“THEIR VOICE IS MUSIC TO MY EAR”: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE WORK OF JOHN THELWALL

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES..iv

ABSTRACT v

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED..vi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vii

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 2 "THE ARDOUR OF A LOVER": WOMEN, THELWALL AND DEBATING SOCIETY CULTURE 30

2.1 "MIXED AUDIENCES": THELWALL'S DEBATING SOCIETY APPRENTICESHIP....................................32

2.2 DEFENDING "DELUDED DAUGHTERS OF DESPAIR": THE "PREFATORY ESSAY" TO "THE SEDUCER"..38

2.3 "WINNING ELOQUENCE": THE MAIDEN IN *A SPEECH IN RHYME* 50

2.4 "THE MOVING ELOQUENCE OF WOE": ROMAN MATRONS AND SABINE WOMEN 58

CHAPTER 3 VINDICATING, RECTIFYING AND REVIVIFYING WOLLSTONECRAFT IN *THE DAUGHTER OF ADOPTION* 67

3.1 LONDON TO LLYSWEN: THE REAL AND IMAGINED MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT 69

3.2 "THE ORGAN OF THAT POWER": OVERCOMING CONFINES AND LIMITATIONS 85

CHAPTER 4 "TO SOOTHE A STRANGER'S WOE": RECOVERY AND THELWALL'S SOCIAL NETWORKS IN EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW (1804) 109

4.1 BEHIND THE SCREEN: THE STRANGER REBUFFED 112

4.2 ACHIEVING "VIRTUE'S WISH'D MILLENIUM": THE STRANGER REVIVED 123

4.3 RECIPROCATION AND RENEWAL: THE STRANGER RETURNS 135

CHAPTER 5 "SWEETNESS AND SCIENCE": EMPOWERING THE VOICE OF THE ACTRESS 154

5.1 HARMONIZING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PERFORMANCE: THE EXAMPLE OF SOPHIA GODDARD 156

5.2 "MY METAMORPHIST! PROTEUS PARAMOUNT": INTRODUCING HENRIETTA CECIL THELWALL 163

5.3 PROMOTING AGENCY AND POLITICAL PROTEST: THELWALL'S REVIEWS IN *THE CHAMPION* 184

CHAPTER 6 PRINT CULTURE, WOMEN'S WRITING AND EDUCATION IN THELWALL'S LATER WRITINGS 203

6.1 THE "ILLUMIN'D FRIEND": THELWALL REVIEWED AND REVIEWING 205

6.2 "DANDY WITLINGS" AND "INCIPIENT POETESS[ES]": MUSINGS ON THE *MUSALOGIA* 220

6.3 CULTIVATING THE HUMAN MIND: FEMALE EDUCATION 231
6.4 "SIGNS OF THE TIMES": THELWALL'S LATE LECTURES 238
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION 247
WORKS CITED 251

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Hogarth, James. *The Progress of a Harlot. As She Is Described in Six Prints, by the Ingenious Mr. Hogarth.* Printed for E. Rayner, 1732.......................... 49

Figure 2 Ashton, John. *Men, Maidens and Manners: A Hundred Years Ago*. Scribner & Welford, 1888.. 53

Figure 3 Godwin, William. *The Diary of William Godwin*, edited by Victoria Myers, David O'Shaughnessy, and Mark Philip, Oxford Digital Library, 2010, godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/nav/Diary.html... 71

Figure 4 Godwin, William. *The Diary of William Godwin*, edited by Victoria Myers, David O'Shaughnessy, and Mark Philip, Oxford Digital Library, 2010, godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/nav/Diary.html... 71

Figure 5 Gillray, James. *New Morality; or the Promis'd Installment of the High-Priest of the Theophilanthropes, with the Homage of Leviathan and His Suite*. Published by J. Wright, No. 169 Piccadilly, for the *Anti-Jacobin Magazine & Review*, 1798.. 74

Figure 6 Birkbeck, George. "Chemical Lectures." *The Glasgow Herald*, 20 Feb. 1804....... 131

Figure 7 Thelwall, John. "English Oratory." *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 Apr. 1804................. 147

