THE FEMALE QUIXOTE

IRONY, METAFICTION,

AND

THE FEMALE QUIXOTE

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the relationship of irony and metafiction in Charlotte Lennox's 1752 novel The Female Quixote. Though it is a very early work of metafiction, The Female Quixote draws attention to itself as a literary construct, questioning the relationship between romance and the novel through the complicated interplay of ironies. While it is ostensibly a novel in which the quixotic heroine Arabella ultimately learns the error of her ways, The Female Quixote nevertheless contains a number of romance elements in its plot and characters, which undercuts the apparent defeat of romance at the end. Furthermore, Arabella's immersion in her heroic world draws a number of characters supposedly rooted in the "real" world of the novel into similarly quixotic situations, thus generating other layers of "reality," or fictional worlds-within-worlds. The recontextualisation of romance language and behaviour is the major mechanism in the production of these worlds-within-worlds. These fictional layers are metafictional in the sense that they foreground the contrasts and similarities

between the novel's "real" world and Arabella's fantasy world. The more fictional layers generated in the text, the more apparent it becomes to the reader that they are all merely constructs, as is the "real" world of the novel.

The first chapter of the thesis examines The Female Quixote as a romance, and also discusses the text's portrayal of romance as an ironic mode. The second chapter focuses on Arabella's world of romance, with particular emphasis on the creative power of ironically recontextualised romance language. The third chapter discusses the ways in which Glanville and Sir George both attempt to manipulate Arabella's world for their own purposes, in turn generating other fictional layers or worlds in which they become entangled. The fourth chapter compares the approaches of the Countess and the Doctor to getting Arabella to readjust to the novel's "real" world, examining these attempts to alter Arabella's perception of the world in relation to language, irony and romance. The concluding chapter analyses the metafictional implications of the topics discussed in the previous chapters, also

locating Lennox's questioning of the nature of genre and fiction within the contexts of irony and literary history.

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Introduction

> Sir *Charles* . . . express'd much Admiration of [Arabella's] Wit, telling her, if she had been a Man, she would have made a great Figure in Parliament, and that her Speeches might have come perhaps to be printed in Time.
>
> (The Female Quixote, 311)

Of course, Arabella's speeches are printed in a form far more accessible and very likely more enduring than any dull parliamentary record; Charlotte Lennox records them for us in her deliciously ironic novel The Female Quixote. This work recognises and celebrates the multiplicities inherent in irony. It uses ironic duality both at the level of language and at the level of art--because the work is self-consciously a fictional construct--to question the nature not only of literary genre but of fiction itself.

The Female Quixote is a romance masquerading as a novel masquerading as a romance. As this statement implies, the novel contains several fictional layers. However, it would be an oversimplification to say that the text contains only two fictional levels, the level of the novel and the level of the romance. While Lennox does pit novel against romance, she does so in a complicated way, by showing that the

interaction of novel and romance generates any number of fictional worlds-within-worlds. Effectively, these become miniature layers of "reality" for the characters who participate in them, however unknowingly they do so. Arabella, as a female Quixote, lives her life as a romance heroine, and her heroic theatre is certainly the primary world-within-a-world of The Female Quixote. As this thesis discusses, however, even characters such as Glanville, Sir George, and a host of minor characters who are supposedly rooted in the "real" world of the novel begin to be drawn into similarly quixotic situations; Sir George, in particular, even begins to actively generate his own "worlds" when he constructs his history and his plot to frame Glanville near the end of the novel.

I will argue that these various fictional layers are closely related to irony, which is a pervasive feature of the text. Irony operates at a number of levels in The Female Quixote. As I will discuss, the recontextualisation of romance language and behaviour within the "real" world of the novel is one of the primary mechanisms in creating these multiple ironic "realities." However, the more "realities" or fictional layers that are generated in the text, the more

apparent it becomes to the reader that these are all merely constructs. The ultimate irony, of course, is that even the "real" world of The Female Quixote is shown to be a construct.

Since The Female Quixote draws attention to itself as a literary construct, it clearly has metafictional concerns, although it is less explicitly metafictional than the twentieth-century works which theorists of metafiction commonly discuss. As an example of early metafiction, however, it is a fairly sophisticated text, due to the tensions between romance and the novel implied by the relationships between its various fictional "realities." The Female Quixote suggests a close connection between romance, metafiction and irony, as I will discuss in the concluding chapter.

It would be useful here to define irony. A number of late-twentieth-century theorists have sought to do so; however, critics agree that to arrive at a universal definition of this nebulous concept would be impossible (Muecke 3). Descriptions of irony, rather than definitions, prove more useful. Perhaps the best-known attempt to describe irony is Wayne Booth's learned and technical

analysis A Rhetoric of Irony. A more recent and more descriptive outline of irony over a number of periods and literary works is D.J. Enright's The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony. However, most suitable to my discussion of irony is D.C. Muecke's classic text The Compass of Irony, which provides an appropriate framework in which to discuss several of the varieties of irony at work in The Female Quixote. Muecke focuses on irony's three general elements: that it is "a double-layered or two-storey phenomenon;" that there is an "opposition between the two levels . . . that may take the form of contradiction, incongruity, or incompatibility," and that "there is in irony an element of 'innocence'; either a victim is confidently unaware of there being an upper level or point of view that invalidates his own, or an ironist pretends not to be aware of it" (20). This thesis particularly discusses the second and third elements of irony in The Female Quixote, taking the first to be self-evident. Arabella's "innocence" and the incongruities between different fictional layers (but also their surprising similarities) provide a framework within which Lennox implies a commentary about the relationships between romance and novel, but also truth and fiction. In my

concluding chapter, I will also discuss the interdependency of irony and metafiction based on Muecke's description of Romantic irony, which postulates "That irony is the very principle of art" (Muecke 9).

The first part of my thesis is an examination of The Female Quixote as a romance. This chapter will provide more extensive details of the novel's romance elements than is currently to be found in criticism of The Female Quixote. It will also discuss The Female Quixote's portrayal of romance as an ironic mode, which is important to my subsequent discussion of irony and metafiction. The second chapter focuses on Arabella's world of romance, with particular emphasis on the creative power of ironic language. The third chapter discusses how the novel's two main male characters, Sir George and Glanville, both attempt to manipulate Arabella's world for their own purposes, in turn generating other metafictional worlds. Ultimately, however, both Glanville and Sir George find themselves caught up in the very force of fiction which they have tried to harness. The fourth chapter discusses two divergent attempts at "reality therapy:" the Countess' approach to manipulating Arabella's world in order to bring her into the novel's "real"

eighteenth-century world, and the Doctor's attempt to correct Arabella's delusions in the text's penultimate chapter. The chapter examines these attempts to alter Arabella's perception of the world in relation to language, irony and romance. The final chapter analyses the metafictional implications of the topics discussed in the previous chapters, locating Lennox's questioning of the nature of genre and fiction within the contexts of irony and literary history.

Chapter One: The Female Quixote and Romance

Helen Thomson puts it best when she states that "the central irony of The Female Quixote is that Arabella all along sees her life as furnishing material for a romance, with herself as heroine, when, in fact, her "history" is made into a novel, a form of fiction which sets itself in opposition to the so-called improbabilities of romance" (Thomson 122). More than this, while the novel seems, on the surface, to be a reaction against the romance form and its accompanying conventions, it is, in form at least, certainly a romance. While several critics have already discussed the text's romance elements, a summary of these will be useful in this chapter in order to begin to bring into focus the complex relationship between romance and novel in this work. The Female Quixote echoes romance not only in plot, character, setting, and related elements, but also, as I will argue at the end of the chapter, in its extensive use of irony. The Female Quixote's negotiation of irony's double edge within the context of romance is integral to its metafictionality.

The novel's metafictional concerns and its mock-heroic tone aside, the plot of The Female Quixote, at its most superficial level, clearly establishes it as a romance. A young and beautiful heroine, Arabella, is steadfastly pursued by an ardent admirer, Glanville; this hero also has a rival in the form of Sir George, who resorts to unscrupulous methods to try and obtain Arabella's hand. There are numerous twists of the plot, including Arabella's ultimate *grand geste* of flinging herself into the Thames in imitation of "the *Roman Clelia*" (363), heroine of Scudery's romance of the same name. This sort of mock-heroic event is clearly meant for us to laugh at, or at least for us uncomfortably "to watch the other characters laughing" (Langbauer 33). Beneath the surface of this parodic event, however, is a definite heroic undercurrent: Arabella is saved by a fortunate accident of sorts, though one perhaps less grand than those in the French romances. When she is contemplating how to escape from the men she thinks are about to attack her, she does "not [perceive] any boat to waft [her and her companions] over to *Richmond;*" shortly after she jumps in, however, a boat magically materialises in an "Instant" (363), just in time to help Mr Roberts save

her life. Underlying Lennox's apparent condemnation of romance, then, is a strong romance structure.

The climax and the conclusion of The Female Quixote perpetuate the ascendancy of the romance form over the novel. Following the danger to the heroine's life, there is a duel between her two admirers from which the hero Glanville emerges victorious. In the end, the barriers to Arabella's marriage to Glanville are removed when the Doctor convinces Arabella that her view of the world is incorrect, and a newly submissive Arabella rejects her belief in romance and offers herself in marriage to Glanville. This ending has troubled numerous critics, who see romance as a vehicle of the desire for female power and view Arabella's reliance on it "as a means for self-assertion" (Spacks 536). With considerable justification, the conclusion has been hailed as "disappointingly abrupt and seemingly anti-feminist" (Motooka 251). However, although on an outward level the text rejects romance, at a more fundamental level romance is perpetuated and affirmed. Even after Arabella's "artificial" world crumbles and she ceases to see herself as a heroine, the novel still concludes with an ending worthy of any romance, with Glanville still unconsciously acting

the role of hero, as I will discuss fully in Chapter Three. The novel ends with the marriage of Glanville and Arabella, as any romance ends with the marriage of the hero and the heroine. Sir George and Charlotte Glanville are also wed at the same time. In a characteristically ironic twist, while Arabella and Glanville's marriage is the happy fulfilment of both their wishes (for, Arabella's final submissive speech aside, it has always been clear that Arabella "does not hate" Glanville), the marriage of Charlotte and Sir George is characterised as a way of punishing the villain: "Sir *George,* entangled in his own Artifices, [sees] himself under a Necessity of confirming the Promises he had made to Miss Glanville during his fit of Penitence" (383). Thus, although Arabella confesses that she has "hitherto . . . trifled away [her] time" with her books (381), the novel's plot fulfils every requirement of romance.

