

ANNA LETITIA BARBAULD: PRESERVATION OF LOCAL CULTURE

**"COME, THEN, DOMESTIC MUSE":
THE PRESERVATION OF LOCAL CULTURE AND ECONOMY
IN THE POETRY OF
ANNA LETITIA BARBAULD**

By

GARRY G. BLAIN

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AUTHOR: Garry G. Blain

Supervisor: Dr. Mary O'Connor

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ABSTRACT

**"Come, then, Domestic Muse":
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in the Poetry of
Anna Letitia Barbauld**

For many years, we have heard from eighteenth-century male voices, often upper-class voices, but seldom, from female voices and very rarely middle-class and lower-class female voices. The pens of many of these women as illustrated by Anna Letitia Barbauld conserved information which is different from male voices we have already heard. Rather than concentrating on the political, grand scale, women like Barbauld have focused on the domestic or what theorist Michel de Certeau calls the "science of singularity." Through this focus on the elements of everyday life within her poetry, Anna Letitia Barbauld has preserved a local culture and economy which helps us in the twentieth century to understand the particularities of her life within the eighteenth century.

Barbauld's world is seen through her eyes, filtering our understanding as she is influenced by the her time, gender, profession and class. This paper focuses on Barbauld's poems which depict home life and, after establishing its critical frame in the introduction, is divided into three chapters: the first, on the work in an eighteenth-century middle-class home as depicted in her poem "Washing-Day"; the second, on the

work involved in courtship and marriage as depicted in a number of marriage poems; and the third, on the work of child-bearing, child-rearing and education in a variety of other poems.

The paper looks at the tensions and inconsistencies within her work; the discrepancies inform us of the pressures which influence the home and middle-class women of the eighteenth-century. Further the paper, examines Barbauld's participation in the shift described by Nancy Armstrong as "[seeking] to disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics," a shift in thinking from general to specific, from status system to the value of the individual.

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INTRODUCTION

Be content to feed your understanding with plain, household truths.

(Barbauld, "Against Inconsistency in our Expectations" 228)

There is a cast of manners peculiar and becoming to each age, sex and profession: one, therefore, should not throw out illiberal and common-place censures against another. Each is perfect in its kind. A woman as a woman; a tradesman as a tradesman. We are often hurt by the brutality and sluggish conceptions of the vulgar: not considering that some there must be hewers of wood and drawers of water, and that cultivated genius, or even any great refinement and delicacy in their moral feelings, would be a real misfortune to them.

(Barbauld, "Against Inconsistency in our Expectations" 236)

In 1773, Anna Letitia Barbauld wrote her treatise, "Against Inconsistency in our Expectations," in which her purpose was "to attain just notions of the laws and order of the universe, that we may not vex ourselves with fruitless wishes, or give way to groundless and unreasonable discontent" (226). Although her purpose was moral and class instruction, Barbauld's secondary subject was the idea that the particularities of life are important; she maintains the ideology of individualism of the time as she argues that the specifics of time, gender, profession and class influence the individual

according to her or his correlation within these categories. Some twenty years later in her letter of reply to Maria Edgeworth declining an invitation to participate in *a lady's paper* (1804), Barbauld maintained her conviction that the individual was particular and not part of an understood consensus or generality. Her grand niece, Anna Letitia Le Breton, quotes the letter in *Memoir of Mrs. Barbauld* (1874):

There is no bond of union among literary women, any more than among literary men; different sentiments and different connections separate them much more than the joint interest of their sex would unite them. Mrs. Hannah More would not write along with you or me, and we should probably hesitate at joining Miss Hays, or if she were living, Mrs. Godwin.

.

There is a great difference between a paper written *by* a lady, and *as* a lady. To write professedly as a female junto seems in some measure to suggest a certain cast of sentiment, and you would write in trammels. (Le Breton 86-7)

The particularities in the passage are much more pronounced than those in the opening epigraph where Barbauld suggests appropriate manners and morals for each group in a particular culture, but here she moves beyond particularized generalities of time, gender, profession and class, to one specific: gender. She feels no individual woman writer necessarily has similar specific sentiments and interests to any other woman writer; further, we may read her comments to suggest that she feels that writers, male or female, do not share the same general sentiments or connections with any other writers. And yet, in spite of her avowal, Barbauld cannot remove herself entirely from her environment; although she declares her removal from her specific gender and aligns herself with a certain class and moral classification, she is a product of her own time, gender, class and profession. Barbauld's interest in particularities takes her beyond

generalization about women in general¹. It is ironic that Barbauld should hit upon one of her own great strengths as a poet, that while writing poetry which she describes as including "the pleasures of the imagination and didactic precept" ("A Critical Essay on the Poem" B), she has preserved, in her own poetry, local culture and economy by incorporating the particularities of everyday, rural life from the late eighteenth century. Although her writing shows signs of its deeply classed origins, it also succeeds in presenting the particularities of a local culture and economy. These particularities are often gendered, reflecting both the general attitudes of her day and Barbauld's particular view as an individual woman of that day.

As a twentieth-century reader of Barbauld's poetry, I find my role in considering anything more than a primary reading of her poetry somewhat overwhelming. I struggle between two worlds: one, the late eighteenth century in which Barbauld delineates a paradox of purpose: "Didactic, or perceptive poetry, seems to include a solecism, for the end of Poetry is to please and of Didactic precept the object is instruction" ("A Critical Essay on the Poem" B); and the second in which we, as twentieth-century readers, look back at her work finding it a repository of cultural detail. Isobel Armstrong, in her *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (1993), allows us to skip the question of whether Barbauld's inclusion of particularities was intentional or if she was simply writing out of her daily activities, reacting to her

¹ This is not to say that Barbauld won't refer to, or react to, generalizations of her time period; through her particularized view of the time period, Barbauld creates a dialogue with the period, a dialogue which not only illuminates Barbauld's local culture and economy, but the bigger picture ... the *generalities* or *generalizations* as well ... of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

environment. Armstrong's proposition of her *double poem* as critical model will help us examine both the "expressive" and the "epistemological" because as Isobel Armstrong observes, a poem is "a dynamic text in which lyric description and analysis are repeatedly redefining the terms of a question and contending for its ground" (*Victorian* 15). Armstrong would have my method, then, as, "to see the text as struggle continually investing terms with a new content [in order] to see it as a responsive rather than as a symptomatic discourse" (15). She proposes her *double poem* concept as critical model, one which examines both "expressive" and "epistemological" interpretations because "the epistemological reading will explore things of which the expressive reading is unaware and go beyond the experience of the lyric speaker." (15) I would argue that although Armstrong's critical position is based on Victorian poetry, the logic of her position works in Barbauld's case as well; in recognition of various positions of a number of critical schools, the critic's role is to see a text as "endless struggle and contention, struggle with a changing project, struggle with the play of ambiguity and contradiction" (10). It is on the "epistemological reading" of Barbauld's work that this paper will focus; it matters not whether Barbauld's inclusion of the particularities of life were intentional, but only that they are here. Now, we must "struggle and contend" with them contextually within eighteenth-century historical conditions and twentieth-century critical theory.

Contextually within the eighteenth century, Anna Letitia Barbauld (1742-1825), née Aikin, was only one in an increasing number of women poets. Roger Lonsdale declares in *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (1989), "in the first decade of the

eighteenth century two women published collections of their verse. In the 1790s more than thirty did so. Even so crude a measure may suggest that there had been an emphatic change in the literary status in the period" ("Introduction" xxi). Barbauld's biographers and friends describe a precocious young woman, daughter of a clergyman and tutor, able to read before she was three and later master of French and Italian with a knowledge of Latin and Greek (*Dictionary of National Biography* 1064). In artistic context, Barbauld published work for more than 41 years from 1771 until 1812, with a number of her works reprinted; she also published as a critic, writing essays and introductions for a number of literary works. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft's *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* (1994), the first collection of her works containing 159 identified poems, 11 poems as conjectural attributions and reference to 10 poems known lost, shows the scope of her poetic output². As part of the literary establishment, Barbauld corresponded with a number of literary figures such as Elizabeth Montagu, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Maria and Richard Lowell Edgeworth as

² McCarthy and Kraft document the "History of the Poems" in their "Introduction". Barbauld's works were published over the course of 41 of her living years from 1771-1825 and some in collection, posthumously in 1825. Several volumes had several editions; for example, her first solo volume, *Poems*, was printed three times between December, 1772 and September, 1773. Barbauld also published hymns and lessons for children, reviews, poems and essays for magazines, edited Samuel Richardson's *Correspondence* and an edition entitled *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian, and Freeholder with a Preliminary Essay*. McCarthy and Kraft describe her prolific career: "Barbauld the poet resembles Thomas Gray: a withdrawn, self-critical talent whose acclaim by her contemporaries bore no proportion to the number of pieces she gave them" ("Introduction" xxxi).

Furthermore, Barbauld associated with, read and was read by literati of the late eighteenth-century and Romantic period: John Aikin, Joseph Priestley, Elizabeth Montagu, Hester Chapone, Hannah More, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Henry Crabb Robinson and William Wordsworth ("Introduction" xxviii-xxxv).

well as with her brother, John Aikin. During her life, Barbauld offered a multiplicity of positions within her collected works: she was a woman, wife, and care-giver, but an educated school teacher, poet and advocate of woman's rights; she was a Christian, God-fearing daughter and wife of clergy, but often a questioning companion of God; she was an intellectual who dealt with complex abstract concepts, but a thinker who grounded her work in "particularities" of everyday life.

Also, within this eighteenth-century context, Barbauld represented the voice of a working woman. As worker, Barbauld wore many hats: she was a poet, working at her art; a wife and home-maker, working at a difficult marriage with a husband who suffered from mental illness; further, a wife to a clergyman and tutor, working at the duties as a clergyman's wife; and a reformer, working through her craft to improve the political and social conditions around her. Until recently, many eighteenth-century female voices were obscured; only male and often upper-class male writers' works reached us. For whatever the reason, many of these male writers did not *see*, or did not *choose to see*, domestic work being done. As a result, many in twentieth-century culture often presumed that pre-twentieth century women did not work, but Bridget Hill in *Women, Work & Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (1994) supports Ivy Pinchbeck's position in *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution* (1930):

Throughout her study, the point is constantly being driven home that women in the eighteenth century, single or married, worked - and worked hard. Long before the impact of industrialization it was taken for granted that women by their labour made a valuable contribution to the subsistence of their families. (Hill 1)

Furthermore, in *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (1987), Nancy Armstrong connects the rise of the eighteenth-century domestic woman and the shaping of culture, the concept which will also link the work of eighteenth-century Anna Letitia Barbauld with the twentieth-century critical position of this paper.

Armstrong contends:

From the beginning, domestic fiction actively sought to disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics and, in so doing, to introduce a new form of political power. This power emerged with the rise of domestic woman and established its hold over British culture through her dominance over all those objects and practices we associate with private life. To her went authority over the household, leisure time, courtship procedures, and kinship relations, and under her jurisdiction the most basic qualities of human identity were supposed to develop.

(*Desire* 3)

Armstrong advances the argument by connecting a shift in the centre of cultural history from men to women:

In place of one intricate status system that had long dominated British thinking, these authors began to represent an individual's value in terms of his, but more often in terms of *her*, essential qualities of mind. Literature devoted to producing the domestic women thus appeared to ignore the political world run by men. Of the female alone did it presume to say neither birth nor the accoutrements of title and status accurately represented the individual; only the more subtle nuances of behaviour indicated what one was really worth. In this way, writing for and about the female introduced a whole new vocabulary for social relations, terms that attached precise value to certain qualities of mind.

(4)

Armstrong's argument centres on the shift from the political world of men to the "more subtle nuances" of the world of women, much like Annette Kolodny's argument in "A Map for Rereading: Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts" (1980). Kolodny uses Susan Keating Gaspell's 1917 short story "A Jury of Her Peers" to point out "the

crucial importance of the *sex* of the "interpreter" in that process which Nelly Furman has called 'the active attribution of significance to formal signifiers'"(Kolodny 1133). As Kolodny observes, "the very act of perception becomes sex-coded: the men look at the house only to talk 'about what had happened,' while the women note the geographical topography which make [the kitchen of the accused], repeatedly in the narrative, 'a lonesome-looking place'"(Kolodny 1134). In the Gaspell story, later as a one-act play titled "Trifles", the men look to the big picture and mock the women for looking at trifles, but it is within those "trifles", the particularities of life common to the two everyday housewives, that the clues to the crime are found. Similarly, within Armstrong's position on the importance of the rise of domestic fiction in the eighteenth century, the shift is from the "big picture" view of politics from the privileged position of the male, to that of the female, a view, in Armstrong's terms, "with the more subtle nuances" and in my terms, with focus on the particularities of everyday life. In moving to the specifics of this paper, I shall argue that although within her works Barbauld often does examine the "big picture", it is within her grounding of her work in the particularities of everyday life that Barbauld preserves local culture and economy of the late eighteenth-century home.

But what of these particularities? Are they worth saving in culture and memory? In his article, "The Work of Local Culture" (1988), Wendell Berry grieves the destruction of local culture maintaining that the significance of this decay is apparent and lasting:

The loss of local culture is, in part, a practical loss and an economic one. For one thing, such culture contains, and conveys to succeeding

generations, the history of the use of the place and the knowledge of how the place may be lived in and used. For another, the pattern of reminding implies affection for the place and respect for it, and so, finally, the local culture will carry the knowledge of how the place may be well and lovingly used, and also the implicit command to use it only well and lovingly. (Berry 166)

Berry maintains that it is the everyday, rural occurrences that have shaped the culture of the countryside; these occurrences are both initiated and stored in and by the citizens of a particular rural locality and are handed down from generation to generation by personal experience and word of mouth. Berry warns that the custody of this culture is, however, a vigorous activity; the community must strive to preserve what they produce if they hope to retain it at all:

A human community, then, if it is to last long must exert a sort of centripetal force, holding local soil and memory in place. (Berry 155)

And unless this rural community does actively fight to preserve both rural life and the rural culture it generates, it is doomed to extinction:

For although our present society does generate a centripetal force, this is not a local force, but one centred almost exclusively in our great commercial and industrial cities. (Berry 155)

Further, if the rurals allow the city to encroach on the rural community, the countryside's destruction will become increasingly self-perpetuating:

As local community decays along with local economy, a vast amnesia settles over the countryside. As the exposed and disregarded soil departs with the rains, so local knowledge and local memory move away to the cities or are forgotten under the influence of homogenized salestalk, entertainment, and education. (Berry 157)

Berry's conclusion is that good local culture must "actively and thoughtfully, ... collect ... stories and turn them into account" (Berry 154).

Michel de Certeau's position is similar to Berry's position, but de Certeau extends the significance of the preservation of local culture. While Berry wants to actually preserve the culture by continuing the practices of the community, de Certeau, in his *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), broadens the particularities to be preserved to include language and the people who use it:

Like tools, proverbs (and other discourses) are *marked by uses*: they offer to analysis the *imprints of acts* or of processes of enunciation; they signify the *operations* whose objects they have been, operations which are relative to situations and which can be thought of as the conjunctural *modalizations* of statements or of practices; more generally, they thus indicate a social *historicity* in which systems of representations or processes of fabrication no longer appear as normative frameworks but as *tools manipulated by users*. (de Certeau 21)

Further, in his "Preface to the English Translation" (*Practice*), de Certeau sees this preservation as a means for humans to learn life skills so that they live physically, aesthetically and ethically; he states his goal:

For what I really wish to work out is *a science of singularity*; that is to say, a science of the relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances. And only in the *local* network of labor and recreation can one grasp how, within a grid of socio-economic constraints, these pursuits unfailingly establish relational tactics (a struggle for life), artistic creations (an aesthetic), and autonomous initiatives (an ethic). The characteristically subtle logic of these "ordinary" activities comes to light only in the details. And hence it seems to me that this analysis, as its bond to another culture is rendered more explicit, will only be assisted in leading readers to uncover for themselves, in their own situations, their own tactics, their own creations, and their own initiatives. (de Certeau ix)

Thus, these twentieth-century theorists take the position that by meticulously preserving the details, whether they be objects, customs, language or stories, we as individuals preserve the "singularities" and gather skills to help us not only cope but also succeed as humans. Berry wants us to continue the actual practices, while de Certeau sees us

preserving culture through language and story; both imply that local culture can only be maintained through conscious, active safeguarding. Further, by preserving local culture and economy, humans have something against which to measure their lives; much like the use of a literary foil, by holding our lives up to others which are to some degree the same, but significantly different, we can see, more objectively, the contrast.