Figure 8 Thelwall, John. "Elocution of the Stage, and Female Accomplishments." *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 5 Apr. 1804... 148

Figure 9 Highfill, Philip H., et al. *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800.* Vol. 6, Southern Illinois University Press, 1978. 12 vols.................... 159

Figure 10 Winston, James, and Iain Mackintosh. *The Theatric Tourist*. The Society for Theatre Research, 2008... 161

Figure 11 Gillray, James. "Copenhagen house." The British Museum, www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=140569001&objectId=1632693&partId=1.. 185

Figure 12 Thornbury, Walter. "Covent Garden Theatre." *Old and New London: Volume 3*. Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1878, pp. 227-237. *British History Online*, www.british-history.ac.uk/old-new-london/vol3/pp227-237.................... 186

ABSTRACT

"'Their Voice is Music to my Ear': The Role of Women in the Work of John Thelwall" contributes to the rapidly growing field of Thelwall studies by examining the mutual influence and representation of women throughout his career. While recent criticism has broadened our understanding of Thelwall beyond his political radicalism in the 1790s, and begun to compare him with a range of male contemporaries, little attention has been devoted to Thelwall's engagement with women writers, artists, thinkers and audiences. This dissertation traces animated exchanges from Thelwall's perspective and, when possible, outlines the reactions of his female interlocutors. Its six chapters cover a variety of women and a wide range of Thelwall's work, from his apprenticeship in debating societies in the 1780s, his mid-career responses to Wollstonecraftian feminism and his participation in networks of sociability and sympathy, to his role as mentor and critic of actresses and women writers in the eighteen-teens and -twenties.

This dissertation demonstrates that women – wives and daughters, writers and speakers, lovers and creators, established and obscure – were fundamental to Thelwall's polymathic projects. Using primarily an archival and historical approach, and making extensive use of newly discovered texts, it emphasizes the importance of Thelwall's political, elocutionary and literary theory in its intent to encourage the agency of women. It also addresses and assesses the media (debating societies, the Jacobin novel, elocutionary lecturing, theatre reviews and print culture) with which Thelwall was involved, within their social and cultural contexts. In so doing, it draws on and contributes to recent critical fields of Romantic voice and performance (Esterhammer), sociability (Russell and Tuite), conversability (Mee) and interaction (Wolfson). While Thelwall largely maneuvers within established frameworks of gender, he sometimes steps outside boundaries and challenges his audience through inquiry and subversion. Thus, while he often appropriates the voice of women, his political, literary and elocutionary endeavours avoid misogynistic usurpation in favour of empathetic ventriloquism, whereby the liberated individual is ultimately empowered to speak effectively for herself.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

LFJ John Thelwall, *A Letter to Francis Jeffray, Esq. . . . on Certain Calumnies and Misrepresentations in the Edinburgh Review*. Edinburgh: Printed for the author, by J. Turnbull, 1804.

PEJ John Thelwall, *The Politics of English Jacobinism: Writings of John Thelwall*, edited by Gregory Claeys, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.

SPP John Thelwall, *Selected Poetry and Poetics*, edited by Judith Thompson. Palgrave McMillan, 2015.

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In *Swann's Way*, Proust writes of "that accuracy of detail which it is easier, often, to obtain when we are studying the lives of people who have been dead for centuries then when we are trying to chronicle those of our own most intimate friends." The past decade or so has been spent mining and mulling over the minutiae of John Thelwall's life and work. Luckily, I have had intimate friends to maintain and sustain me over the course of this exhilarating endeavour.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

> Had your Majesty been treated with the respect due to your exalted rank, our hearts would have throbbed with ardent interest in your cause, and with love to your person; and, leaving to our husbands and sons all public expression of feeling we should have confined ours to our domestic circles: but now, Madam, the indignation we feel for the cruel treatment of your Majesty bursts every barrier between us, and we hasten to express at your feet the warm, the almost overwhelming interest with which we are inspired. . . .
>
> – Henrietta Cecil Thelwall
> (*The Champion* 1821 534)