Romance convention is also upheld in the novel's setting and characters. Arabella grows up isolated in a sort of Palace of Art of her father's making: "she has, in fact, been shut up in a castle quite as totally as any fairy tale princess" (Thomson 115). As the daughter of a Marquis, Arabella is very aware that, like any heroine of romance,

her "Quality is not mean" (336). Indeed, The Female Quixote is peopled with characters of wealth, privilege and quality, to a certain degree. While no princesses or kings walk its pages, the cast of characters includes two Baronets, a Countess, and a Marquis, among others. While the Glanville-Sir George opposition embodies a certain class conflict more characteristic of the emerging novel than of romance, for the Glanvilles seem to have definite connections to trade, the Marquis himself emphasises that Charles Glanville, "being the Son of [the Marquis'] Sister, is certainly not unworthy of [Arabella], tho' he has not a Title" (41). Even Miss Groves, who is the wealthy daughter of a merchant but the stepdaughter of a Duke, has at least an "Alliance to Quality" (68). Although Miss Groves is anything but a virtuous heroine of romance, having borne two illegitimate children by the age of eighteen, she looks like one, which is important in this novel which constantly renegotiates appearance and reality:

> [she is] very magnificently dressed: Tho' she [does] not seem to be more than eighteen Years of Age, her Stature [is] above the ordinary Size of Women; . . . and such an Air of Grandeur [is] diffused over her whole Person . . . that Arabella [can] hardly help thinking she [sees] the beautiful *Candace* before her. (67)

Miss Groves' being of heroic proportions is clearly a factor in Arabella's constructing her as a heroine, as well as in revising her history (Craft 833).

Even Lennox's choice of names for the characters illustrates the pervasiveness of the romance influence on The Female Quixote. The naming conventions of the text reflect the seventeenth-century French novels in which Arabella and, as Doody points out, Lennox herself are so well-versed (xiv-xv). In fact, names in The Female Quixote reflect not only its French ancestry, but the classical times in which the romances of Scudery, La Calprenede and others are set. The names Sir George uses when he tells his history and the elaborate plot he constructs to frame Glanville all echo the classical names with which Arabella is familiar from her reading. Sir George tells his history as Veridomer, has the actress he hires call herself Cynecia, and makes Arabella believe that Glanville's real name is Ariamenes. However, many of the characters of the "real world" of The Female Quixote have names that are French or quasi-French in derivation: Glanville, Bellmour, and Charlotte, for example. (Charlotte Glanville shares a first name with the novelist; both Motooka [256-7] and Marshall

[107] note that this device points out the constructed nature of The Female Quixote.) This is an English novel which reinterprets French texts in much the same problematic way as the French texts treat classical times, twisting the notions of history, fiction, and reality. Though names like Charles, Charlotte and even Arabella are not unusual in eighteenth-century fiction (Motooka 259), the use of "foreign" names lends The Female Quixote some of the exoticism in which romance deals. Additionally, of course, Arabella's Spanish name emphasizes that she is a direct literary descendant of that incomparable Spaniard, Don Quixote. The metafictional effect of Lennox's use of names is that it enables her to draw an implicit parallel between her own novel and its literary progenitors by recalling its origin in the French romances as well as its inheritance from Cervantes of mock-heroism and metafiction. The intertwining of English, French, Spanish and classical names serves to illustrate the coexistence of different fictional layers in the text.

Some critics, such as Hoople and, to a lesser extent, Kauvar, do not see The Female Quixote as being ultimately a romance, instead focusing on the apparent defeat of the

fantasy of romance by the "realism" of the novel indicated by the Doctor's winning over Arabella. However, they are essentially in agreement that it contains a significant number of romance elements. Though many critics recognise that The Female Quixote is a fundamentally ironic text, particularly Doody, Thomson, and Langbauer, little critical attention has been given to the precise ways in which irony operates in the work. In fact, much of the novel's metafictional significance stems from the magnification and intensification of the irony which The Female Quixote implies is a primary mode of romance. While upon first consideration romance might be thought to be antithetical to irony, since romance deals so extensively in desire, fantasy, and the irrational (Langbauer 35), The Female Quixote emphasises romance as a very double-edged and, as I will discuss further in Chapter Four, finally even paradoxical genre. In fact, however, the seeming innocence of fantasy is very important to irony in The Female Quixote, particularly because the text juxtaposes the fantasy of romance with the "reality" of the novel. As Muecke notes in his description of irony, it is "a double-layered or two-storey phenomenon" (19) that involves an "element of

innocence" (20) or unconsciousness which Arabella's relationship to her world of romance certainly embodies.

Many of the episodes that Arabella, Sir George and the Countess cite from romances emphasise double-edged circumstances. These circumstances frequently involve the "opposition that . . . [takes] the form of contradiction, incongruity, or incompatibility" typical of irony (Muecke 20). In romances, heroes rescue the "injurious Husband[s]" of their ladies even when they present obstacles to the heroes' own happiness (229), and princes such as Oroondates fight against their fathers' armies, invading their own kingdoms in the name of friendship (329). The events of The Female Quixote echo a number of these ironic episodes from romance. Like Oroondates, Glanville sides with Arabella against his own sister in Book V, Chapter II, "*Which inculcates . . . that a Person ought not to be too hasty, in deciding a Question he does not perfectly understand*" (186). As I discuss further in Chapter Three, Sir George's "History" provides a number of ironic episodes, as when Veridomer is healed in the house of his mortal enemy, and when Sydimiris falls in love with him although she had intended to torture him to avenge her brother. Not only is

Sir George's history ironic, so is his "real" fate in the novel; when he is being punished for his crimes, "he [finds] himself obliged to be his own Accuser" (382).

The Female Quixote intensifies these ironic aspects of romance, which Lennox clearly identifies. Lennox ironises even the seemingly unironic aspects of romance described at the beginning of this chapter, such as setting and character. The castle in which Arabella grows up is the Marquis' retreat from England's political realities, and hence a locus of the fantasy and escapism associated with romance. Its description is fraught with irony. In the construction of the Marquis' garden, for example, "The most laborious Endeavours of Art had been used to make it appear like the beautiful Product of wild, uncultivated Nature" (6). Arabella grows out of this layered environment wherein a considerable amount of art and artifice lie behind a seemingly natural facade. Arabella's beauty is a quality typical of romance heroines, and the description of her appearance echoes the ironic one of the castle grounds: "her fine black Hair . . . hung upon her Neck in Curls, which had so much the Appearance of being artless, that all but her Maid, whose Employment it was to give them that Form,

imagined they were so" (9). From The Female Quixote's earliest pages, then, Lennox's emphasis on constructedness brings out the the ironic contrasts between appearance and reality, nature and art, and the romance and the novel.

Chapter Two: Arabella's World

Arabella's world of romance is the central metafictional world of The Female Quixote. Its importance to metafiction lies not only in its relationship with the "real" eighteenth-century society represented in the novel, but also in how it interacts with the other levels of "reality", most of which it generates. The chief generating mechanism here is irony: both ironic situations and, especially, the ironic operation of romance language cause Arabella to affect the behaviour of those around her, transforming them from ordinary members of the eighteenth-century English upper class into people who act in the same mode as Arabella. This process is more than simply "romance [being] sometimes mistaken for reality by those surrounding the quixotic protagonist" (Craft 833); we see a great many characters, even including those who seem least like romance figures, such as Sir Charles and the Doctor, participating in Arabella's romantic mode unknowingly or in spite of themselves.

It is apparent from the novel's earliest pages that

Arabella is unable to distinguish between "reality" and the world constructed by the romances she has grown up reading. Like Don Quixote, she therefore lives her life as though it is a romance, much to the astonishment and often the dismay of those around her. Early critics of The Female Quixote saw this as a form of insanity, a "mental aberration" (Hoople 123); more recently, however, Wendy Motooka has read Arabella's "romantic beliefs . . . [as developing] under and [relying] upon the very ordinary intellectual method of empiricism" (257). It is little wonder that she takes romances as a genuine representation of the world; as discussed above, she recognises the elements of romance in her own beauty and social position, as well as her surroundings. Furthermore, her parents have provided her with both a model of retreating into romance, and also the materials with which to do it. Arabella's mother is a woman of "Beauty and good Sense" (6), much like Arabella's heroines and Arabella herself, and promises to be "an agreeable Companion" (6) for the Marquis. Unfortunately, she grows bored with the Marquis' refuge and takes her own refuge in romance, stocking the castle with the many volumes which are Arabella's only female inheritance (Malina 278).

Debra Malina points out that in reading the romances, "Arabella . . . [performs] a political act of recovering and allying herself with the absent mother in defiance of the father" (279). Romance is certainly a source of female power and resistance to patriarchy (Langbauer 31). However, Arabella's father is as much or even more responsible for Arabella's literal interpretations of the romances as the late Marchioness. David Marshall sees the Marquis as Arabella's "writing-master" (107), who exercises patriarchal power in part by "[permitting] her to receive no Part of her Education from another, which he [is] capable of giving her himself" (6).

This education is a thorough one. Having fostered in Arabella a love of reading, the Marquis teaches her French and Italian (7), as well as other subjects of which she proves herself mistress later in the novel such as philosophy and debate (her knowledge of which proves so important in the penultimate chapter) and astronomy (142). Arabella finds the romances she mistakes for reality in the Marquis' library, alongside the books he uses in her formal education. Learning any language or, especially, any abstract subject requires a certain willingness to immerse

oneself in the particular belief system and governing principles of a certain field, even if these seem arbitrary: in other words, learning necessitates the acceptance of a given paradigm and the willingness to work within it. Lennox's placement of the romances in the Marquis' library surely indicates an implied parallel between the world of fiction and the world of mathematics or any other branch of knowledge. Having accepted these various paradigms at the instigation of her father, Arabella accepts the romances in the same way, internalising the laws of romance as she internalises the laws of astronomy, and, significantly, as she internalises the laws of argument. Arabella herself offers a similar explanation for her quixotism during the debate with the Doctor, when she argues, "Experience may be gain'd by Books: And certainly there is no Part of Knowledge in which we are oblig'd to trust them more than in Descriptive Geography" (373) (this is, specifically, the reason she believes the places in the romances are real). Arabella's notion of "romantick Heroism" is thus literally "a Principle imbib'd from Education" (329). By drawing these implicit parallels between "fiction" and "knowledge," Lennox draws our attention to the ubiquity of paradigmatic

constructs, and hence to the coexistence of different realities. Of course, this is closely related to the different "realities" or world-layers of The Female Quixote, and Lennox's questioning of what is acceptably "real" and what is not.