And thus, the significance of the 'home' poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld is here within the balance between the historical context of eighteenth-century artistic creativity and the theoretical context of the twentieth century interpretation; through her inclusion of the details of everyday life centring on the home, Barbauld has preserved the local culture and economy of an eighteenth-century, working home. It is a particular home, not that of Mrs. Hannah More, nor Miss Hays, nor Mrs. Godwin, but that of Mrs. Anna Letitia Barbauld. It is a home in which a wide variety of activities is being worked; therefore, in subsequent chapters, I propose to examine the "work" of the home, first focusing on the home as the work-centre in Barbauld's poem "Washing-Day" (published 1797), and succeedingly, on the "work" of marriage, child-rearing³, and writing in a

³ It is true that the Barbaulds did not produce any children, but they were actively involved with children. According to Mrs. Barbauld's niece, Lucy Aikin, the Barbaulds desperately wanted children and when, after a year of marriage, their nephew Charles was born, they asked to adopt him. They took him home with them when he was two years old and raised him from that point.

Furthermore, as tutors at the Palgrave school for boys and later at other schools, their interaction with children was ongoing. Mrs. Barbauld was invited by Mrs. Montagu to become the principal of a ladies' school, an action which may imply the level of expertise which colleagues of Mrs. Barbauld conferred upon her.

Thirdly, although there is no direct evidence to support this contention, I would speculate that clergy wives may often have been called upon as educated women of the parish to give counsel to women parishioners who needed advice concerning the raising of their children.

variety of her other poems. It is a home with its own work, local culture and economy against which we can measure, and perhaps better understand, our twentieth-century lives. It is a home against which we, as twentieth-century humans can measure our own "situation", "tactics", "creations" and "initiatives".

CHAPTER ONE

Come, Muse, and sing the Washing-Day

(Barbault, "Washing-Day" in *Poems* 8)

*Her response was almost instantaneous to the question,
"What was the greatest invention during your lifetime?"
The one-hundred year-old woman retorted, "Running
water. It never ceases to amaze me that when you turn
the tap water flows out ... and as much as you please,
too!"*

(Annie Brae Buchanan McMane {1889-1990})⁴

When I was a young boy, just after World War II, I lived with my parents in my grandparents' village home. I recall washing day with oval-boiler on the wood-stove in the kitchen, piles of laundry on the kitchen floor, soaking tubs, blocks of blueing being shaved into vats of white clothes. I also recall my general banishment on those days from my usual areas of play and the admonition that the washers, my mother and grandmother, were too busy to be bothered by me that day; the noonday meal was silent and hasty as my father, grandfather and uncle, each in turn, entered the house from the

⁴ The epigraphs within this paper, unless otherwise noted, are all personal communications. As I interacted with the theoretical references for this paper, I came to realize that each of us has our own local culture and economy, one which we each might try to preserve. As Barbault preserved a local culture and economy which can be identified as one unique to her, my choices of epigraphs and personal tales are a threefold attempt: to preserve some of my own local culture, to show the importance of the general concept of preserving local culture and to show the relevance of the act of preservation at any time in history.

family business next door, stepped over piles of laundry and sat down at the table to eat. And I know for certain that this particular culture has been lost in our family. In our own home, laundry facilities are discretely hidden in the basement; washing day is no longer a day-long event, but completed in loads over the course of the week, or as required; laundry is practised by individuals, but not necessarily by the mother only; my sons, both of whom are attending university (or as Berry would say have left the local environment for the city), complete their washing in a coin-operated laundry in the company of other university students. The local culture of our washing day has been lost to our family as has the local economy of the multiple-generational home in the village and the family business. Except for this brief description and unwritten memories, there is nothing to preserve our family's local culture and economy⁵.

Now, at the same time that I say that this local culture has been lost to our family, I must say that it is not my intention here to attempt to bring back washing day as I knew it as a child. Washing day was hard work. Water was pumped from a cistern by means of a hand-pump; water was heated in huge copper boilers on the wood

⁵ Some of my fondest recollections come from listening to the stories that local farmers brought to my grandfather's shop where I spent many idle hours in my own youth. These locals had their own provincial dialect and pattern of story telling; each was distinctive in his own way and each had his own stories; furthermore, each had his own limited and particular view of Canadian politics.

On hot summer afternoons, my grandmother held court from her lawn chair in front of the family home next to shop, where women ... she would have called them *ladies* ... of the village came for a rest and to pass gossip. Similar to the men, of course, the women had their own concerns and own intriguing (to me) dialect and narrative style.

My wife accuses me of reverting to village dialect and axiom when my mother and I talk about the hamlet where we both were raised.

stove which in turn was stoked by hand with wood. I, as one of the washer-persons of today, certainly laud running water, gas-fired water heaters and automatic washing machines and dryers; I do not suggest that we return to this practice as perhaps Wendell Berry does. However, I do remember most fondly the events of the day and by describing the events here in this paper, I am, as is Barbauld in her poetry, preserving the culture through stories. My view is nostalgic, probably romanticized, perhaps even exaggerated⁶.

As Berry notes in "The Work of Local Culture" (1988), "as local community decays along with local economy, a vast amnesia settles over the countryside" (Berry 157). Similar to my failure to document the particularities of washing day during my youth, eighteenth-century households failed to chronicle their particular experiences. Bridget Hill observes the problem in "Women's Work in the Family Economy" in *Women, Work & Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (1994):

One of the difficulties in analyzing women's roles in the eighteenth-century household in Britain is the lack of the sort of evidence - police records, records of ecclesiastical courts, a still vital folklore, and the continuance of the family economy - used by those concerned with the household in France. In England there is evidence available about households, but only rarely those of the labouring class. (Hill 27)

Herein lies the significance of Barbauld's works and the essence of this chapter; she has documented it. Anna Letitia Barbauld's "Washing-Day" is, in Wendell Berry's words, "a sort of centripetal force", "actively and thoughtfully" "collect[ing] leaves and

⁶ In Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, the narrator states that "what fascinates [him] most about ... memory is that it owes nothing to fact. In ... memory atmosphere is more real than incident and everything is simultaneously actual and illusionary. In ... memory, too, the air is nostalgic with music that is both heard and imagined" (Friel 68).

stories, and turn[ing] them into account". Her diversity of roles and positions within her work can only serve to enhance and specify "the collection of memories, ways and skills necessary for the observance, within the bounds of domesticity, of this natural law" (Berry 154). Granted Barbauld was not the only poet to preserve this culture, nor particularities about washing day; Mary Collier's 1739 "The Woman's Labour: An Epistle to Mr. Stephen Duck" captures the details of the poet's own profession as washer woman. But in this chapter, I shall focus on Barbauld's "Washing-Day," a rich and interesting layering of historical and cultural detail, not only illustrating the range of interest and relationships in the culture of a family home during the particularly chaotic process of a working day, but on the peculiarities of time and place. The significance of "Washing-Day," and of Barbauld's other work, is that it "builds that memory of itself - in lore and story and song - that [becomes] its culture"(Berry 154); it combines the portrait of the details and ethics of the daily struggle for life within an artistic creation.

First, and perhaps it seems all too obvious, the location of the place which Barbauld is celebrating and perpetuating is a home in the country. At a time when the rise of industry was moving the economic centre from cottage industry to city, Barbauld has chosen to observe a home where people "prattl[e] on/ [o]f farm or orchard, pleasant curds or cream,/ [o]r drowning flies or shoe lost in the mire"(4-6); it is a family home where parents, children, grandparents, servants and pets reside; it is a middle-class, family home where the work of a washing day affects not just the servants, but all who reside within the house. The action of the house is neither earth-shattering nor

shocking; it centres around the activities of a typical washing day, a day which was probably re-enacted weekly rather than once in a lifetime. In other words, the action of the poem does not celebrate national, international, historic or cosmic events, but those which are mundane or perhaps even gross. These moves from national to local, from political to domestic, from male-centred to female-centred, illustrate Nancy Armstrong's analysis of the move in eighteenth-century domestic fiction to "disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics" (*Desire* 3). In centring her poem on this familiar setting, Barbauld "implies her affection for the place and respect for it." In fact, she states her obvious affection which her remembrance generates, as she refers to "the awe/ [t]his day struck into [her]"(57-8) when she was a child. Furthermore, by using the language of the women who worked within this place, Barbauld documents the work of the place in the appropriate language of the place and work. In other words, Barbauld employs the language appropriate to the gendered nature of the space she is describing; rather than documenting the event in male language, the language of contemporary male poets who focused on events of political and global proportion, Barbauld used the female vernacular, the language used by the women at work as they refer to the specifics of the everyday work for which women were responsible. It is a world of "red-arm'd washers", "linen-horse[s]" and "the petty miseries of life." In contrast to the "political" world of the male, the world of female miseries may seem "petty," but they are miseries, nonetheless, day-to-day, ongoing, persistent, repeated time and time again. As laundry is cleaned, laundry is dirtied; the cycle is endless. The miseries may not be as earth-shattering as those

female
language

delineated within the writing of male writers, but domestic miseries deserve to be aired and complained about just as much as political issues.

Within this setting, Barbauld delineates her understanding of 'her' place, how it is used and the life within the dwelling. It is a female space which, perhaps not everyday, but on this one particular day of the week, is overseen by women. Barbauld's invocation to the Muses at the commencement of the poem focuses the reader's attention on women. She has certainly not changed the Muses' traditional gendering from classic literature as women; however, Barbauld constructs the Muses not in the historicized guise of inspiration of the classical arts but as "domestic Muse[s]"(3) who "are turned gossip"(1); these Muses "have lost/ [t]he buskin'd step, and clear high-sounding phrase,/ [l]anguage of the gods"(1-3). Instead of inspiring topics of epic proportion, they chatter:

In slip-shod measure loosely prattling on
Of farm or orchard, pleasant curds and cream,
Of drowning flies, or shoe lost in the mire
By little whimpering boy, with rueful face; (4-7)

Their new occupation, then, is to inspire and preside over domestic activity. Barbauld invokes this "domestic Muse" to "sing the dreaded "Washing-Day"(8). Similarly, Barbauld has amended her epigraph at the beginning of the poem, a quotation from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* which she quotes as:

. and their [sic] voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in its sound. ----

(Shakespeare II. vii. 161-3)

Barbauld has deliberately misquoted the first line which originally read "and big, manly voice" and created "their voice." Once again, Barbauld has constructed a feminine world, in this case from a world which Shakespeare constructed as a masculine world. With these introductory techniques, Barbauld demonstrates the fabrication of not only a female space but also a space which implies class as well; no longer are these Muses inspiration to classical and epic arts, but working women whose shrill, child-like voices gossip about commonplace occurrences of the rural workday. Rather than inspire epic poetry, these domestic muses inspire poetry about washing day.

These women not only inspire the poem but are the centre of the activity and subject matter of "Washing-Day" as well, for these Muses are the "red-arm'd washers come to chase repose"(14). Barbauld depicts the washerwomen here as the activity makers in this space; it is the "red-arm'd washers", the housewife and the maids who are involved with the work of the washing. The fact that "The red-arm'd washers come"⁷ implies that these women are local women who as their occupation come to another's house and assist, or do another's laundry. Barbauld's mother figure and the maids are certainly involved in the washing, yet it seems that they are not the same persons as these "red-arm'd washers." These women working together create a local economy as well; washerwomen dependent on local households from which to make their wages and the local households dependent on these women from which to derive their labour. It would seem too that this local economy would also include the maids.

⁷ Bridget Hill documents the enormous number of women who worked outside their homes as washer women during this time in "Housework" in *Women, Work & Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England*.

Again, the household would rely on locals to hire as employees and locals would depend on households from which to earn their living as maids. Washing-day activities create an interdependence between all the women engaged in useful and productive work; each participant whether supervisor, washer or maid benefits from the interaction. According to Berry, "a good community ... insures itself by trust, by good faith and good will, by mutual faith"(Berry 158). One might argue that this "good community" is advanced by the whole washing-day process: the act of women from within the house gathering with women from the wider community in a common activity generating interaction between the participants. And yet, when one considers the research of Pinchbeck and Hill, one must question whether this washing community comes together by "good trust, faith and will" or rather by mutual economics. The middle-class household has the economic prosperity to be able to hire the washerwomen; the washerwomen, in turn, need the money. Although the action of washing day creates local culture and economy, the impetus for the washerwomen's involvement has nothing to do with creating or preserving local culture and economy, but in earning a living at a time when the economics of household production are being threatened more and more by the industrial revolution. Workers are leaving the countryside because they are being offered a more liberal wage in the city. Still, the "prattle" is gossip of the community. The women discuss events which affect their immediate lives and the economy of the community: rural economies are centred on farm and orchard; weather affects the production of the harvest; the quality of milk products affects both price and quantity of sales. Disasters are on the level of flies drowning in milk pails and

children's shoes being sucked into mud. The washerwomen, maids and housewife share and perpetuate the events of the larger community; and, by sharing these events among themselves, they conserve the culture of each individual and of the region as a whole. So the preservation of local culture here becomes cross-cultural; it involves at least three different particular cultures coming together as a fourth. It is comprised of the women of the house, their maids who may or may not actually inhabit the house, and the washerwomen who come to this particular house today and to others tomorrow. The micro-economy becomes a macro-economy as strands of uniqueness weave the community into a blanket of interdependence, but the first purpose of the interdependence is not cultural, as Berry romanticizes, to preserve culture, but economic, to preserve life.

Similarly, the poem is written by and for women. Barbauld is an adult woman nostalgically reminiscing on those washing days of her childhood. Barbauld's construction of the poem as a memory poem serves also to heighten her affection for the event; she does not remember only the frenzy of the day, but regards the day with fondness. Although as a child she seemed to feel neglected, her memories of the whole day seem to overpower the neglect and form a nostalgia for the event. Although the poem is grounded in the vivid details of the day, the nostalgia creates a haziness through which the harsher technicalities of the day are softened. Her tone is sentimental as she lovingly memorializes the washing day; she seems to hear Friel's "dream music that is both heard and imagined"(68). Unlike Berry who seems to wish to preserve the culture

as it is and how it is⁸, Barbauld's use of the hazy, nostalgic view seems to suggest a wish for the atmosphere, familial comradery and "music" of the day rather than for the arduous work of the event. She addresses the poem to women who must also endure washing day:

- Ye who beneath the yoke of wedlock bend,
With bowed soul, full well ye ken the day
Which week, smooth sliding after week, brings on
Too soon; (9-12)

The first appeal of "Washing-Day" then is to those women who are familiar with the weekly arduous process of the washing, the women who because of wedlock are figuratively yoked to the work of the house, just as oxen are yoked to complete the rigorous work of ploughing. The image is appropriate; the women are tied to their duties through their marriage vows as the oxen are linked together by the yoke; women are weighed down by marriage as the oxen are by the heavy apparatus which although it aids in work, has great weight in itself. But even with this weighty image and laborious image of a woman's place in marriage, the sentimental and often humorous tone tempers the harshness and questions the seriousness of the whole poem. "Washing-Day" becomes a mock heroic poem as Barbauld sings the song of washing day and applies the characteristics of high epic as she tells the story of an everyday

⁸ Berry seems to advocate a situation similar to the Amish who chose to freeze their cultural development at a given point. Recently, on our way from a family reunion at Atwood, Ontario, my wife and I observed an Amish woman on board her buggy, a woman whose culture deemed buttons too modern a convenience, but which allowed her to wear photo-gray lenses in her glasses. Berry, like the Amish, seems to have chosen an arbitrary point at which culture and convenience is not to develop. Rather than preserve culture through art ... song, story, craft and painting ..., Berry's theory promotes arresting the culture at a subjective point.

occurrence. By invoking the Muses and the epigraph, Barbauld parodies the epic tradition, the tradition of male poets, the area of "the language of politics." The tale of the adventures of the women within a house on washing day is told in the gendered language of the house, but within the epic form, a form associated with male heroes and male political adventures. It would be hard to assess Barbauld's intended audience for the poem to be anything but intelligent women, probably women of the city, who might in some way look down with amusement at the events of a country, and middleclass, washing day, but at the same time, see the parody of a form associated with men. So although "Washing-Day" documents the local community of the female space within a family home as well as the extended female space collected when neighbourhood worker women are included in the primary space, its primary function as an artistic work at the time may well have been one which gently and lovingly mocked that culture at the same time as it provided a vehicle to parody the brave heroic exploits of the male.