Measured yet rife with the language of sensibility, this speech delivered by the wife of the radical orator and elocutionist John Thelwall is sure to have imprinted itself on its auditors. After returning to Britain to reclaim her regal rights, Caroline, the wife of the Prince of Wales, was sensationally put on trial for adultery. Her treatment during these proceedings was the cause célèbre of 1820. Such a perceived injustice stimulated varied social response. In effect, the Queen Caroline Affair generated populist statements that temporarily, at least, galvanized a nation, "encourag[ing] women, radical reformers and the Whig opposition to unite beneath the banner of the queen, whatever their wider intentions" (Brand 3). Citizens representing many classes composed and presented ardent defenses of the queen. But Mrs. Thelwall, an actress trained by her husband before her marriage in 1817, was more than adequately prepared for eloquent delivery under the intense pressure of having to present directly to Caroline. By styling the formerly exiled queen as a figure of injured femininity, Mrs. Thelwall was able to "burst" social boundaries and sympathetically unite a part of the populace. As Tim Fulford contends,

both the moment and the movement were unique, as such a bold statement, couched in conventional decorum, was "an extraordinary sign of women making common cause across political and class divisions" (163). By most accounts in the liberal-minded publications of the day, Mrs. Thelwall's address was well received.

As editor of *The Champion* newspaper, which marked his own triumphant return to the political scene in 1819, Cecil's husband John commented that "[t]he impressive reading of this simple and unostentatious expression of matronly sympathy drew tears from the eyes not only of the ladies themselves and the few spectators of the scene, but from her majesty herself. It was the artless language of the feminine heart speaking consolation to afflicted woman, and her majesty evidently felt in it the implication of her sex's cause in her own" (*The Champion* 1821 535). Thelwall's characterization of both his wife's style of delivery, and its emotional effect upon the audience, highlights the power and influence of public elocution. For Thelwall, it can inspire the individual while also impelling political and social change. His overview likewise expresses one of the most paradoxical elements of effective oratory, that public speaking "is most sincere and natural when it is most sentimental and performative" (Thompson, "Romantic Oratory" 533). Far from being an extempore effort, Mrs. Thelwall's address was a public act carefully designed, meticulously rehearsed and professionally executed. As Frederick Bogel has claimed about sentimental performance, "[o]n the one hand, then, there is a belief in unfeignable passions, spontaneous utterance, and a volitional and expressive subject. . .. [o]n the other, there is the fact of inescapable rhetoricity, constitutive artifice, and the consequent possibility of the feigned, the formulaic, the conventional, and the mechanical" (162). In Mrs. Thelwall's case, all of these calculations were embedded in the performance proper, which was successful because it was received as unembellished and authentic. Both the public recitation of this emotionally charged

political address, and Thelwall's reaction to it in print, underscore the subject of this thesis: the role of women in his work, as subjects, audiences and agents of public speaking, in whose performative acts established tropes and conventions are manipulated to foster unrestricted communication within a united populace. As a female performer, Mrs. Thelwall is engaging in a mode that "threatened the prevailing cultural definition of womanhood as 'private' - that is, as home-bound, self-effacing, dutiful, and dependent - fundamentally challenging, moreover, the pervasive perception of such qualities as inherent" (Keetley 187).

The image of Cecil Thelwall launched from the safety of her "domestic circle[]" (*The Champion* 1821 534) to come to Caroline's defense is emblematic of the purpose behind her husband's extensive oeuvre of political, critical and creative work, written and spoken. Her public statement is indeed indicative of Thelwall's belief that the body is a "living instrument; – all voice – / All harmony; each keen-perceptive nerve / And trembling fibre a responsive string," whose organs, if properly in tune, can allow each individual, regardless of class or station, to be a pivotal and productive member of society in "[w]hispering sweet unisons" (*SPP* 180:91-94). Essentially, Thelwall's position as political pundit, elocutionary mentor and loving husband expresses his coalescing vision of the "self [as] a work of aesthetic synthesis" (McCann, "Romantic Self-Fashioning" 221). For him, the reform of the body politic is grounded in the amendment of its individual members by removing impediments, engaging intellects and empowering the marginalized. Thus, Cecil Thelwall's moving presentation to Queen Caroline stands on a continuum that covers her husband's entire career, from the confident and persuasive maiden in *A Speech in Rhyme* (1788) to the elegiac figure of Socrates in the late "Visions of Philosophy" (1828). Like Socrates, Cecil Thelwall is meant to be the epicenter of passionate protest and steady reform,