As the central figure around whom all the novel's metafictional levels or reality layers revolve, Arabella is a major locus of irony, since, to recall Muecke's description of irony, she operates simultaneously on seemingly incompatible levels while remaining innocent that this incompatibility exists. She is capable of being the ideally accomplished young woman of the eighteenth century, as when at dinner "that Wit and Vivacity which [is] natural to her . . . so absolutely charm[s] the whole Company, that not one of them remember[s] any of her former Extravagancies" (204). On the other hand, her foible of always considering herself a heroine frustrates many of the characters (not to mention the reader!) extremely. Arabella's arrival in Bath occasions one of the most telling reactions to her, typical of her ironic dual nature. Tinsel and Selvin come away from the same conversation with two opposite impressions of Arabella, "Mr *Tinsel* declaring she

was a Fool, and had no knowledge of the World, and Mr. *Selvin* convinced she was a Wit, and very learn'd in Antiquity" (281). The narrator presents Arabella as a liminal figure, calling her a "fair Visionary" (323); while the narrator's tone is not always sympathetic and is frequently ironic, clearly asking us on one level to laugh at the heroine, Arabella is certainly presented as one who is able to transcend different metafictional levels.

Arabella is a fundamentally unironic person in a fundamentally ironic world. Though she lives the irony that is romance, she is completely oblivious to it, because until the novel's *denouement* she does not recognise the existence of any "reality" other than that of her theatre of romance. Arabella also seems oblivious to such forms of irony as Miss Glanville's sarcasm ("thank Heaven, the Sight of you is not so dangerous, but that . . . People . . . may escape your Chains" [84-5]), yet she frequently misinterprets honesty and genuineness, as when she mistakes Sir Charles' addresses on the part of his son for a sexual advance on his own part. Indeed, Arabella shows no consciousness of ironic language whatsoever until comparatively late in the novel, when we see her being purposely ironic for the first time. When Lucy

assures her that she made Mr Tinsel promise that he is not in love with Arabella, Arabella replies, "That was very wisely done, indeed" (298).

In some respects, this innocence causes Arabella to draw others into her romance world to varying degrees. Throughout the novel, Arabella's unawareness that there is any discrepancy between her theatre of romance and the novel's "real" eighteenth-century world causes many characters who are outwardly part of the "real" world to act in accordance with her heroic expectations. While this is most true for characters such as Glanville and Sir George, and the later chapters of this thesis will discuss those cases in detail, it is also true for minor characters, and even for most of the people that Arabella meets just briefly. During the Bath episode, for example, though she risks exposing herself to ridicule, Arabella's run-in with the Mantua-maker whom she hires to make her a gown in the style of the Princess Julia results in Bath society's actually taking her for a mysterious contemporary Princess Julia. They are "aw'd to Respect by that irresistable [sic] Charm in the Person of *Arabella*, which commanded Reverence and Love from all who beheld her" (272). (In addition, this

occurs in part when Arabella's romantic notions and language are parroted by the gossiping Mantua-maker, in the same way as when Lucy mimics them, as I will discuss below.) Arabella's behaviour also affects such minor characters as Tinsel and Selvin. For example, Selvin's behaviour in Book VII Chapter XII when he thinks Tinsel has prejudiced Arabella against him is highly melodramatic: he involuntarily acts the part of the romance hero by flying into "a Rage," making threats against Tinsel, and, significantly, using such overblown rhetoric that Tinsel exclaims, " 'I don't know what you mean . . . you talk in Riddles" (291).

Language is a very important aspect of the ironic interaction of romance and reality in the novel. Arabella perpetuates her world of romance largely through her use of language, though it frequently seems to the other characters as though she, too, is talking in riddles. Romance "language" in <u>The Female Quixote</u> seems to have three components: ironic or hyperbolic rhetoric, a specific vocabulary, and a system of physical signs. A discussion of each of these components is included below because all these are important to the creation of Lennox's metafictional

text-layers. In part this is because Arabella's innocence about language leaves her vulnerable to attempts at manipulation, but it also gives her a unique power to unconsciously affect other characters, "to rewrite her world" (Malina 279).

The ironic aspects of romance in The Female Quixote are not confined to the plot-related elements outlined in Chapter One. Important to the text is that romance figures express themselves in a style characterised by hyperbole. Arabella's mode of verbal expression, as well as her ultimate mode of self-expression, her behaviour, are not only ironic but very frequently hyperbolic, although she does not realise that all her actions and speeches are overblown. Thus we see her summarily banishing people from her presence, believing that she really controls her admirers' life and death, and eventually flinging herself into the Thames, all in accordance with the unlikely conventions of romance. Though Arabella lives hyperbolically, she does not understand hyperbole, as she does not understand ironic language; when Miss Glanville jokes that Mr Selvin will die if Arabella does not come with her to the Parade, Arabella takes her literally (283).

Hyperbole is related to the text's metafictionality; Lennox's self-conscious style with its emphasis on art as construct could be considered a type of fictional hyperbole.

Even more important than hyperbole to the language of Arabella's romance world is her specific vocabulary. The negotiation of this vocabulary by Glanville, Sir George, the Countess, and the Doctor in their attempts to manipulate Arabella will be discussed in detail in Chapters Three and Four. This chapter describes this vocabulary and discusses its effect on minor characters and on the romance world of the novel in general. As Langbauer notes, "enigmatic language is not just an element of [romance], but its very source and impetus" (38). The metafictional effect of Arabella's vocabulary is twofold: not only does it modify the behaviour of those around her so that they, too, act in a heroic or mock-heroic mode (particularly in the case of servants like Lucy or the Mantua-Maker), but its juxtaposition with the "normal" eighteenth-century vocabulary also emphasises the differences and the similarities between Arabella's world and the larger world of the novel, frequently acting as ironic commentary.

The defining characteristic of Arabella's use of the

romance vocabulary, a set of terms taken from the translations of seventeenth-century French romances, is that Arabella's diction is totally without irony. In eighteenth-century parlance, however, many of these words have highly ironic connotations, which leads to a clash between Arabella's world and that of the rest of the characters. This vocabulary includes such words as *Adventures*, *Favours*, *Games*, *Lovers*, *Crimes*, *Servants*, and *History*, among others. While Arabella's usage of these words is completely heroic, in the "real" eighteenth-century world, "much of the romance vocabulary has been appropriated and devalued by conversion into a series of euphemisms for sexual misbehavior" (Thomson 117). This particularly creates difficulties between Arabella and Miss Glanville, who sees Arabella as her rival. Arabella surmises that Miss Glanville, being "young and lovely . . . questionless, [has] . . . been engaged in many Adventures" (87). To Arabella, the word lacks any double meaning, indicating merely the series of surprising events in a heroine's life which lead up to her marriage. Miss Glanville, however, who is unfamiliar with Arabella's unique vocabulary, but very familiar with the ways of the world, is offended at Arabella's apparent imputation that she is a

sexual adventuress, perhaps because this is closer to the mark than she would like to admit. After all, to Arabella's horror, Miss Glanville has not scrupled to bestow such "Favours" as kisses on some of her admirers. The apparent hyperbole or exaggeration characteristic of Arabella's use of the term, then, finds an ironic parallel in Miss Glanville's sexual hypocrisy.

One of the other most important terms in Arabella's heroic vocabulary is "History," which again has different meaning for Arabella than for everyone else; as I will discuss in the final chapter, this term is also significant to Lennox's questioning of the nature of fiction. When Arabella asks Mr. Tinsel for the Adventures of the people she sees at the Bath Assembly-Rooms, he tells her all the gossip concerning them. This confuses her: "I do not know what to make of the Histories he has been relating. I think they do not deserve that Name, and are rather detached Pieces of Satire on particular Persons, than a serious Relation of Facts" (276). Arabella explains her definition of "histories" in her own words: she had imagined that listening to Mr Tinsel's Histories would be

> a pleasing and rational Amusement . . . far from a

> Detail of Vices, Follies, and Irregularities, I expected to have heard the Adventures of some illustrious Personages related; between whose Actions, and those of the Heroes and Heroines of Antiquity, I might have found some Resemblance. (277)

Miss Glanville, Sir Charles and others consistently find fault with the morality and values presented in the romances: Sir Charles is horrified to hear that in these books, women may command armies [205], and Arabella's idols include Cleopatra and the Princess Julia, to whom Miss Glanville is not pleased to be compared. Ironically, however, it is rather in the "real" world, whose sordidness is highlighted by the frustration of Arabella's high expectations of Mr Tinsel's histories, that we find the real lack of morality.

We particularly see the creative or reality-modifying power of Arabella's language through her relationship with her servants. This relationship differs considerably from the way eighteenth-century ladies would normally behave toward their attendants. Arabella's treatment of her "Women," particularly Lucy, makes them act out their roles in keeping with their status as attendants to a heroine, however clumsily. Arabella addresses her attendants in the manner of romance heroines, often using "thee," "thou," and

"thy" for you and your. These, of course, were archaisms by the middle of the eighteenth century. They are clearly labels which not only distinguish Arabella's women from common servants, but also cause them to act differently from common servants, in combination with Arabella's behaviour toward them. This behaviour is marked: for example, she has them sit with her in church, rather than at the back with other servants; Margaret Dalziel's notes on the text point out the unusual nature of this arrangement (389).

Of course, no servant is influenced by Arabella more than Lucy, who plays Sancho Panza to Arabella's Quixote, but who also functions as her mirror (Hoople 129). Perhaps as much from class-based admiration of her mistress as from natural ductility, Lucy wades into Arabella's world obediently, internalising its rules and codes, as when she urges Arabella to prevent Edward the gardener's suicide: "your Ladyship may prevent his going to the Fishpond again, by laying your Commands upon him to Live" (26). Lucy in turn uses language to create romance reality, particularly when she is parroting Arabella's words, or when her language is otherwise an extension of Arabella's. When Lucy tells Mr Hervey that Arabella "has forbid me to receive any Letters

or Messages from you; and therefore I beg you will not offer to bribe me" (12), he mistakes her "Simplicity" for "an Excess of aukward Cunning" (12). This gaucherie of Lucy's actually has the opposite effect of what she and Arabella intend, for Hervey loses no time in offering, successfully, to bribe her. Thus, Arabella's expectation that Lucy will be bribed becomes an ironically self-fulfilling prophecy.

