



EDITED BY

LYDIA
MOLAND

ALISON
STONE

≡ The Oxford Handbook of
AMERICAN & BRITISH
WOMEN PHILOSOPHERS
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF
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BRITISH WOMEN
PHILOSOPHERS
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AMERICAN AND BRITISH WOMEN PHILOSOPHERS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

An Introduction

LYDIA MOLAND AND ALISON STONE

1. INTRODUCTION

THE title of this handbook invites a predictable response. *Were* there any American or British women philosophers in the nineteenth century? For those familiar with the philosophy of this period through its towering representatives—Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Marx, Mill, Dewey, Nietzsche—the absence of women seems all too obvious. It is the goal of this volume to challenge this assumption by shifting our understanding of philosophy in the nineteenth century and of those, including women, who practiced it.

In her essay “Why Have There Been So Few Women Philosophers?,” feminist scholar Gerda Lerner (2000) articulates three related tasks that are necessary in any such endeavor: explaining the barriers to entering philosophy that women faced; resurrecting and reassessing the women who nevertheless succeeded but have been forgotten; and recognizing “the subversive and reconstitutive manner of women’s thought and claim[ing] its legacy” (8). Central to these tasks is the recognition that the inherited philosophical canon is not neutral but reflects biases and choices, silences and omissions. Correcting for these biases and omissions is a matter of justice. The value of more inclusive histories is also epistemic: a history that includes more of those who grappled with philosophical questions is more accurate, because it more faithfully registers the range of philosophical thinking that was actually done. To include the women discussed in this handbook is, we submit, not special pleading in the name of diversity. It is simply better scholarship.

Making our histories more inclusive and accurate requires us to question and expand what we count as philosophy in the first place, including not only professional academics but also speakers and writers from outside the academy who adopted a plurality of forms of expression. Some might then wonder on what grounds these women’s thought is to be counted as philosophy at all. We suggest looking for those asking philosophy’s traditional questions: What is knowledge, or truth, or justice? What is language, or beauty, or science?

What is human nature, and how are we to understand differences of race, sex, or gender? When we focus on these questions, we see that what has been regarded as philosophy is ever-changing and that the criteria are essentially contested. We can more constructively open ourselves up to the variety and wealth of what women have thought and said, allowing our conception of philosophy to reshape itself as we go.

Groundbreaking work on women in philosophy in other centuries has been underway for some time.¹ Curiously, work on the nineteenth century has often lagged behind in these efforts. The main focus of scholarly activity has been the study of white European women of the early modern period (c. 1600–1800), petering out around the beginning of the nineteenth century.² Crucial exceptions include the extensive work on American women by Dorothy Rogers (2005, 2020, 2021) and Therese Dykeman (1993, 1999, 2009), including their co-edited special issue of *Hypatia* in 2004 and collection of primary sources in 2012 (Dykeman and Rogers 2012). Recently, there has been more work in the American tradition by Lydia Moland (2021a, 2021b, 2022), and specifically on Black Americans, such as Anna Julia Cooper, by Kathryn Sophia Belle (2015), V. Denise James (2013), Sandra L. Staton-Taiwo (2004), and Cathryn Bailey (2009). Work on British women has been done by Alison Stone (2022, 2023) and Emily Thomas (2022), and on the German tradition by Kristin Gjesdal and Dalia Nassar (2021, 2024). But the fact remains that there is a relative dearth of scholarship on women philosophers of the nineteenth century, and this should make us suspicious. Why would there have been a wealth of women philosophizing in the eighteenth century, and then very few in the nineteenth?

An overarching reason for this absence in the scholarship may be one identified by William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft. Writing about women in the early nineteenth-century Romantic movement, they argue that “we have convinced ourselves of the powerlessness of women in the ‘patriarchal past’ to the degree that we sometimes fail to perceive the actual influence exerted by women writers of [earlier] generation[s] upon their contemporaries” (McCarthy and Kraft 2001, 29). As an example: the nineteenth century is often characterized as having been dominated by the ideology of “separate spheres,” which prescribed the public world to men and the private or domestic world to women, thus discouraging women from engaging in such “masculine” pursuits as politics, history, and economics.³ Women were also categorized as their children’s “first teachers,” assigning to them a role that was both maternal and pedagogical. Even women without children were encouraged to pursue “spiritual motherhood” by becoming educators (Rogers 2020, 12, 24, 67). There is no doubt that such ideologies, which women sometimes supported as well (Rogers 2020, 60–65), shaped many aspects of nineteenth-century life and prevented women from entering most professions across the century. As bell hooks and others have noted, women of color, including those enslaved in the American South, faced different, more formidable barriers, including moral, intellectual, and sexual norms very different from those governing white women (hooks 2015, 30–34). But the assumption that these sexist and racist ideologies prevented women’s philosophical engagement risks convincing us that there cannot possibly have been much of it to examine.

Freeing ourselves of this vicious cycle—in which we do not look for women philosophers because we do not believe they were there, thus ensuring that they are absent from scholarship even if we look for them—requires understanding several important facets of nineteenth-century intellectual life, including the state of the publishing industry, trends in literacy and education, and the status and practice of philosophy itself. The picture that

emerges from these histories suggests that, in some respects, philosophy was more open to women in the nineteenth century than it was in the beginning of the twentieth.

2. NINETEENTH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHIZING AND PUBLISHING

The nineteenth century had a vastly expanded print and publishing culture compared to earlier periods. In Britain, the industrial revolution, and the development of steam-powered printing presses and rail distribution networks, brought about a huge expansion of printed material. The numbers of books being published rose from around 3,000 new titles a year in 1840 to 7,000 in 1900, and at least 125,000 journals, magazines, and newspapers came and went over the century (VanArsdel 2010). Similar trends are evident in American publishing (Phegley 2004, 2). Literacy increased in parallel, so that by 1900, 97 percent of British men and women were literate; in the United States, the literacy rates of white women rose from 50 percent at the country's founding to 90 percent by 1850 (Davidson 1986, 309).⁴ Women's contributions to publishing also increased. As Susan Hamilton (2006) notes, women provided 13 percent of the content of British periodicals in the nineteenth century (6).⁵ In the United States, Black and Native American female authors increasingly made use of print culture to challenge racist prejudices about their intellectual capacities (Kelley 2010, 348). Of course, not all the content by women authors was philosophy—but some of it was.

Women's inclusion in publishing was facilitated by a distinctive feature of British periodicals: until at least the mid-1860s, authors were normally anonymous.⁶ Books, too, were often published anonymously; the use of pseudonyms and initials in place of full names remained widespread even after signatures became more common. This was also the convention in the United States well into the nineteenth century (Leverenz 2010, 350–352; Dobson and Zagarell 2010, 368). Anonymity, the use of initials, and pseudonymity were standard for men but had a special use for women, enabling them to contribute without facing censure. This made it possible for women to publish while maintaining the ideal that the public sphere was exclusively masculine.

The way philosophy itself was practiced during this period also meant that the barriers for women were lower than we might expect. Specialized philosophy departments as we know them today only emerged gradually: for much of the nineteenth century, philosophy was not considered distinct from related disciplines such as anthropology, pedagogy, psychology, religion, and sociology (Rogers 2020, 6). Professors did not have graduate degrees; the first doctor of philosophy degree was granted in the United States by Yale University only in 1861 (Brubacher and Rudy 1997, 195), and the PhD degree was only introduced in Britain in the twentieth century (Simpson 1983). Philosophy was, in short, not isolated from other disciplines nor restricted to professionals. In this more open environment, women actively engaged in philosophical dialogue. The Concord School of Philosophy in Massachusetts, for instance, included women as both students and teachers (Rogers 2020, 75, 143–145). Margaret Fuller's "Conversations" for women in Boston took up recognizably philosophical topics. It is certainly true that women could not enroll in most American universities until the 1870s and were excluded from elite colleges until well into the twentieth century.

In Britain, universities only began to open to women in the 1870s. But this did not keep women from philosophizing (Rogers 2020, 6).

The more generalist conception of philosophy meant that nineteenth-century philosophy periodicals were not the specialist academic journals we are familiar with today, which were only founded toward the end of the century. These include *Mind* (1876), the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1888), the *Monist* (1888), and the *Philosophical Review* (1892). Nineteenth-century journals were instead generalist, spoke to a wide audience, and shaded into broader public debates. One did not need an academic affiliation to publish in them; indeed, one did not need a university degree at all.⁷ The same was true for books. Thus women's exclusion from universities for most of the century did not prevent them from engaging in philosophy, either in publishing or educational settings.

Nor, at least in some cases, was women's lack of education the barrier it is sometimes thought to be. Education for girls and women, indeed, lagged woefully behind that of their male counterparts; higher education, especially for girls of color or of lower economic class, was often nonexistent. It is also true that until the end of the American Civil War, it was illegal to educate Black girls in much of the American South. But for white women of enough means, education was often available. However disparaging many of these women were about their education, it was often impressive, especially in languages and literatures.⁸ Beyond languages, women often subjected themselves to strenuous courses of self-education. For example, Frances Power Cobbe knew French, German, and Italian; using subscriptions to multiple libraries, she taught herself history, classical and modern literature, ancient philosophy, architecture, astronomy, Greek, geometry, and comparative religion. Similar cases exist in the American context. White women like Mary Moody Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Lydia Maria Child, and Ella Lyman Cabot and Black women such as Frances Watkins Harper, Anna Julia Cooper, and Fanny Jackson Coppin achieved significant levels of self-education.

Once women were allowed into universities, many more than we might expect pursued philosophy, especially at the institutions that were more hospitable to them. These included Cornell University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Chicago, where, as Dorothy Rogers's (2021) research shows, women wrote dissertations on a broad range of figures and topics.⁹ Likewise, in Britain, taking University College London as an example, in the 1880s, a noticeable proportion of its female intake studied philosophy of mind and logic (Mitchell 2008).

The extent to which women's thinking and writing was outright suppressed or prevented by lack of educational opportunities, then, has been exaggerated, with the consequence that we do not look for women's philosophizing because we believe that it was not there. Women can be complicit in this as well. Take, for example, Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*:

Yet genius of a sort must have existed among women as it must have existed among the working class. Now and again an Emily Brontë or a Robert Burns blazes out and proves its presence. But certainly it never got itself on to paper. When, however, one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a very remarkable man who had a mother, then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, or of some mute and inglorious Jane Austen.

([1923] 2014, 40–41)

“Genius amongst women never got itself on to paper”—here Woolf deliberately minimized the contributions of her female predecessors. Lindsey Stewart, in this volume, discusses Woolf’s remarks and brings out how Alice Walker redirected them, and us, to instead *remember* the intellectual work our mothers (real and metaphorical) have been doing. It is a central goal of this volume to make this remembering possible.

3. WOMEN AND PHILOSOPHICAL GENRE

With this reoriented understanding of the possibilities that were open to women in the nineteenth century, it should no longer be surprising how many authors, and how many modes of philosophical engagement, are evident once we look for them.

Some nineteenth-century women wrote “philosophical texts” in the sense that we now recognize that term: abstract, argumentative discussions of epistemology, ontology, metaphysics, and political and moral philosophy. Examples in this category include Mary Shepherd, Ada Lovelace, Helena Blavatsky, E. E. Constance Jones, Ednah Dow Cheney, Marietta Kies, Christine Ladd-Franklin, Ella Lyman Cabot, Constance Naden, Susan Blow, Victoria Welby, and Mary Whiton Calkins.¹⁰ In some cases, they published their theories as books or in venues used by male philosophers such as the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, the *Journal of Philosophy*, the *Dial*, the *National Quarterly Review*, *Popular Science Monthly*, *Mind*, the *Monist*, and the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.¹¹ Some were charter members of the American Philosophical Association and served in leadership roles; others taught philosophy at colleges and universities, though others were prevented from doing so by sexist hiring practices (Rogers 2021, 2). Most of the women in this category are the subjects of chapters in this handbook devoted to their thought, found under “Authors.”

Several women engaged with philosophy by profoundly influencing male philosophers around them or who came after them. Mary Shelley influenced the existentialists; Harriet Taylor Mill influenced John Stuart Mill; Mary Moody Emerson and Margaret Fuller deeply shaped Ralph Waldo Emerson’s thinking. Sometimes the men in question acknowledged these contributions. Often, they did not. In one notorious example, W. E. B. du Bois, in his essay “The Damnation of Women,” quotes Anna Julia Cooper but identifies her only as “one of our women” (Du Bois 1920, 173). Some women also produced interpretations of male philosophers, such as Amalie Hathaway on Schopenhauer; Marietta Kies, Susan Blow, and Anna Brackett on Hegel; Ella Lyman Cabot on Josiah Royce; or Harriet Martineau on Comte. Reading women’s philosophy also illuminates how famous male philosophers were received during this period—for instance, Mary Moody Emerson’s commentaries on Hume and Kant, Antoinette Brown Blackwell’s criticisms of Spencer, Cobbe’s and Julia Wedgwood’s reactions to Darwin, or Frances Ellen Watkins Harper’s interpretations of Tocqueville. By influencing or commenting on male philosophers, many of these women participated in nineteenth-century philosophical movements, such as Romanticism, Transcendentalism, Idealism, and Utilitarianism. These are documented in the part of this handbook entitled “Movements.”

In keeping with the fact that philosophy was less defined and more popular in scope in the nineteenth century than in the twentieth, women philosophers often thought and wrote across many disciplines. This was not unique to women: nineteenth-century men such as

Friedrich Schlegel, Mill, and Nietzsche did the same. Among women, for instance, Harriet Martineau's vast body of work cut across what we now think of as a swathe of different disciplines, including literature, economics, philosophy, religious studies, history, and politics. Other women, such as George Eliot, Lydia Maria Child, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Ednah Dow Cheney, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and Mary Shelley, used literature and poetry to explore philosophical themes.

While some women philosophers focused on abstract philosophical themes, others brought philosophy to bear on the social issues around them. The reasons for this focus are not hard to imagine. Because of women's direct experience of gender oppression and, in some cases, racial oppression, it is not surprising that they often wrote advocating greater racial, gender, and economic equality. Black women, including Maria Stewart, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and Sarah Parker Remond, also contributed philosophical arguments in favor of abolitionism and racial justice, as did some of their white counterparts. That said, women did not all think with one mind on these topics. Catharine Beecher was critical of the Grimké sisters' outspoken abolitionism, for example, and Mrs. Humphry Ward (Mary Ward) in 1889 coordinated the *Appeal Against Female Suffrage* in the United Kingdom.

Another pull toward social and political matters came from the idea of "woman's mission," according to which white women were expected to be especially virtuous, or even morally superior to men.¹² In the United States, women were explicitly called on to help forge the new nation and assure its moral character (Dobson and Zagarell 2010, 373). Ideas of "separate spheres" rationalized women's exclusion from the public domain on the grounds that economic and political participation would drag women down to men's morally lower level. But equally, these ideas motivated women to engage with injustices and issues of public concern—indeed, to *make* issues into matters of public concern, as with women's suffrage, the lynching of Black Americans, education reform, the Contagious Diseases Acts, and vivisection. Women also actively philosophized about other social justice topics, such as pacifism, imperialism, and animal rights. This tendency toward activism sometimes leads scholars to discount women's philosophizing. As Rogers (2020) puts it:

These women might better be appreciated as women of ideas or social theorists, but not "philosophers," per se. Yet, I propose to explore their ideas and consider including them so as to transform philosophy. Social and political activists may have developed ideas that are more significant and informative than those of the intellectual elite that have been lauded through the centuries . . . Should we trust the abstract concepts Mill put forth over the contextualized critiques provided by a woman like Luisa Capetillo, whose life was shaped by that colonial legacy? (9)

In support of this reasoning, several of the chapters in this volume appear in the part entitled "Topics in Social Philosophy."

Religious concerns were also central to many nineteenth-century women, a fact made obvious in the philosophies of religion articulated by Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Watkins Harper, Jarena Lee, Cobbe, Blavatsky, Josephine Butler, Cheney, Moody Emerson, and Brown Blackwell. A final sphere of special interest to some women philosophers was education, in part because of the major reforms taking place around public education during this century, and in part because women were often "tracked" into pedagogical pursuits by the belief that women were naturally better suited for educating children (Rogers 2020, 6). The women philosophizing about education discussed in this handbook include Coppin,

Brackett, Blow, Bibb, Duprey, Elizabeth Hamilton, Zitkálá-Šá, Lyman Cabot, Watkins Harper, Welby, Woodson, and Williams.

In short: American and British women in the nineteenth century philosophized across a full range of both theoretical and applied philosophy. During their own lifetimes, this was well known.¹³ Why, then, are they often absent from histories of philosophy? What trends, in their time and ours, have caused their contributions to be forgotten?

4. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN PHILOSOPHERS

By the end of the nineteenth century, two major trends in philosophy had begun to diminish women's impact in the field. First, philosophy began to specialize, defining itself in contrast to literature, philology, psychology, religion, and education. The fact that many women published across topics and disciplines, often mixing theory with practice, meant they were consequently dismissed as dilettantes or as working in application as opposed to philosophical abstraction (Rogers 2021, 5–6; O'Neill 1997, 35).¹⁴ The most abstract parts of philosophy such as metaethics, metaphysics, and philosophy of logic and language came to be privileged, meaning that reformist and practically oriented philosophizing came to seem “unphilosophical.” The discounting of education and religion as “serious” philosophical disciplines, which continues into the present, diminished the work of the nineteenth-century women who engaged in these topics—sometimes out of interest, and sometimes, to repeat, because they had been “tracked” into “care-taking practices” (Rogers 2020, 6). The omission of women writing on religion is exacerbated by the fact that most contemporary Western philosophers are secular, and feminists are often critical of religious traditions for being patriarchal. In consequence, for instance, Josephine Butler is understudied because of her Christian faith; the thought and practice of Black women in the conjure tradition, such as Marie Laveau, have been dismissed as mere superstition; and Helena Blavatsky has been ignored because of her esotericism.

The second trend was professionalization. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, philosophy, like other subjects, increasingly became the domain of trained academics with university degrees. Philosophical journals specialized as well, becoming primarily venues for professional philosophers to publish their work. For example, Joel Katzav (2018) has shown how *Mind*, the *Philosophical Review*, and other journals changed in the early twentieth century from publishing work in diverse philosophical traditions to only publishing analytic philosophy. Since women were generally excluded from higher education, these developments constituted a new and significant barrier that continued well into the twentieth century.¹⁵ At the same time, women whose ideas “first appeared in short-form publications—newspaper articles, booklets, pamphlets, and published speeches—rather than in hefty tomes” were no longer taken seriously (Rogers 2020, 9). This continues a trend initiated in earlier centuries as identified by O'Neill (1997): “The feminine gender has traditionally been aligned with philosophical positions, with styles of philosophizing, and, indeed, with underlying forms of episteme, that were not to ‘win out’ in the history of philosophy” (20). As a consequence of this trend, scholarship on these women often

describes them vaguely as “writers,” “reformers,” or even “journalists”—the last because they published in periodicals, no matter that *what* they published in periodicals may have been substantial articles on philosophy and far removed from what we today understand by “journalism.” Labels such as “writer” and “reformer” have, it seems, greater elasticity than “philosopher.”

As the trend toward professionalization continued, it converged with and reinforced the idea that philosophy was something done by a solitary genius who produces a single great work or system. This sidelined women who worked collaboratively or who, because of their domestic responsibilities, were unable to engage in solitary work. As the “author function” (in Foucault’s phrase) came to dominate philosophical practice, women’s exclusion intensified, since they lacked students and graduate students to disseminate their ideas and preserve their legacies.¹⁶ These trends have had cumulative effects, for instance in women’s general absence from philosophical anthologies and archives.

Shifts toward specialization and professionalization aside, we must of course remember the far-reaching consequences of sexist prejudice. Theories about women’s inferiority abounded in the nineteenth century (Cruea 2005). Some men were openly hostile to the idea of women engaging in philosophical thought, resulting in what O’Neill (1997) has called the “oxymoron problem”: the claim that “a woman philosopher is something barely possible and always unnatural” (36). This hostility was, of course, also directed at women of color, who faced prejudices about their race as well. O’Neill also emphasizes that the threat that female authors posed to entrenched hierarchies should not be underestimated: men interested in retaining power over women had good reason to claim that women could not really think, much less philosophize (37).¹⁷ For these all too predictable reasons, women who philosophized were discounted, and their names forgotten.

Some women internalized this prejudice, prompting them to deny that they were philosophers to avoid accusations of being unfeminine or, indeed, unnatural. Some women, nevertheless, embraced the title “philosopher” (Cobbe, Shepherd, and Constance Naden, for instance) or pursued a life of explicit philosophizing (Cheney, E. E. Constance Jones, Kies, Ladd-Franklin, Lyman Cabot, and Whiton Calkins). Other women included in this volume did not—thus many women over the century argued for female suffrage on philosophical grounds, for instance, without claiming to be doing philosophy. Whatever their choice, and whatever reasons prompted that choice, ambivalence about claiming the title of philosopher contributes to the difficulty of recognizing these women’s philosophical work.

Women who philosophized were sometimes also ambivalent about identifying themselves as women in print. Several wrote anonymously or under a pseudonym or initials: examples include “Vernon Lee,” whose given name was Violet Paget; “George Eliot,” whose given name was Mary Ann Evans; “C. N.” or “C. A.” for Constance Naden, the latter being short for her pseudonym “Constance Arden.” Anonymity and pseudonyms had the benefit of allowing women to continue publishing in “masculine” spheres, but they have also made women less visible and harder to identify.

Just as these women often minimized or concealed their femininity when philosophizing, they also tended to downplay their intellectual relations with other women. This handbook includes many examples of women who referenced men almost exclusively—Naden, for instance, and Brown Blackwell. Those who referenced other women more freely, such as Besant, Cheney, and Cobbe, were outliers. Women generally avoided citing other women because men’s names carried authority and invoking them could add credibility for women,

who otherwise lacked it. To reference a woman was to put oneself in the wrong company. This situation presents further challenges. To understand women's philosophical claims and arguments, we, of course, want to put them into the context of the interlocutors and influences who were important for them. Yet if we go by women's named references, we will end up relating each woman singly to a range of already canonical men, impeded from tracing the intellectual connections among women. To go beyond what Sandrine Bergès (2015) aptly calls "the myth of the lone female philosopher," then, we need to read between the lines. Several authors in this volume do this by relating nineteenth-century women philosophers to Wollstonecraft, whom they were often reluctant to name explicitly because she had become so controversial. We need to extend this approach, beyond Wollstonecraft, to disinter other tacit relations among women.

5. NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN PHILOSOPHERS AND RACE

For two-thirds of the nineteenth century, millions of Black women remained enslaved in the American South. Those who were not enslaved were subjected to racist laws and prejudice, including in the North, which prevented the vast majority of them from attaining education or even literacy. These barriers remained long after American slavery ended. Academic philosophizing, then, was not an option for the vast majority of Black women. Black women's experiences of the social issues that some white women theorized about—motherhood, work, suffrage, sexuality, education—were also radically different. Both Black women and white women struggled against the "cult of true womanhood," for instance; however, Black women also had to fight against stereotypes regarding their alleged sexual promiscuity or moral inferiority. Their exclusion from ideals of domesticity meant that Black women authors often "critiqued the prevailing model" of womanhood, engaging in a "repudiation of racism" and supporting their own communities. Their writing was sometimes collaborative and frequently supported by African American literary societies that were determined to fight prejudice and better the prospects of Black Americans (Dobson and Zagarell 2010, 379). Black women also faced prejudice from white women, including from abolitionist women in the North, who were often more comfortable fighting an atrocity in the South than confronting the racism in their own communities. As bell hooks (2015) demonstrates, white women's opposition to slavery did not imply their opposition to racism (124–131; see also Bay 2015, 79).¹⁸

Such prejudice can be found both in women doing theoretical philosophy and women theorizing specifically about gender and race.¹⁹ Particularly harmful to Black women was Elizabeth Cady Stanton's racism in the contentious fight over who would first gain the vote, women or Black men (Terborg-Penn 1998, 24–35; DuBois 1978, 93–101, 174–178). Nor was the struggle against racism unique to Black women. White women's patronizing theories about Native Americans helped to justify the destruction of indigenous lands, traditions, and families (Schuller 2021, 79–111). American women of Asian, Jewish, or Latin American heritage also faced substantial barriers that prevented them from attaining graduate degrees in philosophy until the twentieth century (Rogers 2021, 4; Dykeman and Rogers

2004, xvi). The struggles of women of color against the prejudices of white women are detailed in several chapters of this handbook (see Robinson and Gray, Falkenstern, Robinson, Cooper, Perkins, James, Dykeman, Rogers, Deutscher, and Sorenson). These prejudices and exclusions continue to impact women of color in philosophy today (Dotson 2011; James 2014; Ruíz 2014; Wilson 2017).

We find similar prejudices in the writings of many white women from Britain. Later in the century, hierarchical taxonomies of the “races” and civilizations became increasingly popular; in these, Europe was almost always placed at the summit of civilization. These schemes provided an intellectual rationale for European colonialism by suggesting that colonization would pull “primitive” peoples up the civilizational ladder. Some women subscribed to these accounts, at least in part; stereotypes depicting Native Americans and Africans as savages, India as stagnant and degraded, and the people of “the East” as indolent and given over to excessive sensuality were widespread (examples can be found in Cobbe’s work or in Martineau’s; for critical discussion, see Stone [2021]). Some prominent feminists even gave full-blown support to imperialism, notably, Millicent Garrett Fawcett. However, other women criticized British empire building, including the incorporation of Ireland into Britain. Annie Besant opposed British rule in India, going on to emigrate to India and briefly become president of the Indian National Congress; and Helen Taylor championed Home Rule for Ireland and supported land reform to end the unjust landlord system that the British had imposed on Ireland. But all too often, even the women who were critical of the empire still accepted some of the attendant stereotypes, as when Taylor claimed that denying Englishwomen the vote was an objectionable introduction of “Oriental ideas” into British life.

The prejudicial assumptions of white women (and men) were by no means the only obstacle faced by Black people in nineteenth-century Britain, most of whom were poor, working class, and without access to education, since universal education only began to be introduced in 1870. The result of these obstacles, according to David Dabydeen and Paul Edwards in *Black Writers in Britain, 1760–1890*, is that “apart from Mary Prince’s book, which is . . . a transcript of an oral narrative, Mary Seacole’s autobiography is the only other book in English by a black woman in Britain published in the nineteenth century” (1991, 165). However, we should be cautious here and remember other ways in which Black women, often from North America, affected philosophical conversations in Britain. For example, in 1859, Sarah Parker Remond gave a UK lecture tour speaking against slavery, and in the early 1890s, Ida B. Wells toured England critiquing segregation and lynching. These are just two instances of a transatlantic exchange of ideas among Black women and white women on freedom, antiracism, progress, education, and other topics.

So, even though they faced formidable barriers, women of color in the nineteenth century philosophized. As Barbara Christian (1987) suggests, “People of color have always theorized—but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic” (52). Some Black women whose philosophical thinking has been preserved are featured in the chapters on Sojourner Truth, Maria Stewart, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Mary Seacole, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells, and Fanny Jackson Coppin.²⁰ Others appear in Section 7 encouraging further research below.

It is worth noting some of the particular barriers to research on nineteenth-century women of color in philosophy. Earlier, we said that to include historical women philosophers

we need to expand the range of written forms that we count as philosophy, stressing women's presence in written archives. Expanding our awareness to women of color requires that we further enlarge our focus to take in the oral philosophy of such figures as Truth and Laveau, or Mary Prince, whose narrative of enslavement was recorded by Thomas Pringle and Susanna Strickland. Inevitably, questions arise here about what those reporting the words of Truth, Laveau, or Prince missed or amended. Texts by women of color are less likely to be archived and accessible, as Caroline Bressey (2010) has noted: "An assumed absence of black people in British archives has led to . . . their absence and exclusion from narratives of British history" (289).²¹ Despite the obvious presence of Black women in the United States, they are often underrepresented in archives as well. In pursuing scholarship about women of color in both countries, then, additional effort is needed to ensure that these absences can be overcome.

6. THE SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF THE HANDBOOK

The period covered by this handbook is the long nineteenth century, that is, 1790 to 1914. It covers Britain and America together because their intellectual trajectories were quite closely connected and there were many interactions among women thinkers and philosophical movements on the two sides of the Atlantic. To give two examples: the abolition of slavery was an urgent topic in Britain as well as in the United States; and women in both Britain and America discussed utilitarianism in a continuous conversation. We have organized the chapters in each part of the handbook chronologically by the birth date, either of the author discussed in the chapter or, in the case of chapters on movements or topics, of the first author substantially discussed.

A few possible tensions in the book's conception are worth noting. Many of the chapters focus on particular women. Since the twentieth-century obsession with "great men"—that is, great male individual authors—has disadvantaged women, it may seem unfortunate to perpetuate this individualistic focus. Still, to put women back into the picture *as* women, we need to treat them as individuals, and as authors, and mark them as the women they were. It may also seem strange to focus on women at a moment when definitions of gender and sexuality are being challenged. But since almost all of the women discussed in this volume identified as women and struggled with the prejudices that were directed at them as such, focusing on them as women remains important. For some, their lived gender identities were ambiguous, as with Vernon Lee. In categorizing Lee as a woman philosopher, we hope that "woman" can be understood capaciously.

Considering this broad time period and geographical spread, there are, inevitably, limitations to what a single volume can cover. We have not been able to include all the women doing philosophy in the nineteenth century.²² Someone's not being featured in the handbook does not imply that she was unimportant; the inclusions and omissions reflect constraints of scale, the availability of authors to contribute and on what subjects, and considerations of fit, as well as the chronological and thematic spread among these subjects. Some of the women we either omitted or covered only briefly are documented in part 7. In naming

these women along with those who have been treated more fully, our hope is to replicate what Eileen O'Neill achieved in her work on earlier women: to present the reader with overwhelming evidence of the presence of women philosophers in the nineteenth century. As O'Neill (1997) herself put it, "It is only in this way that the problem of women's virtually complete absence in contemporary histories of philosophy becomes pressing, mind-boggling, possibly scandalous" (32).

In some cases, women lacking a designated chapter are discussed in other chapters. This is true, for instance, of several Native American women, including Zitkála-Šá, Betsey Chamberlain, Sarah "Shell Flower" Winnemucca, and E. Pauline Johnson. In addition to the Black women discussed in individual chapters (Truth, Coppin, Watkins Harper, Cooper, Wells), others are discussed in thematic chapters. These include Jarena Lee, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Sarah J. Woodson, Fannie Barrier Williams, Marie Laveau, Mary Seacole, and Betsy Toledano. (Readers are encouraged to consult the index for a full range of references.) More research is needed on women such as Sarah Early, Charlotte Forten Grimké, Sarah Mapps Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Sarah Louise Forten. Other avenues for further research include Jewish women, such as Maud Nathan, Ernestine Rose, and Lillian Wald; Puerto Rican feminists and activists Ana Roqué and Luisa Capetillo; and women in other groups that immigrated to the United States in the nineteenth century, including from China, Germany, and Poland (see Rogers, this volume).

Some of the thematic chapters deal primarily with a particular figure, for instance, Josephine Butler on sexual politics and ethics and Harriet Taylor Mill on the sexual contract. Debates in feminism and women's rights in Britain are charted through a focus on Helen Taylor; George Eliot and Mary Shelley represent figures who philosophized in the medium of literature. Other figures who could easily merit their own chapters have been subsumed under themes, including Margaret Fuller under transcendentalism; Jane Addams under pragmatism; Charlotte Perkins Gilman in chapters on feminism and socialism; Anna Dickinson under education; Frances Wright and Anna Doyle Wheeler under both socialism and utilitarianism; Julia Wedgwood and Annie Besant under science and religion; Anna Letitia Barbauld, Joanna Baillie, and Maria Edgeworth under romantic aesthetics; Jane Style and Sybella Gurney Bradford under positivism; Arabella Buckley under British idealism. Several women who theorized in the suffrage movement are included in thematic chapters, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Howe, Marion Reid, Margaret Mylne, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, and Lydia Becker. Some women philosophizing in the abolitionist movement but without designated chapters—for instance, Sarah Grimké and Angelina Grimké Weld—are included in chapters on feminism and suffrage, as are advocates of women's sexual liberation, including Victoria Woodhull, Frances Wright, and Ernestine Rose.

Given the unconventional nature of this volume, the individual chapters reflect a wide range of approaches to representing women's philosophizing in the nineteenth century. Some closely resemble the more analytic chapters found in traditional philosophical scholarship, focusing only on the thought of the philosopher in question; others take a more historical approach, introducing us to women through their lived experience or mining those experiences for their philosophical significance. Some chapters build on existing scholarship; where there is no such scholarship, the authors have provided a foundation for further work.

7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In attempting to expand the canon as we know it, an anthology of this sort faces a dilemma: on the one hand, we want to expand the canon and give neglected women philosophers the recognition they deserve, but on the other hand, it is not our intention to reinstall a new canon that now contains a few additional women but otherwise produces a new set of marginalizations, exclusions, and judgments about who is and is not “major” and “minor.” As in the feminist history of philosophy more broadly, then, we have confronted a tension between creating a new, broader canon and critiquing the idea of canonicity altogether. We can hardly hope to dissolve this tension here. We simply want to make it explicit. With this tension in mind, we offer the following short biographies as opportunities for further research into some of the authors we were not able fully to include.

7.1. The British Context (Listed Chronologically by Birth Year)

Hannah More (1745–1833), a member of the Bluestockings circle who was famous in her time, both championed abolitionism and defended traditional values in the 1890s in reaction against the French Revolution, and published the widely read “Cheap Repository Tracts” urging moral reform. A prolific author, she advocated improved education for women, primarily as a means to their moral edification (see Diniejko 2010).

Mary Hays (1759–1843) authored novels and essays on philosophical themes such as free love and gender inequality and wrote the six-volume *Female Biography, or, Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women* (1803). On Hays, see Walker (2006).

Mary Somerville (1780–1872) was a self-taught scientific polymath, widely extolled as one of the nineteenth century’s great female minds. It was in reference to her that William Whewell first used the term “scientist” in the now-standard sense, in response to her work synthesizing knowledge across all the branches of science, *On the Connexion of the Physical Sciences* (1834). See Arianrhod (2012).