> pour[ing] forth sublime the eloquence of soul
>
> That sets at naught the transient vanities,
>
> The envy, & malice & the frauds,
>
> The tyrannies & partial distributions,
>
> And disappointments of this demy-life. (*SPP* 173:267-271)

Socrates was an emblem of Thelwall's political prerogative in the 1790s. In *The Rights of Nature* (1796), he writes that "in the midst of. . . persecution and proscriptions, Socrates was found, as usual, in the places of public resort. . . uttering seditious allegories and condemning the desolating tyranny of the Oligarchy" (23). The "sort of Socratic spirit" that arises from social communion and communication is extended to and includes women (24). Cecil herself, in "Pandolia's Description of Her Four Lovers," is portrayed as a "dimpled Socrates," capable of effectively managing a band of misguided paramours with her rhetoric (*SPP* 204:110). Similarly, but more reticently, during her address to Queen Caroline, Cecil Thelwall achieves the base harmony required within the elocutionary body, between what Thelwall called the primary and secondary organs, to voice effective and expressive sound. The overall purpose of Thelwall's work is to put the liberated speaker, irrespective of gender or social status, at the rostrum, to instigate and enact change. Interestingly, for Thelwall, the attainment of these particular skills also means the ability to inculcate them in others since, as Judith Thompson suggests, "while the student begins as an instrument or mere player, the ultimate aim is to prepare the student/reader to command at least his/her own organs, and at best, the organs of the body politic" (*John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle* 178). Thus, the democratic impetus of his system is ultimately based on the recognition of voice in individuals and the expansion of voice to all.

The part played by Thelwall in preparations for the performance of his wife may be seen as a form of ventriloquism. As a literary term, ventriloquism is closely associated with Coleridge, who brought it into common use as such, and it has become a term of some critical cachet. In relation to gender, however, its connotations have largely been negative, being used as a metaphor that sets up a binary between the ventriloquist, often considered male, and the puppet, a passive feminized figure devoid of agency. However, as John Hodgson suggests, the term cannot be limited by a contemporary understanding of the dichotomy between ventriloquist and dummy ("An Other Voice"). Rather, critics of ventriloquism in the Romantic era must take into account matters of context, recognizing that the term was used in many different ways. For example, Coleridge employed it as an "ideal" and "a contemporary figure for vatic possession" ("An Other Voice"). It is in this vein that the term appears in his first use of it, in a letter to Thelwall in which, after lightly chiding his atheism, Coleridge asks if Thelwall has "been able to conjure up religious Faith in [his] Heart, and whether if only as a Ventriloquist unconscious of his own agency [he] has in any mood or moment thrown the voice of [his] human wishes into the space without [him], & listened to it as to a Reality" (*Collected Letters* 656).

However, Thelwall's understanding of ventriloquism is not defined only by his interaction with Coleridge. In fact, it was John Gough, a seminal figure in Thelwall's development as elocutionary theorist, whose understanding of the term influenced Thelwall's thinking on voice. In *A Letter to Henry Cline*, Thelwall acknowledges his debt to "Mr. Gough," whom he considers "an accurate philosopher and philanthropist… whose papers… have sufficiently evinced the profundity of his researches into the interesting phaenomena [sic] of human voice" (30). One of the key tracts by Gough that influenced Thelwall at this time directly addresses the art and act of ventriloquism. "An Investigation of the Method Whereby Men Judge,

By the Ear, of the Position of Sonorous Bodies Relative to their Own Persons" distinguishes the tolling of a bell from the ventriloquist's performance; in the former case, "the echo reaches the ear, while the original sound is intercepted by *accident* in the case of the bells, but by *art* in the case of the ventriloquist" (647). Gough's understanding of ventriloquism combines art and science. Scientifically, it is concerned with "the circumstances that take place in the act of speaking, because the skill of the ventriloquist seems to consist in particular management of them" (649). However, Gough likewise realized that "[i]t is the business of the ventriloquist to amuse his admirers with tricks resembling the foregone delusions; and it will be readily granted, that he has a subtle sense, highly corrected by experience, to manage, on which account the judgment must be cheated as well as the ear" (650).[1]