The other two active participants within the poem are also women. The first is the housewife, Barbauld's mother, whose position on washing day is to supervise. Barbauld remembers that "[a]t intervals my mother's voice was heard,/[u]rging dispatch"(74-5). Although the mother's duties for washing day are not fully delineated within the text, it is certain that she was, in fact, involved in both a supervisory and participatory position. Implication suggests that this activity is completely the housewife's responsibility. In order to support this idea, it becomes necessary to look for a moment at the two male figures within the poem; both are presented as completely

passive when juxtaposed with the active females. The master is not present within the poem unless he should "perchance" "require" his "Study swept, or nicely dusted coat, [o]r usual 'tendance"; at which case he will be denied. Similarly if a friend, and he is depicted as a male friend, should call by, he will be totally ignored and denied the usual hospitality of "roast chicken, savoury pie,/[o]r tart or pudding"(51-2). The male figures are taciturn and subject to the women and day's event. In contrast, Barbauld assembles the responsibilities of the housewife; she is responsible for the maintenance of the house. We find a hierarchy of jobs within the house; on this particular day, washing is ultimate, and entertaining or tending to a husband, subordinate. It seems obvious, too, that the master understands this dictum for Barbauld makes no mention of his objection to his neglect. Barbauld also calls into question the male's attitude that he might be in charge in this space; by addressing him as "thou/ [w]ho call'st thyself perchance the master there," she implies exactly the opposite. It is clear that the only person who might refer to the male as master here, then, is himself. If he dare not ask for his study to be swept, coat dusted or other usual attendance, he is not really in charge of this space in the first place. So this is Barbauld's mother's territory; she is responsible, she supervises the laundry, she dispatch[es] the breakfast and watches for bad weather. Completing the women within the poem is Barbauld's "dear grandmother, eldest of forms" who "[t]ended the little ones, and watched from harm,/ [a]nxiously fond"(68-70). The "indulgence" of the grandmother when the children "her spectacles/ [w]ith elfin cunning hid and oft the pins/ [drew] from her ravell'd stocking"(70-2). She too is constructed as a useful part of the local economy; she has a purpose to fulfil

which includes being a care-taker of the children. But the grandmother perhaps makes a more significant contribution here because with her presence within this home there dwell three generations of the family.

Multiple generations within one dwelling act as a catalyst for the preservation of local culture. Three generations share aspects of life with one another, since, as Bridget Hill observes, most dwellings of the eighteenth-century were not large "country homes" but very small "homes in the country." Within the confines of these homes, three generations of women share the responsibility of washing day with each other, with other women whom they hire and with still other women who form the readership of the poem itself. Each woman of the three generations has her own distinct duty. Barbauld's mother is in charge of the home and the actual washing process; Barbauld's grandmother, although the brunt of the children's pranks supervises the children of the household; while Barbauld, as child, takes a leading role in perpetuating the culture, first through hearing and experiencing the tales and the events of the day, and secondly through her preservation of the day and culture within her poem. But in the preservation of the culture, perhaps we should re-order the generations chronologically. Barbauld's grandmother represents the roots of the culture; she depicts the past and the passing of the culture of washing day from her predecessors to Barbauld's mother. Barbauld's mother, in turn, represents the present, the culture passed from the past and presently in full bloom. She and the other women in the neighbourhood who are presently the most active within this culture are the teachers who pass the culture on to future generations through their children, in this case represented by Barbauld. It is

here within the preservation that Barbauld herself takes an important role. Berry tells us that "[a]mong the hearers of stories were always the children"(Berry 158); this action was significant since the children then became the perpetrators of the story and the culture.

As eulogizer of the washing day, Barbauld has constructed a useful purpose for herself in the day's event and within the local culture itself for as she learns the culture and participates in it, she perpetuates the culture and saves it from loss. As adult, Barbauld will be able to recreate the culture because she has learned it as a child. In fact, as she writes the poem, she is a woman looking back at her childhood and the washing day. In all probability, she is now mistress of her own house and supervisor of her own washing day. Ironically, Barbauld is supervisor of not only washing day, the event, but also "Washing-Day", her poem which preserves the culture of the event, the skill of supervision passed on by her mother and grandmother. In fact, according to Nancy Armstrong, the skill of supervision became the subject matter of conduct books for those in domestic duty; she notes that "the peculiar combination of invisibility and vigilance personified in the domestic woman came to represent the principle of domestic economy itself"(81). The links of the culture are here, then. Not only is the whole local culture passed on with its economy intact, but, because of their participation in the event, the roles are passed on as well. Mother will assume the role of grandmother; daughter, of mother. If, as an adult, Barbauld perpetuates the actual event of washing day, she *could* fulfil Berry's purpose for conserving culture, but as an adult

who writes of the event, Barbauld *has* preserved the culture of the occurrence according to de Certeau's precepts.

But what exactly does the work of this event entail? As chronicler of washing day, Barbauld presents us with a local culture that may be very alien to those who have not participated in such an event. For the twentieth-century reader with automatic washing and drying machines or one who visits an urban coin laundry or one who uses laundry services, the event may seem distant and amusing, but beneath the humour and nostalgia, Barbauld constructs an accurate picture of the actual work that takes place on washing day. First, she presents washing day as an emotionally as well as a physically demanding day. One complete day devoted to the labours of laundry; the entire household disrupted for the event; all the female members of the household plus hired washerwomen involved in the arduous task. Each washer approaches the day "[w]ith bowed soul"(10), "for to that day nor peace belongs/ [n]or comfort"(12-3). When "the red-arm'd washers" come, they "chase repose"(14). Neither "pleasant smile, not quaint device of mirth/ [e]'er [visit] that day"(14-5). The events are even frightening enough to scare the cat from its place in the kitchen into the parlour. Second, all activities become subordinate to the washing except for the watching of the weather as:

. anxious looks
 Cast at a lowering sky, if sky should lower.
 From the last evil, oh preserve us, heavens!
 For should the skies pour down, adieu to all
 Remains of quiet: (20-4)

Participants in this local culture need not be reminded of the "sad disasters - dirt and gravel stains"(25) when lines snap after lines become too heavy with sodden clothes or when the dog knocks down the linen-horse; however, readers today may find this culture alien and fail to understand the enormous amount of work it constituted. Bridget Hill in *Women, Work & Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* and Jane Rendall in *Women in an Industrializing Society: England 1750-1880*, confirm the hard work of washing. Washerwomen often arrived at three or four in the morning; heavy containers of water had to be fetched from some distance and often from a town's single water pipe shared by the entire population of the town and its surroundings; food preparation was often forgone on washing day since washing utensils and water-carrying utensils often had as their first purpose cooking and since stoves were being used to heat water; and cleaning agents were often harsh elements such as lye and urine. Barbauld attempts to put the stress of the day in perspective in her comparison of housewife to historicized figures:

Saints have been calm while stretched upon the rack,
 And Guatimozin⁹ smil'd on burning coals;
 But never yet did housewife notable
 Greet with a smile a rainy washing day. (29-32)

⁹ " 'Guatimozin, the nephew and son-in-law of Montezuma, was the last of the Mexican Emperors. He defended his country against the Spaniards, with admirable courage and fortitude, to the last extremity. He was finally taken prisoner by Cortes, who completed the infamy of his bloody career in America, by putting this young gallant Prince, first to the torture, and then to an ignominious death'(Monthly Review 61 [1779]:70n). ALB probably read about Guatimozin in William Robertson's *History of America* (1777), book 5, Sect.47." (McCarthy & Kraft, *Notes* 298).

In Barbauld's description, execution and martyrdom are easily compared to washing day. On the other hand, the work of this place also involves fun, especially in the retelling of the events of the day. Not meaning to demean or discount the work of the place, Barbauld seems to delight in her tongue-in-cheek comments and use of hyperbole. Events are raised to epic proportion as the watching of the sky for clouds is compared to the kind of disaster which might have caused heroes such as Odysseus ruin by ship-wreck. The effects of bad weather on washing day are raised to the proportion that they are seen as more disastrous to the participants than the tortures before death were regarded by famous martyrs. The image of the dog knocking over linen-horses may bring tears to the washers, but to the onlooker, the event has all the elements of slapstick comedy.

What Barbauld's construction delineates for us, then, is the *before* to our present culture, wherein Barbauld's household completes the laundry in a useful and helpful way. What we have in the twentieth century is the *after*, wherein none of us is an expert within this culture and we depend on experts to advise us on the proper method and detergent. We are merely a market for consumer goods, consumers not to our own local economy but to great commercial economy. We are urged to buy *Maytag* appliances, *Tide* detergent, whiter whites and softer softness. Each purchase we make does not benefit the local economy but the commercial economy of the city. As Berry notes, raw materials are drawn from the country and returned to the country as comestibles. So Barbauld has constructed a time capsule in which she depicts the act of washing day as it was enacted in the late eighteenth-century. As Berry has pointed out,

with the loss of local culture comes a loss of knowledge, memory and local economy. What is so valuable within "Washing-Day", then, is Barbauld's clear rendering of a lost local culture, the culture of washing day.

But we must not be quick to leave Barbauld's "Washing-Day," because the local culture constructed within the poem is not limited to the washing day culture alone. Barbauld includes other uses "of the place and how the place was lived in and used" as well. Earlier, I introduced the father whose position seemed usurped for the day of washing. What then was his position within washing-day culture? He certainly is neglected; on days other than washing day, he expected to be fussed over with his "study swept", a "nicely dusted coat/Or usual 'tendance"(35-6), but on washing day, his whole world is overturned. He cannot get any attention even if his stockings have "yawning rents" which "Gape wide as Erebus"(37-8), nor can he expect to walk quietly and think in "Some snug recess impervious"(39); no place within the house remains quiet. Similarly, if he chooses to take his "'customed garden walks," he will find his beautiful gardens under the weight of laundry. The world of laundry usurps his world; the world of women subjugates his. Symbolically, as women's poetry of the eighteenth century moves from the "political" world of the male to the "domestic" world of the female, from its "language of politics" to the "language of sexual relations," the domain and sensibilities of the male within the household are secondary to those of the women and washing. Similarly, the children feel neglected; shoes are lost in the mud and no one

comforts the "whimpering boy¹⁰"(7); the narrator expecting her usual cuddles, treats, stories and attention finds herself banished to grandmother's care where perhaps the only attention she can glean is by being a pest and teasing grandmother. Furthermore, except for the washerwomen who, when washing as professionals, seem single-minded in their attempt to finish the washing, everyone in the house has set aside the normal routine to accommodate the event. Maids have neglected their tidying, dusting, indulgence of children and pleasant talk for the task at hand; mother neglects supervision of her husband, meals, children and everyday duties for this special, yet ordinary, routine-breaking, but routinely necessary work. Similarly by contrast, the unlucky visitor who met with a lack of hospitality informs us of the usual customs afforded a visitor in this culture. First, Barbault informs us that the visit was not an appointed visit; it was on the whim of the visitor. She warns, "[W]oe to the friend/ [w]hose evil stars have urged him forth to claim/ [o]n such a day the hospitable rites"(46-8). Secondly, here she informs us that the visitor can expect a certain level hospitality or "rites". He can expect to be invited to dinner and engage in lively conversation with the household members, a kind of neighbourly hospitality and exchange not often evident today.

On the other hand, Barbault is not confined by the house nor the day; she is also outward looking, examining the world around her and the future. Barbault is not content to stick with the stories of her immediate culture but draws in the classic literature and

¹⁰ Could this whimpering boy epitomize the adult males' real position on washing day? Could they also be wishing to whimper at their lack of attention as well? Furthermore, the whimpering of any of the male characters points to the irony of the situation; they are whimpering as the women do the laundry for the household, certainly including the laundry of the men who have not raised a hand to help in the project.

reference. Already, we have examined her reference to classic literature in the Muses, religion in the martyrdom of the saints, earlier history in Montezuma's nephew Guatimozin, and British drama in her knowledge of Shakespeare's works, but Barbauld also refers to current science as well in her reference to Montgolfier. The Montgolfier brothers, Joseph and Jacques, had recently "launched the first hot-air balloon in Annonay, France, in the summer of 1773¹¹, inspiring other ballooning experiments throughout Europe, including Britain during the following years" ("Notes" 298)¹². This new science seems to fascinate Barbauld as she compares the children playing with bubble pipes to the launching of the Montgolfiers' balloon. As we saw before, Barbauld makes use of both the Muses and the quotation from Shakespeare; she takes both and moulds them to her own construction and use. She takes the original versions and makes them particular for her own use. Second, she uses the reference to the saints and to Guatimozin as comparison to the housewives on washing day, reducing the significance of these two historic references for the purpose of humorous analogy, and at the same time elevating the women superior to the celebrated figures. Third, in her reference to the great balloon of the Montgolfiers, Barbauld compares the balloon to the soap bubbles which children create through the "hollow bole/ [o]f pipe"(79-80); she compares "[t]he sports of children and the toils of men"(84); she equates the feats of science with the kind of domestic science practised by children on a washing day. Perhaps here too, as she

¹¹ "Washing-Day" was first published unsigned in December, 1797.

¹² Barbauld has much reason for her interest in ballooning since the British credited her close friend, Joseph Priestley, with much of the science behind ballooning through his recent research on oxygen.

did when she evoked the Muses, Barbauld may be playing with the construction of the reference to Montgolfier. She raises the sport of the children to the toils of the men, but is she lowering the toils of the men to the sport of the children? Is this Barbauld's little joke? Is she suggesting that the Montgolfier brothers are *playing*? Our twentieth-century quip, "you can tell the age of the boys by the size of their toys" might be applicable here. Although Barbauld seems more outward looking, when she constructs her local culture, the construction is grounded on a local economy rather than a wider one. True, she is aware of a larger culture, but she constructs the elements of her culture by selecting from the larger culture and particularizing for her local culture. On the other hand, by using references to the Montgolfiers and other famous figures, Barbauld shows that her intended audience, those who will listen to ... or read ... her story, are not locals but the educated, those who could gather the wide range of allusions. And, once again, Barbauld illustrates Nancy Armstrong's position of domestic fiction's move from "the political world run by men" to "the more subtle nuances of behaviour [indicating] what one was really worth" (4). Indeed, I would argue that her references to the larger scope of science by referring to the Montgolfiers is not diminishing in any way, but adding to the local culture of "Washing-Day" since it specifies this local culture, in this case, not by place but by time. Rather than pin-pointing a physical location, the inclusion of the reference to the Montgolfier flights helps to establish a time frame from which to date the culture of the poem. Berry has not identified local culture in terms of a certain time period, only by place; however, I would argue that local culture certainly

becomes unique because of its position in history as well as its geographical and economical position. Berry suggests:

The only true and effective "operator's manual for spaceship earth" is not a book any human will ever write; it is hundreds of thousands of local cultures. (Berry 166)

It follows, then, there must be hundreds of thousands of local cultures dependent on time. Barbauld's construction of "Washing-Day," then, is not universal in either time or space. It represents a local culture for a specific space on earth and for a distinctive era. Although the community is aware of the larger culture around it, the prime importance of retaining the local culture is to the local community itself.

And finally, within this interesting local culture created in the poem, is the space of the poet, herself. Previously, we have noted her position as child in the culture as observer of action, listener to story and chronicler; her mandate according to Berry is to listen to the stories of the culture, remember them and to pass them on. Certainly, Barbauld has fulfilled this mandate, but as poet, Barbauld is artificer; she controls the shape and construction of the poem. She recounts not only what might be the local culture, but her vision of this culture. She tells us that she "well remember[s], when a child, the awe/ [t]his day struck into [her]"(58), but she also "would sit [her] down, and ponder much/ [w]hy washings were"(78-9). But she seems to think of the progress of poetry making as well; there is much similarity between washing day as constructed by Barbauld and poetry making. Both are inspired, but by different Muses; both are hard work and although they may not occur on a daily basis, both grow out of daily activity; both require the setting aside of the daily routine, perhaps neglecting daily chores and

loved ones; both involve language and interaction. At the end of "Washing-Day", the children play with soap bubbles, which she constructs as a metaphor for poetry. When the bubble is complete, it becomes airborne as does a poem. It is shaped and complete and now must be tested against the elements. In the poem, the bubble pops as a fragile poem which seems whole might self-destruct once it leaves the sheltered environment of the poet. We do not know what pops the bubble; what might explode the poem might be anything from the poet's self-doubts to a hostile public. Here, Barbauld suggests the explosion of bubble and poem might well be because the poem is frivolous and entertaining just as bubble-blowing is entertaining to children at play. The analogy might well be extended with the thought that as the bubble floats upward, it will pop just as her poem ends with a metaphorical pop at this point. This analogy, then, would seem to imply a frivolity in "Washing-Day"; it seems to indicate the light-hearted picture of the event of no consequence. And yet, there is a genuine affection on the part of the poet; Barbauld is participant, chronicler and supporter of this weekly event. Furthermore, Barbauld's bubble takes on a variety of other meanings as well; Barbauld uses it to equate science with play, toying with nature, perhaps even to mock men¹³ as they toy with science as children play with bubbles. Similarly, exploration of new ideas and creativity, as with poetry, may be a kind of game, finding the right mixture of components, arranging them in the correct order, finding them beginning to react, only

¹³ Barbauld was close friends with scientists such as Joseph Priestley. Barbauld wrote "The Mouse's Petition" when she learned that Priestley was going to use a mouse to test suffocating gases. The poem is playfully constructed from the mouse's perspective, but clearly shows Barbauld's disapproval of Priestley's experiment.

to have them self-destruct in front of the creator. Thus "Washing-Day" not only deals with the mundane, but also with play, invention, creativity, poetry-making and science. Barbauld not only brings the outside in, but takes the inside out, making the macro, micro and the micro, macro.