Caroline Cornwallis (1786–1858) established an “A. B. C. Society,” which under her direction brought out twenty-two books in the series Short Books on Great Subjects, many of them philosophical and written by Cornwallis herself. They include *Philosophical Theories and Philosophical Experience* (1841), signed “A. Pariah”; *A Brief View of Greek Philosophy* (1846); *The Principles of Criminal Law* (1846); and *The Philosophy of Ragged Schools* (1851; “ragged schools” were pioneering schools for poor and destitute children, established by Mary Carpenter). More research is needed on Cornwallis, but there is a biography. See Barber (2007).

Anna Jameson’s (1794–1860) huge body of genre- and discipline-spanning work encompasses memoir, fragmentary epigrams and essays, travel writing, literary criticism (e.g., *Shakespeare’s Heroines/Characteristics of Women* in 1832), essays on feminism, and the six-volume art-historical series *Sacred and Legendary Art* (1848–1864). Though Jameson has been called the first professional art historian in Britain, much of her writing has a philosophical side. Her work on art and aesthetics was at the time as influential as Ruskin’s.

She linked art and ethics, maintaining that good art presents us with moral and spiritual exemplars. An excellent starting point is Johnston (1997).

Sara Hennell (1812–1899) wrote on theology and philosophy of religion, including *Christianity and Infidelity: An Exposition of the Arguments on Both Sides* (1857), which came second in a competition for the best discussion of faith and infidelity by a layperson. A friend of George Eliot, Hennell was involved in the latter's translations of both David Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach. Hennell is another remarkably underresearched figure, often reduced to a footnote in the life of Eliot.

Mary Everest Boole (1832–1916) helped her husband George Boole with his logical and mathematical work and, after he died, continued to pursue logical, metaphysical, spiritual and social inquiries, developing a monistic metaphysics and a philosophy of mental acts to underpin Boolean logic. She corresponded extensively with Victoria Welby and Julia Wedgwood, among others. Additionally, Boole published works on language, philosophy of mathematics, and philosophy of education; her volume of *Collected Works* runs to 1,500 pages. See Valente (2010).

Emilia Dilke (1840–1904), formerly known as Francis Strong and Francis Pattison, was by the time of her death Britain's chief authority on French art, but before that she wrote some significant essays on aesthetics, making a case for aestheticism (or art for beauty's sake) in "Art and Morality" (1869) and developing a taxonomy of different valuable qualities and effects of paintings in "The Use of Looking at Pictures" (1873). She was a leader of the movement to unionize women workers. See Israel (1999).

Mathilde Blind (1841–1896), who was German-born, published many essays, mainly on literary topics but also, for example, on Wollstonecraft and on Shelley's and Darwin's views of nature. Blind wrote the first biography of George Eliot, translated work by the German theologian Strauss, and published philosophical fiction and poetry, including *The Ascent of Man*, a response to Darwin. Like Dilke, Blind was an aestheticist, and her work, like Lee's, straddled literature, aesthetics, and philosophy. See Diedrick (2016).

Edith Simcox (1844–1901) wrote many periodical essays on, inter alia, St. Paul, Proudhon, Spinoza, Heine, Hamann, Tocqueville, and philosophy and science, often under the pseudonym "H. Lawrenny." Her books included the 350-page *Natural Law* (1877), outlining a comprehensive ethical theory that moved from human nature to customary, positive, and then moral law, and on that basis theorized religion, altruism, and social and individual perfection. She is another figure in need of more research. A brief record of Simcox's achievements is Fulmer and Barfield (2011).

Anna Kingsford (1846–1888) made a moral and medical case for vegetarianism, and argued and campaigned against conducting animal experiments on moral, religious, and metaphysical grounds. She developed a form of Christian mysticism that overlapped with Theosophy. See Pert (2006).

Sophie Bryant's (1850–1922) philosophical interests ranged over logic, metaphysics, mind, ethics, and education theory. Besides her major work *Educational Ends*, of 1887, her articles include "On the Nature and Functions of a Complete Symbolic Language" (1888); "Mental Association Investigated by Experiment" (1889); "Variety of Extent, Degree and Unity of Self-Consciousness" (1897); and "The Double Effect of Mental Stimuli" (1900), all published in *Mind* (Mind Association 2023). See also Connell (2023).

Mary Augusta Ward (1851–1920) or, as she preferred to be called, Mrs. Humphry Ward, was a nodal figure in 1870s and 1880s Britain, at the heart of intellectual life. Her best-selling

novel of ideas *Robert Elsmere* (1888) was, like her other novels, philosophical, exploring the transition from religious faith to social duty. Ward was lead author of the “Appeal Against Female Suffrage” of 1889 and became the figurehead for organized antisuffragism in Britain. Yet she was no simple reactionary. She worked hard to make advanced education more available to the working class, founding the adult education center in London that is now known as the Mary Ward Centre. See Fessenbecker (2018).

Beatrice Webb (1858–1943) is well known as one of the leading Fabian socialists, and did much to motivate and provide the intellectual underpinnings of the welfare state in Britain. Her many works include *The Cooperative Movement in Britain* (1891), *The History of Trade Unionism* (1894), and *Industrial Democracy* (1897), the last two coauthored with her husband, Sidney Webb. See Harrison (2000).

Elizabeth Haldane (1862–1937) translated and edited selected writings of Hegel and Descartes, and wrote on other figures, including Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and the Scottish philosopher James Ferrier (who coined the word *epistemology*). She combined this with work in housing reform, healthcare management, and suffragism.

7.2. The American Context

For detailed descriptions of the many women who entered academia in the nineteenth century, see Rogers (2021). Rogers organizes this volume on women in philosophy according to institutions where women had (slowly) been permitted to study philosophy, several of whom went on to teach philosophy at colleges and universities. Chapters on some of these women are already included in this handbook. Others include women who studied at Cornell University at this time, such as Ellen Bliss Talbot, who wrote on Fichte; Ethel Gordon Muir, who wrote on Smith; Grace Neal Dolson, who wrote on Nietzsche; and Vida Frank Moore, who wrote on Lotze’s *Metaphysics* (Rogers 2021, 48–91). Notable women who studied at the University of Chicago include Ella Flagg Young, who wrote on ethics and pedagogy; Clara Millerd, who wrote on Aristotle and the Presocratics; Matilde Castro, who wrote on psychology and logic; Anna Louise Strong, who wrote on philosophy, psychology, pragmatism, and religion; Rachel Caroline Eaton, who wrote on political philosophy through considering Native American issues through her own Cherokee heritage; and Georgiana Simpson, who wrote on Herder (Rogers 2021, 145–193). Women who studied at Yale include Anna Alice Cutler, who wrote on Kant, and Clara Maria Hitchcock, who wrote on the philosophy of psychology. Women who studied at Harvard or Radcliffe include Ethel Densch Puffer Howes, who wrote on perception and architecture; and Eva Beatrice Dykes, an African American scholar who wrote on literature and genre. Rogers also discusses early women philosophers at Johns Hopkins, Smith, Bern, and the Sorbonne (Rogers 2021, 195–236, 237–289).

Other women (listed chronologically by birth year) whose work also merits further research include:

Margaret Mercer (1791–1846) was a wealthy white Southerner who freed the people her family enslaved and wrote *Popular Lectures on Ethics, or Moral Obligation*, which may be the first ethics textbook published in the United States. *Popular Lectures* includes discussions of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, and Smith; it includes theorizing about humans’ dual

nature and chapters on benevolence and justice that echo Hume and Smith (Rogers 2020, 114–125).

Ellen Mitchell (1838–1920) published studies of both Hegel and Schopenhauer and lectured at the Concord School of Philosophy on Aristotle's theory of friendship. She published a feminist analysis of prostitution and *A Study of Greek Philosophy* (Rogers 2020, 139–146).

Eliza Read Sunderland (1839–1910) studied with John Dewey, wrote a dissertation on Kant and Hegel, often lectured on women's roles and rights, and specialized in the history and philosophy of religion (Rogers 2005, 119–127).

Grace Bibb (1842–1912) studied Hegel and Rosenkranz and became the first woman dean of a normal school at the University of Missouri. She was a regular participant in the St. Louis Kant Club. Her "Women as Teachers," published in the *Journal of Education*, argues for a feminist understanding of women's capacities in higher education and leadership (Rogers 2020, 85–88; 2005, 98–104).

Susan Elizabeth Blow (1843–1916) was active in the St. Louis Hegelians and was a well-known theorist of early childhood education in the United States, building on theories by Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel, as well as Hegel and Rousseau. Her publications, including *Symbolic Education* and *Letters to Mothers on the Philosophy of Froebel*, reveal the influence of philosophy, especially German idealism, on her philosophy of education, which includes theorizing in epistemology, ontology, and moral agency (Rogers 2005, 47–68).

Emma Lazarus (1849–1887), a Jewish American famous for writing the poem featured on the Statue of Liberty, wrote philosophical essays on freedom, including "Epistle to the Hebrews" (Dykeman and Rogers 2004, xvi).

Josephine Silone Yates (1852–1912) was an African American writer on education and race, active especially in theorizing about kindergarten. Her pedagogical theories emphasize the importance of Black children's pride in their own culture (Rogers 2020, 58–59).

Ana Roqué de Duprey (1853–1933) was a Puerto Rican pedagogical theorist influenced by Auguste Comte who helped found the University of Puerto Rico and the women's suffrage movement in Puerto Rico, including its first newspaper specifically for women (Rogers 2020, 106–110).

Susette "Bright Eyes" La Flesche (1854–1903) was a Native American educator, political theorist, and legal activist of the Omaha tribe who argued against the oppression of Native Americans and played an instrumental role in several major legal cases on civil rights (see Rothberg 2022; Kilcup 2000, 169–186).

Fannie Barrier Williams (1855–1944) was an African American theorist of education and race who published "The Colored Woman and Her Part in Race Regeneration" and assisted in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She sometimes collaborated with Jane Addams (Dykeman and Rogers 2004, xiv; Rogers 2020, 162).

Lucia Ames Mead (1856–1936) read widely in philosophy and attended the Concord School of Philosophy. Inspired by Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, she published several works on pacifism, including *Patriotism and the New Internationalism* and *Law or War*. She developed curricula for peace studies on several educational levels and a four-phase theory of pacifism (Rogers 2020, 152–161; 2005, 128–135).

May Preston Slosson (1858–1943) wrote the dissertation "Different Theories of Beauty" at Cornell University, commenting on the aesthetic theories of Plato, Schiller, Hume, and Kant (Rogers 2021, 20–26).

Mary Church Terrell (1863–1954) was an influential Black educator, orator, advocate for suffrage, and peace activist. Her pedagogy emphasized a balance of play and work. In 1919, she presented a keynote address at the International Committee of Women for a Permanent Peace in Switzerland (Rogers 2020, 36, 56–59; Jones 2020, 151–164).

Maude Eaton (1865–1914), whose Chinese name was Sui Sin Far, was of Chinese ancestry; she lived in England, Canada, and the United States and theorized about the Chinese experience in Europe and America (Eaton 2016).

Caroline Miles Hill (1866–1951) wrote a dissertation on Kant’s Kingdom of Ends and a master’s thesis on New England transcendentalism. She published in the *Journal of Political Economy* and the *American Journal of Psychology* and also published several essays on feminism (Rogers 2021, 119–132; 2005, 104–115).

Emma Johnson Goulette (1876–1960) was a Native American theorist of pedagogy and racism. Her writing about education analyzed the consequences of prejudice and theories of white supremacy on indigenous children’s learning. She was one of the founders of the Society of American Indians (Rogers 2020, 37, 50–57).

Luisa Capetillo (1879–1922) was a Puerto Rican labor rights activist and feminist whose work was founded in progressive philosophers and spanned several genres. Her “Mi opinion sobre las libertades, derechos, and deberes de la mujer” (“My Opinion on the Liberties, Rights, and Duties of Women”) is considered by some to be the first treatise on feminism in Puerto Rico (Rogers 2020, 183–187).

Laura Cornelius Kellogg (1880–1949) was a Native American author who published a critique of injustice against indigenous people entitled *Our Democracy and the American Indian* (Dykeman and Rogers 2004, xv; Rogers 2020, 11, 50, 134).

8. CONCLUSION

Philosophy since Socrates has challenged its own parameters and definition. The women who appear in this handbook continue this tradition. Philosophy historically has also taken multiple forms, from Plato’s dialogues to Hegel’s lectures, Mill’s journalism, and Nietzsche’s aphorisms. Women philosophers contributed to this rich variety of form and content as well. Once we recognize that common questions and varieties of form have always characterized philosophy, our search for women philosophers in the nineteenth century reveals abundance rather than paucity. Better understanding the historical context helps us confront the reasons so many of them have remained hidden. With this improved interpretive lens, we find that women in the nineteenth century were philosophizing all along. It is our hope that by giving them more scholarly attention, the handbook will widen our sense both of philosophy and of who practiced it, and thus enrich philosophy for us all.

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NOTES

1. See, for instance, Bergès (2023, n.d.); Broad (2002); Dykeman (1993, 1999, 2009); Gardner (2000, 2013); Hagengruber (2023); McAlister (1996); O'Neill (1997, 2005); O'Neill and Lascano (2019); Shapiro (2016); Tougas and Ebenreck (2000); Tuana (1992); Tyson (2019), Waithe (1987–1995, 2004); and Warnock (1996). See also Paderborn University's *History of Women Philosophers and Scientists* (Paderborn University and Cleveland State University 2023), the Extending New Narratives Project (n.d.), the Women Philosophers Heritage Collection (edited by Ruth Hagengruber), Project Vox (Duke University Libraries, n.d.) and The Society for Women in Philosophy, whose website includes Kate Lindemann's compendium of women philosophers (2016). We will use "American" in this volume to refer to people residing or primarily working in the United States, and "British" for those residing or primarily working in Great Britain and Ireland.
2. As examples: the third volume of Waithe's (1987–1995) *History of Women Philosophers*, published in 1991, covering the whole modern period, includes only three nineteenth-century figures in detail (Clarisse Coignet, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, and Julie Velten Favre), compared to nine early modern figures. The recent book *The Philosopher Queens* (Buxton and Whiting 2020) includes only Mary Ann Evans (i.e., George Eliot) and Harriet Taylor Mill from the nineteenth century. And in O'Neill and Lascano's *Feminist History of Philosophy* (2019), only Mary Shepherd and George Eliot represent the nineteenth century.
3. Influential accounts of the period's "separate spheres" or the related "cult of true womanhood" are Davidoff and Hall (1987) and Welter (1966), though more recent historians have suggested that the reality of nineteenth-century women's lives was always more complicated and diverse than these ideologies prescribed (see, e.g., Vickery 1993). See also Cruea (2005).
4. Much of this vast body of printed material is now easily available in digital archives and in historical periodicals collections. There are, of course, gaps and biases within these archives. The more mainstream works and periodicals, for instance, have been digitized more comprehensively. Nonetheless, overall, much more philosophical writing by women from this period is easily available than for earlier periods, but as yet it is rarely consulted.
5. More precisely, women were authors of 13% of the periodical content identified in the Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, which attributes authors to initially-anonymous content. Joel Katjavas has documented how the contributions of women philosophy journals dropped in the early twentieth century and kept falling to its nadir at the mid-century (2020). Focusing on the *Philosophical Review*, women contributed 11% of content in the 1910s, falling to just 2% between 1950 and 1970. Though this is only one journal, juxtaposing Hamilton's figures with Katjavas's figures suggests that women had at least as much opportunity to publish philosophy in the generalist culture of the nineteenth-century than in the specialist culture of the twentieth. See also Phegley (2004, 7–8); Tuchman and Fortin (2012, 60).