It should be noted that Arabella's language does not always succeed at making others behave appropriately to her world. When others do not seem to be supplying the rhetoric she expects, she provides it herself, in an effort to reconcile the events that are happening with what she sees as their proper expression. When Sir George's servant is "opening his Mouth to say something, 'tis probable in his own Defence, . . . Arabella, preventing him" tells him, "I know what thou wouldst say . . . : Thou wouldst abuse my Patience by a false Detail of thy Master's Sighs, Tears, Exclamations, and Despair" (256). When he tells her he does not "intend to say any such Thing", Arabella is "a little disappointed" (256). Arabella clearly is unable to separate certain actions or behaviours from the language she believes should accompany them, as when she thinks Lucy must be

mistaken about how Tinsel has asked to see her: " 'tis impossible he should sue for such a Favour in Terms like those" (299).

At other times, however, Arabella's use of romance language and behaviour ironically has a beneficial effect on those around her, such as when she and the Glanvilles are set upon by highwaymen on the road to Bath (surely an Adventure suitable to the romance that The Female Quixote is). When Arabella assumes they are knights come to rescue her and Miss Glanville from abduction, due to the fact that they "[appear] to be in so handsome a Garb, that [she takes] them for persons of prime Quality" (259), Sir Charles euphemistically and ironically calls them "Knights of the Road" (257). Arabella "interpret[s] these Words in her own Way" due to her lack of consciousness that Sir Charles' words might be at all ambiguous (258). When Sir Charles inadvertently reinforces her incorrect assumption with his diction, Arabella proceeds to do all the wrong things, addressing the robbers as "valiant Men" (258) and warning them that they are outnumbered by the Glanvilles' party. While the men are not close enough to actually hear her words, "finding they would be very well received, [they

think] fit to abandon their Enterprize" (258). So, ironically, Arabella's apparently foolish conduct prevents the robbery that it might have been expected to further. Thus we see that disrupting expected, appropriate eighteenth-century conduct with the behaviour of romance does, in fact, have the effect that Arabella intends: the "knights" leave the party alone, allowing them to proceed on their way unmolested.

Arabella's adoption of the nonverbal language used by romance heroines and heroes also has repercussions throughout the novel. These repercussions result not only from the way characters such as Sir George and Glanville begin to use this nonverbal language (as I will discuss in the next chapter), but because the reading of nonverbal "Signs" by various characters helps draw attention to the ironic discrepancies between appearance and reality which operate on many levels in the novel. This nonverbal language falls into several categories. For example, Arabella places much faith in physical signs such as the ones she expects Glanville to exhibit when he learns he has disappeared ("Tears . . . , [striking] his Bosom . . . and [casting] his accusing and despairing Eyes to Heaven" [109]). Glanville's

exhibition of these signs at the end of the novel will be discussed in the next chapter. Another element of Arabella's language which Glanville eventually masters, whether consciously or not, is silence-as-sign. Arabella admonishes Sir Charles, for example, to "let the Silence I require of you, be one Proof of [your Solicitude]" (204). The third category of Arabella's nonverbal language is her use of "Signs": these are signs with her hand indicating that she should be left alone. These initially confuse not only Glanville but a host of servants, as when Arabella makes Sir George's servant a "Sign with her Hand, very majestically, for him to be gone" (256) and then, when he remains, asks why he will not obey her commands. He is "wishing at the same time secretly, she would let him know what they [are]" (256).

Appropriately, Sir George himself, the master of deceit, gives Arabella an example of the unreliability of signs and appearances which later becomes so significant in the novel, both at the level of his plot to frame Glanville and at the metafictional level:

> I have seen some Persons of my Acquaintance talking to . . . Ladies, while one of Congreve's Comedies have been acting; his Face quite turned from the Stage, and

> hers overspread with an eternal Smile; her fine Eyes sometimes lifted up in a beautiful Surprize, and a little inchanting Giggle half-hid with her Fan; in spite of their Inattention, I have been ready to imagine, he was entertaining her with Remarks upon the Play, which she was judicious enough to understand; and yet I have afterwards been informed by himself, that nothing was less in their Thoughts; and all that Variety in her Face, and that extreme seeming Earnestness in his Discourse, was occasioned by the most trifling Subjects imaginable: He perhaps had been telling her how the Sight of her Squirrel, which peeped out of her Pocket, surprised some Ladies she was visiting; . . . Hence proceeded her Smiles, the lifting up of her Eyes, the half-stifled Laugh, and all the pretty Gestures that appeared so wonderfully charming to all those who did not hear their Discourse. (148-9)

Arabella's reaction is typical of her obliviousness to the discrepancy between appearance and reality: she initiates a discussion of "Beauty and Love" as appropriate conversational matter (149). Except when believing gardeners to be princes and social acquaintances to be ravishers, Arabella reads only one layer of reality, "confidently unaware of the very possibility of there being an upper level or point of view that invalidates [her] own" (Muecke 20); this is a characteristic which Sir George does not hesitate to exploit.

The Female Quixote, however, does not condemn Arabella alone for judging by appearance and interpreting signs in her own way, instead drawing a parallel between Arabella's

quixotism and the tendency of people in the "real" world to do the same thing. Book VII, Chapter IV, subtitled "*In which one of our Heroine's Whims is justified, by some others full as whimsical*" proves that others are as guilty as Arabella of not only judging by appearance, but also of constructing fictions as a result. Her unusual costume at her first appearance in the Bath Pump-Rooms causes rife speculation about who she is: she's taken for "a Foreigner; [or], a *Scots* Lady, covered with her Plaid, [or] a *Spanish* Nun, that had escaped from a Convent, and had not yet quitted her Veil" (263). This last theory is as wild as any of Arabella's fantasies, and more than borders on the gothic. Mr Tinsel, too, makes up his own fiction by drawing wild conclusions from Arabella's choosing to walk with him rather than Mr Selvin: he

> examine[s] her Looks and Behaviour with more Care, conceiving such a Preference must proceed from a latent Motive which was not unfavourable for him. His Discernment on these Occasions being very surprising, he soon discover'd in the bright Eyes of *Arabella* a secret Approbation of his Person, which he endeavour'd to increase by displaying it with all the Addresses he was Master of, and did not fail to talk her into an Opinion of his Wit, by ridiculing every Body that pass'd them, and directing several study'd Compliments to herself. (287)

Thus, signs and appearances cause even minor characters to

construct their own belief systems or paradigms. Although appearances are deceptive, these belief systems are "realities" as valid (or as invalid) as any of the novel's other layers of reality, at least as long as the characters continue to believe in them.

In this way, we see that various conflicting worlds or layers of reality operate simultaneously in The Female Quixote. Lennox further emphasises this point by using the recontextualisation of romance language to illustrate that the "real" world of the novel is as double-edged as Arabella's romance world. For example, while the episode where Arabella believes Hervey is trying to abduct her clearly shows her folly, on another level the language illustrates that Hervey's character is operating on several levels. When he first sees her, Mr Hervey "resolves to make some Attempt upon" Arabella, presumably meaning that he wishes to court her (10). However, the word "Attempt" reappears in Book I, Chapter VI, in which Arabella really believes he is making an attempt on her person. Indeed, Hervey's motivation is less than innocent: his "eager Glances" betray his sexual interest in her (9), and learning that she is heiress to her father's "vast Estates" makes him

financially interested as well (10). Significantly, the word is also associated with Glanville in Book VIII, Chapter IV, "*In which* Mr Glanville *makes an unsuccessful Attempt upon* Arabella" (319). This time the reference is to Glanville's attempt to shatter Arabella's romance world and to reconcile her to the novel's "real" world. However, if we read Arabella's retreat into romance as an attempt to insulate herself against the dangers posed by such opportunists as Hervey and the sexual hypocrisy embodied by Miss Glanville, we must also read Glanville's "Attempt" as being ironic and equally as sinister as Hervey's.

CHAPTER 3: World-Manipulators: Glanville and Sir George

Arabella's beauty, charm and wealth make her one of the finest matches in England, as Hervey quickly realises, and her quixotic foible is the Achilles heel targeted by her main suitors in order to attain her hand and her fortune. Both Glanville and Sir George try to manipulate Arabella by outwardly participating in her world of romance. However, the power of the world of romance is such that both men are drawn into Arabella's layer of reality. Ironically, they begin to exist on several different fictional levels: they are not only part of the "real" world of the novel, and they not only construct their own false romance worlds by actively manipulating Arabella's heroic expectations, but they also unconsciously begin to conform to the traditions and characteristics of romance I have outlined in the previous two chapters. The manipulators find themselves ultimately manipulated; while the novel's conclusion indicates that Arabella is, perhaps, the victim of the novel, both Glanville and Sir George are victims of the romance.

The events of the novel eventually prove the ever-constant Glanville to be the romance's hero, and according to romance tradition, the one who deserves to marry Arabella. However, especially at first, his fictional status is unclear. Glanville particularly lacks the ability, at the beginning of the novel, to understand Arabella's language of romance. He misinterprets her hyperbolic mode of expression, as we see when Arabella writes her earnest letter to "the most presumptuous Man in the World" (33). Glanville cannot believe that someone whose language is so hyperbolic can be serious: "The Superscription of this Letter, and the uncommon Style of it, persuaded Mr. Glanville, that what he had been foolish enough to resent as an Affront, was designed as a Jest, and meant to divert him as well as herself" (33). In an elegantly ironic twist, Lennox illustrates that, accustomed to seeing irony and hypocrisy all around him, Glanville reads Arabella as an ironist even when she is at her most innocent, in Muecke's sense of the term. Glanville also reads an ironic intention in Arabella's diction where there is none, as his frequent confusion at terms such as "Offence" and "Crime" shows. Unable to comprehend her earnestness, he confesses himself "quite at a

loss to understand [her]" (36). Worse, he fails to use the rhetorical and behavioural conventions of a romance lover, as we see when he precipitously declares his love for her. Arabella's reaction on this occasion is typically hyperbolic:

> What a horrible Violation this, of all the Laws of Gallantry and Respect . . . *Arabella* could hardly believe her Senses when she heard a Declaration, not only made without the usual Forms, but also, that the presumtuous [sic] Criminal waited for her Answer, without . . . any Apprehension of the Punishment to which he was to be doomed. (32)

Furthermore, he is neither able to recognise Arabella's wordless signs to be gone, nor does he exhibit the physical signs of the tormented lover which Arabella expects: "didst thou not observe the Tears trickle from his Eyes, which, haply, he strove to conceal? Did he not strike his Bosom with the Vehemence of his Grief; and cast his accusing and despairing Eyes to Heaven, which had permitted . . . a Misfortune to befal me?" (109). As I will discuss, however, Glanville eventually repairs each of these inadequacies.