And so, whether or not Barbauld has consciously set out to preserve the local culture of "Washing-Day," or to provide a light-hearted entertainment based on an everyday event, the poem functions as an artifact which delineates the events of a particular workday in the life of a middle-class home in the country in the late eighteenth century. Barbauld has fulfilled Berry's mandate for preserving local culture. She has both "actively and thoughtfully" collected the many particles of the stories of the day, and turned them into a consolidated memory. The stories are multi-generational and include the tales brought by other members of the culture as well. By constructing "Washing-Day," Barbauld has created a unifying force which may not preserve the actions of the day, but which will preserve the memory of event and place. The poem captures and conveys to us two centuries later the events of the day, the people involved, their roles, essential detail about time and place, specifically in the home described and generally during the era. And Barbauld certainly shows an amused nostalgia for the place, creating a sense of affection for an event which is part of her culture and heritage. For according to Berry, the only way to preserve or to revive local culture is :

not from the outside by instruction of visiting experts, but from the inside by the ancient rule of neighbourliness, by the love of precious things, and by the wish to be at home. (Berry 169)

Barbauld is the inside expert here; through her skill as poet, she safeguards the event of washing day as she experienced it in the eighteenth century for both readers who were familiar with the event and place, and for those who would never have the opportunity.

By celebrating her domestic experience in "Washing-Day", Anna Letitia Barbauld helps shape modern culture, one which celebrates less the significance of great political events and more the nuances of everyday social relations, one which commemorates woman's space more than man's; through her precise details, she celebrated the dichotomy between then and now.

CHAPTER TWO

The sweets to find must be your task

(Barbauld, "Lines with a Wedding Present" in *Poems* 8)

He was new to the village ... a blacksmith from England, come to shoe horses in the quarries. The village blacksmith shop was one side of our house and the village well was on the other. He had to pass my house to get water for the shop from the pump ... and that's how we met.

(Laura Pringle Shering {1891-1978} on how she met her husband paraphrased)

Mother and me are going to go home, run around the bed three times, jump in ... and ... go to sleep.

(Edgar George Shering {1882-1974} at his 60th wedding anniversary)

When my eighty-seven year-old grandfather made his quip at his sixtieth wedding anniversary party, I am sure he wasn't aware that he was perpetuating the culture of the village where he has lived for the past fifty-eight years. His jest was, in fact, a witty lampoon of a gossipy anecdote recounted in the village since the 1930s. Its source was the conversation between two locals discussing the recent marriage of another pair of locals, a farmer and his new wife. Both newly weds were about sixty-five years old and had been "walking out together" for about thirty years. Finally, they had gone to the rectory for a simple service with the rector's wife as the only witness:

The first villager asked: "And what did they do for their honeymoon?"

The second snorted: "I think they went home ... went out to the barn and did the chores ... went into the house ... ran around the bed three times ... and jumped in."

The content of Grandpa's wisecrack reminds us of the awkwardness of simple country manners, the austerity prevalent during the depression, the modesty of wedding customs when measured against many of those today and the significance of oral culture in smaller communities. By the time my grandfather mimicked the story in 1970, the original speakers and victims were both nameless and faceless and probably dead. It was the story, a part of village culture, which implied the singularities while omitting the specifics of the participants. The story is "*marked by uses*" (21) as de Certeau would say in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau argues:

Like the bridge or chess articles in *The New York Times*, the stories could be formulated in a special code, thus making it clear that every event is a particular application of the formal framework. But in replaying the games and telling about them, these accounts record the rules and the moves simultaneously. To be memorized as well as memorable, they are *repertories of schemas of action* between partners. With the attraction that the element of surprise introduces, these mementos teach the tactics possible within a given (social) system. (22-3)

De Certeau follows his own *schema of action* to particularize his argument:

Tales and legends seem to have the same role. They are deployed, like games, in a space outside of and isolated from daily competition, that of the past, the marvelous, the original. In that space can thus be revealed, dressed as gods or heroes, the models of good or bad ruses that can be used everyday. Moves, not truths, are recounted. (23)

Thus, if we follow de Certeau's reasoning, oftentimes generalities imply particularities when read in a specific framework. My grandfather's jest, although lacking in

specifics, hit its target because his audience, skilled in the culture of the village, understood the "moves".

By juxtaposing factors which weighed generally on eighteenth-century marriage against particulars supplied by Barbauld in her poems about marriage, then, the twentieth-century reader is likely to gain insight into the "singularities" of the marriage described. Unlike the difficulty in finding material with which to analyze women's roles¹⁴ in the eighteenth century, contemporary material on marriage is much more plentiful. Bridget Hill tells us in *Women, Work & Sexual Politics in the Eighteenth Century* that:

There is a mass of diaries, journals, memoirs, and autobiographies of both men and women of the middle class from which we learn something of their motives for marriage, hopes for, frustrations with, and disappointment in the marriage experience. Even so, often it is a one-sided account. It is not easy to get inside a marriage relationship and know how it was perceived by both spouses. (175)

Within this mass of information, however, Anna Letitia Barbauld represents a link between this general view and her individual view on marriage. She was a woman who interacted with, and, of course, was a product of, her time, but had particularities within this marriage which the other records cannot document. First and simply, there is Barbauld's personal view of the general concept of marriage. As a product of her middle-class, Presbyterian upbringing, Anna Letitia held a unique position. Overeducated for her class and gender to the probable exclusion from her peers, Anna Letitia shows, within her work, liberal dissenting views in direct contradiction with

¹⁴ As noted in Chapter One.

other views which are distinctly conservative. Second, according to Le Breton, Anna Letitia's parents held strong objections to the marriage¹⁵. Third, Barbauld's courtship and marriage was troubled because Rochemont's lack of direction, depression and eventual suicide; Barbauld had been warned of Rochemont's difficulties and may well have considered these warning as she wrote her early marriage poems. Fourth, Barbauld was a noted writer, one who not only looked out at the world, but had the world look in at her. Many of her comments, although in primary context are private and particular, may, at the same time, be created for public consumption and advice. Further, trends affecting writers in general exerted forces to which Barbauld may have reacted in her poetry making. The focus, here in this chapter then, will be Barbauld's poems which are on the general topic of marriage, but, if examined in the context of these four influences, will reveal particularities of married life within both the Barbauld home and eighteenth-century culture.

Contextually, the concept of marriage in the eighteenth century was complex. On one hand, marriage in all classes was probably more an economic relationship than a romantic one. Bridget Hill states:

One thing all marriages in the eighteenth century had in common was close links with the economic circumstances of the couple concerned. This applies to the mercenary marriages of the upper class, which were often mere financial transactions, and to those 'prudent' marriages of the middle class summed up by advice of Matthew Boulton: 'Don't marry

¹⁵ Le Breton reports that "from the change of opinions he formed [at the dissenting Warrington Academy], [Rochemont] felt obliged to renounce his expectations from the Church, though by doing so he raised the further obstacle of want of fortune and profession to the objections already felt by [Anna Letitia's] parents to the union with their daughter" (Le Breton 41-2).

for money, but marry where money is.’ It also applies to servants in husbandry or domestic servants who agreed to marry once their joint savings were sufficient to buy a cottage, furnish it with bare necessities, and even, perhaps, buy a cow or other livestock. It applies equally to the apprentice who on completion of his apprenticeship married a servant maid and set up as journeyman in a rented apartment of one or two rooms. (174)

For Rochemont Barbauld, there was much benefit from pursuing Anna Letitia Aikin. A published poet moving freely in the company of other literati, daughter of a Presbyterian Dissenter clergyman, skilled in French and Italian with a knowledge of Latin and Greek, Anna Letitia would be the appropriate and desirable partner for co-management of the newly opened Palgrave School within his Suffolk parish¹⁶. Because of her upbringing, Anna Letitia would be aware of the role of a clergyman’s wife, her scholarly talents would assist Rochemont’s pedagogical pursuits, and her reputation as a poet would perhaps enhance the prestige of the school. In return, Rochemont may have offered economic security. As a middle-class woman, Anna Letitia could not look beyond her class for marriage; as a daughter of a clergyman, she had no expectation of inherited land or money; as a young woman educated far beyond the level of her peers¹⁷, she may have looked with condescension at middle-class suitors or have been seen as a threat by many men of her class.

¹⁶ There is some discrepancy to the location of the Barbauld’s new charge: Le Breton claims Suffolk, whereas, McCarthy and Kraft claim Norfolk. McCarthy and Kraft’s source, the Norfolk Record Office, seems more reliable than family memory.

¹⁷ Certainly educated beyond her female peers, but for the most part, beyond males of her class as well.

Speculation as to the economic motives and benefits of their marriage aside, we must return to the fact that Rochemont and Anna Letitia's marriage was only one marriage within the eighteenth-century landscape. Bridget Hill qualifies her previous remark:

But if from this claim of a shared characteristic any idea of homogeneity of marriages is drawn, it would be wholly misleading. To talk about the institution of marriage in this period as though it were something monolithic that the majority of people experienced would be to distort the truth. (174)

So although Rochemont and Anna Letitia fit the mold in terms of the mutual economic benefit of their marriage, Hill warns that this motive may not be paramount.

Lawrence Stone offers another side to the argument in his *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500 -1800* (1977); he feels that the criteria of affection became increasingly important in the eighteenth century and that furthermore, problems resulted:

Another reason for the frustration of many women was that this shift of motives for marriage from the concrete ones of power, status and money to the imponderable one of affection probably worked to the benefit more of men than women. This was because social custom dictated that the initiative of the courtship process should be with the male and not the female. The former was, therefore, free to follow his personal inclinations wherever they might lead him, but the latter was, at any rate in theory, restricted in her choice to those who made advances to her. (398)

Stone's argument is compelling; if Barbauld were not drawn into a marriage, a marriage which, in fact, held some danger, by an economic union, then perhaps she was drawn by her emotion and to overcome "the objections already felt by Miss Aikin's parents to [Rochemont's] union with their daughter"(Le Breton 42). Le Breton quotes Lucy Aikin's, Barbauld's niece, evaluation of the affection:

Her attachment to Mr. Barbauld was the illusion of a romantic fancy - not of a tender heart. Had her true affections been early called forth by a more genial home atmosphere, she would never have allowed herself to be caught by crazy demonstrations of amorous rapture, set off with theatrical French manners, or have conceived of such exaggerated passion as a safe foundation on which to raise the sober structure of domestic happiness. My father ascribed that ill-starred union in great part to the baleful influence of the 'Nouvelle Heloise,' Mr. B. impersonating St. Preux. She was informed by a true friend that he had experienced one attack of insanity, and was urged to break off the engagement on that account. --- 'Then' answered she, 'if I were now to disappoint him, he would certainly go mad.' To this there could be no reply; and with a kind of desperate generosity she rushed upon her melancholy destiny. (42-3)

And we certainly see that affection within her poetry; in "To Mr. Barbauld, with a Map of the Land of Matrimony" (1773-4), Barbauld delineates a picture of marriage as a state to be wished for¹⁸. Her husband-to-be is constructed as:

The sailor worn by toil and wet with storms
As in the wished-for port secure he rides
With transport numbers o'er the dangers past
From threatening quicksands and adverse tides.

(1-4)

Barbauld employs "A New Map of the Land of Matrimony", a map unsigned and published in London in 1772 to focus her argument. She sees the bachelor life as one in which "Joyous he tells among his jocund mates/ Of loud alarms that chase his broken sleep"(5-6); her view of bachelorhood is one of "sailor worn by toil and wet with

¹⁸ McCarthy and Kraft argue on the basis of "internal evidence" that the poem was written "near the end of ALA's and RB's difficult courtship. The obstacles to be overcome included her parent's disapproval and the uncertainty of RB's career choice. On 10 November 1773, after much vacillating, RB accepted a congregation at Diss in Norfolk and agreed to manage school there; in his acceptance letter he anticipates the fulfilment of my dearest wishes', marriage to ALA" (McCarthy and Kraft, "Notes" 273).

storms" searching for security in the "secure port" of marriage. Within the metaphor, then, bachelorhood is a sea of storms; whereas, marriage encompasses the stability of solid ground. Marriage is seen in the poem as desirable, but the progress toward the marriage is a stormy one, strewn with "threatening quicksands, adverse tides" and "ceaseless toils" (22). Just as seafarers employ the North Star for navigation, men are led by "every kinder star"(7) and "Hope, [their] star [shining] faintly through the gloom"(15). Once again, Barbauld creates a tension as she looks forward to marriage with Rochemont. Will marriage be as:

... --- this land through Fancy's glass descried,
 The bright Elysian fields her pencil drew, ---
 Has time the dear ideas realized?
 Or are her optics false, her tints untrue?

(17-20)

Here, Barbauld's use of optics and nautical telescope reinforces the concept of her restricted or idealized vision toward the future, while extending the nautical metaphor of the poem. She refuses to view the marriage as either mundane or idealized since those "golden hours" will have "ceaseless toils", offering her toil as well in her assertion that no matter how much "the restless seaman longs to change"(25), "[she her] destined captive [will] hold to fast"(32) and he shall not " ... for no returning prow/ E'er cut the ocean which [his] bark has past"(29-30). Barbauld has accepted the "New Map of the Land of Matrimony" and its construction with land as marriage and stability in opposition to the Ocean of Love as bachelorhood with its storms; the land belongs to woman and the ocean to man. The woman, then, is seen within this construction as the stabilizing force in the marriage; he struggles with "toils", storms" and "alarms". He

may even boast to his fellow bachelors of his exploits in the stormy sea of courtship and romance, but from the safety of port. The female voice is sure of her romantic position; her goal is clear. However, the male figure is racked by "jealous Doubt" and "boding Fears" (13-14). Once again the tension is evident: why is she so sure about marriage and he so tentative? Le Breton and Aikin point to Rochemont as the aggressor in the relationship, but if we apply this biographical information to the poem, the irony becomes apparent. It is she who is cajoling and convincing here; he is caught in a storm of doubt and jealousy. The doubts of a young man about to make a life-long decision may be natural, but a question remains: why does she accuse him of having "jealous Doubt"? Once again, by applying biography as an "epistemological" influence, I would argue that Rochemont may have much for which to be jealous of Anna Letitia; she is well-educated ... it seems more than he ..., renowned as a poet, capable and stable. But more important, I would argue that this reading of her diction within this section of the poem informs us of the position of a middle-class women of marrying age in the late eighteenth century. Anna Letitia is working at some odds here as she and Rochemont approach marriage; she is positive and he, perhaps evasive. These actions may well suggest that for Anna Letitia, an overly educated, famous poet with literati connections, approaching her thirty-first birthday, the prospect of other marriage proposals might be scarce¹⁹. I would argue that her construction here informs about the education of middle-class women of this time period: marriage for women seems to be an essential state, while education beyond gender and class was a

¹⁹ Biographers do not mention any other suitors.

handicap for women either because it created actual jealousy in the suitor, or imagined jealousy in the woman. Thus Barbauld's construction informs of a particular marriage, one in which gender, class and education combine to form barriers to the couple.

Furthermore, Barbauld does not construct a simple scenario with marriage a neat conclusion: she accuses Rochemont of being drawn to the stormy seas again, but she will keep him from leaving with her strong love. So in the poem's construction, the male is the hero, but the female is the homebody; in courtship, he is active, but she, passive; in marriage, however, he becomes passive, and she becomes active as she holds him captive; the male, like Ulysses, may wander, but the female, like Penelope, must be the stability; the male pals around with "his jocund mates", while she is alone; he has action and power, but she has commitment and emotions. Although the construction of the poem seems gendered with Rochemont actively setting on his voyage-quest to seek Anna Letitia, when measured against Lawrence Stone's argument, the poem is somewhat atypical. If, as Stone argues, the male holds all the power and the female is "restricted in her choice", "To Mr. Barbauld with a Map" does not fit the mold; as speaker in the poem, Anna Letitia seems to be the pursuer with Rochemont as the pursued; she is the instructor, with him as the instructed. She cautions that after the safe port of marriage, restlessness and boredom may draw the sailor to sea again. As instructor, she has not idealized marriage. Yet, I question if we might not find here a woman who is not only convincing her man to settle down, but an ingenuous woman convincing herself that this marriage is right for her as well; emotionally, she is convinced, but intellectually, she still has questions. She sees the dangers but is

convinced that love will prevail and provide a solution to his problems. So although the poem documents the "moves," more importantly, the subtext may reveal the subtleties of this particular eighteenth-century marriage.