6. The editors of the first volume of the Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals estimated that until 1870, 97% of articles were published anonymously.
7. Nor, of course, did men need to hold an academic position to be at the forefront of intellectual life. Neither Darwin nor Mill were professional academics.
8. For example, George Eliot knew French, German, Italian, Latin, Greek, Spanish, and Hebrew. This was not atypical. Emilia Dilke—who wrote on aesthetics—could read French, Latin, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and Provençal and had some Swedish and Welsh (Israel 1999, 240).
9. See section 7 below for discussion of some of these women. May Preston Slossen, the first American woman to be awarded a PhD, received her degree in 1880 (Rogers 2020, 146).
10. Another obstacle to the scholarship on women philosophers is the variation in their names, often due to changes in marital status or legal emancipation status. There is no scholarly consensus on whether Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, for instance, should be referred to as “Watkins Harper” or “Harper,” or Harriet Taylor Mill as “Taylor” or “Taylor Mill.” The same is true for many of the women discussed in this handbook. We have deferred to the individual chapter authors to determine what they think best and cross-referenced all the name combinations in the index.
11. For alternate ways of categorizing how women philosophized, see Rogers (2020, 5, 10). See also Corey Dyck’s (2021) distinctions among “women philosophers,” “women in philosophy” and “women and philosophy” (11).
12. See, for instance, Phegley (2004, 50–52).
13. See O’Neill (1997, 33). Sometimes their reputations have fallen badly since their lifetimes. For example, Elizabeth Barrett Browning described Harriet Martineau as the “profoundest woman thinker in England” (Kelley and Hudson 1989, 317), which contrasts with Benjamin Woolley’s (1999) recent slighting description of her as an “author of numerous improving texts . . . to the middle classes” (308). Another example is Lydia Maria Child, who, famous during her lifetime for her abolitionist and transcendentalist writings, is now only known for the sentimental poem “The New-England Boy’s Song about Thanksgiving Day,” commonly known as “Over the River and through the Wood.”
14. On the underrepresentation of the fields of pedagogy, religion, and “philosophies of relationship (maternal love, altruism, and care),” see Rogers (2020, 1); on philology, see Rogers (2021, 5).
15. Dobson and Zagarell (2010) make a similar claim about women’s authorship in the nineteenth century more broadly, suggesting that a narrowing of gender norms made the possibilities for women authors “increasingly restrictive”: “Various perceptions of women’s writing that had coexisted from the 1790s through the 1820s came together in the 1830s and assumed an uneasy cohesion reflecting the larger culture’s intensified gender codifications” (376, 373; see also 374).
16. On elite universities and their admittance of women, see Rogers (2021, 7–9). Rogers organizes her second volume on women philosophers by institution, including Cornell University, University of Michigan, University of Chicago, Harvard, and Yale.
17. See also O’Neill’s (1997) differentiation of the three ways of doing of the history of philosophy and how each affects women’s inclusion (39–43), and Tuana (1992) on the experience of “reading philosophy as a woman.”
18. On racism among abolitionist women, see also Jeffrey (1998, 64–65).

19. See also Rogers's (2020) conclusion about the women working in the St. Louis idealist movement: "None of these women appear to have discussed the evils of slavery in writing, helped combat racism, or contributed to Reconstruction efforts following the Civil War. The world they lived in was fully segregated, and they appear to have accepted the status quo" (4, see also 15–18).
20. On Black women abolitionists, see also Yee (1992) and Jones (2020). On Black women's intellectual history, see Bay et al. (2015).
21. Demographics may be a factor in the UK case, too, for the Black population in Britain is estimated never to have exceeded around 10,000 throughout the century (see Myers 1996). Population size is not decisive in itself, though. The British aristocracy was very small (around 7,000 families; Cannadine 1990, 9) but contributed disproportionately to the ranks of philosophers—Shepherd, Lovelace, Cobbe, and Welby were all from the aristocracy.
22. Conversely, readers might wonder why some of those featured here *are* included, for example, the Russian-born Blavatsky and Lee, who primarily lived in Italy. The reasons are that Blavatsky spent large periods in the United States and Britain, where she published (in English) her two major works, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*; and Lee was a British citizen, spent considerable periods of time in Britain, published in British journals, and was part of the British philosophical conversation. That said, we do not want to reify people's national identities unduly, for this was a period when borders were comparatively open and there was considerable geographical mobility.

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PART I

AUTHORS

CHAPTER 1

ELIZABETH HAMILTON

Moral Philosophy and Early Childhood Education

CLAIRE GROGAN

1. INTRODUCTION

THE British writer Elizabeth Hamilton (1756–1816) used her many publications at the start of the nineteenth century to demonstrate a woman’s competence to write in a range of literary genres and to engage with topics often deemed too masculine for females to comprehend, let alone master. She largely tried to side-step the party politics of her day, claiming that “of systems I have none, save the system of Christianity” (Hamilton 1803, 1:18), fearing that partisan allegiances distracted one from real progress and understanding. Although her views do not fit consistently with any political position, she nevertheless engaged in the political debate about the rights of the individual.¹ Hamilton concurred with many other educationalists that learning should not be the sole purview of males—either as instructors or pupils—and that the education of females was an essential mark of an advanced modern society. She believed that the “society which contains the greatest number of wise and virtuous individuals, is the happiest and most perfect, . . . and that the wisdom and virtue of individuals will be in a great measure in proportion to the pains that are bestowed on their education” (Hamilton 1803, 1:x).

However, educationalists differed on the question of what constituted a suitable education (see Sorenson, this volume).² Hamilton moved from an early acceptance of the prevailing ideology that females were innately intellectually inferior, as disseminated in most of the major educational treatises of the day, to the more radical assertion that there is no sex in the soul—a position that aligned her with Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays (see Kelly 1992, 1993; Luria 2006). However, Hamilton did not align herself as a “champion for sexual equality” alongside Wollstonecraft and Hays, believing that such a position was “indefensible, if not absurd,” because it was not a claim for equal “moral worth” but for an “equality of employments and avocations, founded upon an erroneous idea of a perfect similarity of powers” (1803, 1:254). In her discussions about women’s rights she also eschewed the more radical assertions of sexual freedoms voiced by her English contemporaries in favor of

tempering the passions and achieving greater economic independence.³ As such, Hamilton provides a fascinating example of how a woman successfully participated in the intellectual debates of her day without compromising her domesticity, thereby avoiding the personal attacks experienced by her more politically radical contemporaries Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays.⁴

But what differentiated Hamilton most strikingly from other contemporary educationalists was her insistence that a clear and current understanding of the workings of the mind was a necessary foundation for any educational reform. Hamilton was concerned with the fundamentals of learning and how knowledge of the human mind—a philosophy of understanding—was needed to underpin any educational scheme or project. A careful reading of her various publications between 1797 and 1815 maps the evolution of her understanding of, and contribution to, moral and educational philosophy.⁵ As such, Hamilton's moral philosophy and educational theory build more on the ideas of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers such as Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart than on the educationalists Wollstonecraft, Hannah More, or Richard and Maria Edgeworth.⁶

2. HAMILTON'S EARLY EDUCATION

How did a middle-class woman become so heavily grounded in the Scottish intellectual milieu of the early 1800s, especially as it pertained to theories of educational philosophy? Hamilton was born in Belfast in 1756 but raised by a paternal aunt near Stirling, Scotland, after her father's death when she was three years old. She lived with her aunt and uncle in relative rural seclusion, receiving the typical limited formal education afforded to middle-class females of her day. From the ages of eight to thirteen she attended a day school in Stirling as a weekly boarder, staying with a family friend. Hamilton recalled in her partial memoir how she learned to acquit herself in the traditionally feminine accomplishments of "writing, geography, dancing" and, later, "French, music and drawing" (Benger 1819, 1:37). A less conventional aspect of her schooling was its coeducational delivery by a male tutor, Mr. Mason.

Hamilton described her childhood as one of "unalloyed happiness" and Rousseauistic seclusion (Benger 1819, 1:42). It was a warm and religiously tolerant household—her aunt was Episcopalian and her uncle Presbyterian—in which the Christian precepts were more significant than sectarian allegiance. This openness to a broad definition of Christianity informed all her writing. And though her "formal" education was completed at age thirteen, Hamilton continued to draw, study French, and "rattle at [her] harpsichord," as well as "peruse books by stealth" (Benger 1819, 1:86, 46). By her own admission, she was a precocious reader. She recalls being discovered by her aunt while reading the work of Lord Kames:

Do I now well remember hiding Kaimes [sic] *Elements of Criticism* under the cover of an easy chair, whenever I heard the approach of a footstep, well knowing the ridicule to which I should have been exposed, had I been detected in the act of looking into such a book?

(Benger 1819, 2:203)

Her aunt, on discovering Hamilton, "quietly advised her to avoid any display of superior knowledge, by which she might be subjected to the imputation of pedantry" but then

arranged for her niece “to be absent some months on a visit to Glasgow and Edinburgh,” where she received “lessons from various masters” (Benger 1819, 1:47–48).

3. SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHERS

While attending a popular series of public lectures at the University of Edinburgh, Hamilton met some of the leading Scottish intellectuals of her day. She heard Dugald Stewart (1753–1828)⁷—the Scottish philosopher and mathematician, author of *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792) and *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (1793)—lecture on moral philosophy, popularizing the work of Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and Thomas Reid. She was introduced to Scottish common sense realism, which originated in the ideas of Scottish philosophers Reid and Stewart, as well as Adam Ferguson and James Beattie, who argued that common sense denoted not only widespread popular conviction but also, and more importantly, the basic principles at work in human reasoning and belief formation. Another critical element Hamilton took from Reid was his insistence that “philosophical inquiry into the human mind is not a matter of making popular opinion the test of truth, but of initiating a ‘dialogue between the vulgar and the learned’ in which proper weight is attached to the actual minds at work” (Graham 2020). Hamilton also attended a series of lectures on “experimental philosophy” by the blind chemist Henry Moyes and took the audacious step of introducing herself to him (Armstrong and Deischer 1947, 169–174; Benger 1819, 1:47). Moyes, an active member of the Lunar Society, worked as an itinerant public speaker to help to raise public interest in the new field of chemistry (*The Gentleman’s Magazine* 1784). After this introduction, Dr. Moyes “liberally undertook to direct the studies of his youthful pupil,” and thus began a life-altering “literary correspondence” (Benger 1819, 1:46). Another friendship developed, this one with her cousin, the physician and chemist Adair Crawford, though it is not directly referred to in the *Memoirs* (Perkins 2010, 84–86). These friendships gave direction to Hamilton’s fascination with theories of the mind and moral philosophy, and Moyes and Stewart served as mentors, friends, and critics.

Despite her correspondence with Moyes and Stewart, Hamilton remained in the countryside, physically distant from the Edinburgh intellectuals until her return to the city, in 1804, as a celebrated writer in her own right. Except for the six months she spent visiting her sister Katherine in Ireland, in 1780, Hamilton remained isolated at home. After her aunt’s death later that year, she assumed the role of homemaker for her uncle (Benger 1819, 1:68, 76). Her sense of isolation is palpable in the surviving letters she wrote to her brother, who was serving overseas in the East India Company. Hamilton described that period as “one of the most solitary winters I have ever passed, as I have now no companions to enliven it” (Benger 1819, 1:87). Hamilton continued to read widely, but her movements and social circle were increasingly restricted. As Benger (1819) notes:

Dugald Stewart, Paley, and Alison, had long been the chosen companions of her private hours; and her religion being, as her friend has justly observed, not only spiritual but practical, she became every day more deeply impressed with the value of useful knowledge, and more anxious to promote such pursuits as might be permanently beneficial to mankind. (1:221)

Things changed dramatically in 1786, when her brother returned to England. Charles, who had been a cadet with the East India Company since 1772, was working on the Orientalist project under the auspices of William Jones. He had been sent back to London to complete two projects: the first was to publish *An Historical Relation of the Origin, Progress, and Final Dissolution of the Government of the Rohilla Afghans in the Northern Provinces of Hindostan*, which he did in December 1786 (Charles Hamilton 1786), and the second was a scholarly translation of the Persian *Hedaya*, completed and published in 1791 (Charles Hamilton 1791).

When Charles invited his sisters to join him in London in 1787, life fundamentally changed for Hamilton. For the next two years she enjoyed the lively intellectual connections the city and her brother afforded her. Through Charles's connections at the London Asiatic Society, Hamilton was introduced to a stimulating social crowd. This exposure schooled her in the politics and mission of the society, and allowed her to listen to and then participate in their conversations and learn about their research project. As Bengier (1819) notes:

In this polished circle, Miss Hamilton discovered all the charms of novelty and congeniality; and it was here, perhaps, that she first became conscious of her own strength. Learning may be insulated; imagination delights in solitude; but wit and humour are social qualities, and can only be excited in a genial element. (1:111)

Around this time, a meeting with the Reverend Dr. George Gregory and his wife started a friendship that lasted for the next thirty years (1:114).

In London, Hamilton moved from a theoretical understanding of Locke, Hume, and Stewart on the need for intellectual exchange to a real-life appreciation of the benefits of conversation and community. Locke (1824) described "the pleasure of rational conversation with a friend, or of a well-directed study in the search and discovery of truth" (218). Hamilton notes her personal transformation as a result of regular conversation, debate, and study:

On coming to England the scene was not only changed, but I found myself as if I had at once assumed a new character. Men of learning addressed themselves to me, as to a being who was actually capable of thinking. Men of wit seemed to imagine that I could understand them; and both men and women, very superior, both in point of situation and abilities, to those with whom I had been accustomed to associate, conversed with me so much upon a footing of equality, that sometimes I was inclined to exclaim with the *wee wife*, "surely *this is no me*." (Bengier 1819, 2:206–207)

These new friends and opportunities for intellectual engagement enriched her understanding from years of reading the major Scottish Enlightenment figures.

In September 1791, Hamilton returned to Scotland, and Charles prepared to return to the East. That December he was recognized in Parliament for his scholarly efforts (Bengier 1819, 1:121). However, declining health delayed his departure, and he died in March 1792 from typhus. Hamilton turned to writing over the ensuing years to cope with her loss. Her first published work, *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (Hamilton [1796] 1998), was part tribute to her brother, part satire, and part Oriental study. Hamilton fictionalized Charles in the hero, Percy, and used the book to celebrate Charles's life and research. Ironically, in so doing she disseminated his scholarship to a far broader readership than it had previously had (see Grogan 2002). *Translations* used the foreigner's observations to

critique British social customs and prejudices. A clear target of her satirical scorn was the New Philosophy and its proponents. The New Philosophy espoused revolutionary ideas of individual rights and freedoms, with social mobility based upon meritocracy rather than birth. It challenged the traditional units of authority, namely the crown, the church, the government, and the family.

But even as Hamilton mercilessly ridiculed vacuous philosophical posturing, she sketched her own educational or moral philosophy. In what became a characteristic feature in her writing, Hamilton illustrated how everyone's response to situations is determined by their upbringing, education, and religious faith. But it is not only environment that shapes a person's moral development—it requires rigorous mental engagement and reflection on choices taken and the consequences.

4. HAMILTON AS AUTHOR

The success of *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* encouraged Hamilton to continue writing, and she published steadily over the next two decades in a variety of genres. In these works, we can trace Hamilton's evolving views on educational philosophy. Although her publications range from historical biography to national tales, the plots were invariably subordinate to Hamilton's concerns with education, particularly of women, and the narrative representation of educational practices, both successful and—more often—failed. Whether guiding her in love or life, a woman's education proves more crucial than family status, appearance, or intention.

4.1. Memoirs of Modern Philosophers

Hamilton's next work, the political satire *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (Hamilton [1800] 2000), gave the readers three heroines to follow as they negotiate with and respond to the arrival of the New Philosophers and their revolutionary ideas in their small, rural English community. What each has done as a child, how each has been educated, and the ability of each to think and reason logically will either protect them or expose them to danger. The book was a humorous but scathing indictment of the New Philosophers and their ideas in early nineteenth-century England. Mr. Myope, who is a loose representation of William Godwin, demonstrates the dangerous consequences for females of adhering to the latest philosophical fads when the local group of adherents plans to emigrate to live among the Hottentots in Africa, where his "Doctrine of Perfectibility" appears to be practiced:

All our theory realised! Here is a whole nation of philosophers, all as wise as ourselves! All enjoying the proper dignity of man! Things just as they ought! No man working for another! All alike! All equal! No laws! No government! No coercion! Everyone exerting his energies as he pleases! The very ground-work of perfectibility! (141)

One of the three heroines, the beautiful but naive Julia Delmont, has been indulged by her father, while her mother has invested no time in her daughter's education. Although Julia

has had a broadly Christian upbringing, she has never been taught to think through the lessons she reads or hears at church. Her father openly castigates religion “as a very proper thing for the common people, who, not having the advantages of military discipline, required a parson with some notion of hell, instead of a cat-o-nine-tails to keep them in awe” (Hamilton [1800] 2000, 78–79). But his daughter, being neither in the military nor of the working class, is left in a spiritual limbo. Consequently, she lacks any moral framework or the critical tools with which to defend herself against the machinations of Vallaton, a “vagabond who masquerades as a philosopher when he perceive[s] how much it would be to his advantage” to destroy her ideas of filial duty and social propriety (60). As the narrator observes, the New Philosophy is ideally “suited for gaining proselytes among the young, the unthinking and the uninformed” (60). The reader is invited to associate Hamilton’s Julia with Rousseau’s protagonist in *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). Through Julia, Hamilton critiques Rousseau’s educational theories and political philosophy, which valued the young female’s “natural” state but left her dangerously vulnerable. Hamilton repeatedly stressed the “importance of establish[ing] religious principles in the minds of [the young] on a firm and lasting foundation” (Hamilton 1803, 1:93). Such faith provides a template without which one is rudderless, uncritical, undirected, and vulnerable.⁸

Our second heroine, Bridgetina Botherim, who has also been indulged by a doting parent, offers a critique of Godwin’s theory of necessitarianism and its particular dangers to females. Whereas Julia receives attention for her beauty, Bridgetina (with her short stature and squint) has to find other ways to shine. Bridgetina’s smattering of learning from the New Philosophical books she reads provides her with a semblance of intelligence that garners her the public acclaim she yearns for. But for her, too, the absence of sound moral principles or real understanding leaves her vulnerable. Neither Bridgetina nor Julia has engaged deeply with any subject matter, and certainly not with scripture. Bridgetina rejects faith as an “old fashioned encumbrance”; and Julia’s superficial understanding of faith is quickly eroded by Vallaton’s rhetorical onslaught. Both females illustrate Hamilton’s concern about rote learning without real understanding or engagement. Bridgetina successfully parrots passages from Godwin’s *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, but she lacks any real comprehension of the ideas. Likewise, Julia has a smattering of religious knowledge but no sense of how this translates into a lived reality. As Hamilton notes, “The capacity to retain, without the power to digest and combine, is of very little real advantage” ([1800] 2000, 166; Ty 1991).