Though Glanville is physically attractive, wealthy and allied to quality through his blood relationship with the Marquis, these are often qualities of the villains of romances, as well as the heroes, as we see by Arabella's

expectation that all potential ravishers must be of illustrious birth (259). (We also see this convention in Don Quixote, in such characters as Don Fernando, who, like Sir George, eventually repents his crime of trying to carry off one heroine and marries the woman to whom he previously made promises.) More than this, Glanville initially exhibits some signs specifically characteristic of a villain. The fact that Glanville is her father's choice for her causes Arabella particular difficulties:

> The Impropriety of receiving a Lover of a Father's recommending appeared in its strongest Light. What Lady in Romance ever married the Man that was chose for her? In those Cases the Remonstrances of a Parent are called Persecutions; obstinate Resistance, Constancy and Courage. (27)

Furthermore, as noted in the previous chapter, Lennox implies a sinister subtext to Glanville's desires by putting his attempt upon Arabella on a par with Hervey's; after all, Glanville wishes to violate Arabella's world, which makes him in some sense a ravisher. In addition, Glanville is at first guilty of insufficient respect for the romance heroine. Having first declared "tell me, I beseech you, how I must behave to please you; for I should be extremely glad to be honoured with your good Opinion" (15), some of

Glanville's subsequent behaviour certainly does not prove him the loyal suitor of romance, who is supposed to be willing to spend years in his lady's service. If part of the appeal of romance for Arabella is that it provides a model of female power and individual influence, as so many critics have argued (Thomson 113, Doody xxiv, Langbauer 45, *et al.*), then Glanville's reneging on his agreement to read part of Cassandra in Book I, Chapter XII constitutes a lack of respect for Arabella's wishes that does seem a criminal affront to her dignity, at least by Arabella's standard of criminality. Indeed she feels "Shame and Rage. . .at so glaring a Proof of his Disrespect" (51). As the novel progresses, however, Glanville moves from being a flawed novelistic hero to a more unambiguous hero typical of romance.

Glanville's transformation is deliberate in part; he purposely remakes himself into the type of lover Arabella expects him to be. Although, as noted above, Glanville immediately sees that the way to Arabella's heart is to behave in a way that will please her, he does not take this to heart at first, even though the Marquis acts as a type of "writing-master" for him as well, chiding his nephew for not

reading what Arabella had asked (52). However, after Sir George begins deliberately playing with Arabella's version of reality as discussed below, Glanville begins to follow suit, being "apt to believe [he] shall have more Reason to envy than pity [Sir George's] situation" (188). He thus begins to deliberately use romance "as a tool for the manipulation and capture" of Arabella (Malina 279). Glanville humours Arabella when she consults him as to whether

> it is less criminal in a Lady to hear Persons talk to her of Love, allow them to kiss her Hand, and permit them to write to her, than to make a charitable Visit to a Man who is confined to his Bed through the Violence of his Passion and Despair; the Intent of this Visit being only to prevent the Death of an unfortunate Lover, and, if necessary, to lay her Commands upon him to live. (186)

His hasty action backfires, however, when Miss Glanville points out that it is Sir George Arabella proposes to visit. The chapter's cautionary subtitle, "*Which inculcates by a very good Example, that a Person ought not to be too hasty in deciding a Question he does not perfectly understand*" (186), indicates the inadvisability of such cavalier attempts to manipulate the earnest Arabella. Glanville's clumsy effort to prevent Arabella from visiting Sir George,

by threatening that he will die if she proceeds, genuinely confuses and upsets her, making her bemoan that ironic "Fatal Necessity . . . which obliges me either to be cruel or unjust; and, with a Disposition to neither, makes me, in some Degree, guilty of both!" (190). In this episode both Glanville and Charlotte are disposed to laugh at Arabella's seriousness, indicating a continued lack of respect for her, although Glanville is self-interested enough to conceal his laughter behind a coughing fit to prevent offending her (187). However, despite the pattern in the novel of people being deceived by appearances, Glanville's selfish attempt at manipulation ultimately fails.

As Glanville's love for Arabella deepens, and as her influence begins to be pervasive, Glanville's early attempts to act the part of the romance hero eventually begin to succeed, although he appears increasingly unaware of his transformation. As Thompson notes, "by turning herself into a heroine of romance, Arabella makes of her lover Glanville a hero whose sole function is to serve his mistress" (114-115), thereby fulfilling part of her desire for power. This alteration in Glanville is precipitated by his mastering Arabella's vocabulary of words and signs; the "process of

[testing Glanville's heart and . . . teaching him to be her loyal knight] is conducted through the romance texts: Arabella succeeds in getting Glanville to speak to her in the language of romance, a metaphoric language of love" (Thomson 115). However, the changes in Glanville extend far beyond the linguistic ones Thomson cites.

As Glanville increasingly takes on the role of hero, unconsciously beginning to exist as more than an ordinary eighteenth-century gentleman, a tension develops between the earnest behaviour of a romance hero and his initial tendency to laugh at Arabella's foible. When Sir George jestingly adopts the discourse of romance in his dialogue with Glanville, calling him "inhuman, but too happy Lover" and proceeding with a speech in the florid style of romance, Glanville stiffly replies, "lay aside this pompous Style: I am not disposed to be merry at present, and have not all the Relish for this kind of Wit, that you seem to expect" (196). During this confrontation with his rival for Arabella's hand, Glanville seems conscious that he is playing a role: "Lady *Bella*, Sir, is not a Person, with whom such Liberties ought to be taken; nor will I, in the double Character of her Lover and Relation, suffer it from any one whatever"

(196). Significantly, when faced with this threat, and recognising his rival's lack of respect for Arabella, Glanville begins to lose his sense of irony as well, getting closer to Arabella in this respect. While part of him still finds Sir George's antics funny, he is also grave and disapproving, as Sir George notes: "be as serious as thou wilt. . .provided you will allow me to be gay; and not pretend to infect me with thy unbecoming Gravity" (197). This "Gravity," which Glanville clearly lacks at the beginning of the novel, signals that he is beginning to stop playing the role of Arabella's lover, and beginning to live it.

As Glanville increasingly fulfils the role of hero, he appears increasingly to lose control over how he behaves. At the end of the novel, he comes close to losing control of his very identity when we nearly see him renamed: Arabella believes, because of the actress' story, that Glanville's real name is Ariamenes. He offers to fight Mr Tinsel for sneering at Arabella (303), and Arabella praises him for having "given your Rival his Liberty. I assure you this Generosity is highly agreeable to me" (303). When Miss Glanville observes to him, "you are very vehement in your

Temper, and are as violently carry'd away about Things of little Importance as of the greatest; and then, whatever you have a Fancy for, you love so obstinately" (310), Arabella again rewards him with her approbation: "the Temperament of great Minds ought to be such as she represents yours to be" (310). Significantly, this "Temperament" is shared not only by the impulsive, strong-willed heroes of romance, but by Arabella herself, as we see by her many instances of hyperbolic behaviour.

As the novel's climax approaches, Glanville becomes almost totally absorbed in his role, although part of him continues to be frustrated at Arabella's blind absorption. Though he groans with frustration while Arabella discourses on "the unhappy *Hermione*" (338) (and Arabella, having by now constructed him as the perfect hero, interprets his groans as evidence that the story has moved him excessively), he still uses heroic language, having internalised Arabella's example: "Let me know my Crime. Yet may I perish if I am conscious of any towards you--" (352). Glanville also begins to focus on rather heroic concerns: he fights or offers to fight first Hervey, then Tinsel, when he believes they are mocking her, even though he is not immune to mocking her

himself. It is in connection with his main rival, however, that Glanville's actions become most extreme and heroic. He "[soothes] his Uneasiness with Hopes of Revenge" upon Sir George (355), and when, mistaking Miss Glanville for Arabella because she is veiled, he precipitately wounds Sir George, he is "Transported with Rage" (357). During this episode, he does continue to manipulate Arabella consciously, as when he pretends to leave the house at Richmond "[making] Lady *Bella* believe it was in Obedience to her Commands that he had left her, with a Purpose not to return till he had clear'd his Innocence" (355). However, he does so because he is caught up in his vengeance-driven plot.

The novel's final page locates Glanville fully in Arabella's romance world; even when Arabella stops constructing herself as a romance heroine, Glanville retains his heroic status. Upon hearing that the Doctor has "cured" Arabella of her supposed madness, Glanville continues to behave in the mode of romance. His behaviour toward the Doctor tends toward hyperbole: "in the Transport of his Joy [he] was almost ready to throw himself at [the Doctor's] Feet, to thank him for this Miracle, as he called it" (382).

As well, when Arabella finally agrees to marry him, he "kisse[s] the Hand she [gives] him with an emphatic Silence" (383), recalling, of course, the many silent Signs in Arabella's language of romance discussed in Chapter Two. Interestingly, of the three characters most controlled by the romance mode (Arabella, Sir George, and Glanville), only Glanville does not come to a bad end. The happy, even quixotic, ending for Glanville has several metafictional functions. Of course, his ultimate status as a romance hero undercuts the apparent intrusion of "reality" into Arabella's world, indicating the ascendancy of the romance over the novel in the text. It also illustrates that romance is not merely absurd fantasy, and does not deserve the "extreme wariness" with which it has been treated in British fiction since Lennox's time (Doody xviii). The text certainly valourises the genuine earnestness characteristic of romance with which Glanville finally behaves. Of course, as I will discuss in the following chapter, this is not a complete vindication of romance, but even if Arabella must become "defeated, humiliated, and subordinated" at the level of the novel (Motooka 251), at least romance has provided her with a husband who respects her.

Less respectful of Arabella but far more skilful at manipulating her is Sir George, who tries to turn his extensive background in romance to his own advantage. He "had actually employed himself some Weeks in giving a new Version of the *Grand Cyrus*. . . . he [is] perfectly well acquainted with the chief Characters in most of the *French* Romances" (129), and therefore "he resolve[s] to make his Addresses to Arabella in the Form they [prescribe]" (130). Sir George's position is even more complex than Glanville's, however. Not only does he exist as part of the "real" world of the novel that is fraught with irony and sexual hypocrisy, but he is also a classic romance villain. Additionally, in his attempt to manipulate Arabella's layer of reality he generates other layers in which he and the other characters become entangled, most notably his long "History" and the plot he constructs to frame Glanville. Lennox emphasises that these "realities" have particular metafictional significance by having Glanville characterise Sir George explicitly as an expert fiction-maker:"'It is a pity you are not poor enough to be an Author; you would occupy a Garret in *Grub-street*, with great Fame to yourself, and Diversion to the Public'" (252).