Now, it would seem that the tone of this poem is playful in its use of the map as central reference. The map might be described as a "cute" source, the type of illustration passed for amusement, but really holding no substance. On the other hand, Barbauld's metaphorical construction "holds eloquent descriptions of the love" (McCarthy and Kraft, "Introduction" in *Poems* xxii-iii), but if we remember Lucy Aikin's evaluation of the attachment as "the illusion of a romantic fancy", perhaps we must reconsider the poem. If, then, we re-examine "To Mr. Barbauld, with a Map of the Land of Matrimony" in terms of Lucy Aikin's criticism, another tension appears: the construction of the poem perhaps reveals naïveté on the part of the speaker. The illustration, "The New Map of the Land of Matrimony" (McCarthy and Kraft 89) was presented to Rochemont by Barbauld on the day of their wedding along with her poem. The construction of the map, her inspiration, seems metaphorically based on Greek myth and geographically based on a map of the Greek Islands with the "ocean of love" surrounding a number of islands with names such as "Friesland" in the "Frozen Sea", "the Land of Matrimony", the "Enchanted Islands", "Prudence Island", "Languish Island", and "Repulse Island" containing "Lovers leap" separated from "Summers Islands" by the "Straits of uncertainty" (McCarthy and Kraft 89). Within the poem, the male figure becomes one of the great hero seafarers such as Ulysses or Jason, men driven by the love and adventure enough to desert the women they love to be tossed

by tempest and danger. Once again within this construction as in "Washing-Day," Barbauld uses classic terminology and references as the seafarer looks to "Elysian fields" (18) and hopes to reside "in Hymen's happy bowers" (24). And again, she particularizes the myth to raise Rochemont to mythic proportion. And yet in some ways, the construction seems silly: the notion of this "upright, benevolent, generous [and] independent spirit" (Le Breton 43), a dissenting Presbyterian depicted as a rough sailor, the idea of this clergyman as boasting to "his jocund mates" about his adventures, both seem to be created out of pure flattery or fantasy. On the other side of the tension, however, is the notion that sailors evoke danger. Barbauld seems aware here of the dangers within marriage; her parents and friends have raised objections to her own union with Rochemont. Perhaps she relishes the danger, but I would argue that it is noteworthy that the marriage within the poem will remain in safe harbour; she does not suggest that as a pair they should set sail on this "Ocean of Love." To return to the naïve side of the poem, the idealized construction points to Lawrence Stone's evaluation of the eighteenth-century relationship based on affection rather than economics, but of course, as a woman, Anna Letitia had been the focus of the courtship, unable to "initiate the process" and "restricted in her choice to [Rochemont] who made advances to her". Yet there are signals within the poem which again suggest we cannot abandon the poem here; Barbauld has "initiated her own process." She was a scholar, a poet and a teacher who was pursued in marriage; I would argue that within "To Mr. Barbauld, with a Map of the Land of Matrimony," we find a young woman who is aware of the dangers of the match, but is too much under the influence of affection to

heed her own caution. There is no mention within the poem of any economic benefits of the union, only of affection. Although, as Stone observed, it was the male who made the advances, the poem shows that there were certainly ways in which the female might encourage.

If we step outside the Barbauld courtship to examine Barbauld's portrait of two sisters actively engaged in courtship, we find that although women might not "do the asking" in that courtship process, they were neither helpless nor powerless. Barbauld has constructed the two young women much like young Dianas hunting down their innocent victims. If her descriptions of two young sisters in "[Sarah Rigby]" and "[Elizabeth Rigby]" (*Poems* 66) are accurate, then, Barbauld sees their particular courtship as playful with the female taking much of the responsibility and action. However, the poems do not epitomize the ideal courtship, but act as warnings. She describes Elizabeth as:

Celia, the queen of sports and sudden smiles,
Gay rising hopes, and loves creating wiles,
Celia, in beautys native treasures bright
Stands like the laughing year and breathes delight.

(Barbauld, *Poems* 1-4)

Similarly talented with the wiles to capture a man, Sarah is consummate charm:

Skill'd in art to fan the lover's fire,
And nurse the tender buds of young desire:
Soft smiles, whose dimpling eddies smoothly play
And suck in careless hearts, an easy prey. (Barbauld, *Poems* 1-4)

The speaker in "[Sarah Rigby]" warns men, "Fly, fly the dangers of so sweet a face/And if you would not love forbear to gaze"(13-4). When it comes to affairs of the

heart, the picture of the male is one of victim of the female's wiles. However, after Elizabeth is stricken by love, the speaker observes:

Then shall thy frolick air be dash'd with sighs
And a new softness steal into thy eyes,
How can that heart be free from love's alarms
Which pity softens and which friendship warms [.] (15-8)

So there is a difference in this construction of the *before* and *after* of courtship. There is a game to be played until love is generated between the two lovers and then, not only the game, but the players are tempered. Before love, the woman is deception and tiger, but after, she is companionship and lamb. Just as in "To Mr. Barbauld with a Map," the early part of courtship and marriage may not be related; early courtship is all action, but marriage seems to be dormant; courtship seems to be sexual and entrapment, while marriage seems to be companionship and partnership, two people in safe harbour together, rather than one at home and one at sea. Barbauld's construction within the two poems documents the *game* of courtship, but then tempers the portrait by chronicling the warmth of affection within a developing relationship in "[Elizabeth Rigby]". Although Barbauld shows some humour and playfulness in her description of early courtship, her attitude towards a deeper relationship is conservative. Playful description becomes moral warning.

Returning the focus "To Mr. Barbauld with a Map," let us evaluate the construction of the poem as influenced by a particular marriage, the marriage of Anna Letitia Aikin with Rochemont Barbauld who was subject to "fits of insane fury" (Le Breton 43) and "the uncertainty of RB's career choice" (McCarthy and Kraft 273), a marriage which was disapproved by Aikin's parents. Here once again the economy of

exploration is metaphorically related to that of this particular marriage. The ocean with its dangers ... storms, shoals and hazardous 'other' islands, in the general context ... compares to the risks inherent in life, but takes on more specific meaning when read in de Certeau's "special code". The surface and depth of the ocean with its many unseen pitfalls becomes analogous to the perils which jeopardize Rochemont; his fits of rage and depression are hidden under his charming surface threatening to erupt at any moment and destroy him and his union with Anna Letitia; "adverse tides" could well represent her parents' doubts and objections to the marriage. He, the seaman-explorer, travels these exciting and dangerous waters, similar to the voyage of life, but specifically parallel to Rochemont's situation. As with the explorer and the ocean, the voyage is his means of exploration which puts Rochemont in hazard; just as the sea on which the explorer makes his voyage of exploration is both vehicle and foe, Rochemont's mind with its depths and dangers encompasses the dichotomy of both Rochemont's means of teaching and preaching, and the means of his despair in mental illness. The object of the explorer's search, obviously new-found land, takes as its general context the impending nuptials of Rochemont and Anna Letitia, but specifically, implies Rochemont's finding the calm *without* the storm through his relationship with his new wife. If this "epistemological" level is valid, then, I would argue that Anna Letitia, herself, is on dangerous seas; to naïvely believe that marriage could and would have a calming effect on wanderlust is innocent, but to think that her influence could possibly calm the raging power of mental illness is dangerous, a fact which she finds later in life as Rochemont "one day at dinner, seized a knife from the table and pursued

her round the room" (Le Breton 121). Does she in her own mind see his bouts of rage as "jealous Doubt", "boding Fears" or "the tortured breast" which can be easily overcome by "Hope, our star"? This particular reading of the poem suggests a naïveté about marriage. Lucy Aikin, as quoted by Le Breton, tells us:

[Anna Letitia] was informed by a true friend that he had experienced one attack of insanity, and was urged to break off the engagement on that account. --'Then' answered she, 'if I were now to disappoint him, he would certainly go mad.' To this there could be no reply ; and with a kind of desperate generosity she rushed upon her melancholy destiny.
(43)

Of course from the twentieth-century perspective, it is evident that she believes she is the tempering force for his illness, but this explication raises a number of questions. Why did she not heed her friend's warning or her parents objections? Was her commitment to Rochemont blind or was she reacting with a sense of guilt? The marriage poems do not answer these questions, but reveal conservative attitudes toward love and marriage and a real lack of knowledge about mental illness.

Before leaving the economy of exploration, I wish to digress momentarily to discuss the appropriateness of the use of this analogy at this particular time, 1773. If one considers the number of expeditions throughout this time period, one can see both the appropriateness and appeal for its use. In Canada alone, Britain was heavily involved in exploration. *The Illustrated History of Canada* informs us that:

When English cartographer John Mitchell published his map of North America in 1755, he drew Hudson Bay, the Labrador and Atlantic coasts, and the lower St. Lawrence with some precision, but his Great Lakes only broadly resembled their counterparts on modern maps At best all that lay west of Hudson Bay, the Nelson River, and the forks of the Saskatchewan River remained *terra incognita* to Europeans in 1763.
(200)

Furthermore, the Seven-Years War (1756-63) was recently waged over the unexplored territories and the beaver trade. A plethora of exploration by the British was taking place throughout Canada: the fur trade was evident in daily fashion; exploration to fuel trade was encouraged by Adam Smith's *The Wealth of the Nation* (1776); explorers and those in their company, such as "Joseph Banks, the botanist in Captain Cook's expedition to Newfoundland in 1760s" (*The Illustrated History of Canada* 197) were encouraged by the abundance and diversity of raw resources to send back a profusion of observations. Travel literature, an exploration with perhaps fewer dangers, was flourishing as well with men such as Tobias Smollett and Samuel Johnson, observing their travels in writing. Women too, during the period, travelled and wrote as illustrated by Elizabeth Simcoe (1766-1850) who, as a young bride accompanying her husband, John Graves Simcoe, not only travelled recording her observations, but, as talented artist, sketching maps ... sometimes on birchbark (*Illustrated History* 206). Later Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) not only presented views of her visit to Scandinavia, but served as political propaganda as well. Thus the economy of exploration was appropriate, accessible and appealing to Barbauld's eighteenth-century reader. Furthermore, the contemporary maritime exploration allowed Barbauld to construct her poem metaphorically rather than be obliged to spell out the nuances of her ideas: exploration was dangerous; sailors evoke danger; and sailors seldom remain in port, but return to the sea over and over. From an outside view, exploration might also open other readings: exploration maps were often inaccurate and lead to dangerous places; the

destination might not prove satisfactory; or the excitement of exploration might well overpower the satisfaction of discovery. From the twentieth-century critical perspective, the analogy between the economy of exploration and marriage on the first level, and exploration and mental illness on the second illustrates de Certeau's evaluation that "every event is a particular application of the formal framework"(23).

A fourth influence upon Rochemont and Anna Letitia's marriage was her profession as a poet. At the time of composition of the poem, both Barbauld and her brother, John Aikin, were already published poets of some renown, familiar with the trends and constructs of contemporary poetry. One of the contemporary constructs on the subject of marriage was the conduct manual. Nancy Armstrong observes in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987) that:

In their effort to make young women desirable to men of a good social position, countless conduct books and works of instruction for women represented a specific configuration of sexual features as those of the only appropriate women for men at all levels of society to want as a wife. (59)

And:

During the eighteenth century, the conduct book for women became such a common phenomenon that many different kinds of writers felt compelled to add their wrinkles to the female character. Besides men like Halifax, Rochester, Swift, and Defoe -all of whom tried their hands at writing conduct books for women - there were pedagogues such as Timothy Rogers, Thomas Gisborne, and T.S. Arthur and clergymen like Rev. Thomas Broadhurst ... as well as women authors such as Sarah Taylor, Catherine E. Beecher, and the Countess Dowager of Carlisle Like Hester Chapone, Hannah More, and Maria Edgeworth²⁰, some authors made their reputations by writing conduct books, while conduct-

²⁰ Maria Edgeworth was a close friend and correspondent to Barbauld.

book authors like Mary Wollstonecraft and Erasmus Darwin were known primarily for writing in more prestigious modes. (65)

This invention opens a new frame of reference for examining Barbauld's poem to Rochemont. In this context, it would appear to be Barbauld's own attempt at writing a conduct manual, in poetry rather than prose and aimed at instructing Rochemont specifically and men in general, rather than at women. But there is no evidence of Barbauld exhibiting any life experiences or skills in this area. We recall Lucy Aikin's evaluation, "Had her affections been early called forth by a more genial home atmosphere ..." (Le Breton 42); Aikin is critical of Barbauld's socialization within the academic home of Presbyterian Dissenting clergy. There is to be further irony in the fact that Anna Letitia is writing this instruction to Rochemont since part of the duties of the clergy is instruction of moral obligation and decorum. Does this not once again point to a naïveté in Barbauld's outlook on her relationship with Rochemont? Although Lawrence Stone may hold that Rochemont, as a man, probably controlled the dynamic of courtship, the poem suggests that Anna Letitia could influence the terms of the relationship and marriage.

Nancy Armstrong notes that the economy of marriage during the eighteenth century became an exchange between gendered parties. It is here that Barbauld's *before* and *after*, her *playful* and *serious*, her *idealized* and *realistic* begin to appear as a paradox of construction rather than a contradiction. Validating her point by referring to Richardson's novel *Pamela*, Armstrong argues after all the chasing around and after Pamela's continued rebukes of Mr. B., Mr. B. declares:

I have ample possessions for us both: and you deserve to share them with me; and you shall do it, with as little reserve, as if you had brought me what the world reckons an equivalent: for, as to my own opinion, you bring me what is infinitely more valuable, an experienced truth, a well-tried virtue, and a wit and behaviour more than equal to the state you will be placed in. (Armstrong quoting Richardson (p.355) 130-1)

Armstrong explains:

Here the exchange is one between gendered parties - a wedding of her moral authority to his particular economic practices and social place. Together they compose the same domestic world that the conduct books were also intent upon making attractive to their readership. (130)

Barbauld, like Pamela, and like the conduct books, is offering moral authority; she will instruct Rochemont on what is right, just as Pamela by holding off instructed Mr. B. Of course, if one considers Barbauld's upbringing as a daughter of Presbyterian clergy, Barbauld has been raised in a world of moral authority. Now we understand the paradox of the poems: Barbauld offers moral authority on one hand, and romantic enthusiasm on the other. Barbauld has constructed herself as "moral instruction" and Rochemont as "a particular economic practice"; she provides the "schema of actions between partners," recording not only the "rules", but the "moves and the tactics" as well.

Coincidentally and perhaps ironically, Barbauld later wrote "A Biographical Account of That Author and Observations of his Writings" in *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson* (1804) in which Barbauld offers moral instruction to Pamela, Richardson and her reading public:

So long as Pamela is safely occupied in schemes to escape from her persecutor, her virtuous resistance obtains our unqualified approbation; but from the moment she begins to entertain hopes of marrying him, we admire her guarded prudence, rather than her purity of mind. She has an

end in view, an interested end, and we can only consider her as the conscious possessor of a treasure, which she is wisely resolved not to part with but for its own price. Her staying in his house a moment after she found herself at liberty to leave it, was totally unjustifiable; her repentant lover ought to have followed her to her father's cottage, and to have married her from thence. (lxiii-lxiv)

Barbauld is adamant in her moral outrage, but the outrage seems misplaced, based on Mr. B.'s faux pas in etiquette when he does not call for Pamela at her father's cottage rather than on his decision to confine a young woman against her will to win her.