The third heroine, Harriet Orwell, combines beauty with sound principles that she has imbibed from her father and, in the absence of her mother, her aunt. She alone tries to logically think through the New Philosophical ideas that Julia and Bridgetina merely parrot. Harriet alone insists on tying theory to practice by challenging Julia to explain her views on the “necessity of repentance” in her own words.⁹ It becomes clear that mere words do not suffice; they must be matched with feeling and an emotional response. Harriet alone uses her reading, whether of Hume or scripture, to guide and prescribe actual behavior. She devotes her time and energies to helping the poor in her community. Her faith has a practical charitable component. Thus, through Harriet, Hamilton clearly depicts how important patterns established in one’s childhood—whether of time management, reading habits, compassion, personal reflection, or faith—determine one’s responses throughout life. The absence of a solid moral foundation leads to Julia’s death and Bridgetina’s disgrace. Both are susceptible to the machinations of others, whether the rhetorical manipulations of

Vallaton or the misguided ramblings of Mr. Myope. As Hamilton (1803) explained in *Letters on Elementary Principles of Education*: “If minds that have been imbued with no solid principles of virtue should become the prey of vice, let us not be astonished. Let us not express the feelings of regret and disappointment at a consequence so natural” (1:26).

Critics and readers recognized and celebrated *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* as a weapon in the arsenal of anti-Jacobin fiction, though Hamilton clearly also used it to flesh out her educational philosophy (see Boyle 2021a).

5. EDUCATIONAL TREATISES

Hamilton moved from indirect to direct articulations of her educational theories in a range of treatises: *Letters on Education* (1801), the expanded *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* (1803), *Letters Addressed to the Daughter of a Nobleman* (1806), *Exercises in Religious Knowledge* (1809), *A Series of Popular Essays* (1813), and *Hints Addressed to the Patrons and Directors of Schools* (1815). But she moved in a different direction from the many educationalists who proposed pedagogical rubrics to equip women to succeed in the marriage market or restricting their study to appropriately feminine subjects. Hamilton (1803) argued instead for a sound education that develops the individual’s rational capacity: “In this I can make no distinction of sex; it being my opinion, that the mind which is most sedulously preserved from the influence of prejudice, will be best preserved for pursuing the line of conduct best adapted to its situation and circumstances” (1:29). With regard to prescribed female education, she notes:

To expose the absurdity of making mere personal accomplishments the exclusive object of attention, is an easy task; but it is, perhaps, an error little less fatal in its consequences, to direct the attention solely to the cultivation of the understanding, while we neglect the heart. . . . It is simply untrue that we cannot use reason to shape feeling or emotion. (1:28)

From Hamilton’s perspective, well-regulated passions necessarily balance an individual. Early childhood education is crucial in forming good character:

Whoever considers the operations of the passions, and the influence of the affections upon the happiness of individuals and of society, must be sensible, that if these do not receive a proper direction in early life, the acquisition of knowledge will never render a man “wise unto happiness or unto virtue, more than unto salvation.” (1:29)

Hamilton is clear that her goal is to “trace the influence of situation in forming the mind, and to observe the rise of those opinions and prejudices which form the character” (Benger 1819, 1:163). In so doing, she followed Stewart (1793), who asserted, in his *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*, “that the object . . . is to ascertain the general rules of a wise and virtuous conduct in life, in so far as these rules may be discovered by the unassisted light of nature” (12). Knowledge was essential (even knowledge of a specialized or higher order) to guide practical lived experience. Hamilton, like Stewart, argued that moral philosophy was critical to achieving a properly functioning social order. She built on Stewart’s theories to design her own educational program, which started with the premise that women, especially mothers,

were intellectually capable of understanding the importance of the early association of ideas in the training of children's emotions and reasoning powers.¹⁰ Until mothers understood how the mind is formed, all children would be at risk. To ensure every mother's comprehension, Hamilton "divested [the *Letters*] of all extraneous matter, cleared from the rubbish of system and hypothesis, and rendered so plain to every capacity as to become a part of common education" (1803, 1:20–21).

All women, regardless of age and class, need a clear grasp of moral philosophy. Accurate knowledge about the workings of the mind, she argued quoting Stewart, is as important as knowledge about anatomy: "Would it not necessarily be rendered more systematical and enlightened, if the powers and faculties on which it [the mind] operated were more scientifically examined, and better understood?" (Stewart 1818, 43–44). Just as we search for an understanding of the science of physics (gravity or velocity), so we should search for an understanding of the mind. She provided the example of "the optical defect of squinting," describing how new knowledge about the physiology of the eye quickly led to "a reformation . . . in every nursery, and the position of every cradle was carefully attended to." She challenged her reader: "Is the mind, then, so comparatively unimportant? Or the impressions made upon it by strong and powerful sensation, to a certainty, less durable than those made upon the optick [*sic*] nerve?" (Hamilton 1803, 1:70).¹¹

Hamilton chose the more intimate and informal genre of the epistle in her *Letters on Education* (1801) and *Letters on Elementary Principles* (1803) to present and explicate her theories of education and stress the importance of the child's early years, which fell primarily to the mother's care. Hamilton only used anecdotes (and examples etc.) of which she had personal, firsthand knowledge to illustrate her theories and preferred mode of behavior; she gently led the reader to appreciate the importance of consistent, rational, and reasonable conduct toward a young child. She did not attempt to convince "the prejudiced, or . . . the giddy and unthinking votaries of folly and fashion to listen to the voice of reason" but, rather, addressed "the young but conscientious parent, who, anxiously solicitous for the virtue and happiness of her offspring, is in danger of being bewildered amid the variety of systems that offer themselves as unerring guides in the important path of education" (Hamilton 1803, 1:xiv).

Hamilton's stated goal was to offer a regular plan based on foundational principles about the mind and how the acquisition of knowledge mirrors theories of association. Only "by watching over the impressions and associations which the mind receives in early life," she wrote, could one "secure it against the influence of prevailing errors; and as far as possible engage its prepossessions on the side of truth" (1803, 1:30); she added, "I believe, on close and accurate examination, we shall find that the permanency of associations depends in the first place, *on the strength of the original impression*, and secondly, on the frequency of the repetition" (1:32). Her example was, again, familiar: "Of this we have a convincing proof in the number of persons who are unhappily through life slaves to the terrors of darkness, from the idea of ghosts and darkness having been associated together in infancy, and forcibly impressed by means of the passion of fear" (Hamilton 1803, 1:33).

Hamilton explained that "the woman who would educate her children with success, must begin by educating herself" (1803, 1:21). Each mother "must carefully examine her opinions, and carefully distinguish between those that have received the sanction of reason and judgment, and such as have been implicitly adopted from the family of prejudice" (1:21). Such an education had political and social implications, because it would allow

women, whether they were mothers or not, to have greater influence in society. The goal, she reassured her readers, was not to make “speculative philosophers of your daughters” (Hamilton 1803, 2:361).¹² Hamilton clearly stated that the potential reward far outweighed the consequences of personal hesitation or indifference:

Nor can I, perhaps, plead the cause of my sex more effectually than by explaining the influence of early education; and thus rendering it evident to every unprejudiced mind, that if women were so educated as to qualify them for the proper performance of this momentous duty, it would do more towards the progressive improvement of the species than all the discoveries of science, and the reaches of philosophy.

(Hamilton 1803, 1:3)¹³

Since Hamilton argues that sound domestic management is a complicated and serious endeavor, it follows that all human beings, females as well as males, must also be educated to take moral and intellectual responsibility for their own ideas and actions. As Pamela Perkins (2010) notes, for Hamilton “a rationally functioning mind is not a gendered quality but rather is essential to all human beings” (115).

Hamilton challenged her female readers to “consider themselves as having an inherent interest in the cultivation of their faculties,” but worried that prejudices deterred females from “applying to the subject the degree of understanding and information [they] possess” (1803, 1:245, 38). She again drew on familiar practices to counter the reader’s hesitation:

Some reading upon the subject . . . may indeed . . . [prove] expedient . . . but this is no more than [one] would find necessary, in order to learn the principles of Whist or Casino; for who can expect to play to advantage without a knowledge of the rules of the game? (1:22).

That women happily devoted time to mastering the rules of new card games indicated their ability to apply themselves—and if a woman “consider herself as an accountable agent, and that beings formed for immortality are entrusted to her care, she will set about this preliminary duty with alacrity and zeal . . . [understanding] that reason and reflection are within the power of every rational creature” (Hamilton 1803, 1:21).

There was an unapologetic element of moral philosophy in all Hamilton’s works, regardless of genre. She claimed and illustrated not only that females need to learn and practice proper behavior, but even more importantly, that they have to understand the principles underlying the rules, and not just passively imitate them. She explained in *Letters on Elementary Principles* “that, as in . . . every other branch of science . . . rules are less necessary than principles” (Hamilton 1803, 1:xii). Bengier (1819) described her position this way: “She prescribes not rules, but enforces principles, immutable in their nature, in their operation universal” (1:133).

Passive obedience was so far from being a virtue in Hamilton’s view that she dramatized, in all her fiction and nonfiction, the devastating consequences when females appear virtuous but remain incapable of understanding or articulating the reasons for their virtuous behavior. When they are challenged (as the fictional Julia Delmont was) or required to teach virtue to their own children, they prove unable to defend or explain their thinking.

The *Letters on Elementary Principles*, which Hamilton affectionately termed “her bantling” (Bengier 1819, 1:154), were well received. After Dugald Stewart favorably reviewed the book, she wrote that “it would be a poor affectation to say, that I was not flattered by such praise from a character so distinguished” (Bengier 1819, 1:162). Interestingly, her friend and

mentor Hector MacNeill—to whom she later dedicated *The Cottagers of Glenburnie*—voiced the concern of some male critics that the second volume of *Letters on Elementary Principles* was “too abstruse for certain readers” and “above the comprehension of all, except a learned female reader” (Benger 1819, 2:201, 204). Hamilton politely but firmly disagreed, and explained that she “could not have been satisfied, if, in a book on education, [I] had not . . . endeavoured to force the necessity of cultivating the reasoning faculty, and to explain the advantages arising from the capacity of taking general and extensive views” (Benger 1819, 2:204–205).¹⁴ In fact, she retorted, “all the ladies of my acquaintance here [in England] have read them with satisfaction; and I have received letters, even from young ladies, upon the subject, which show not only that they understood it, but were capable of weighing, with accuracy, every argument adduced” (Benger 1819, 2:204–205). Later, she pushed this idea even further, arguing:

I know not whether the generalisation of ideas be more requisite to a minister of state than to the mistress of a family. How necessary to the former, has been displayed by the elegant and judicious author of the “Elements of Philosophy of the Human Mind” [Dugald Stewart] its use to the latter is a more becoming theme to the Author of this humble performance.

(Hamilton 1803, 2:369)

6. LIFE IN EDINBURGH

By the time Hamilton chose to settle in Edinburgh with her sister, she was an established and acclaimed writer. Her stature was confirmed in 1804 when she received a Royal Pension to acknowledge that her literary talents had been “meritoriously exerted in the cause of religion and virtue.” In Edinburgh, which was known as the “Athens of the North,” Hamilton quickly established a regular routine of study, visiting, and writing. She participated in the many lectures and events organized by the faculty of the University of Edinburgh. This period was crucial for the maturation of her theories of education and moral philosophy. Her correspondence indicates that she had friendships with Archibald Alison, Walter Scott, Francis Jeffrey, Hector MacNeill, Henry Mackenzie, Anna Grant, Joanna Baillie, mathematician John Playfair, historian Alex Tytler (Lord Woodhouselee), moral philosophers Sydney Smith and James Gregory, publisher Archibald Constable, and her old friends Dugald Stewart and Henry Moyes (see also Fiona Price, this volume).¹⁵ This list testifies to what Perkins (2010) describes as an “Enlightenment tradition of Intellectual sociability . . . in which women played an active role as participants and as hosts . . . engaging in a form of sociable exchange that lies somewhere between the worlds of public entertainment and of strict domesticity” (26).

Central to Hamilton’s philosophy was a belief that each individual, regardless of social station, needs to return to the core Christian values. Success lies in a greater sense of community, a shared responsibility for one’s neighbor, and a duty to one’s dependents to teach and instill in them sound morals, Christian values, and a strong work ethic (Straight 2013). Any education program that does not develop “intellectual judgment” in oneself, and then in everyone under one’s care, is doomed to fail. Two works, focused on opposite ends of the social scale, demonstrate the scope of this concept: the first, *Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina*,

the Wife of Germanicus (1804), enlisted biography and Roman history to examine the shortcomings of personal heroic virtue that was untempered by Christian faith; the second, *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808), used a national tale to illustrate the shortcomings of blind, nostalgic adherence to Scottish customs. Both works demonstrated the cost when an individual fails to understand how their personal moral choices are inflected by and, in turn, shape society. As Hamilton warns: “One might act properly for a time through habit or by instinct, but female virtue that is not grounded in a reasoned moral ideology is dangerously inadequate not just to the family unit but to society as a whole” (Perkins 2010, 123).

6.1. Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina, the Wife of Germanicus

Hamilton used Agrippina the Elder (c. 14 BC–AD 33), a recognized model of heroic womanhood, to illustrate her theories of moral philosophy and show how early influences help to shape a person’s moral code. “*Memoirs of Agrippina, Wife of Germanicus* illustrate[s] by biographical examples the speculative principles assumed in the *Letters on Education*” (Benger 1819, 1:160). Her intent was

to trace the progress of an extraordinary mind from the first dawn of genius to maturity; to mark the circumstances from which it received its peculiar bent; to develop the sources whence the understanding derived its sources; and thus . . . to pourtray [*sic*] the characteristic features of the soul.

(Hamilton 1804, xvii)

Perkins argues that “as a work of moral philosophy filtered through a study of ancient Rome . . . *Agrippina* illustrates a woman’s inability to make private virtue culturally relevant.” She continues, “If 18th century celebrations of female virtue and chastity took for granted that women influenced their children by the shining force of their exemplary characters,” then Hamilton was interested in showing how limited such influence was (Perkins 2010, 122). It is not sufficient to model private virtue. One needs first to understand, and then to instill in others, the principles behind one’s virtuous choices. Agrippina’s inability to instill virtuous principles in her children reveals the limitations of individual action and the dangers of unthinking or imitated virtue. Whereas contemporary writers more frequently described and celebrated imitations of sensibility, Hamilton was more concerned with imitations of virtue. She showed how genuine virtue required real comprehension and choice, because “virtue that is merely the effect of imitation, cannot be expected to survive its model” (Hamilton 1803, 1:244, 243). Virtuous action must be conscious and informed, not merely rote, behavior. Individuals must theorize actions and reason for themselves.

We read how Agrippina, on returning from Germany, planned to better “acquaint herself with her sons’ . . . dispositions” in order to then “lay down plans for the formation of their characters.” But she failed in this, on all fronts, because her modeling of private virtue was eclipsed by her society’s view of virtue. According to Hamilton, because Agrippina lacked religious faith or sound principles, she could not teach her children to set aside the violence, family pride, and sexual profligacy of Rome (Hamilton 1804, 2:94–95). Agrippina’s children were, Hamilton implies, morally and mentally unable to benefit from their mother’s instruction and example. Agrippina remained an anomalous and remarkable individual, but for Hamilton she was a failure because she could not extend her private virtue beyond

her person to reform Roman society. The potential was there, but it remained unrealized because of Agrippina's gender, lack of Christian faith, and underdeveloped intellectual judgment.

Hamilton, like Stewart and other leading figures of her day, saw philosophy as a practical discipline. As Macintyre notes, "The principal aim of professors of philosophy and history in the 18th century was not to develop tools of impartial analysis but to make their students wiser and better men and so help improve the social order" (2003, 155, 157). One of the charitable projects Hamilton cofounded was the Edinburgh House of Industry, "instituted for the purpose of affording assistance to aged females of respectable character, when thrown out of employment, and of training the youth to habits of industry and virtue" (Hamilton 1809, app. 1). She also decided to work on a new, cheaper, edition of *Letters on Elementary Principles of Education*, "condensing the material, in order to enable the bookseller to sell at a lower price" (Benger 1819, 2:120) and so reach a wider readership. She took an interest in the "experiment in model landowning" that Alex Tytler was carrying out on his Woodhouselee estate in the Pentland Hills outside Edinburgh. Hamilton visited the estate and saw how Tytler had "renovated the cottager's dwellings affording them each a patch of garden and instituted various land reforms" (Alison 1818, 32; Woodhouselee 1807, 2:54). She was so impressed that she promptly penned *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* to encourage all Scottish peasantry and landowners to emulate the reforms. For Hamilton, true Christian faith manifested itself in practical improvements to the lives of ordinary people. Unlike her contemporary Hannah More, who addressed her *Village Politics* and *Cheap Repository Tracts* to "the most vulgar class of readers," Hamilton's goal was to improve rather than subdue the rural poor, and to effect real change recognizing and developing each person's "moral capacity" (Hamilton 2010, 49; see also Grogan 2017).