Sir George's method focuses on using language and appearance, rather than genuine behaviour, to lead Arabella. This process begins as early as Book III, Chapter IV. Arabella having requested him to listen to a dispute between herself and Glanville, Sir George makes an appropriately florid reply: "a very strong Prepossession I feel in Favour of you, already persuades me, that I shall give Sentence on your Side, since you have honoured me so far, as to constitute me Judge of this Difference" (119). Though Sir George is insincere, "The solemn Manner in which Sir *George* (who began to suspect her peculiar Turn) spoke this, pleased [Arabella] infinitely" (119). Sir George is a master at negotiating the ironic double edge of the appearance/reality dichotomy, and this is an important aspect of Sir George's world-manipulation throughout the novel; Glanville's attempts lack this sophistication. Sir George remains aware of the power of language to say one thing and mean another, even when his machinations seem to be backfiring, as when he finds that Arabella has told her cousins about his letter threatening suicide. He tries to save himself by manipulating the two simultaneous levels of "reality": "as it concerned him greatly to avoid any Quarrel, with the

Brother and Sister, he determined to turn the whole Matter into a Jest; but, if possible, to manage it so, that Arabella should not enter into his meaning" (195). This is primarily accomplished by using the same language toward Glanville and Charlotte as toward Arabella; the Glanvilles, however, recognise Sir George's ironic intent where Arabella does not. Sir George continues to exploit this potential duality throughout the novel, and particularly in his "history," which is told in front of an audience of not only Arabella but all the Glanvilles. Arabella appears to absorb every word, while Sir Charles and Glanville keep undercutting Sir George's narrative. They act as ironic counterpoint, deflating his arrogance, as when Sir Charles says, "Lady *Bella* had some reason to fear your Modesty, I find. . .for, methinks you really speak too slightly of your Excellencies" (211).

From a metafictional perspective, Book VI, which contains the relation of Sir George's history, is one of the novel's most sophisticated and challenging sections, and, surprisingly, is the section most ignored by Lennox critics, with the notable exception of David Marshall. In many ways, Sir George's history acts as a microcosm of the novel

itself. A number of its features are echoed in the actual plot of The Female Quixote, thus emphasising the novel's status as a construct. The chapter heading "*Containing the Beginning of Sir* George's *History, in which the ingenious Relater has exactly copied the Stile of Romance*" (209) implies a parallel between Sir George ingeniously copying the style of romance and Lennox doing so as well, and Marshall notes the metafictional significance of this supposed layering of authors, this "literary ventriloquy" (116-7). Sir George's history becomes a metafictional world-within-a-world because not only does Arabella believe it is real, but it affects those involved outside it in the same way Arabella's world does.

Sir George encodes real events in his "history", though he disguises them for Arabella by giving them a heroic twist. One way in which he does this is by renaming the various people from his past, in accordance with romance conventions. He changes his French family name to one that sounds more classical, much to Sir Charles' bemusement, since he knew Sir George's grandfather as Sir Edward Bellmour, not "Veridomer" (210). Dolly the milkmaid with whom Sir George has his first affair becomes "Dorothea"

(212) the "Shepherdess" (213) (and here we see an echo of the beautiful farmer's daughter in Don Quixote named Dorotea). This aspect of Sir George's history is repeated when he generates the plot to frame his rival, renaming Glanville Ariamenes during the episode with the actress.

Sir George's history provides an interesting example of how the most ordinary occurrences seem extraordinary when clothed in the language of romance. When Glanville notes that the young Sir George "was the most unlucky bold Spark . . . [he] ever knew in [his] life" (211), Sir George rewrites it: due to his precocity, it was "prognosticated . . . that very strange Accidents would befal [him]" (211). Note the contrast between the lofty description Sir George gives of the milkmaid's eyes and the reactions of Sir Charles and Glanville:

> what Words shall I find to express the Wonder, the Astonishment, and Rapture, which the Sight of those bright Stars inspired me with? The Flames which darted from those glorious Orbs, cast such a dazling [sic] Splendor upon a Sight too weak to bear a Radiance so unusual, that, stepping back a few Paces, I contemplated at a Distance, that Brightness, which had begun already to kindle a consuming Fire in my Soul. (214)

In response to this hyperbolic rhetoric, Sir Charles is "confounded at so pompous a description" and does not even

recognise the woman Sir George is describing ("Bless me! . . . who could this be?" [214]) until Glanville reminds him that she is "The pretty Milk-maid, *Dolly Acorn*.. . . She often used to bring Cream to my Lady" (214). They also comment upon Sir George's narrative style: Sir Charles comments, "poor *Dolly* must be surprised at such a rhodomontade Speech!", and Glanville knowingly replies "Oh, Sir!. . .you will find she will make as good a one" (215); this brings into focus the constructed nature of Sir George's tale. The presentation of the most mundane of events in Sir George's past as romance adventures has several parallels in the novel itself: not only does it parallel Arabella's assumption that a prostitute is a heroine in disguise, and not only does it recall the narrator's ironic presentation of Miss Groves as a heroic type, but it also anticipates Sir George's making the actress at the end of the novel into the Princess Cynecia. Of course, Lennox is illustrating that making the ordinary extraordinary is not only a feature of romance, but of fiction as a whole.

Sir George is walking a romantic tightrope in the novel, secretly pursuing Arabella though outwardly

interested in her more worldly cousin, Charlotte Glanville. His reason for telling his History, in fact, is to defend himself against the charge of infidelity in love; not surprisingly, his tale reflects his double-edged romantic exploits. As Dalziel's notes to The Female Quixote make clear, "It would not escape the attention of Sir George's audience that the description of Sydimiris might well be a 'portrait' of Arabella" (404). As a sort of red herring for the audience, however, Sir George's affections are subsequently stolen by Philonice, a fair-haired beauty whom Sir George describes in superlative, yet relatively unspecific terms (242-3). Miss Glanville's appearance is described in similarly vague terms: we learn little about her beyond that "her Person" is "very agreeable" (80), and that Arabella considers her to "have more Beauty than [herself]" (87). Presumably, this change of allegiance is meant to flatter Charlotte, whose awareness of the subtext Arabella does not appear to share. If Philonice is meant to resemble Miss Glanville, then The Female Quixote's conclusion provides an appropriate parallel to Sir George's tale: his being made to give up Arabella in favour of Miss Glanville is anticipated by his turning from Sydimiris to

Philonice in what becomes his own self-fulfilling prophecy.

As The Female Quixote contains Sir George's history, this tale in its turn contains another narratorial layer. This additional layer, a part of Sir George's tale in which he supposedly repeats the story what occurred while he was unconscious as told to him by Urinoe, the Woman of Sydimiris, serves to draw attention to the labyrinthine layers of fiction in the novel as a whole (Marshall 116). This short section is explicitly metafictional. Sir George comments on Urinoe's narrative function, comparing her to

> a Squire, who is thoroughly instructed with the Secrets of his Master's Heart, relating his Adventures, and giving a proper Eulogium of his rare Valour, without being in Danger of offending the Modesty of the renowned Knight; who, as you know, Madam, upon those Occasions, commodiously slips away. (223)

Of course, since Sir George is making up his own tale, it is he who is giving an eulogium of his own fictitious valour, just as Arabella manages to make her own history closely resemble a romance when she tells it to the actress (348). In addition, though, besides calling attention to the fact that Sir George's history is a deliberate construct, Urinoe's story has further metafictional significance since it emphasises the various layers of audience for the tale.

Sir George claims he was the audience for Urinoe's narration; he is telling the story to his audience of the Glanvilles; and his telling of the story is done by the narrator of The Female Quixote for the reader. Sir George addresses his narration principally to Arabella (232); the reader of the novel is thus implicitly aligned with her as an audience for all the various fictional layers.

Though both Arabella and Sir George produce their own fictional worlds, the difference in narratorial sympathy is clear. While the narrator is ironic in describing Sir George, calling him, for example, "the young Prince of Kent" (211), Arabella is characterised as "the fair Visionary" (323) and "our charming Heroine" (349). The difference, of course, is that Arabella is genuinely immersed in her romance world, while Sir George creates his History primarily to manipulate Arabella, and secondarily to entertain the Glanvilles over supper. During the tale, there is a debate about whether romance heroes eat; Sir George asserts that "Sighs and Tears were all my sustenance" (239), but Arabella, who unlike Sir George views romance as a real mode with all the appurtenances of real life, replies that

> such trifling Circumstances are always left out, in the

> Relations of Histories; and truly an Audience must be very dull and unapprehensive, that cannot conceive, without being told, that a Man must necessarily eat in the Space of Ten Months. (239-40)

Significantly, although the narration of the tale takes place at the dinner table, there is no reference to anyone actually eating. Clearly, "such trifling Circumstances" are also to be left out of the relation of the larger "history".

As discussed above, Sir George uses the telling of his history to win Arabella's approbation, and simultaneously to amuse the Glanvilles. However, the history is more than an amusing tale; it seeks to affect Arabella's world as well as the "real" world of the Glanvilles. What Sir Charles considers a pack of lies has a didactic function, as well as metafictional significance. Sir George manipulates the romance elements of his story in a way that is meant to instruct Arabella, while still humouring her foible. For example, the young Prince Veridomer fails to recover simply because Philonice commands him to; if Arabella recognises herself in Sydimiris, presumably she recognises the parallel between Veridomer's "disobedience" and the failure of both Glanville and Sir George to recover at her own command. Of course, it is to Sir George's advantage that Arabella be

able to reconcile this occurrence to a similar situation in romance, and incidentally to Glanville's as well. Another, undeliberate, didactic effect of Sir George's history is that it occasions several debates about correct romance procedure, such as the discussion about whether heroes eat. This gives the three Glanvilles, not to mention the reader, insight into Arabella's behaviour, since to her it is real-life procedure. Sir Charles' sympathy toward Arabella seems to have increased by the end of Book VI, when he, too, speaks to Arabella as though he is humouring her, though his tone is one of gentle irony: "you have quoted Examples [of appropriate conduct] sufficient, if this inconstant Man would have the Grace to follow them" (251).

