a single individual, or a few isolated ones, defying a cultural norm, it seems likely that the destabilizing effect which is made possible can be deflected by a cultural practice as thoroughly entrenched as is heteronormativity; thus, instead of challenging the status quo to any significant degree, the consequences of a culturally disruptive act simply rebound onto the person, rendering her a marginal, incomprehensible figure. The educated woman, therefore, is regarded as not fitting within either possible gender category, becoming instead an undefined, monstrous entity. Her transgression of gender norms becomes a kind of physical deformity that marks her as an unreadable, sexually ambivalent body.

It is interesting to note that Montagu turns to a metaphor of the body in order to contain any desire her granddaughter might have for fame; this rhetorical strategy tacitly acknowledges the crucial link between the female body and commodity exchange. A woman's value, the only fame possible for her, is determined by her physical appearance and by her decorous behaviour. To display any intellectual accomplishment is seen as inappropriate, marring the woman's reputation and her potential value. Thus, though the idea of female education threatens the most central assumptions of a male-dominated heteronormativity, the individual woman who defies the conventions of her society simply becomes a victim of her own unwillingness, or inability, to conform to normative expectations. Montagu can offer no escape from this situation save concealment and retreat. Both of these options accede to the demands of a patriarchal culture that enforces silenced objectification on those subjects who do correspond to the norm, and silenced marginalization on those who do not.

The difficulties of resistance to power, which the metaphor of learning as a deformity in women illustrates, pervade Montagu's writing about female education. Though the problem presents itself in various forms, prompting different responses at different points in her letters, the essential difficulty of a subject's ability to resist the power responsible for its formation remains. To become a subject

means that one has attained a linguistic condition of existence and agency which is comprehensible within one's culture. Yet, at the same time, the inauguration of subjecthood involves a subordination of the individual to an external power which delineates and produces his or her subjectivity (*Psychic Life* 9). Thus, the forms of male discourse and the values of patriarchal culture continue to exert force in Montagu's writing, even as she attempts to argue in favour of education for women; the principal means by which she can legitimate her assertions is to appeal to the source of the values against which she is arguing. The reason for this apparent paradox is that, in order to come into being, the individual must first be subordinated to the bounds and to the normative expectations imposed by a particular culture. Though she may seek to dispute certain aspects of the dominant discourse, Montagu's own subjectivity is, nonetheless, founded in the same principles as it is. Hence, even the way she conceives of herself remains circumscribed by the limitations imposed by her own cultural milieu.

Furthermore, even the most basic elements of a person's identity are dictated by these norms. Supposedly 'natural' categories such as gender are established through the adherence of the subject to an array of socially constructed oppositional binaries (*Gender Trouble* 22). However, once formed, the subject acquires its own agency and becomes able to wield power for its own purposes. Montagu thus employs

strategies in her letters that subvert conventional assumptions concerning gender roles, disrupting in particular the belief that education and femininity are mutually exclusive. Because power exerted on an individual enacts the possibility for that individual to exert power, charting a course of resistance to authority is, nevertheless, difficult, as one must avoid simply reiterating, in the exercise of one's own power, that which formed the self in the first place. Notably, a slight slippage between the authority that inaugurates the subject and the subject's own agency occurs through time, creating the possibility of a conditioned resistance to external power (*Psychic Life* 12). It is this radically conditional nature of resistance with which Montagu struggles throughout her writing. Even as she problematizes the notion of gender current within her cultural and historical milieu, she must balance the need to remain intelligible to her audience, with her own desire to explore different possible subjectivities.

POSTSCRIPT

In some ways, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters concerning the education of her granddaughters are an outgrowth of Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. The type of subject, and the educational strategy required to produce that individual, which each author envisions share a number of commonalities. Both writers, for instance, share the opinion that education ought to have a practical end. However, what constitutes utility in their respective theories differs substantially, and gender plays a significant part in this divergence of opinion. For Locke, practical training for the young gentleman encompasses a broad knowledge of skills relevant to the life of a member of the landed gentry; modern languages, Latin, law, ethics, and accounting all receive his commendation, but literature is almost entirely overlooked. Montagu, by contrast, focuses her attention almost exclusively on literature; it provides a means of experiencing the world which would be otherwise unavailable to young women. The issue of gender also influences the respective authors' conceptions of discipline. While Locke regards the authority of parents and tutors to be largely a benign one, Montagu regularly figures parental control as negative, a force which

further circumscribes daughters' intellectual prospects. Both authors wish to prevent young people from developing superstitious prejudice, but their methods of avoiding this fault are almost diametrically opposed. Again, the issue of gender plays a role in the differing approaches of the authors.

Montagu cannot be seen as a straightforward reply to Locke though; she does not intend merely to write a version of Locke; *Education* for girls. Rather, the disruptive strategies she deploys in her letters target the gender anxieties which are latent in Locke's work, exploiting the possibilities that are there present. Thus, the *Education* tentatively posits near-parity in the sexes' educational capacities, but then tries to suppress this notion in order to maintain the conventional bounds of gender; Montagu, on the other hand, suggests that girls study a challenging, academic curriculum, an idea which assumes, by implication, that women have the intellectual capacity to attain a similar standard as men. Notably, the political implications of this dissolution of gender difference create tensions in her writing as she struggles to maintain control over the potential scope of her ideas. It is, most likely, the threatening extent of these thoughts that leads Locke, at least when writing for the country gentleman who has an interest in maintaining traditional political and social structures, to silence the more disruptive possibilities of educational parity between

the sexes. By contrast, Montagu, though an aristocrat, remains more open to the broader, more socially destabilizing possibilities that she herself, the educated woman, creates.

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