6.2. The Cottagers of Glenburnie

The Cottagers of Glenburnie was an immediate success when it appeared in the summer of 1808. It became a best-seller and was reputed to be found on every cottager's shelf, alongside the Bible and Robert Burns. The narrative follows an elderly retired servant, Mrs. Mason, who travels north to live with her surviving relatives in Glenburnie, Scotland. En route she visits the house of the Stewart family, where she recounts the story of her life to one of the daughters. From here the plot splits into two plots. One follows Mrs. Mason to Glenburnie; the other remains with the Stewart family. The latter is a fairly stock narrative of two sisters, Bell and Mary, raised by their widowed father, Mr. Stewart, who is a factor on the estate of the Longlands. Since her mother's death, Bell has been raised by an indulgent grandmother. *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* opens with her return to her father's home having spent several terms being schooled at a fashionable "house of learning," where she has acquired little more than an appetite for finery and a healthy disrespect for her family's modest social position. Mary, meanwhile, having been educated at home, uses her strong Christian faith to ground all her decisions and actions. The shenanigans of the wayward Bell are shown to be the direct result of the father's failure to control her. Neither father nor daughter has learned to subdue their passions in useful or productive ways.

Mrs. Mason's plotline is more original, as the reader enters the McClarty's cottage and becomes immersed in peasant life. The unruly MacClarty children mirror the problem of

undirected parental affection which readers have already witnessed in the Stewart household, now coupled with domestic disarray. Although the cottagers are superficially religious, their faith lacks any positive practical dimension. Mrs. Mason's faith dictates good works and action, but faith for the locals means passive acceptance and an insistence "to ne're be fashed" (meaning "bothered"). When the father falls dangerously ill, local custom dictates that he must kept in "an over-crowded airless sick room," since "we maun trust a' to the Grace of God" (Hamilton 2010, 143). Not surprisingly, the father dies. We see how unquestioning acquiescence to social norms is pointless at best, and dangerous at worst. Mrs. Mason uses her own actions, and the many reforms in domestic economy and education that she introduces to the cottagers, to demonstrate that every individual has a God-given obligation to exert themselves.

In line with Hamilton's theories about early childhood education, the mother, Mrs. McClarty, is held most responsible for her children's failings, since their "tempers and dispositions, falsely attributed to nature, may be traced to impressions received in infancy" (Hamilton 1803, 1:5). Once again, Hamilton shows how a woman with relatively few material or social worries still manages to destroy her family as a result of passive virtues she learned by rote. If Agrippina modeled virtuous behavior, Mrs. McClarty models misguided nationalism. Mrs. MacClarty claims virtue in nostalgically upholding familial traditions, without regard for common sense or sound reasoning—as a consequence, she is the most slovenly of housewives. She models a "blind and indiscriminating partiality for national modes, manners and customs" (Hamilton 2010, 48). Whether it is her refusal to adopt new modes of cleanliness (and remove hairs from her butter), renovate the cottage, force her children to attend school, or even to use her best linen, the reader is invited to laugh at her misplaced pride.¹⁶ Truly virtuous behavior must come from reasoned conviction, not mere habit or other people's commands or exhortations. Hamilton was indebted to Stewart's contention that everyone needs to understand the foundations of morality to be consistently and effectively virtuous. By the novel's end, Mrs. MacClarty has learned nothing and lost everything. One daughter elopes, the son joins the army and then deserts only to be caught and transported overseas, the father dies, and throughout it all, the mother persistently refuses to morally guide her family. The truculence, insolence, and disobedience she has nurtured in her children destroy the family. In contrast, the other cottagers see the value of Mrs. Mason's Christian reforms and improve their lots and attitude.

The Irish novelist, educationalist, and Hamilton acquaintance Maria Edgeworth wrote a fulsome obituary on Hamilton's death in 1816. In it, Edgeworth notes Hamilton's significant contribution to moral philosophy:

In [*Letters on Elementary Principles*] she not only shows that she has studied the history of the human mind, and that she has made herself acquainted with all that has been written on this subject by the best moral and metaphysical writers, but she adds new value to their knowledge, by rendering it practically useful. She has thrown open, to all classes of readers, those metaphysical discoveries of observations which had been confined chiefly to the learned. To a sort of knowledge which had been considered rather as a matter of curiosity than of use, she has given real value and currency. She has shown how the knowledge of metaphysics can be made serviceable to the art of education. She has shown, for instance, how the doctrine of the association of ideas may be applied in early education to the formation of the habits of temper, and of the principles of taste and of morals: she has considered how all that

metaphysicians know of sensation and of abstraction can be applied to the cultivation of the attention, the judgment and the imagination of children.

(quoted in Benger 1819, 1:225–226)

It is fitting to conclude this discussion of Hamilton's educational philosophy with Edgeworth's acknowledgment of the advances she made in the field:

Had Mrs Hamilton set ladies on metaphysics merely to show their *paces*, she would have made herself and them ridiculous and troublesome; but she has shown how they may, by slow and certain steps, advance to a useful object. The dark, intricate, and dangerous labyrinth, she has converted into a clear, strait, practicable road, a road not only practicable but pleasant, and not only pleasant, but, what is of far more consequence to women, safe.

(quoted in Benger 1819, 1:227–228)

NOTES

1. Hamilton claimed to “hold the spirit of party to be radically vicious: but [that she] should be sorry to think that all who are led into it are individually corrupt” (Benger 1819, 2:86; see also Grogan 2012, 1–26).
2. On the range of nineteenth-century women's philosophies of education, see Sorenson, this volume.
3. In Hamilton's fictional works, the romance elements in the plot are subordinated to her concern with women's economic independence and the narrative representation of successful or—more often—failed educational practices. See Grogan (2012, 75–89), on how Hamilton's contribution to the assertion of women's rights lies in an assertion of female intellectual capabilities and the need for a better education for females to enable them to realize their intellectual potential.
4. Unlike her English female counterparts, Hamilton did not see the roles of writer and domestic figure as being in tension—performance in one area did not prevent performance in the other. See Egenolf (2009); Wallace (2009); Grogan (2012, 2020); and Perkins (2010).
5. See Boyle (2011b); De Ritter (2012); Hutton (2008); Perkins (2010); Price (2002, 2007); Rendall (2013); Russell 1986); and Thaddeus (1994).
6. Perkins (2010, 104) notes that Hamilton shares Stewart's “assumption that an informed and educated populace is necessary to the proper functioning of society.”
7. Dugald Stewart studied morality under Thomas Reid at the University of Glasgow. He was a founding member of the Philosophical Society at Edinburgh and cofounder of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1783. His course on moral philosophy covered ethics but also included lectures on political philosophy and the theory of government. In 1800–1801 he lectured to undergraduate students on the new subject of political economy.
8. See Perkins (2010, 122–124) for her discussion of Hamilton's “Story of the Tame Pigeon” in *Letters Addressed to the Daughter of a Nobleman* (1806).
9. See *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* for this debate between the two friends (Hamilton [1800] 2000, 163–168).
10. “From an education conducted upon no regular plan, we acquire no regular associations in our ideas, no accurate arrangement, no habit of mental application” (Hamilton 1803, 1:3).

11. See De Ritter (2012) for a fascinating discussion of squinting.
12. As Benger (1819) noted:

In recommending to her own sex the study of metaphysics, as far as it relates to education, Mrs Hamilton has been judiciously careful to avoid all that can lead to that species of vain debate of which there is no end: . . . She does not aim at making women expert in the wordy war; . . . but she has not, on the other hand, been deceived, or overawed, by those who would represent the study of the human mind as one that tends to no practical purpose, and that is unfit and unsafe for her sex. (1:226–227)

13. In confirmation of her claim in *Letters on Education* that women are fully capable, Hamilton repeats Stewart's assertion: "Never . . . have I known a man remarkable for wisdom and virtue, who was the son of a foolish mother" (1803, 1:4).
14. Hamilton, as De Ritter notes, saw "domestic life as the ideal environment in which to cultivate philosophical disinterestedness," allowing women to gain a more integrated view by which they can "see the relations which every part bears to the whole" (Hamilton 1803, 2:376; De Ritter 2012, 690).
15. Archibald Alison was the author of the *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790). According to Benger, Hamilton's "Exercises in Religious Knowledge" (1809) "received the sanction of Bishop Sandford, and the Rev Mr. Alison" prior to publication (Benger 1819, 1:169). On Hamilton's friendship with Lord Woodhouselee, see her letter to "J. G—, Esq." from Edinburgh, May 1807 (Benger 1819, 2:74). John Gregory (1724–1773) was a Scottish Enlightenment physician, medical writer, and moralist; Thomas Reid was his cousin. On Joanna Baillie, see also Fiona Price, this volume.
16. "Na na, we're no sic fools as put our napery to use! . . . I have a dizen table cloths in that press thirty years old, that were never laid upon a table!" (Hamilton 2010, 109).

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CHAPTER 2

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND WOLLSTONECRAFTIAN PHILOSOPHY

ALAN COFFEE

1. INTRODUCTION

MARY Wollstonecraft died in 1797, which places her just outside the period with which this handbook is concerned. Even if we take a “long nineteenth century” perspective, which often runs from the French Revolution in 1789, her life barely overlaps with it. The conceptual tools and frameworks that she used also belong to the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment, drawing as she did, for example, on the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and sharing a great deal with the approach of Immanuel Kant (Coffee 2022). Wollstonecraft’s thought, however, lived on through the nineteenth century, and beyond, and it is with this legacy that I shall be concerned in this chapter.

Wollstonecraft is the most widely known and celebrated early feminist. However, though she is often taken to be the first feminist by those outside the field of women in the history of philosophy, many of her feminist arguments or positions are not original to her. Feminist thought has a long history dating back to ancient times, and by the seventeenth century, we see the emergence of a growing body of work that is arguing for women’s spiritual, moral, and intellectual equality with men, with an accompanying call for a correspondingly rigorous education for women, for example, in the work of Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678), Gabrielle Suchon (1632–1703), François Poulain de la Barre (1648–1723), and Mary Astell (1666–1731). Several of Wollstonecraft’s own arguments are foreshadowed in the anonymous tract appearing in 1739 that was attributed to Sophia, a Person of Quality, “Woman Not Inferior to Man: or, A short and modest Vindication of the natural Right of the Fair-Sex to a perfect Equality of Power, Dignity, and Esteem, with the Men”; and Wollstonecraft herself acknowledges her considerable intellectual debt to Catharine Macaulay’s (1790) *Letters on Education* (Coffee 2019a). Recognizing her feminist predecessors and intellectual debts, however, does nothing to diminish Wollstonecraft’s significance as an innovative philosopher with a considerable and deserved legacy.

As far as the nineteenth century goes, however, conventional opinion often has it that, while Wollstonecraft's standing as a public intellectual was growing in the final years of her life, her reputation after her death was devastated by the revelations about her private life that appeared in her husband William Godwin's (1798) memoir—that she had been an unwed mother, for example, who attempted suicide—and with it, her intellectual influence (see Smith, this volume).¹ While it is true that the memoir did damage Wollstonecraft's public profile, the overall effect it had on Wollstonecraft's influence in the next century has been somewhat exaggerated. Though Godwin's book and the popular reaction to Wollstonecraft's colorful life undoubtedly presented considerable obstacles, the fact remains that Wollstonecraft had a strong and far-reaching impact throughout the nineteenth century. This has been ably demonstrated by Eileen Hunt Botting, both through a series of articles outlining Wollstonecraft's influence in Europe, the United States, and Latin America and, more recently, in two volumes of "portraits" of Wollstonecraft from around the world.²

My concern in this chapter, though, is not to continue the work of tracing where and when Wollstonecraft had an influence in the nineteenth century but is conceptual. I will focus on a particular form of argument that I take to be central to Wollstonecraft's feminist philosophy and examine how it was extended, modified, and developed into the nineteenth century. My interest here is in the development of an idea rather than any particular biographical influence that Wollstonecraft may have had. This said, two of the nineteenth-century thinkers I shall discuss are close relatives of hers—Wollstonecraft's sister-in-law, Nancy Kingsbury Wollstonecraft (henceforth, "Kingsbury"), and Wollstonecraft's daughter, Mary Shelley—and there are good reasons to believe that Mary Wollstonecraft's work directly influenced the thought of both.

The Wollstonecraftian idea that I shall examine is her belief that for women to be socially and politically free and the equal of men as citizens in their own right, they must be independent. Independence, here, is used in a specialized sense. It is the central notion in the republican political tradition in which individual freedom is understood with respect to membership in a free state. On the interpretation of Wollstonecraft that I offer, she rearticulates the standard political understanding of freedom to embrace an idea of cultural as well as political freedom. Freedom, she argues, requires membership of a free (inclusive and representative) culture. Women must, therefore, play an equal part with men in reshaping background social norms, concepts, beliefs, and practices before they can participate as free individuals with meaningful rights and opportunities to act. Wollstonecraft was an early innovator and pioneer of this idea, both as a feminist and as a republican political theorist, though the insight took root among radicals, reformers, and activists in the nineteenth century through a variety of routes.

I shall first set out the Wollstonecraftian ideal of social and political independence. I will then show how Kingsbury develops Wollstonecraft's thought with regard to women's education before turning to a more salutary analysis from Shelley, who identifies the destabilizing effect that human emotions and self-interest have on some of the standard institutions on which republicans typically rely. Finally, I will examine how certain African American writers within the republican tradition took up the same Wollstonecraftian concept of cultural reform and regeneration as a necessary precondition of, and accompaniment to, any hope of political freedom and equality.

2. WOLLSTONECRAFT'S IDEAL OF INDEPENDENCE

One of the central principles around which Wollstonecraft constructs her feminist arguments and social criticism is that women must be independent; that is, they must be full citizens, equipped and empowered to act as moral and political agents in their own right. In particular, women must be independent of men, something that was not possible in her own time for legal, political, and cultural reasons. Wollstonecraft uses the term *independence* in a specific and specialized way. Independence, on her account, is synonymous with freedom, and it is in their independence, collectively and as individuals, that women will be considered to be the equals of men (Coffee 2013, 2014).

Wollstonecraft indicates the foundational importance that she attributes to the principle of independence in the opening paragraph of the preface to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, where she refers to it as “the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue” (2014, 21). This particular expression is drawn from her rational form of religion which serves as a fundamental underpinning to her moral philosophy. The form that independence takes in her political theorizing, however, is derived from the republican political tradition, where it plays a pivotal role in framing the relationship between the rights, opportunities, and responsibilities of the citizen. Politically, there is no doubt that Wollstonecraft was a republican thinker, as she made clear in *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1795). This also makes sense given her association with several prominent republican theorists and activists, such as Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, James Burgh, Thomas Paine, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld. However, when it comes to her social criticism and arguments for women’s rights and equality, some feminists have resisted attributing a republican model to Wollstonecraft.³ While this is understandable given the long association of republican thinking with patriarchy, the explicit exclusion of women from the citizenry, and the often implicit infusion of male-oriented language into its framework, in my view these reservations can be answered in the case of Wollstonecraft.⁴ This much said, it is not necessary to endorse anything like a full republican political model in order to follow or accept my analysis in this chapter. All that is needed is a willingness to see how Wollstonecraft relates three core values—freedom as independence, equality, and virtue—in a specific way to generate her feminist position.

As Wollstonecraft understands it, independence is not an individualistic or rugged ideal suggesting that a person is either self-sufficient or unmindful of others. Independence is, rather, a relational ideal that starts with the unavoidability, and desirability, of our extensive mutual interdependence as social agents. The purpose is not to attempt to draw boundaries around individuals but to establish a secure framework in which each person can act reliably and freely as an equal within their existing relationships (Coffee 2018). The key claim is that this condition can best be realized where everyone is subject to a system of law that represents the common interests of the whole community. No one is to be exempt from this law, and no one should fall outside its protection. Finally, everyone should have the opportunity to shape the law, subject to the proviso that it continues to support all and only the shared interests of those whose lives are governed by it. This is the republican model in a highly idealized form, with citizens being independent to the extent that these conditions apply. While Wollstonecraft does not challenge this basic overall concept, she

realizes that as society was currently constructed there was no possible way that women could be included on an equal and independent basis. Wollstonecraft recognizes, for example, that even to hint that “women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government” will “excite laughter” among her opponents rather than, as one might hope for under more conducive circumstances, stimulate serious debate and eventually lead to genuine reform (2014, 176).

One of Wollstonecraft’s lasting philosophical innovations was to refocus the republican orientation as a political theory to encompass the broader social context. Where the classic republican axiom had traditionally been that “freedom is only possible in a free state,” Wollstonecraft showed that it would be more accurate to stipulate that freedom was only possible in a free (inclusive and representative) culture. Political freedom, in other words, is derived from, and so dependent upon, the way we are perceived and valued socially. Building on the prior work of Catharine Macaulay, Wollstonecraft takes the basic framework that republicans apply to political institutions, and applies it to the social and cultural background.