Let us move forward to examine Barbauld's depiction of their marriage four and one-half years later. "To Mr. Barbauld, November 14, 1778"²¹ (*Poems* 91) shows a much more sedate relationship in her address to Rochemont as winter approaches. Here marriage and love is a relationship to be shared by the partners only; "[their] bliss, all inward and [their] own,/ Would only tarnished be, by being shown (31-32)." She makes herself "[his] empress" and "[bids him] smile"(4), making sure that he "[clears his] studious looks awhile"(1). The two look forward, shortly, to the harshness of the winter which they will endure together, and in the longer term, to that greater winter, old age which again, they will bear together. Of course, in this particular marriage, we may read the coming of winter as the onslaught of mental breakdown. Barbauld views a warm loving relationship here between husband and wife, one which although not public suggests private affection, one in which companionship is the lasting link. In spite of a "talking restless world" (33), Barbauld and Rochemont will "happy be" (34) within their private love. Barbauld's depiction of marriage is much more of a

²¹ The Barbaulds were married 26 May 1774 based on St. Elphin's Parish Register (McCarthy and Kraft 273).

partnership in which both husband and wife contribute more equally; she tells Rochemont:

A thousand pleasant arts we'll have
 To add new feathers to the wings of Time,
 And make him smoothly haste away:
 We'll use him as our slave,
 And when we please we'll bid him stay,
 And clip his wings, and make him stop to view
 Our studies, and our follies too:
 How sweet our follies are, how high our fancies climb.
(21-28)

In this depiction of the relationship, Barbauld has stressed the 'we' of the relationship in strong opposition to the 'I' and 'Thou' in the previous poem created before their marriage²². Perhaps we also see a union within the tone of the poem. Anna Letitia's soothing tone, perhaps fussing over Rochemont, could well be what Rochemont needs to balance his fits of rage. If this were the case then, what Bridget Hill referred to as "mere financial transactions" in the upper class and "those 'prudent' marriages of the middle class" (174) may well have another economy for union; that economy would be an emotional union, different from the affection one partner gives another, an emotional union in which the type of emotion or affection one partner gives is precisely the one needed by the other partner. If we read on this particular level, we hear Anna Letitia's soothing voice trying to charm Rochemont out of depression with his "moping brow"(3). Once again when one looks at the poem on a general level, the speaker

²² The Barbauld's partnership as constructed within the text is also born out in their marriage itself; the Barbaulds were active in the education of young boys through the Sunday School movement which accounted for the education of a great number of young boys in the second half of the eighteenth century (Pickering).

voices charming thoughts concerning the couple's life together as they approach winter, whether this winter or a metaphorical winter. In other works such as "Hymn VI - Pious Friendship," Barbauld's constructs relationships which literally sing the praises of a relationship in which the couple share their religious faith:

How blest the sacred tie that binds
 In sweet according minds!
 How swift the heavenly course they run
 Whose hearts, whose faith, whose hopes are one! (Barbauld, *Poems* 1-4)

Certainly the loving relationship which is enhanced when the participants share their religious convictions is one of moral instruction. These two poems, then, reinforce the conservative attitudes toward marriage that she has already exhibited, but remind those in the twentieth century who might look back through nostalgia's foggy glasses, that marriage in the eighteenth century was not a panacea; this is a marriage which is worked at. Although both poems display the importance of the unity of two persons in a marriage, "Hymn VI" reinforces the importance of unity of religious faith to this middle-class, Presbyterian marriage. I would argue that this concept of sharing not just a religious faith, but a particular religious doctrine within a marriage is an element of local culture which may be alien to many in our multi-cultural society of today.

But as well as grounding her poems in her first-hand knowledge, Anna Letitia Barbauld speaks of women in general, of the rights of these women and more generally of the rights of the human being. In "The Rights of Women" (*Poems* 121-122), Barbauld begins in militant tone. She incites her audience:

Yes, injured Woman! rise, assert thy right!
 Woman! too long degraded, scorned, opprest;
 O born to rule in partial Law's despite,

Resume thy native empire o'er the breast!

(1-4)

In language, charged with militaristic jargon, she rouses her fellow women to go to battle against man, to:

Try all that wit and art suggest to bend
Of thy imperial foe the stubborn knee:
Make treacherous Man thy subject, not thy friend:
Thou mayst command, but never canst be free.

(17-20)

This use of militaristic rhetoric and tone, however, creates the tension of the poem, because the narrator moves from a position of force and control to one in which she advocates "That separate rights are lost in mutual love"(32). Barbauld's picture of woman "Arrayed in panoply divine"(5) and "[girded] with grace"(9) becomes woman, "courted idol of mankind"(25), one who uses her graces learned "in Nature's school"(31). Here, Barbauld's construction employs irony to juxtapose the view that the battle of the sexes is in fact a war, against her solution which is that in a loving relationship, partners can become equal. Further, her use of irony refutes the aggressive tone in Mary Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the Rights of Women" (1792), offering instead "mutual love" as a solution²³. Within this construction, wars can be won, not necessarily on the battle field, but in the mind. Once again, in Barbauld's discourse, the male is tied to reason and intellect and the female to intuition; the whole art of war is a structured, controlled entity, an entity to be governed by reason, planning and strategy. For Barbauld, this male approach does not work; she would rather be

²³ The real irony may be that Barbauld was the one chased around the table with a knife; she is caught in the gendered idealogy of relying on the "breast" (4).

oppressed physically ... if oppressed she must be ... , than lose her freedom of thought. Her construction points to her attitude as a feminine, intuitive attitude, perhaps requiring far more inner fortitude than waging wars as the male, or the militant Wollstonecraft, seems wont to do. And once again, Barbauld has constructed marriage as a better foundation, an institution where two are better than one, where a couple form a completeness that an individual never can. Within her view, singleness is separateness; marriage creates a unity, a whole.

Barbauld's final portrait of her own marriage is found in "Dirge Written November 1808" (*Poems* 145-146) in which Barbauld mourns Rochemont who recently committed suicide after suffering mental illness in which he violently assaulted Anna Letitia. The poem does not speak of her abuse, nor of their separation for eight months as a result of the illness and assault, but of her loss of companion and friend. In the poem, she addresses him as "Pure spirit!" (1), a construction which acknowledges both his death ... he has become a pure spirit ... and her high regard for his purity during their lives together. Once again, Barbauld reverts to the imagery of the sea, placing Rochemont now "On that eternal shore" with "the sea ... calm, the tempest past" (7-8). Now that she feels Rochemont is "on the bosom of thy God" (23), she asks him to send her his faith in order to:

Let these [her] lonely path illumine,
And teach [her] weakened mind
To welcome all that's left of good
To all that's lost resigned. (29-32)

It is within this passage that Barbauld's world outlook becomes more clear. Here, Barbauld leaned toward her husband, although he is now dead, for the more intellectual

or reasoning aspects of life. His faith is God-centred and by asking to borrow his "devotion's flame", Barbauld's discourse here subordinates her faith to his by channelling her faith through his. She asks him to lend her, "[his] strong aspiring hopes"(27-28) in order that she may overcome her "weakened mind"(30) and continue on. Her construction allows for a wholeness and partnership in marriage, with husband bringing intellect and formal religion, a faith centred on a Christian God, and with wife bringing emotion and nurture. If man then is the ocean and woman the land as within *a Map of the Land of Matrimony*, then perhaps marriage is the complete world, a union of land and sea.

By documenting key events in her own marriage and in events she witnessed, Anna Letitia Barbauld gives us the opportunity to look beyond those generalizations to the particularities of everyday eighteenth-century life as seen by a woman scholar, poet, educator and wife of a clergyman. Within that scope, she may well have begun her marriage in a naively optimistic manner, but within the marriage, we see her as a strong partner in a marriage based on trust and respect. After Rochemont drowned, Anna Letitia never remarried; this action may suggest a strength in itself.²⁴ It was a working marriage: she and Rochemont worked together as tutors and shared the responsibility of a parish; likewise, it would seem, they worked hard at their marriage. Barbauld's picture of marriage is one of a balanced scale: the land balances sea; action balances

²⁴ According to Bridget Hill widowhood often gave women control of their own lives since by law they could then govern their own resources rather than in marriage where legally, the male controlled all.

inaction, intellect balances emotion, before balances after, mythic balances everyday, generality balances particularity, but for Barbauld, it seems, *she* balances *he*.

Similar to "Washing-Day", Barbauld's poems centring on marriage provide the twentieth-century reader with a variety of views of the economy of marriage in the late eighteenth-century. Not only was Barbauld collecting her own attitudes within these poems, but also more generalized attitudes and trends of the time period. Through her poems, Barbauld illustrates that marriage is "schemas of action between partners," and by examining her constructions of these "schemas of actions, these mementos teach the tactics possible within a given (social) system." Barbauld's poetry illustrates the influences that eighteenth-century attitudes toward gender, class, ethics, religion, myth and exploration had on Barbauld's concept of marriage. For us in the twentieth century, these mementos teach us the possibilities within *our* interactions between the sexes and with courtship and marriage practices. Just as the "singularities" in Anna Letitia and Rochemont's marriage may be based on generalizations of attitudes of courtship and marriage at the end of the eighteenth-century, Nancy Armstrong sees these generalities leading to seriously misconstrued peculiarities in the twentieth century when she argues:

With the novels of Burney and Austen, furthermore, the conduct-book ideal of womanhood provided the ideal against which the novelistic representations of women asserted themselves as being more true to life.
(252)

By perpetuating "an idealized fiction of love", novelists, in particular Victorian novelists, "had an unhealthy grip on human desire" (253) because the generalization

invented in the conduct manual became the particularized dictum after it was repeated constantly.

Similarly, if we are not careful as we look back at the eighteenth century, we may take as our views of courtship and marriage at that time, those same generalizations rather than the "singularities" of each marriage. Barbauld's poetry allows us to scrutinize the "singularities" for subtleties rather than the generalizations for myths reminding us not to interpret the general as particular, nor the particular as the universal.

CHAPTER THREE

To impress them by connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects

(Barbault, "Preface" in *Hymns in Praise for Children* vi)

Grandma had a baby boy called Robert who died in infancy; she never talked about him so we don't know the details. Dad was born next and so he was called Robert Kenneth, but always called Ken.

(Barbara Cornish Blain {1947-} on her father's use of his second given name)

Remember when we went out to Aunt Annie's farm and there would be four kids in a three-quarter bed, and Aunt Annie would say: "Sleep like spoons, girls, sleep like spoons!"

(Olive Buchanan {1920-} on visiting my Grandma McMane's farm as a child)

It seems to me that three occurrences bring a family together today: family reunions, weddings and funerals. My side of the family has never had a reunion, but different divisions of my wife's have; in each case, the initiators of the reunion and the majority of the participants have been from the country or small communities in the country. All three of these events allow for stories to pass among the generations, stories which many have heard many times, and some which the younger generations have not heard before. But as these stories are shared, they become the common bond for the family, often with family jargon and myth involved. The stories also mark the

history of the family: recent births, the perceived differences between the process of birth in different generations, recent deaths, interesting characters within the family and within their common knowledge, and stories of common experience or place. Recently, at a Buchanan reunion at Atwood, Ontario, I found myself on the outside fringe of the family; my wife's grandmother, Annie Brae (1889-1990), had been a Buchanan and the gathering was predominantly descendants from Grandma's brother's (Bert) family, mostly people who had never lived more than several miles from the family home. As a relative outsider, certain elements within the stories caught my attention; I knew some of the characters by reputation alone, but hearing the phrase "sleep like spoons" suddenly drew my notice. The only time I had ever heard the expression, meaning to cuddle up in bed, one person to the next as spoons might be stacked on their sides in a cutlery tray, was from my wife who, although related to these people had not met most of them before the reunion. Several hundred kilometres from my home and three hours from this paper, I was recalling Wendell Berry's theory:

They told each other stories, as I knew myself, that they all had heard before. Sometimes they told stories about each other, about themselves, living again in their own memories and thus keeping their memories alive. Among the hearers of the stories were always the children. (158)

My wife had learned the expression from her grandmother, the term had become family jargon, it was "*marked* by uses" and when placed into context of the nineteen-thirties suggested austerity, familial closeness and good humour in adversity. What this story experience signifies is the importance of children and generations within families in creating and perpetuating local culture and economy. Some of Uncle Bert's descendants were still working his farm, preserving family tradition and culture, while

others were preserving the culture through their stories. Children and generations of children became both the source of these stories and the preservers of the culture as both hearers and tellers of the stories.

Anna Letitia and Rochemont Barbauld had no children, but as educators, they supervised the instruction of a number of children at the various parishes over which they had jurisdiction. Again, although they had no offspring, they did, in fact, enthusiastically adopt their nephew. Lucy Aikin evaluates Barbauld's home life as it affected her art:

Children this couple seemed immediately to have despaired of. My brother Charles, born only one year after the marriage, was bespoken by them almost directly, they took him home with them before he was two years old - she enjoyed in his dutiful affection - in the charms of his delightful disposition - his talents and his accomplished mind, her pride, her pleasure, the best solace of her old age. Mrs. Barbauld's indolence was a standing subject of regret and reproach with the admirers of her genius - but those who blamed her, little knew the daily and hourly miseries of her home; they could not compute the amount of hindrances proceeding her husband's crazy habits, and the dreadful apprehensions with which they could not fail to inspire. (Le Breton 43-4)

One of these detractors was Samuel Johnson whose reaction to her variety of roles showed his concern that she subjected her art to her other vocations:

[Mrs. Barbauld] was an instance of early cultivation, but in what did it terminate? In marrying a little Presbyterian parson, who keeps an infant boarding-school, so that all her employment now is, "To suckle fools, and chronicle small-beer." She tells the children, "This is a cat, and that is a dog, with four legs and a tail; see there! you are much better than a cat or dog, for you can speak." If I had bestowed such an education on a daughter, and had discovered that she thought of marrying such a fellow, I would have sent her to the *Congress*.

(as quoted by McCarthy & Kraft "Introduction" xxii)

But, in spite of the many hats Barbauld wore, her work continued, the work of the house, the work of the marriage, and the work of raising and educating children; and perhaps, as a result of Barbauld's many roles, her writing captured many of the everyday occurrences which create local culture and economy. The previous two chapters examined Barbauld's documentation of everyday life within her poetry as a method of reminding us of particular culture and economy, first, the home as the place of everyday work and the economy, and second, the work necessary to keep the marriage in that place together. Now, in this chapter, let us re-examine Barbauld's depiction of an eighteenth-century home, this time with the focus on children, especially spotlighting childbirth, and the nurture and education of children; the children are characterized as both the inspiration and the perpetuators of the culture.

Barbauld's "To a little invisible Being who is expected soon to become visible" (c. 1795) (*Poems* 131-132) is fraught with irony, irony which details her personal and artistic position in the eighteenth century:

She only asks to lay her burden down,
That her glad arms that burden may resume;
And nature's sharp pangs her wishes crown,
That free thee living from thy living tomb. (17-20)

The poem is joyful, but anxious, celebratory, but painful; it speaks of woman as child bearer in a traditional sense, but at the same time, the voice is a candid woman's voice; it is about creation, first and traditionally about pregnancy, but perhaps second and metaphorically, about the painful creative process of poetry production. Although Barbauld did not experience pregnancy and childbirth first hand, the construction of "To a little invisible Being who is expected soon to become visible" would suggest a vicarious

experience through proximity to such a pregnancy and birth. Margaret Doody in "Tit for Tat," (1989) a review of Roger Lonsdale's *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (1989), creates a context within which to examine the poem when she evaluates Barbauld's "To a little invisible Being ..." :

This poem could not have been written by a man, one feels, not because an 18th-century man would never try to imagine being female and being pregnant (think of Defoe's Moll and Roxana), but because the male hierarchical world is ignored. The baby's sex is not mentioned, nor is the father. The subject of the mother's relationship to the baby is to be developed in a praise of life that does not exclude the pain of labour and the weight of carrying the child. (Doody 3)

Doody's reasoning that the poem could not be written by a man because "the male hierarchical world is ignored" supports Nancy Armstrong's contention that what marks eighteenth-century women's writing as culturally significant is the attention to small detail rather than the 'big' political picture. Barbauld's "To a little invisible Being ..." is also marking a particular convention which has its origins in the seventeenth and eighteenth century; Tess Cosslett argues in *Women writing childbirth: Modern discourses of motherhood* (1994):

The discourse of medical expertise has its roots in the scientific revolution which began in the seventeenth century, which conceptualized Nature as a machine which could be controlled by human intervention. In the history of childbirth, the use of medical discourse is paralleled by and legitimates increasing intervention, and the take-over by men- male midwives and doctors - of the originally wholly female role of the midwife. The power of male obstetricians over female bodies has been convincingly likened to the power scientific discourse claimed over passive 'female' nature. (Cosslett 47)

Doody's argument, then, becomes more important when associated with Cosslett's because the poem takes stronger cultural significance; not only was it written by a

woman, but it was written by a woman at a time when the male medical establishment had not fully usurped the process of childbirth from the female. Jane Rendall agrees with this position in *Women in an Industrializing Society: England 1750-1880* (1990):

By the eighteenth century childbirth was being claimed as the province of the medical profession, and the right of the midwife to oversee childbirth was challenged. It is so easy to weigh up the consequences of this. It had been argued that the intervention of a financially interested, masculine profession, claiming a scientific authority unwarranted in the existing state of knowledge, imposed greater suffering on women, and helped to destroy the livelihood of the independent midwife. (Rendall 92)

So then, the poem is written at a time of struggle over the domain of childbirth. "To a little invisible Being ..." pinpoints the relationship between mother and foetus at a time when males had little intervention, after conception, in the period of pregnancy and birth. Barbauld's discourse in this poem centres on the lack of medical knowledge regarding childbirth at that time. The birth canal is "life's mysterious gate" and the baby will be freed "with nature's sharpest pangs .../ That free [it] living from [its] living tomb.(19-20)" Barbauld's reference and rhyme of "womb" and "tomb" and repetition of the word "living" within a single line serves to remind the twentieth century reader of the enormous death rate among newborns of the time²⁵. Rather than rare, death was routine.

Jane Rendall also points to another issue raised by the high mortality rate among infants; her argument raises the importance of poems such as "To a little invisible Being ..." in a continuing controversy with historians:

²⁵ Lawrence Stone estimates the mean of the death rate in the first year of life at twenty-one percent, but adds that this rate may be very conservative because up to one third of all births were never registered.