In the end, we see that Arabella has indeed learned something from Sir George's history, although ironically it is the opposite of what he intends for her to learn. His errors, such as asserting that he lived on "Sighs and Tears," make Arabella uncomfortable during his story. Finally, however, it is because she believes the events of his history are true that Sir George loses her favour: while she is convinced of Sir George's "admirable Valour" (251), she is also convinced that he has not adequately "imitated

the illustrious Heroes of Antiquity . . . in the Constancy of their Affections" (251), and goes so far as to call him not only inconstant but "Ungrateful and Unjust" (250). Sir George

> is fittingly defeated, not by any discrepancy between the real and the fantasy version of [his history], but because in ironically translating his own sexual transgressions and emotional infidelities into the vehicle of romance--which he presumes will amusingly disguise them--he is detected by Arabella, because his faithlessness breaks the rules of romantic fidelity. (Thomson 118)

As a further irony, what Sir George intends as a device to bring him closer to Arabella ends up procuring his banishment from her presence--a banishment which, as the albeit flawed romance hero Arabella believes him to be, he can hardly ignore.

Sir George's history may thus be considered an example of the failure of romance, just as in the larger novel we see Arabella's world of romance crumble as well. As self-styled heroes, both Arabella and Sir George fall when their histories end; Sir George, of course, is defeated twice, once at the end of his own history, and also at the novel's end when he is forced to marry Miss Glanville. Though he has attempted to construct himself as a hero, he becomes in both

cases a villain. Like The Female Quixote, then, Sir George's history is both ironic and didactic.

Chapter Four: World-Healers: The Countess and the Doctor

Unlike Glanville and Sir George, who manipulate Arabella's world for their own selfish ends, the Countess and the Doctor try to correct Arabella's misconceptions about the world. The contrast between their methods, however, is marked, although they both use language to try to modify Arabella's perceptions. The Countess, who is quite explicitly characterised as a part of the romance world of The Female Quixote, tries to work from within Arabella's heroic theatre. On the other hand, the Doctor, who represents the realism of the novel, uses the paradigmatic rules of debate as a tool to show Arabella where her education turned off the path of reason.

The Countess' introduction in Chapter V, book VIII is in the hyperbolic terms characteristic of romance. There is a paean to the Countess' good qualities:

> This Lady, who among her own Sex had no Superior in Wit, Elegance, and Ease, was inferior to very few of the other in Sense, Learning, and Judgment. Her Skill in Poetry, Painting, and Musick, tho' incontestably great, was number'd among the least of her Accomplishments. Her Candour, her Sweetness, her Modesty and Benevolence, while they secur'd her from

> the Darts of Envy, render'd her superior to Praise, and made the one as unnecessary as the other ineffectual. (323)

Not surprisingly, this description also shows that the Countess shares a number of qualities and accomplishments with Arabella (although Arabella is hardly secured from the darts of envy). Indeed, the Countess' heroic status is made explicit when she herself admits that as a girl, she "was likely to have been as much a Heroine as Lady *Bella*" (323). The Countess even performs a heroic deed: she admires Arabella's "Wit and Spirit" and so adds "Esteem to the Compassion she [feels] for the fair Visionary," and "resolv[es] to rescue her from the ill-natured Raillery of her Sex" (323). In the Countess, then, we see a character who is unequivocally the ideal romance heroine; there is no doubt as to her status, as there is in the case of a character like Glanville, whose fictional status is initially uncertain, as noted above.

The Countess works from within the framework of Arabella's heroic world in order to get Arabella to modify her behaviour. The Countess' behaviour even before the two meet is typical of the expansive gestures of romance, as when she declares herself in Arabella's favour without

having met her personally. Arabella is even more impulsive than the Countess, treating the older woman as a fellow heroine from the moment of their first meeting, "embrac[ing] . . . her with all the Fervour of a long absent Friend" (324), much to the horror of Glanville and Sir Charles. Most significantly, Arabella and the Countess converse in a "heroick Strain," the Countess not having "forgot[ten] the Language of Romance" (325). Having initiated the type of learned debate over the relative merits of various heroines in which Arabella loves to engage, the Countess begins to give Arabella her first gentle lessons in separating romance "reality" from ordinary "reality": "one cannot help rejoicing that we live in an Age in which the Customs, Manners, Habits, and Inclinations differ so widely from theirs, that 'tis impossible such Adventures should ever happen" (326). She goes on to give more hints about the difference between fiction and reality, while still staying within the boundaries of Arabella's world: "Not one of these things having happen'd within the Compass of several thousand Years, People unlearn'd in Antiquity would be apt to deem them idle Tales, so improbable do they appear at present" (326). Significantly, the Countess does not say the

events common in romances never happened; rather, she gives Arabella to understand that they no longer happen. In other words, she implies not that romances are untrue, merely that they are outmoded. The Countess continues her discussion of changing custom without negating the concept of the heroine so integral to Arabella's sense of identity: "a Beauty in this [age] could not pass thro' the Hands of several different Ravishers, without bringing an Imputation on her Chastity" (328). In this way, the Countess avoids a conflict between fiction and reality by putting the differences between the two into historical context. Arabella is put into the position of a Mr. Selvin at this juncture: "She [is] unwilling to appear absolutely ignorant of the present Customs of the World, before a Lady whose good Opinion she [is] ardently desirous of improving" (326), so she respects the "new Lights" the Countess holds out to her, though she doubts them (326). The Countess, herself a heroic type, is thus working within the framework of fiction in order to enable Arabella to renegotiate her relationship with the real eighteenth-century world in which they live.

Not surprisingly, the Countess focuses on altering Arabella's understanding of the language of romance, an

approach called "nominalist and unsentimental" by Wendy Motooka (269). When Arabella embarrasses her by asking for a recital of her "Adventures," the Countess comments upon the word's current connotations: "The Word Adventures carries so free and licentious a Sound in the Apprehensions of People at this Period of Time, that it can hardly with Propriety be apply'd to those few and natural Incidents which compose the History of a Woman of Honour" (327). Again, the Countess works to modify Arabella's perceptions, without breaking them down completely. In so doing she uses another word from Arabella's vocabulary, "History," in her redefinition of "Adventures," a technique which is designed to maintain part of Arabella's illusory world. As well as emphasising language, the Countess also uses irony as a rhetorical strategy, since Arabella is accustomed to the ironic mode of romance. The Countess emphasises that the passage of time has given certain types of behaviour a double edge, ironically turning the notable into the notorious: "The same Actions which made Man a Hero in those Times, would constitute him a Murderer in these--And the same Steps which led him to a Throne Then, would infallibly conduct him to a Scaffold Now" (328). The Countess situates her correction of

Arabella within this ironic context, in preparation for her more blunt announcement that "what was Virtue in those Days, is Vice in ours: And to form a Hero according to our Notion of 'em at present, 'tis necessary to give him Qualities very different from *Oroondates*" (329). Rather than telling Arabella that heroes no longer exist, and instead of asserting that fact and fiction are antithetical, the Countess implies a change, of sorts, in literary convention. And, in fact, The Female Quixote as a literary work supports the Countess' position on heroes: it is itself a fully imagined reality, a "world" which, even on its more "real" level contains heroes and heroines, even if they are not perfect copies of romance heroes and heroines. More importantly, the text also emphasises that fact and fiction are indeed not antithetical, but rather two sides of the same ironic coin.

In increasing Arabella's esteem "by a Conformity to some of her Notions and Language" (329), the Countess' approach appears to be starting to work. The reaction to this approach by Glanville and Sir Charles illustrates the two men's attitude toward romance as a whole. Glanville is initially confused at the Countess' actions, and believes

her to be appropriating Arabella's language and behaviour in order to mock the younger woman. However, perhaps because he is himself in the process of unknowingly becoming a romance hero, he soon realises that Countess' intentions are good. On the other hand, Sir Charles is quite unable to understand what is happening: "Methinks . . . she has as strange Whims in her Head as my Niece. . . . In my Mind she is more likely to make Lady *Bella* worse than better" (330); clearly he has no understanding of the mode of romance or of the subtlety of the Countess' efforts at subversion from within. Motooka argues that these efforts fail, ultimately, because Arabella's "essentialist, absolutist" nature is unable to bend to the Countess' arguments for historical contingency (Motooka 269). However, Debra Malina has another theory. She cites the Countess' status as a romance type as the reason for her disappearance from the text before Arabella's cure is complete. Having argued that patriarchal forces tend to erase the mother figure from romances and texts influenced by romances such as Lennox's and Austen's as a way of counteracting matriarchal power, Malina identifies the Countess as a mother-figure for Arabella and points out that her disappearance from the text is caused by the fact that

she "now has to go see *her* (absent) mother" (Malina 290). Ironically, then, the gentle, promising romance-based approach taken by the Countess may be doomed to failure by the very fact that it is romance-based. In any case, the Countess makes an abrupt exit from the text to make room for the Doctor, so that the harsh realities of the novel may outwardly triumph over the fantasy of romance.

If the Countess is the personification of romance in The Female Quixote, the Doctor is perhaps the incarnation of the novel. Critics have made much of the Countess' quick exit from and the Doctor's abrupt intrusion into the text. Most frequently cited, of course, is the influence of Johnson; indeed, the belief that Johnson wrote the novel's penultimate chapter has persisted since at least the nineteenth century (Motooka 263), resulting in its being persistently labelled the "Johnson chapter." While Duncan Isles' important article "Johnson, Richardson and The Female Quixote" refutes this theory, it reaffirms the extensive influence on the text of both Dr Johnson and the man who wrote Pamela, "the first English book that practically all readers are willing to call a fully realized novel" (Holman and Harmon 323). Whether the Doctor of the text is or is not

Dr. Johnson, it is clear that while his intentions are perhaps as good as the Countess', his method is diametrically opposed to hers. Rather than gently reshaping Arabella's quixotic world-view as the Countess tries to do, the doctor aims to shatter her fiction altogether and cause her to live fully within the "real" world of the novel, as he does, thus acting as an agent of novelistic "realism;" The Female Quixote, after all, was written at a time when "the novel was circumscribed into . . . 'formal realism,'" and romance was being repudiated" (Doody xvii).