Conceptually, “freedom as independence” is a function of two further ideals, equality and virtue. A free society is an equal one (“among unequals there can be no society”); and to maintain an equal society requires virtue on the part of its members (“virtue can only flourish among equals”; M. Wollstonecraft 1995, 39, 61).⁵ Virtue in this context entails two aspects, an ability to reflect rationally on one’s opinions and actions and a willingness to direct this toward the common good. These two aspects are related since, for Wollstonecraft, reason is understood in the context of religion and the moral law: “To submit to reason is to submit to the nature of things, and to that God, who formed them so, to promote our real interest” (M. Wollstonecraft 2014, 186). Both inequality and dependence are incompatible with the virtue necessary to hold society together. Inequality, for example, pits individuals and social classes against one another instead of focusing their minds on their shared interests. Dependence is also divisive but, according to Wollstonecraft, it has another, more corrosive, effect on people’s minds. “When a man makes his spirit bend to any power but reason, his character is soon degraded, and his mind shackled by the very principles to which he submits with reluctance” (1995, 39). Dependence is said to alter people’s character, giving them a servile demeanor that prevents them from acting on principle, being forced instead to ingratiate themselves to those in whose power they are: “Virtue is out of the question when you worship only a shadow, and worship it only to secure your property” (21).

Wollstonecraft makes clear that everyone involved in dependent relationships is affected, the dominators as well as the dominated. She gives examples, including the aristocracy, clergy, and military. She also emphasizes that women are especially vulnerable, since they are the most fully dependent members of society, having no legal standing of their own and therefore relying on the goodwill of their fathers and husbands. Under these circumstances, how can a wife act on principle and conscience, as virtue requires? A wife, Wollstonecraft argues, must not be “dependent on her husband’s bounty for her subsistence during his life, or support after his death—for how can a being be generous who has nothing of its own? or, virtuous, who is not free?” (2014, 176). Wives are simply not in a position to take control of their lives by making use of the power of reasoned argument—as they would if they were equal partners with their husbands—and so have no option but to resort to more covert

means, such as to “govern their tyrants by sinister tricks” (174).⁶ It should be noted here that although Wollstonecraft spends a lot of time analyzing the effects of dependence on women, since this is her principal subject in several of her works, she in no way confines her criticism to women. Coquettish wives are no more than the female equivalent of the obsequious and fawning courtiers and officers whom she also criticizes at length. And Wollstonecraft’s focus on women’s degradation should be balanced against her analysis of the overbearing and abusive behavior of men (a theme she examines at length in her unfinished novel, *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*).

There is one further aspect of dependence and inequality that is important to note in this analysis. This is the tendency for the corruption of virtue to spread throughout society, starting with individual cases and drawing in ever greater numbers. Supposing, for example, a man is dependent on his patrons in the unstable world of gossip and intrigue in the royal court. The lowly courtier may come home to his family and take out his feelings of frustration and insignificance on his wife. His dominated wife, in turn, as Wollstonecraft observes, may come to “tyrannise over her servants; for slavish fear and tyranny are found together” (1787, 63). Thought of in this way, then, dependence is not only an individual harm but a social concern, one that implicates the freedom of the whole of society if patterns of inequality and dependence are allowed to grow unchecked.

3. NANCY KINGSBURY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND EDUCATION

Nancy Kingsbury Wollstonecraft was born in 1781 in Massachusetts. In 1813, she married Mary Wollstonecraft’s younger brother Charles, who had emigrated to the United States in 1792. Charles died in 1817, whereupon Kingsbury moved to Cuba. Kingsbury wrote a number of articles for the *Boston Monthly Magazine* in the 1820s and had just completed an illustrated manuscript titled “Specimens of the Plants and Fruits of the Island of Cuba,” before her, sadly untimely, death in 1828. Her work remained in almost complete obscurity until the chance resurfacing of her botanical papers—still unpublished—in 2019 in the archives at Cornell University. This discovery generated considerable excitement among historians in the field, as much for its extremely high quality as for the fact that scholars interested in the extended Wollstonecraft family had long wondered what had become of the manuscript (Reid 2019).⁷ Further interest was sparked by the realization that she had also written a pseudonymous article in *Boston Monthly Magazine*, “The Natural Rights of Woman,” under the name D’Anville (N. K. Wollstonecraft 1825; Bensick 2020).

Because so little is known about Kingsbury’s life, we cannot be sure how much of her sister-in-law’s work she had read or how far she may have been influenced by it. Nevertheless, it is almost certain that she was familiar with her predecessor’s thought. Not only did she model the title of her article after Wollstonecraft’s most famous book, but there is evidence that she often used the name Mary herself. Wayne Bodle (2019) has shown that Kingsbury traveled from Cuba to Boston using the name Mary Wollstonecraft, for example. It’s also interesting to note that, although Kingsbury wrote anonymously for *Boston Monthly Magazine* (under the D’Anville pseudonym), when the editor of the magazine, Samuel Knapp, later revealed

her identity in a collection of short biographies of notable women (Knapp 1846), he gave her name as Mary Wollstonecraft (albeit misspelled with only one *l*, and without an *e*; Bensick 2020). All the same, whether Wollstonecraft directly influenced Kingsbury's thinking or not, we can detect a distinct *Wollstonecraftian* tone and structure in her thinking.

Kingsbury uses the same basic republican philosophical structure as Wollstonecraft, linking the concepts of freedom and independence with equality, rational and moral virtue, and the common good (Coffee 2023). We see these principles at work in her final two articles for *Boston Monthly*, "Books and Literature" and "Patriotism: A Sketch," as well as in "The Natural Rights of Woman" (N. K. Wollstonecraft 1826b, 1826a, 1825). It is helpful to read all three articles together, even though their ostensible subjects are quite distinct, as each sets out different aspects of her overall philosophical framework. The articles are all entertainingly and forthrightly written; they start from some foundational principles that are appropriate for an essay with that title, but then focus at the end on a surprisingly specific and narrow conclusion given the broad topic at hand. "Patriotism," for example, starts with an argument that love of country must be tied to the principles by which it is governed and that the population endorses collectively, and not in any appeals to innate or natural superiority. The principles that animate the nation must entail a love of knowledge and the pursuit of scientific, cultural, and moral progress. Government, as a protector and enabler of the common good, must play a direct role in ensuring that the conditions are right for these virtues to flourish. She ends with an appeal for the establishment of a national botanical garden in the capital, similar to the Jardin des Plantes in Paris.

Kingsbury elaborates on the idea of cultivating collective reason and virtue in "Books" (N. K. Wollstonecraft 1826a). The production of certain kinds of wisdom, she argues, cannot be left to the operations of the free market. Few people could read in seventeenth-century England, she writes, yet they produced John Milton, whose writing was not self-supporting but required public sponsorship. Fast forward to Kingsbury's time when she notes that the writing of novels is now a lucrative business. There is little government support for writers, but those who can capture the public's imagination might be richly rewarded. The result, she argues, is a glut of shallow, tawdry books pandering to easy sentiments and chronicling trivial everyday experiences. These books appeal to the vanity of critics and readers alike but do not challenge them to reflect and rethink their values and beliefs. Although Kingsbury is particularly scornful of "that host of female scribblers who did much more than waste the paper—the time of the printers—and the money of boarding school misses, by their voluminous tomes of sentimental nonsense, and deluding details of deceiving error," her real target in the essay is Walter Scott, to whom she attributes much of the blame for this state of affairs (79).⁸

In both "Books" and "Patriotism," Kingsbury adopts the position that an individual's ability to reason, and thus to act with moral and civic virtue, is highly dependent on the collective intellectual and cultural context in which they live. This being so, it is in everyone's shared interest to maintain a healthy national environment conducive to both scientific and artistic progress. This being a shared interest, it becomes something that government has a duty to facilitate. Although written later than "Natural Rights," these two articles can be seen to show the foundation on which Kingsbury makes her most overtly feminist arguments. Despite its general title, "Natural Rights" was written as an answer to a puzzling situation that had arisen in Kingsbury's time. Why is it, she asks, that in early nineteenth-century America, when women have what would seem to be a historically unparalleled opportunity

to become educated, do so few appear to take up this offer and improve their minds? Women's apparent failure to make the most of the intellectual resources available to them played into the hands of the critics who maintained that women were simply not suited for either mental achievement or to be socially useful outside their traditionally defined domestic roles. However, while this is a superficially persuasive conclusion—one that has survived into our own century—Kingsbury sets about addressing it from first principles, showing how flimsy the premises on which it relies are.

Kingsbury opens with the claim that although men and women are fundamentally equal, men have universally taken it upon themselves to subject women to their authority. Interestingly, she does not argue for women's equality with men, but instead asks, pointedly, if also wittily, for serious scientific, empirical, or theological evidence to be provided to the contrary. After all, we study the difference between an elephant's jawbone and a mammoth's jawbone, so where, she asks, is the research into the differences between the male brain and female brain to account for such a significant conclusion as male superiority? Instead of attempting to prove women's equality, Kingsbury focuses on the implications of men's usurpation, in particular, on men's need to control and limit women's minds. The model that men have used to justify their domination conforms to the same pattern that she argues in "Patriotism" that tyrants and despots use to control their population. Drawing on her own experience of living in Cuba, she points out that the Spanish colonies managed to prevent the kind of revolution that the United States experienced by tightly controlling the level and content of the education that their populations received, both formally and informally. Education was not only limited, but deviation from approved ideas was socially condemned by the church. Kingsbury outlines a very similar tactic employed by men in the control of women. Women, she argues, have been systematically denied access to education, and this restriction has, for the most part, been rigorously enforced throughout history, with multiple effects. Limiting women's educational opportunities prevents them from achieving intellectual accomplishments in visibly large numbers, which creates the impression that women are not naturally suited to intellectual endeavors. Over time, norms are established that reinforce this idea, and the opportunities for gifted or educated women to support themselves financially or to be socially appreciated become increasingly scarce.

Kingsbury only brings up the question of why women seem not to take up the apparently ample opportunities for both formal and self-education in the nineteenth century after having established this foundation. Kingsbury may have been right in suggesting that the number of schools and colleges admitting women in New England at the time was unprecedented, as was the leisure time available in which to enjoy affordable but improving pastimes such as reading (though she likely overstates her case). But her larger point is that the mere supply of educational institutions is only one factor among many that come together to work against women's becoming educated across a broad range of scientific, economic, and cultural subjects. Although women themselves receive most of the criticism for this—if they don't take up intellectual pursuits when they are available, then obviously, they either don't want to or aren't very good at them, so either way we don't have to do anything more about it—men play an equal if less visible role, according to Kingsbury. Men do not reward or encourage women to become educated. In a time when there are few viable or lucrative careers open to women, the need to appeal to men's desires is decisive. Marriage and the financial protection of a man is by far the most rational option for a woman. "If knowledge, wit, and wisdom, were essential to this," Kingsbury argues, "every woman would

endeavor to be knowing, witty and wise” (N. K. Wollstonecraft 1825, 134). But of course, and regrettably, they were not.

If women cannot improve their minds as men can, then women cannot be independent and thus socially and politically free in the sense Wollstonecraft describes. While Kingsbury, like Wollstonecraft, identifies education as a key element of achieving independence, she wants to take the focus away from women’s individual decisions and bring our attention to the ways that we are embedded in a network of social relationships and cultural practices that restrict and constrain the decisions that it is individually rational for a woman to make. Men and women are both implicated, and, considering that securing the independence of every citizen is a foundational in the pursuit of the common good, it becomes the responsibility of us all to put it right, an endeavor in which the state is required to play a role.

4. MARY SHELLEY AND THE DESTABILIZING ROLE OF HUMAN PASSIONS

The daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, extended and critiqued her mother’s work as part of what can be seen as the ongoing development of Wollstonecraftian ideas throughout the nineteenth century. Though Shelley had not been treated in any sustained depth as a political theorist until very recently, exceptional work has been done by Sharon Ruston (2005) and, more recently by Eileen Hunt Botting (2017, 2020; see also Hunt, this volume). My focus here is on just one aspect of Shelley’s political philosophy, her use of the republican framework of freedom as independence, equality, and civic virtue that she shares with Wollstonecraft. Although Shelley made extensive use of the republican model in each of her first three full novels—*Frankenstein* (1818), *Valperga* (1823), and *The Last Man* ([1826] 1998)—I shall concentrate on *The Last Man* (Coffee 2020; forthcoming).

Republican theory is principally an institutionally driven approach to political philosophy. The freedom of individual citizens is guaranteed by the functioning of a set of republican institutions designed to uphold the rule of law, where this law fairly and accurately represents the shared interests of all citizens. What Shelley does is to populate this republican model with characters with very human, if exaggerated and caricatured, flaws. In so doing, she effectively stress tests the republican framework, highlighting its vulnerability to the unrelenting pressure that certain motivated individuals and groups can place on republican institutions. Of special significance for Shelley is the role that personal ambition plays in some people’s lives. Personal ambition is directly opposed to the core republican value of civic virtue, which requires individuals to set aside personal gain in favor of the common good.

In each of the three novels we see aspects of the contrast and clash between virtue and ambition in the central characters. Victor Frankenstein’s uncontrolled passions drive his quest for glory, for example, while his creature is rational and seeks to become part of a society that is focused on the common good (Coffee, forthcoming). In *Valperga*, Shelley gives her perspective on Machiavelli’s ruthless republican adventurer and hero, Castruccio Castracani. Shelley presents Castruccio as irretrievably torn between his love of virtue, both as a set of ideals and in the person of his lover, Euthanasia. Euthanasia represents both

spiritual and republican virtue, and as her name suggests, she is prepared to die for her principles. Both protagonists, Castruccio of Lucca and Euthanasia of the fictional Valperga, are also political leaders who govern in accordance with their deepest commitments. For Euthanasia, a love of virtue is sufficient for her to rule well. But her domain is no match for the relentlessly expansionist city-state of Lucca under Castruccio, who genuinely wrestles with the competing claims of virtue, for its own sake and for his republic, and of glory. In the end, however, his ambition cannot be restrained, destroying any prospect of a society built on the republican values of individual and collective freedom among equals committed to the common interests of them all.⁹

A similar tension plays a central role in *The Last Man*, a novel set in the twenty-first century that describes a pandemic happening in a political context that uncannily resembles our own. At the start of the novel, Shelley describes a polarized society in which two parties, stuck in an acrimonious deadlock, dominate the political landscape. The population is bored and disillusioned. Many people feel that the country is on the verge of breaking up, perhaps descending into conflict, though behind the scenes the opposing politicians, despite their rhetoric, are actually very chummy. In the public's mind, the foundational ideals of the republic—freedom, equal respect, civic virtue—have “grown stale” (Shelley [1826] 1998, 59). No one is interested in politics as usual, and the deadlock is broken by an outsider, Raymond, a charismatic populist who gains power and public support by exploiting the public's exhaustion and natural weakness for “tinsel and show.” Raymond is by no means a bad person; he is a sympathetic character who dies a hero's death. But he is politically ambitious for personal glory rather than the good of the nation. Not only this, he cannot control his emotions, and his other appetites get the better of him.

The England described in *The Last Man* before the pandemic struck was a republican state in which institutions are supposed to capture the energy of ambitious leaders, constrain it within defined limits, and direct it toward the common good (Macaulay 1767; Coffee 2017). The cases of Raymond and Castruccio show how ineffectual formal legal and political institutions are when faced with the dual threat of charismatic and talented but self-interested politicians and an apathetic, easily manipulated public.

Ambition and apathy are not the only emotions that Shelley ([1826] 1998) injects into the republican framework. Another set of motives clusters around a combination of factional loyalty, ideological blindness, economic class, and self-interest. So, when Raymond departs the scene following a scandal, he leaves the nation in the hands of the more republican-minded leader of the democratic party. In the face of the pandemic that has now struck, instead of seeking a united cross-party response, the new leader suppresses the seriousness of the disease to pursue partisan advantage. Even the otherwise noble party's aims of equalizing society and helping the poor are compromised, because the democrats need the wealth of the commercial party for their funding. The result is a series of cosmetic reforms that actually secure for the rich “all they wished” (235). A third, even deeper driver, in Shelley's account, concerns a visceral intergroup hostility rooted in belonging and status. In the later stages of the novel, Shelley describes how a colony of exiled survivors, instead of pulling together, have become bitterly divided. Those who arrived in the colony first felt a sense of superiority and entitlement, and they opposed the newcomers, who, in turn, formed a rival party. The dysfunction of their fighting allows a third, initially much smaller, group to ascend comprising the fanatical followers of a messianic “impostor.” He promises restoration of their lost social privilege and God's protection from the disease, in exchange

for complete loyalty and obedience. The impostor exploits the language of religion while ruthlessly pursuing his tawdry ambitions and self-aggrandizement, without restraint or conscience. The desire simply to rule, Shelley says, and the hope of being remembered as a “patriarch, a prophet, nay a deity” leads the impostor to keep up his fight “to the last act,” even as he brings down the colony with him (386, 406).