[Motherhood] is one of the most difficult [issues] which faces the historian of women's lives; it remains one about which we still know little. Some historians - notably Professor Lawrence Stone - have argued for a very significant change in the relationship between mothers and their infant children in the eighteenth century. They have suggested that high mortality rates and the harshness of living conditions characteristic of medieval and much of early modern society in England and Western Europe meant family relationships which were not strongly emotional: that in such societies the emotional ties between mothers and their children were not close, and that children were viewed by their parents in terms of the advantages they might bring or the burdens they might represent.²⁶

(Rendall 90-1)

"To a little invisible Being ..." makes Stone's argument a moot point; the poem is significant in its documentation of the highly emotional relationship between expectant mother and child, an association which returns us to Margaret Doody's observations.

Doody's second area of comment is the relationship between mother and baby; there is warmth and reward for the mother, but there is also pain and mystery. The mother is depicted as the perfect caregiver, one who will produce a perfect offspring:

Germ of new life, whose powers expanding slow
For many a moon their full perfection wait -
Haste, precious pledge of happy love, to go
Auspicious borne through life's mysterious gate.

(1-4)

The mother's position, here too, is fraught with irony:

She only asks to lay her burden down

²⁶ Rendall remains non-committal on Stone's position stating: "At present there is little detailed research to support arguments made either for a fundamental transformation of the quality of family life, or for a basic continuity with the world of the seventeenth century. We can only hope to indicate some of the questions which historians have been asking about the relationship between mothers and their children in this period.

The history of childbirth itself is beginning to be written, first by using the evidence of the medical profession, and then, very much more recently, through the writings of literate women" (91).

That her glad arms that burden may resume
 ° (17-18)

Barbauld has created a tension between the delivery, the laying her burden down, and the cuddling, the resuming of her burden; her construction centres a mother's deep need to "carry" her child whether it be in her womb or in her "glad arms." Similarly, Barbauld regards the baby as a joy and a burden at the same time, a tension which centres the idea that although motherhood is a responsibility, yet it is one which women accept willingly in order to "reap [their] rich inheritance of love"(25)! The child's smiles its "mother's pangs o'erpay"(36). This caregiving and regenerative power of women as depicted by Barbauld is not a panacea, but the poem celebrates the balance between the emotional and physical abilities of women within the process of childbirth.

Once again, Margaret Doody marks the importance of "matter," and "bodies" (3) in the eighteenth century and what she calls "Incarnational Poetry":

It is 'incarnational' not merely because it deals very largely in particulars (it was necessary for poets to remind themselves not to number the streaks of the tulip, since, they were inclined to do so), but also because it celebrates, however ruefully, the experience of living a bodily and historical life. That incessant experience was thought the very stuff of verse is one of the triumphs of 18th-century literature which post-Romantic assessment has tended to obscure. Such a sense of the value of the incarnate, the great worth of mundane life in the flesh, informs Anna Laetitia (sic) Barbauld's 'To a Little Invisible Being who is Expected Soon to Become Visible.' (Doody 3)

Here, of course, the poem rejoices that the tomb is opened and the body emerges as a living human baby, but, perhaps more noteworthy is the celebration within the poem of living a "bodily" life. Barbauld does not speak of childbirth in intellectual or medical terms, but she speaks of the nitty-gritty of childbirth: labour, birth canals, pain, nursing,

the expectant mother's fears, old wives' tales and unsubstantiated superstitions surrounding childbirth. Doody notes the significance of this construction when juxtaposed against Wordsworth:

Anna Laetitia Barbauld is certain that bodily life is valuable life.
 (Contrast the sentiments of Wordsworth's 'Imitations of Immortality'.)
 (Doody 3)

So as a poem of its time, "To a little invisible Being . . .," depicts the specifics of its time as well as documenting the particularities of everyday life. Furthermore, if we read the poem as an organic unit, the intellectual process of Barbauld's poetic construction in the poem combined with her depiction of the emotional, physical, and spiritual elements in her central character create a completeness in the portrait of the female; the female is a complete human, one who is capable in all areas²⁷.

To a little invisible Being ... also extends its ground beyond that of house and human world in its grounding in nature imagery. The foetus is referred to as "[g]erm of new life", "infant bud" who will "share" "the genial season's warm .../Fresh youngling's shoot and opening roses glow!(1-10)" The process for the mother is "to reap [her] rich inheritance of love"(25). "Nature for [this child is displaying] her various stores/ [Opening] her thousand inlets of delights.(31-2)" The gardening terms perhaps help the reader to understand the mysterious process of birth by placing elements of

²⁷ As one of the many eighteenth-century women writers brought to light by critics such as Roger Lonsdale, Barbauld's depiction of the well-rounded woman helps us to understand a more complete view of the period than before. Until recently, literary texts such as the G. Tillotson, P. Fussell, & M. Waingrow edition of *Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (1969) included in its canon almost no references to works by eighteenth-century women.

gestation and birth within the frame of everyday experience; there is a direct relationship between nature and the baby, between blooming and birth. Although Barbauld's use of gardening terms here might be a question of decorum, convention or a conceit, the construction may also suggest that the eighteenth century inhabitant knew as much, if not more about gardening than about the human body²⁸. As we are reminded of the differences in our everyday lives from those in the eighteenth century in "Washing-Day," we in the twentieth century are reminded that although we may garden as a hobby, we are not required to garden to sustain life²⁹. And, a tension appears in the poem between the understanding of events through nature ... perhaps a pagan understanding as "charmed verse" and "favouring spells" (33-34) are said ... as opposed to a Christian understanding. Certainly, Barbauld credits God and "all the worlds the Almighty

²⁸ All classes must have had knowledge of gardening. Middle and lower class women gardened for their own households. The eighteenth century is the period of the development of the country house in England and the highland clearances in Scotland, both making great changes in the landscape. Landscape gardeners such as Capability Brown supervised great changes in the countryside creating hills and valleys, woods, lakes and vistas where none were found before. Of course, these gardening extravaganzas were only created for the landed gentry, but I would argue that every class must have had knowledge of the excavations since it would take hundreds of workers to accomplish this task. One critic noted that the transformation of France took place on the heads of the aristocracy, but the transformation of the countryside in Britain was accomplished on the backs of the English lower class. And of course, the loss of villages is lamented in works such as Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*.

²⁹ Of course, the differences in our reliance on gardening has nothing to do with childbirth, but it does point to Barbauld's ability to capture local culture within her poem. The poem is about childbirth, but the details contained within the poem point to information which was assessable as a matter of daily knowledge. On the other hand, many of us in the twentieth century are removed from cultivation and gardening. We simply 'drop by' our local supermarket or market gardener for an abundance of selection; fresh produce is imported from throughout the continent and at times, from around the world. We need have no knowledge of the connection between product and production.

wrought"(8) and will have her character offer "muttered prayers"(33) at the same time as her narrator "bids [her] beads"(35) for a safe delivery, yet the pregnancy is timed and perhaps influenced by the moon:

For many a moon their full perfection wait -
(2)

and

Fed with her life through many a tedious moon
(24)

Furthermore, balancing the "prayers" ... "muttered", perhaps not completely sincere³⁰ ... and the narrator's "beads" perhaps simply a mechanical act ... against the mother and her women cohorts' offers of "charmed verse" and "favouring spells to speed [it] on [its] way"(33-4) seems to favour the verse and spells. From Barbauld's grounding of the process of pregnancy and birth upon superstition and pagan ideology, she points to the strong reliance of women of the eighteenth century on superstition rather than on scientific, medical knowledge. Similarly, Barbauld's strong grounding of the role of women as nurturer and lifegiver in the natural world of flora strongly links women to the more intuitive and pagan model of the world, one in which nature is also feminine and lifegiving, a nurturer making her first priority birth. Barbauld's celebration of life and the relationship between mother and child is not restricted to conventional views of religion, but as if her several vocations had widened her experience and the outlook of her poetical works, ironies of this particular poem characterize Barbauld's numerous dichotomous positions within her life and her collected works.

³⁰ The word "muttering" may imply lack of commitment to the belief so that the prayers are repeated by rote rather than conviction.

This dichotomous position is noted by Margaret Doody in her comments on stanza six:

She longs to fold her maternal breast
Part of herself, yet to herself unknown;
To see and to salute the stranger guest,
Fed with her life through many a tedious moon. (21-4)

Doody comments:

The quatrain stanza is used here to reflect, and to reflect upon, the interfolding of the mother and her womb-child, their relationship an intimate paradox of the kind more usually found in hymns. This world - which does include pain and tedium - is nonetheless a world worth asking a person to inhabit. (3)

As within Barbauld's description of her relationship with her husband, here too, there seems to be a kind of naïveté, or perhaps an optimism in her outlook, an outlook which Doody describes as the world of hymns. Doody's view of Barbauld's outlook directs us to another peculiarity of Barbauld's everyday life which affects her work. As a Presbyterian dissenter's daughter and wife, she would certainly find as familiar the scope and form of hymns. By employing both their poetical pattern and their philosophical frame, Barbauld combines praise and instruction as well as her formal religious training with her knowledge from her many other endeavours. Furthermore, the hymn takes on a tension in itself. The female sings her hymn, an ode to praise, to the unborn child, but the hymn is Barbauld's construction and as both hymn and constructed poem, it has documented a time and place and attitude. As she sings her hymn, she moves closer and closer to the mother's perspective, internalizing similar to the manner in which a novelist moves from external to interior monologue. The outer singer is constructed with the omniscient powers to step inside her character to vicariously experience the expectant

mother's emotions. But further still, then, the hymn to the unborn child becomes its song, a song that it will be able to sing as its own song when it reaches a singing age. And as this child sings its own song, the song becomes perpetuated. The mother sang the song to the unborn child; the child, later, sings the song about its birth, perhaps in turn, if the first child is a female, to her own child. The peculiarities of this particular culture are preserved as the birth hymn is sung to generation after generation. Just as the expression "sleep like spoons" became a local cultural feature preserved from generation to generation, "To a little invisible Being" is the birth song first of a family to be passed from mother to daughter and second, of a culture to be passed from generation to generation, in both cases documenting and perpetuating the culture of childbirth in the eighteenth-century³¹.

Doody's use of the term *hymn* also creates a link between this particular poem about the relationship of expectant mother to baby and Barbauld's work as educator and surrogate parent. Within this second world of experience and work, Barbauld wrote and published *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781). In her "Preface" to this publication, Barbauld delineates her philosophy of education, one in which she questions the suitability of poetry for the instruction of children:

³¹ Similar to nursery rhymes such as "Ring Around the Rosy" which document cultural aspects in a particular historical context such as those experienced during the plague. The "ring around the rosy" describes the red rash as a symptom of the disease; "pocket full of posey", the herbs thought to ward off the disease; "husha-husha" mimics the sound of the sneezing which accompanied the affliction; and finally, "they all fall down" recounts the death itself. This seemingly innocent children's rhyme documents one of the great crisis of British humanity.

But it may well be doubted, whether poetry *ought* to be lowered to the capacities of children, or whether they should not rather be kept from reading verse: for the very essence of poetry is an elevation in thought and style above the common standard; and if it wants this character, it wants all that renders it valuable. (Barbauld, *Preface in Hymns in Prose for Children* iv)

She chooses to write her hymns in prose, and as a method of instruction to have the hymns "committed to memory, and recited"(v). Moreover, she reveals that this educational philosophy in itself is based on the idea of specifics and particularities:

The peculiar design of this publication is, to impress devotional feeling as early as possible on the infant mind; fully convinced as the author is, that they cannot be impressed too soon, and that a child, to feel the full force of the idea of God, ought never to remember the time when he had no such idea - to impress them by connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects; with all that he sees, all he hears, all that affects his young mind with wonder or delight; and thus by deep, strong, and permanent associations, to lay the best foundation for practical devotion in future life. For he who has early been accustomed to see the Creator in the visible appearances of all around him, to feel his continual presence, and lean upon his daily protection - though his religious ideas may be mixed with many improprieties, which his correcter reason will refine away - has made large advances towards that habitual piety, without which religion can scarcely regulate the conduct, and will never warm the heart. (vi-vii)

Of further interest to us in the twentieth century is her connection between education and religion; the two are inextricably connected. For us today, our system of democracy espouses a separation of church and state, a principle which in turn advocates a separation of church and education. Barbauld's instruction here is the explanation of the ways of the world mixed with religious doctrine, a union which informs us in the twentieth century about the origins of our public education through the Sunday School Movement of the late eighteenth century. Barbauld begins by illustrating God in the particularities of life: fields, flowers, birds, the seasons, really anything that children

may come across in their daily, monthly and yearly routines. As Sam Pickering, in "Mrs. Barbauld's Hymns in Prose: 'An Air-Blown Particle' of Romanticism?", notes, "In revolt, like Wordsworth, against poetic diction and eighteenth-century rationalism, Mrs. Barbauld used the language of a man speaking simply"(265). In *Hymn V*, using simple language, Barbauld allegorically explains the workings of the world and their connection with the workings of God's universe :

The glorious sun is set in the west; the night dews fall; and the air which was sultry, becomes cool. The flowers fold up their coloured leaves; they fold themselves up, and hang their heads on the slender stalk. The chickens are gathered under the wing of the hen, and are at rest; the hen herself is at rest also. The little birds have ceased their warbling; they are asleep in the boughs, each one with his head behind his wing. There is no murmur of bees around the hive, or amongst the honeyed woodbines; they have done their work, and lie close in their waxen cells. The sheep rest their soft fleeces, and their loud bleating is no more heard amongst the hills. There is no sound of voices, or of children at play, or the trampling of busy feet, and of people hurrying to and fro. The smith's hammer is not heard upon the anvil; nor the harsh saw of the carpenter. All men are stretched on their quiet beds; and the child sleeps upon the breast of its mother. Darkness is spread over the skies, and darkness is upon the ground; every eye is shut, and every hand is still. Who taketh care of all people when they are sunk in sleep; when they cannot defend themselves, not see if danger approacheth? There is an eye that never sleepeth; there is an eye that seeth in dark night, as well as in the bright sun-shine. When there is no light of the sun nor of the moon; when there is no lamp in the house, nor any little star twinkling through the thick clouds; that eye seeth every where, in all places, and watcheth continually over all the families of the earth. The eye that sleepeth not is God's; his hand is always stretched out over us. He made sleep to refresh us when we are weary: he made night, that we might sleep in quiet. As the mother moveth about the house with her fingers on her lips, and stilleth every little noise, that her infant will not be disturbed; as she draweth the curtains around its bed, and shutteth out the light from its tender eyes; for God draweth the curtains of darkness around us; so he maketh all things to be hushed and still, that his large family may sleep in peace. Labourers spent with toil, and young children, and every little humming insect, sleep quietly, for God watcheth over you. You may sleep, for he never sleeps: you may close your eyes in safety, for his eye is always

open to protect you. When darkness is passed away, and the beams of morning-sun strike through your eye-lids, begin the day with praising God, who hath taken care of you through the night. Flowers, when you open again, spread your leaves, and smell sweet to his praise. Birds, when you awake, warble your thanks amongst the green boughs; sing to him, before you sing to your mates. Let his praise be in our hearts, when we lie down; let his praise be on our lips, when we awake. (25-35)

Aside from informing us in the twentieth century of particularities which surrounded the eighteenth-century daily life such as chickens, bees, sheep, blacksmiths and carpenters, *Hymn V* explains the coming of night and the protection afforded a fearful child during the period of darkness. The terms of reference are familiar, everyday particularities to the child meant to instruct the child about the order of his or her immediate universe and to radiate outward to explain God's position and relationship to the child. Within the hymn's construction lies an interesting paradox; God is gendered as male, but the person within the child's immediate world who provides parallel services to the child is female, the mother. Within the hymn, the men sleep, but mother and God are awake; mother and God "draweth the curtains" and "stilleth every little noise"(32). I would argue here that as in "Washing-Day," the home is seen as the woman's jurisdiction and as God is seen as the governor of the universe, the mother is seen as the supervisor of the home.

Further, Barbauld's weaving of religion and education is indicative of the ideology of the Sunday School Movement of the late eighteenth century, a movement within which Barbauld and her husband were participants. Pickering quotes J. R. Green's evaluation of the period as "the beginning of popular education"(263) and states:

In 1785 the Sunday School Society was founded; by 1792, it was estimated that there were five hundred thousand "Sunday Scholars." The phenomenal spread of Sunday school resulted, for the most part, from three factors: evangelical stress on man's responsibility for man,

latitudinal emphasis on personal benevolism, and the belief that a religious education would make society more stable. (263)

And these last three factors are found within Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children*.

According to Pickering what broadened the appeal of Barbauld's hymns was as "A Unitarian at a time when Unitarians were respected rather than condemned, Mrs. Barbauld did not stress particular doctrines such as atonement of the Trinity"(262).