The Doctor's attempt comes at a time when Arabella is weakened by illness, and in this state she seems to recognise the inappropriateness of some of her behaviour, such as the leap into the Thames which causes her collapse. During this period of preparation for death, she indeed seems more a "visionary" than ever: "In the Divine Frame *Arabella* was then in, this Action appear'd to her rash and vain-glorious, and she acknowledg'd it to be so to her pious Monitor" (366). With Arabella in this receptive state, the Doctor focuses his first offensive on her language, telling her that "Your Imaginations, Madam, are too quick for Language; you conjecture too soon, what you do not wait to

hear; and reason upon Suppositions which cannot be allow'd you" (370). As the tone of this statement indicates, their discussion quickly turns away from language into a debate for which Arabella sets out the rules when she asks whether she didn't have "cause to be frighted" by the strangers approaching on the riverbank (371), and the Doctor replies that "It is certain . . . that no Injury was intended you" (371). Arabella points out that his reply is fallacious: "The Laws of Conference require that the Terms of the Question and Answer be the same" (371); the Doctor, in other words, reasons upon suppositions that cannot be allowed him. At least initially, then, the debate is not about fiction versus reality, but rather about why "in giving Way to [her] Fears, even supposing them groundless, [Arabella] departed from the Character of a reasonable Person" (371). However, when Arabella cites examples from romance in her own defence, the Doctor begins chipping away at the foundation of her ideology, challenging the belief that romance is based in reality.

Even while this offensive against romance is occurring, however, Arabella continues to generate romance behaviour in those around her. Ironically, Arabella falls indirectly

because she causes the Doctor to participate in her heroic world, at least in formal terms. When the Doctor offends her by casting aspersions on romance readers, she tells him "I will not pardon you . . . without enjoining you a Penance for the Fault you own you have committed" (374). While it would surely be a breach of eighteenth-century good manners to cause offence to a young lady such as Arabella, her employment of the terms "Penance" and "Fault," as well as her assertion of power over the Doctor, align this exchange with the acts of penance that romance heroes perform at their ladies' bidding (though presumably a Fault would be less serious than a Crime). The penance, which the Doctor accepts as readily as any romance hero ever did, consists of proving "First, That these Histories you condemn are Fictions. / Next, That they are absurd. / And lastly, That they are Criminal" (374). The Doctor's proof that romances are fictions lies in the lack of corroborating written evidence for the events in the romances, such as "Records, Monuments, Memoirs, and Histories;" Arabella concedes this point because she cannot come up with any of these documents.

The real blow to Arabella's world, however, comes when

she offers her late escape from the "ravishers" as an example of the romantic "Accidents" of which she believes life to be comprised. The Doctor turns her own debating rules against her here, saying, "You must not, Madam, . . . urge as an Argument the Fact which is at present the Subject of Dispute" (379). Since Arabella has already taken the Doctor up on a similar technicality, "surpass[ing] the Doctor in her adherence to the rules of argument" (Malina 291) as described above, she is unable to deny her error, "blushing at the Absurdity she had been guilty of" (379). In fact, this is a complex meta-absurdity: in realising she has made an argumentative absurdity, Arabella realises that the paradigm within which she has made it is itself absurd. The Doctor founds the rest of his argument on an assertion of personal superiority in learning and experience, and therefore "presume[s] to tell your Ladyship, with great Confidence, that your Writers have instituted a World of their own, and that nothing is more different from a human Being, than Heroes or Heroines" (380). This is the first time that anyone tells Arabella outright that her world is a construct. In the end, it is this concept of the construct

that finally does Arabella in. Not only does she begin to be caught in the sticky web of formal debate with the Doctor which she has herself participated in instituting, but the fundamental assumptions of romance on which Arabella has constructed her world prove self-contradictory. The Doctor exposes the irony of one of Arabella's most often-used romance terms by pointing out that "Crime" operates paradoxically in romance. Though crime and the associated idea of penance or reparation drive so many of the events of romance, the manner in which they do so is indeed criminal: for example, "Battles . . . in which thousands are slaughtered for no other Purpose than to gain a Smile from [a] haughty Beauty" (381) must certainly be crimes. The scales fall from Arabella's eyes when she "remark[s] with Abhorrence the Crime of deliberate unnecessary Bloodshed" (381). As the Doctor fulfils his one heroic task, then, another ironic layer is added to the term "Crime:" it proves to be a word which not only generates romance, but also generates "reality."

A number of suggestions have been offered as to why the Doctor succeeds where the Countess does not, or why quixotic

romance is apparently banished from the text, to be replaced with novelistic "realism", many of these focussing on historical factors such as pressure from Richardson and Lennox's own financial need (Isles) and such issues as "Lennox's apparent abdication of female authority and authorship" (Marshall 117). It would appear that the novel wins an important victory over the romance in the Johnson chapter; however, from a metafictional point of view, the Doctor's approach may be discovered to be based not in reality, but rather on a different set of constructs. In fact, the Doctor goes back to Arabella's earliest education, which, as discussed in Chapter One, involved extensive training in accepting and internalising belief systems, and constructs a new system whose rules invalidate the rules of romance. As Malina correctly points out, "Arabella has only exchanged one illusion for another, discarding her romantic grid for a belief in the impartiality of the clergyman's rationalism" (291). Thus, even the defeat of romance is not what it seems to be in this novel that negotiates in such a complex way the boundaries between true and false, the natural and the constructed, and, as the concluding chapter

will discuss in greater detail, "fiction" and "reality."

Conclusion: Metafiction and Romantic Irony

Clearly, The Female Quixote is far more than a simple tale that teaches that "reading romances is a silly activity that will turn a woman's head" (Craft 832). Rather, it is a work of considerable sophistication, in which fictional layers--the various "realities" I have discussed in the previous chapters--interact in a problematic way. These fictional layers result especially from the reactions of the various characters to irony and ironic language. The interaction of these layers of reality--for, particularly in the case of Arabella and Sir George, one "reality" seems to generate others--is in turn double-edged as well, since the characters involved in these often seemingly incompatible fictional layers are innocent in Muecke's sense. That is, they are overwhelmingly unaware of the contradictions implicit in their fictional positions, as in the case of all the minor "real-world" characters discussed in Chapter Two, who prove to be quite as quixotic as Arabella when interacting with her. This is also true in the case of Glanville, who is at once a rational, flawed, "realistic"

hero typical of the novel, and at the same time the faithful, earnest lover of romance. As a result, the novel questions the validity of separating the natural from the constructed, and the real from the false, but also questions whether novel and romance are separable. As Langbauer notes, "What [The Female Quixote] locates as romance's problems--the disorder and rigidity of its form, the ambiguities of its language--become its own" (30): it is a text which conflates rather than explodes the ideas of romance and novel.

Part of the interest of The Female Quixote lies in its historical position in relation to genre. As Doody notes, it was written at a time when romance was very nearly "officially dead," to be replaced with the novel's attempt at "realism" and "probability" (xvii-xviii; Thomson 122). However, The Female Quixote's multilayeredness proves that not only are romance and the novel not antithetical, but indeed they may be indivisible; at the very least, the "realism" of the novel is shown to be as much of a construct as the "fantasy" of romance. The word "history" is an important one in The Female Quixote. Innocent of any ironic

double meaning in the word "history," Arabella takes the romances for reality because they are, in fact, presented as "history;" they feature historical characters such as Cleopatra and Julia, and additionally, they provide related information that Arabella reads as "Descriptive Geography" (373) and ethnography, as we see when Arabella knowledgeably discusses the customs of the Thessalonians (260). Arabella's mistake is humorous, certainly, but the concept of history was nebulous in the eighteenth century, and still is. Fielding and Richardson called their novels "histories," after all, just as the seventeenth-century romance writers did. Later in the eighteenth century, William Godwin characterises history as "little better than romance under a graver name," and makes an effort to reclaim romance from those who deride it as wild fantasy. Godwin here anticipates the twentieth-century position that "Metafiction suggests not only that writing history is a fictional act . . . but that history itself is invested, like fiction, with interrelated plots which appear to act independently of human design" (Waugh 49). In seeing the events of her own life as a "history," Arabella is, of course, correct

(Thomson 122); her life is indeed a narrative. Implicit in Lennox's treatment of the concept of "history" versus "fiction" is an interrogation of the very nature of art and truth.

Lennox's highlighting of the different fictional "worlds" of her text is, of course, a highly self-conscious and deliberately ironic device. Combined with such other obvious self-conscious devices as footnotes explaining romance traditions (29) and the chapter headings typical of both Cervantes and Fielding, these show us that The Female Quixote is an elaborate metafictional construct. This is hardly surprising, as Lennox's novel is based on Don Quixote, which is frequently hailed as the first work of metafiction (de Armas Wilson xi), and Patricia Waugh acknowledges that "the practice [of metafiction] is as old . . . as the novel itself," although the theory of metafiction is a twentieth-century phenomenon (Waugh 5). However, the concept of metafiction that we know from twentieth-century theorists such as Waugh and Robert Scholes is directly descended from early critical thinking on irony.

The literary self-consciousness and self-referentiality

that is so fundamental to The Female Quixote hinges on the recognition of the ironic contradictions of art (Muecke 159). Named for the German Romantics, who first explicitly identified these contradictions, Romantic irony makes "the startling claim that irony is the very principle of art" (Muecke 9). Art is ironic because of its constructed nature: it exists at two levels, the "real" level and the imaginative level (Muecke 160). Lennox's deliberate layering of fictional "realities" in The Female Quixote signifies that she recognised and celebrated so-called Romantic irony before it had been articulated as a concept. (Note: while the simple, obvious self-conscious devices such as the footnotes and chapter headings mentioned in the preceding paragraph, which Waugh calls metafictional "frame-breaks" [31], would seem to be examples of Romantic irony, they may more accurately be labelled proto-Romantic irony [Muecke 164].)

In Lennox's text, then, romance ironically survives its own apparent death. Though the Doctor outwardly "cures" Arabella, we see that he does this only nominally. In fact, she has merely ceased to function on one level of constructed "reality" in favour of another. Of course, the

Doctor and the rest of those who operate within the novel's "real" world are thus shown to be "innocent:" they are unaware, although the reader is not, that their world is Lennox's fictional construct just as much as Arabella's heroic theatre is. It is appropriate that Lennox gives the last paragraph of her novel over to one final illustration of double-edged language. The text ends conventionally, with matrimony. However, Lennox distinguishes between marriage "in the common Acceptance of the Word," exemplified by the union of Charlotte and Sir George, and the more extraordinary relationship of Arabella and Glanville, who are united "in every Virtue and laudable Affection of the Mind" (383). This text which is both novel and romance ends with a reminder of the irony of its own literary conventions.

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