Shelley’s analysis is stark, but it’s not hopeless. Human beings are not ungovernable. She does not believe that people are only driven by destructive passions such as self-centered ambition or partisan loyalty and, in fact, has great faith in enlightened republican values. Rather, Shelley warns us that we must jealously and actively guard our civic institutions and their accompanying norms. The somewhat naive utopian solutions outlined by earlier republicans, such as Catharine Macaulay and others, are insufficient on their own. Wollstonecraft herself says little about institutions, except perhaps in the context of the chaos of the French Revolution, where they have completely broken down. So, Shelley’s analysis plays a valuable role in fleshing out an important aspect of Wollstonecraftian philosophy—namely, the role of real human emotions in what is otherwise an idealized theoretical framework. Ultimately, human beings are in charge of their institutions. The wider population can’t be expected to constrain their leaders—people are too easily swayed by powerful rhetoric and prone to become bored or cynical when nothing seems to change. And there will always arise leaders and schemers such as Raymond and Castruccio, who are both relentless in their pursuit of glory and full of guile, charm, and ruthlessness. So, in exposing the weakness of the republican reliance on virtue to restrain destructive human emotions, then, Shelley does republicanism a great favor.

History shows how fragile our institutions are and how unreliable both leaders and populations can be. A brief glance at the world today seems to confirm that. Shelley’s analysis, probing imaginatively and psychologically into the motives, emotions, and ambitions that drive us, represents a much-needed corrective to abstract philosophical speculation and logical argument.

5. HARRIET JACOBS, RACE, AND RADICAL SOCIAL REFORM

A key feature of Wollstonecraft’s political philosophy was her call at the end of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* for a “revolution in female manners” (2014, 224). This was a radical demand. “Female manners” here does not mean mere etiquette, and it is not limited to women’s behavior. Wollstonecraft is calling for a complete restructuring and redefining of the full range of ways that women are perceived and able to act, socially, culturally, politically, legally, and economically. On the standard republican account, to be independent, and so free, a person must live under a law that represents all and only the shared interests of the political community. Wollstonecraft’s insight was to take this structure and refocus it so that it includes the social context as well as the political one. Freedom requires living, not only under a representative law but also in a culture that reflects one’s interests in which one is accorded equal standing with others (Coffee 2013). Without a wholesale overhaul

of this social and cultural background, she argues, women simply cannot be free as independent citizens, equals of men, because there are so many subtle but pervasive prejudices and structural barriers that hold them back. The social and political worlds must be remade collaboratively, by men and women working together to forge a conceptual environment that represents their shared input on equal terms.

The recognition that political independence and equality requires more than mere political rights took root in abolitionist thought during the nineteenth century. This idea became especially apparent after the Civil War and the failure of Reconstruction to bring about meaningful social or political equality for Black Americans. What is perhaps the most fully worked-out version of this position, within the republican tradition at least, was given by Frederick Douglass. "To-day we have put down a stupendous rebellion," Douglass writes, speaking of the coming end of the Civil War, and "to-morrow we shall have to reconstruct the whole fabric of Southern society," adding that it will be "a tremendous undertaking" (1976, 290). He concludes that what will be required, if Black Americans are to live freely as independent and equal citizens, "is nothing less than a radical revolution in all the modes of thought which have flourished under the blighting slave system" (292), echoing the thought that underpinned Wollstonecraft's revolution in female manners. Precisely how far Wollstonecraft's philosophy had a direct influence on nineteenth-century abolitionism, I am not in a position to say. Nevertheless, on the question of the systematic and structural nature of the domination of an oppressed group (women and Black Americans), analyzed through the power of social prejudices and cultural representation and articulated through the republican framework of freedom as independence, the later positions of abolitionists and social reformers such as Douglass can be seen as developing ideas set out earlier in Wollstonecraft's work.

Harriet Jacobs (1813–1897) was an almost exact contemporary of Douglass (1817–1895). Her analysis of the nature and effects of slavery, and her use of the republican framework of freedom as independence, mirrors his development of Wollstonecraft's ideas in many respects. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Woman*, her narrative of her life as a slave (Jacobs 2001) adds a much-needed contribution to the body of republican theory, which until very recently overlooked the contributions of both women and slaves as a whole, and especially those from the perspectives of women slaves. She does not, for example, hold back in writing about the daily threat, and often reality, of rape and sexual violence that slave women experience. "Even the little child," Jacobs tells us,

who is accustomed to wait on her mistress and her children will learn, before she is twelve years old, why it is that her mistress hates such and such a one among the slaves She will become prematurely knowing in evil things. Soon she will learn to tremble when she hears her master's footfall. She will be compelled to realize that she is no longer a child. If God has bestowed beauty upon her, it will be her greatest curse. That which commands admiration in the white woman only hastens the degradation of the female slave. (2001, 27)

Jacobs herself suffered horribly in this way. "My master met me at every turn," she recalls, "reminding me that I belonged to him." Jacobs not only makes clear that no matter how brutalized by their experiences they were, slave women felt the humiliation "most acutely." There was nowhere for her to turn, even for moral support. The other slaves pitied her, because they "knew too well the guilty practices under that roof" but were also "aware that to speak of them was an offence that never went unpunished" (27).

Through this specifically female form of suffering, Jacobs develops one of the most well-known themes in male slave narratives, the showdown between slave and master. Through a physical victory in a fight, the male slave's status is changed. Though he is still a slave in form, the victor is no longer servile and has taken the first critical step toward true freedom.¹⁰ He has summoned the resolve to face death if he fails and prevailed through his strength and is, thereby, deserving of freedom. This is the message that runs through Douglass's famous confrontation with the slavebreaker Covey (Douglass 2003, 156–162). Jacobs includes a similar incident in the story of her fellow slave Benjamin (Jacobs 2001, 20–25). Shortly afterward, she also introduces a showdown episode she herself experienced. The backdrop to the encounter is the threat of sexual violence from her master, Dr. Flint, and the risk of punishment if she resists, including being sold into even more unsafe conditions. Flint had been pursuing Jacobs for some time but had not yet overpowered her. On this occasion, he confronts her about the rumors that she wants to marry a free Black man rather than acquiesce to him. Jacob answers Flint truthfully, and boldly, confirming that she wants to marry and reaffirming her virtue notwithstanding her lowly condition. Flint then strikes her for her insolence. Jacobs stands her ground and replies, “I despise you!” (36). This stance and these words are as powerful as Benjamin's or Douglass's physical defiance. Her words echo the feeling she had had some time earlier, when Flint had told her that “I was made for his use, made to obey his command in *every* thing; that I was nothing but a slave, whose will must and should surrender to his,” adding “never before had my puny arm felt half so strong” (18). In standing up to Flint, Jacobs illustrates how a classic aspect of the master-slave dialectic is instantiated for the female slave. Flint has the power to impose his carnal will on Jacobs. He would also like to do this. But he also wants her to submit willingly, feeling for him both desire and gratitude. He can't have both. Some slave women may comply, but their sincerity can never be known; others, like Jacobs, resist.

Sadly, there is no way out for Jacobs. Denied the opportunity to marry the man she loves, she has children with another white man (not her master). In so doing, she lowers herself in her own estimation, as well as in that of her relatives who had cherished her earlier virtuous defiance. These are obstacles that male slave writers do not have to confront. Jacobs incurs the wrath of Flint and, especially, his wife. Finally, worrying about the fate of her children—which is out of her hands as a slave mother at the best of times—becomes a considerable barrier to her self-preservation. Unlike Benjamin and Douglass, she cannot strike out on her own to make a life as a fugitive. Though, of course, both men also had ties and networks of support, Jacobs's account of escape is bound up much more with the lives of her loved ones.

Jacobs does eventually escape, and her narrative ends with freedom for herself and her children. While she is upbeat—this, after, all is an improvement on the brutal reality of bondage—her story is tinged with sadness and stops short of her gaining freedom as independence (she was free of the power of the slaveholders, which, while “not saying a great deal, it is a vast improvement in my condition” [164]). Her account of living in the notionally free North mirrors that of Douglass, both enduring the visceral prejudices against Black people, structural and social inequality, and the ever-present threat of capture under the dreaded Fugitive Slave Law, which gave vast powers to slave catchers. Philosophically, Jacobs's *Incidents* is a rich and valuable book in its own right. When read through the lens of feminist republican theory and abolitionism, it also represents an insightful contribution to the development of Wollstonecraftian thought in the nineteenth century.

The impact that Mary Wollstonecraft's thought had in the nineteenth century was profound and wide-ranging, partly because of the breadth of her interests, and partly because of her broader role as an inspiration for feminists. In this chapter, I have examined one particular philosophical idea—the role that culture and social attitudes play in thwarting the operation of political institutions and public reason that are supposed to deliver equality and justice, and I have placed this in a specific context of her republican framework. Though this is a foundational aspect of her philosophy, there are a great many other ways that Wollstonecraft's rich and innovative work can be traced through the next century and beyond, which is the hallmark of a great thinker.

NOTES

1. For the view that Godwin's memoir sent Wollstonecraft's work into obscurity for the next century, see, for example, Wardle (1951, 339), Eberle (2002, 58), and, for a nuanced view, Gabrielle Callaway (2019). See also Janet Smith, this volume.
2. Botting (2013a, 2013b; 2021a, 2021b) and Botting and Charlotte Hammond Matthews (2014). Kandice Sharren has also traced a healthy prevalence of editions of Wollstonecraft's books in traveling libraries and private collections in the nineteenth century, demonstrating that she was far from forgotten or unread (2022). There were, of course, numerous competing themes that helped to shape and hinder Wollstonecraft's reception in the century following her death. Something of the complexity can be seen in Harriet Martineau's remarks in her *Autobiography*, where she acknowledges the "admiration with which her [Wollstonecraft's] memory was regarded in her childhood" but admits that she could not "reconcile her mind to Mary Wollstonecraft's writing or to whatever she heard of her" (1877, 1:301). Martineau's reason was that "on the subject of Woman's Rights and condition . . . the first requisite to advancement is the self-reliance which results from self-discipline," but that "Wollstonecraft was, with all her powers, a poor victim of passion, with no control over her own peace." Martineau concludes that she is inclined to "decline all fellowship and co-operation with women of genius or otherwise favourable position, who injure the cause by their personal tendencies" (1:302).
3. See, for example, Karen Green (2019), Anne Phillips (2000), and Carole Pateman (2007).
4. Coffee (2013, 2014, 2019b). A growing body of feminist scholarship now accepts the republican reading of her philosophy. See Sandrine Bergès (2019), Susan James (2016), and Lena Halldenius (2015) in particular.
5. The first of these remarks may well owe its expression to John Milton, whose *Paradise Lost* Wollstonecraft later quotes in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: "Among unequals what society; Can sort, what harmony or true delight" (2014, 47). In relation to the second remark, Wollstonecraft earlier maintains that "inequality of rank must ever impede the growth of virtue, by vitiating the mind that submits or domineers" (1995, 48–49).
6. Although Wollstonecraft fully develops her philosophical position on dependence and independence only in her middle and later works, starting with *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (most likely inspired by her association with the rational dissenters such as Richard Price and James Burgh), she was even as a teenager very clear that dependence was to be avoided at all costs, giving her childhood friend Jane Arden this advice, "Struggle with any obstacles rather than go into a state of dependence" (2003, 29).

7. See also Bodle (2019). Bodle is perhaps the foremost authority on Kingsbury's life along with other members of Wollstonecraft's American family.
8. My purpose in discussing Kingsbury's "Books and Literature" is to examine its republican elements and support for an overall argument that underpins what she argues for in the "Natural Rights of Woman." Kingsbury is not, of course, the only woman to pick out Walter Scott as having a corrupting influence on the novel as an art form or to deplore the state of women's writing in this period. See Barbara Onslow (2000, chap. 4) and George Eliot (1883).
9. Beyond her connection with Wollstonecraft and republicanism, Shelley's interest in the political effect of the passions, including that of ambition, strikes a chord with the writing of Joanna Baillie in which these themes are both prominent and well-developed. Whether there is any direct influence, I am not in a position to determine, but we know from Shelley's journals that she did read Baillie, including the play *Ethwald*, which focuses on ambition. For example, Shelley is said to have "read Miss Baillie's plays all day" on December 26, 1814 (Marshall 1889, 103). I thank Alison Stone for drawing Baillie's work to my attention. See also Stone (forthcoming).
10. See Lindsey Stewart (2021) for a discussion of alternatives to the narratives of violent conflict based on readings of Harriet Tubman and Old Elizabeth.

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CHAPTER 3

MARY SHEPHERD ON METAPHYSICS AND MATHEMATICS

DEBORAH BOYLE

1. INTRODUCTION

LADY Mary Shepherd (1777–1847) was born and raised at Barnbogle Castle, just outside Edinburgh. Despite her status as a member of the aristocracy, we know little about her life; our primary source of information about her is a brief memoir written years later by her daughter (Brandreth 1886, 26). According to the memoir, Shepherd and her two sisters were taught geography, mathematics, history, and Latin by a schoolteacher in their home; in contrast, the boys in the family were educated by a fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge University, which they later attended themselves (Brandreth 1886, 26, 116). Married in 1808 to a barrister, Shepherd settled in London. Her name appeared frequently in the society columns of British newspapers throughout the 1810s, 20s, and 30s, reporting her attendance at balls, concerts, and dinner parties. But in a letter to Shepherd's daughter, Shepherd's grandnephew Everard Henry Primrose (1848–1885) offers a glimpse of Shepherd's intellectual life: "I should like to hear more about the gifted Lady Mary Shepherd—and her 'Salon,' which my mother has often assured me was a very interesting and agreeable one. My father seems to have been often there, and Lady Mary's humor seems to have been as well-known as her logical powers, and occasional causticity" (Brandreth 1886, 4). According to Shepherd's daughter, her parents "gathered in those days both the scientific and the literary sides of the learned world, into easy and intimate intercourse" (Brandreth 1886, 41–42). Shepherd's daughter mentions as members of her parents' social circle geologist Charles Lyell; Cambridge philosopher of science William Whewell; mathematician Mary Somerville; economists Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo; and Charles Babbage, inventor of the Analytical Engine and the Difference Engine, early computers (Brandreth 1886, 41–42; on Babbage's collaborator Ada Lovelace, see Krämer, this volume). Shepherd is also mentioned as an acquaintance in correspondence and memoirs by Amelia Opie, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Harriet Martineau, and Mary Shelley.¹

Although few materials about Shepherd's life are available, we do have Shepherd's philosophical writings, which include two published treatises, three journal articles, and some letters to Babbage.² Together, these works present an impressive, carefully wrought, and original philosophical system. In her first book, *An Essay upon the Relation of Cause and Effect* (1824), Shepherd defends our knowledge of two causal principles and argues, against David Hume, that causation involves necessary connections and that inductive reasoning is secure. In her second book, *Essays on the Perception of an External Universe* (1827), she argues, against George Berkeley, that we can know with certainty that an external world exists. In both books, Shepherd relies on mathematical analogies to illuminate her views: in the essay on causation, she compares causal relationships to mathematical *equations*, and in the essays on our knowledge of an external world, she compares our sensations to *algebraic signs* standing for unknown quantities.³ She further develops the algebraic analogy in her 1832 magazine article, "Lady Mary Shepherd's Metaphysics." This chapter will focus on Shepherd's mathematical analogies in order to lay out the broad outlines of her theories of causation and induction and her argument for our knowledge of the existence of an external world.

2. SHEPHERD'S CAUSAL THEORY

In *An Essay upon the Relation of Cause and Effect*, Shepherd seeks to rebut Hume's contentions, first, that necessary connections between causes and effects are properly understood in terms of constant conjunctions of precedent and subsequent events and causal inferences from one to the other, and, second, that causal inferences themselves cannot be rationally justified. She sees these doctrines as leading "directly to a scepticism of an atheistical tendency" (Shepherd 1824, 4).⁴ Shepherd argues, in contrast, that causal principles can be known by reason to be necessary truths. Her first step is to argue that we can know through reason alone that nothing can come to exist without a cause other than itself—or, as she puts it, that "*there is no object which begins to exist, but must owe its existence to some cause*" (Shepherd 1824, 36).⁵ Call this the Causal Principle, or CP. Shepherd considers the CP to be the "key to every difficulty that concerns the sources of our belief or knowledge" (Shepherd 1827, 138), and she uses it in her next step, which is to argue that like causes *necessarily* have like effects (call this the Causal Likeness Principle, or CLP).

Shepherd maintains that everyone knows the CP implicitly by what she calls "latent reasoning," but that it can also be explicitly defended with a *reductio* argument.⁶ This runs as follows: First, assume that some object *can* come into existence without a cause; suppose it "START[S] FORTH into existence, and make[s] the first breach on the wide nonentity around" (Shepherd 1824, 35). This "starting forth," or coming into existence, is an action, and Shepherd treats an action as a *quality* of an object. However, no object can have a quality without existing. Therefore, for an object to have the quality of coming into existence, it must already exist; yet by hypothesis, it does not. Given this contradiction, Shepherd writes that "we must conclude *that there is no object which begins to exist, but must owe its existence to some cause*" (Shepherd 1824, 36; see also 1827, 290).⁷ Sometimes, instead of objects, she refers to *differences* or *qualities* requiring causes for their existence (Shepherd 1824, 58–59).⁸ Since, as we will see, Shepherd defines objects as bundles of qualities, to cause a new object is also to cause at least one new quality: "*Cause producing Effect*, therefore, under the strict