Hymn VIII outlines the need for interdependence within the family in the lines, "The father, the mother, and the children, make a family; the father is the master thereof"(54).

However, as it proceeds, the hymn does not limit the family's responsibilities to itself:

If the family is numerous, and the grounds large, there are servants to help to do the work: all these dwell in one house; they sleep under one roof; they eat of the same bread; they kneel down together and praise God every night and every morning with one voice; (56-7)

The hymn continues moving from family to servants to kingdom to include all "God's family"(59). This chain of interdependence of care extends beyond those similar to one another in class to include those of different races as well:

Negro woman, who sittest pining in captivity, and weeping over thy sick child; though no one seeth thee, God seeth thee; though no one pitieth thee, God pitieth thee, raise thy voice, forlorn and abandoned one; call upon him from amidst thy bonds, for assuredly he will hear thee. (60-1)

The hymn may imply that if God hears this woman's pleas, so should everyone else within this great community³². The ordered nature of the political hierarchy within the hymn is depicted as similar to that ascribed to God and thus, the combination of religion

³² Barbauld made her abolitionist views evident in "Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave Trade" (1791) (*Poems* 114-118).

with politics "makes society more stable". If we accept Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* as indicative of other educational material at the time, then the system was paradoxically based; the education of a great number of children, especially those of the lower classes is an admirable objective, but the political philosophy espoused within this text embraces the status quo. Each class finds its place, much as in the Elizabethan Great Chain of Being or Pope's phrase "Whatever Is, is Right"(294) in his *An Essay on Man* (1733-34). Barbauld's pedagogical philosophy informs us of the nature of the Sunday School Movement of the later eighteenth century with its mixture of religious, vernacular and political purposes. We, in the twentieth century, tend to accept our educational system as a right rather than a privilege; to find the origins of our system in Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* within the context of suggested benevolence and status quo may surprise us who look to education as a method of bettering ourselves and our fellow humans, rather than tying us to a retrogressive system. But as a method of preserving culture, Barbauld could probably have thought of no better system: have the children commit the hymns to memory and recite them as often as possible. Like the nursery rhymes we all learned in childhood, they stay with us for life.

On the other hand, Barbauld was also a party to an established system of educating boys at the Palgrave School where she composed the playful poem *Petition of a Schoolboy to his Father*. Here we find that education need not be tedious; there is sport to be had at school and around the subject of learning; being educated allows a person to have fun with both the substance and the process of education. *Petition of a Schoolboy to his Father* is written in the appropriated voice of a boarding, middle-class

student writing his father in complaint over the lack of funds sent by his father for the student's board and spending money:

Most honour'd Sir, I must confess
I never liked a letter less
Than yours, which brought this new receipt
To prove that poets must not eat. (1-4)

The poem continues as the student laments "his empty stomach"(18) and implores his father for more money. Barbauld captures the British boarding school here, not a school such as Eton or Harrow, but a school well down the social ladder. The tone of the poem is amused; the student is chagrined and self-pitying. But as well as having fun with her subject matter, Barbauld also has fun with the whole idea of education. Her references to Greek poetry and myth informs us of the curriculum of such a school, even to the fact that this school was using Pope's translation to the *Iliad*. After, his initial complaint the remainder of the poem becomes a recipe for baking a cake in mock heroic terms:

Now with pure hands receive the flour
Which Ceres from her horn will pour.
The fairest herds on Mosswold hill
Your pail with smoking streams shall fill,
Which, tortured in the whirling churn,
Shall soon to waxen butter turn, -
Butter, more sweet than morning dew,
Butter, which Homer never knew! (29-36)

So we find within the poem that education in the late eighteenth century need not be dull; student and tutor might enter into sport with their learning. Content material certainly had to be learned, as well as processes which could be copied for use, but at the same time, content could also be used for fun and processes could be parodied to create satire. Instruction may have employed the ancient Greek language and culture, but obviously,

good instruction related the means of teaching to everyday life. Just as the schoolboy found a way to use his Greek lessons to describe his hunger and ask for a more generous allowance, Barbauld has found a means to satirize the cerebral nature of education to speak of the mundane. Although the purpose of the poem is to jest, Barbauld has captured elements of boarding school life with the poem; the young boy mocks his Greek lessons, but informs us of everyday life within the school.

One topic of educational philosophy is obviously missing from the poems of Barbauld: the education of young women. As I read her collected poetry, I was surprised there was no comment on the education of young women. Obviously, as a young woman she was highly educated and regarded for that education, but she appears to have written no poetry on the subject. However, she did comment on her idea of education for women in a reply to Mrs. Montagu who proposes that Barbauld become principal of a ladies' college. Barbauld replied:

A kind of Academy for ladies where they are taught in a regular manner the various branches of science, appears to me better calculated to form such characters as the *Précieuses* or *Femmes Savantes* than good wives or agreeable companions. The best way for a woman to acquire knowledge is from conversation with a father or brother, and by such a course of reading as they may recommend, perhaps you may think that having myself stepped out of the bounds of female reserve in becoming an author, it is with an ill grace I offer these sentiments - but my situation has been peculiar, and would be no rule for others. (Le Breton 46-7)

Barbauld's letter informs us of her unique position as an educated woman at this time; rather than feeling superior, she feels left out as she laments, "I converse little with my own sex"(48). One can only speculate as to the reason for her comment: perhaps she was educated to a point where she had nothing in common with contemporary women.

However, her letter, once again points to the tension within her work and attitudes. She was a woman ahead of her time in her own education, in her involvement with the Sunday School Movement, as an abolitionist, as a thinker who was interested in exploration and science, and as a poet; on the other hand, she was intensely conservative denying involvement in both a lady's paper and as mistress of an academy for ladies. This contradiction of stances surrounds her work for although she maintains an affinity for the political world of men, her poetry turns to the everyday domestic for its reference points. Again one can only speculate, but from the evidence within her works, it would seem that she is torn between two worlds because of the combination of her gender, class and education. Educated beyond her gender, she is drawn to the corner of men, but gender and class pull her to the corner of women, leaving her alone in between.

Barbauld sings the songs of the late eighteenth century; she tells of a time when childbirth was far more dangerous than today, when women ... mother, midwife and other females ... were the only people involved in the actual birth, when superstition governed the field of pregnancy and birth, and when people knew more about gardening than about human anatomy and medicine. Her songs are about a local culture and economy; they describe a particular time and place and attitude and custom and gender; her songs perpetuate the culture each time they are sung by a new reader. Likewise, Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* is much more active in conserving the local culture and economy of the Sunday School Movement of the late eighteenth century. By recording specific details of everyday life and distinctive attitudes toward particular religious denominations and political dogma, and by instructing children to commit them

to memory and sing them over and over, Barbauld has not just recorded cultural history but vigorously activated it at the same time. Similarly, in creating an entertaining poem in jest about a student's predicament at her academy, Barbauld has included information intrinsic to her profession as tutor. The information need not be forced into the poem; it is information which belongs in the context of teaching and therefore is naturally included. And finally in contrast, that which is omitted becomes important as well; Barbauld's omission of poems about female students indicates important information about the local culture and economy of Barbauld's world as well. This lack of inclusion may not tell us *what is*, but it may well imply *what is not*, a statement which may in its own right tell us a great deal about the local culture.

Thus in the course of her daily endeavours as clergyman's wife, educator, poet, critic and intellectual, Barbauld has gleaned the particularities of her time, place, occupation, gender and class and incorporated them into her writing for us in the twentieth century to uncover. The inclusion of these clues does not seem to be a deliberate act, simply an unconscious incorporating of the element which touched her life each day. Barbauld's poetry is the means of sheltering this culture, just as songs and nursery rhymes repeated and memorized by children become a record of events, superstitions, customs and attitudes of a particular time, place and group of people, whether a particular family, or village or gender. Each time her poems are read, knowledge of the culture is conserved.

CONCLUSION

Marking the features of this motley age

(Barbauld, "Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave Trade" in *Poems* 121)

For many years, a number of eighteenth-century voices were silent, unheard by the twentieth century, often mere sketchy references in such works as *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1932) where the reference to Barbauld briefly states:

BARBAULD, Mrs. ANNA LETITIA (1743-1826), *née* AIKIN, was author of miscellaneous poems and prose essays, including nature studies entitled 'Hymns in Prose'. She is chiefly remembered for her fine line beginning:

Life! I know not what thou art. (62)

For voices like Barbauld's to be silent meant a loss of resources for us in the twentieth century. We had lost access to culture, a local culture and economy, frozen by Barbauld at a specific time, place and community and influenced by gender and class. By assuming that the generalizations about the eighteenth century were true, modern readers often assumed knowledge of daily life in the eighteenth century. We had heard from male voices, often upper-class male voices, but seldom, female voices and very rarely, from middle-class and lower-class female voices. The danger in generalizations is often their failure to ground themselves in specifics, the "singularities" of day-to-day

life. Without the specifics through which to view the generalizations, we lack the substance, in twentieth-century terms, the data, on which to argue whether or not the generalizations are valid. Furthermore, and paradoxically, oftentimes if we know the specifics, these particulars will help illuminate the generalities and the generalities may, in turn, help to understand the specifics. Having access to a body of work such as that of Anna Letitia Barbauld allows twentieth-century critics to view the eighteenth century through a specific pair of eyes, the eyes of a female artist who constructed a particular view of her world with the local culture and economy of a middle-class home with its daily work of the house, marriage and children.

Anna Letitia Barbauld believed that poetry's first purpose was to please and that poetry was a poor medium for instruction. In her "A Critical Essay on the Poem" prefixed to Mark Akenside's *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1803), she states:

For poetry cannot descend to teach the elements of any art or science, or confine itself to that regular arrangement and clear brevity which suits the communication of unknown truths. In fact, the Muse would make a very indifferent school-mistress. Whoever therefore reads a Didactic Poem ought to come to it with a previous knowledge of his subject; and whoever writes one, ought to suppose such a knowledge in his readers. If he is obliged to explain technical terms, to refer continually to critical notes, and to follow a system step by step with the patient exactness of a teacher, his poem, however laboured, will be a bad poem. (3)

Ironically, it is within her very works that we, in the twentieth century, find a kind of "instruction" in the culture of the eighteenth century, not the process of instruction to which Barbauld refers in her essay, but an "instruction" of the local culture within which Barbauld worked. Although Barbauld consciously elevated her material for poetry, she grounded her work on the "singularities" of everyday life around her. It is

here at this domestic or grounded level that we find an abundance of information about daily life in the late eighteenth century. Barbauld's art not only pleases but also informs us of both eighteenth-century and our own "situations", "tactics", "creations" and "initiatives".

Within her poems included in this paper, Barbauld often particularizes contemporary techniques of poetry; Barbauld draws from myth, history and the greater body of literature. References to Greek myth in "Washing-Day" and "To Mr. Barbauld, with a Map of the Land of Matrimony", to exploration in "To Mr. Barbauld ...", and to the works of Shakespeare, Pope and Johnson in a variety of her works are then grounded on issues presented within each poem. Rather than leave the reference at its mythological, historical or literary level, Barbauld particularizes the reference to her own concern, her era, her gender and her class. As Pope elevates the snipping of a lock of hair to epic proportion for humorous effect using mock epic form, Barbauld uses mock epic form to particularize the events in "Washing-Day". Pope sarcastically mocks the events of upper-class sexual and political intrigue to create a gendered (male) view of an attack on a female, while Barbauld lovingly pokes fun at an everyday occurrence in middle-class homes to create a gendered (female) view of women of several classes working together for a common purpose. While Barbauld does use references to myth, history and literature to raise the significance of her subject matter, her first purpose seems to be to illustrate her points about daily life through the use of myth, history and literature. She uses the conventions of her fellow poets with a twist; rather than raise a daily issue to epic proportion, she reduces epic proportion to

everyday occurrences. Rather than create *macrocosm*, she uses myth and history to create *microcosm*, but without the generalization usually associated with microcosm. As Nancy Armstrong notes, eighteenth-century women writers "sought to disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics and, in so doing, to introduce a new form of political power"(3). Until recently women writers such as Barbauld were not accessible since they were excluded from the canon of works available to the twentieth-century critic. Therefore, critics such as Armstrong were not armed with the evidence nor the range of resources to understand fully or to argue her position on the shift of political power in domestic situations as reflected in domestic literature. We could measure neither the *before* against the *after*, nor the process of moving from political to the domestic.

Furthermore, as illustrated in *Hymns in Prose for Children*, Barbauld moves her work to "the style of familiar conversation"(Pickering 261). Pickering refers to Pater³³ to illustrate the similarity between "Mrs. Barbauld's poetry and that of Wordsworth who read and admired her writings":

According to Pater, "the sense of a life in natural objects," which was rhetorical artifice in most poetry, was almost a "literal act" for Wordsworth [and for Barbauld]. "To him," Pater wrote, "every natural object seemed to possess . . . a moral or spiritual life, to be capable of a companionship with man, full of expression, of inexplicable affinities and delicacies of intercourse." (Pickering 264)

In *Hymns in Prose for Children*, Barbauld grounds her instruction to the children in everyday natural objects and events, linking the natural object with the moral instruction

³³ Walter Pater, *Appreciations* (London, 1911), p. 46-48. Wordsworth, "Preface of 1800," "Tintern Abbey," and "The Recluse."

in order to "speak more directly" to the children, but at the same time informing the twentieth-century reader of the particularities of everyday life. Barbauld's poetics were based on the inclusion of these particularities of her local culture within her work, poetics which Pickering argues may well have been a catalyst to the Romantic movement:

According to Henry James, the artistic sensibility is "a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-blown particle in its tissue." In turn these particles were often converted into art. Certainly the *Hymns*' popularity testified to the wind they stirred, and particles were blown into the nineteenth century. To say, however, that Mrs. Barbauld directly influenced Romantic poetry would be going too far. If, though, the artist does convert "the very pulses of the air into revelations," she may have had an indirect influence upon the Romantics.³⁴ (264)

In his "Introduction" to *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* Roger Lonsdale argues that, "Any discussion of women writers in the eighteenth century will - or should - always find issues of gender entangled with those of class"(xxxviii). True to Lonsdale's evaluation, the works of Anna Letitia Barbauld inform us of gender issues, class issues and the inter-relationship of class and gender. First, Barbauld's work informs the twentieth-century reader of eighteenth-century gender issues; the work of the house: washing day, courtship and marriage, pregnancy and birth, child-rearing and education. Barbauld illustrated that the home had become women's domain; no longer

³⁴ McCarthy and Kraft note: "The young Samuel Taylor Coleridge walked forty miles, from Stowey to Bristol, to meet Barbauld; and William Wordsworth paid her probably the greatest compliment one poet can bestow on another when he confessed to Henry Crabb Robinson that, 'though he was not in the habit of begrudging others their good things,' he wished the final eight lines of her 'Life' had been of his own composing" ("Introduction" xxi-xxii).

was the marriage of husband and wife an only economic union, but one based on affection as well; the home was not the economic centre, but the domestic centre; middle-class women developed skills of supervision of work within that home as middle class supervised lower class; courtship might be a process seemingly controlled by males, but women might manipulate the process; childbirth was a mysterious process not yet controlled by medical males; education of the masses was in its infancy and yet educational philosophy for general education was being developed. But perhaps the most significant contribution made by Anna Letitia Barbauld was that in grounding her work in the particularities of everyday life, she revealed herself and not just the local culture of her home. Although grounding her art on the particularities of everyday life was certainly important, the grounding of her art on the particularities of her "essential qualities of mind" (*Desire* 4) was more important. Nancy Armstrong argues the significance of eighteenth-century women writers such as Barbauld:

Of the female alone did it presume to say neither birth nor the accoutrements of title and status accurately represent the individual; only the more subtle nuances of behaviour indicated what one was really worth. In this way, writing for and about the female introduced a whole new vocabulary for social relations, terms that attached precise moral value to certain qualities of mind. (4)

Furthermore, keeping in mind that the novel was the genre wherein everyday life was allowed, while poetry was not, I would argue that by moving poetry from the elevated to the domestic, women poets like Barbauld may have participated in the novelization of poetry. Accompanying this movement from political to domestic, from poetry to novel is the movement in the novel of moving from outside to inside a character, to show the mind at work. In construction of poems such as "To a little invisible Being

who is expected soon to become visible," Barbauld has shown her skill, moving from an outside narrative voice to within the mother herself creating a vicarious experience for the reader. As in the novel, the point of view may be third person, but the viewpoint is the mother's³⁵. So as well as bringing the *outside in* by moving the focus of poetry from politics to domestics, Barbauld participated in the movement to bring the *inside out* by focusing on the workings of the mind.

³⁵ Contemporary women novelists such as Jane Austen were practising this technique drawing us into the minds of such characters as Emma Woodhouse.

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