After Gough attended one of Thelwall's lectures in Kendal "On the Education and Management of the Organs of Voice," the two began an epistolary exchange that would have a long-lasting impact on Thelwall's elocutionary endeavor (*A Letter to Henry Cline* 31-44). Common threads between Gough and Thelwall include their reliance on the "elements of physical science" to unravel "the most hidden mysteries of the Science of Human Speech" (*A Letter to Henry Cline* 2-3) and their desire to explicate "the physical principles" of their theories (*A Letter to Henry Cline* 5). In his "Introductory Essay on the Study of English Rhythmus," Thelwall develops a complementary theory of sounds that owes a debt to Gough's scientific treatise (*Selections for the Illustrations* xxviii). Thelwall was especially interested in the projection of sound; particularly the "nature, force, and modification of the impulse," "the vibratory power, texture, or construction of the immediate substance to which that impulse is

---

[1] The language of trickery and cheating suggests negative moral connotations that attach to the artistic part of ventriloquism.

given" and, finally, "the sympathetic media, whose secondary vibrations co-operate with, and assist in the diffusion or promulgation of the primary vibrations" (xxiii). In short, Thelwall was concerned about how each level of voice operated – from inception to action to reception. Thelwall's theory, likewise, rested on a holistic understanding of the body whereby "what is connected in the mind, must be connected with equal intimacy by the voice; and what, in the mind, is transposed, interrupted or suspended, must be separated, interrupted, or suspended, in the mode of articulation" (xvi). In detailing how Thelwall's medical apprenticeship influenced his writing in the 1790s, James Allard points out the "insistent body consciousness . . . of Thelwall's reformist efforts and concerns" (*Romanticism, Medicine, and the Poet's Body* 65). Since Thelwall himself claimed that "the individual body and the social body do exactly agree" (*The Tribune* 114), the mind-body connection is crucial to unlocking Thelwall's elocutionary theory and also serves as an excellent means by which to begin exploring his feminism.

At times, Thelwall appropriates the female voice. In this, he is engaging in what Madeleine Kahn calls "narrative transvestism," where, as a male writer, he "gain[s] access to a culturally defined female voice and sensibility, but runs no risk of being trapped in the devalued female realm" (11). This form of appropriation will be examined in Chapter 2 (The Maiden in *A Speech in Rhyme*), Chapter 3 (Seraphina in *The Daughter of Adoption*) and Chapter 5 (the speaker in "An Occasional Address, Spoken by the late Miss Goddard" and Pandolia from "Pandolia's Description of Her Four Lovers"). James Carson has argued that this appropriation can be considered a sort of "cross-dressing," which accentuates the subversive potential fundamental to the act of writing like a woman (95-97). However, while he often appropriates the female voice in his writing, Thelwall's primary goal is encouragement rather than the "conquest of the feminine by means of appropriation of the female voice" that Gaura Narayan

discusses in her examination of real and imagined women in the era (82). Narayan distinguishes conquest from the aims of authors who take part in "a larger cultural program of gender revaluation initiated by Wollstonecraft" (82). Though she does not deal with him, Thelwall is one of those authors deeply engaged with Wollstonecraft's ideas and ideals, as I shall discuss further in Chapter 3, which deals with his most feminist text, *The Daughter of Adoption*. Looking ahead to that discussion, I contend that a better term than appropriation to understand Thelwall's use of the female voice is "adoption"—a term that captures both the encouragement and, more importantly, the mutual respect, sympathy and "reciprocal affection" (*The Daughter of Adoption* 33) between men and women with which that term is defined in Thelwall's novel. In Thelwall's relations with women it is "the education of the voice" that is paramount (*Introductory Discourse* 26). Central to his theory is "IMITATIVE PATHOS," which Thelwall defines as "[t]he flow and fluctuation of the voice thro different transitions of sentiment and emotion" before making the idealistic claim that "Pathetic modulation [is] not a theatrical Invention, but a dictate of nature and sincerity" (28).

In this way, Thelwall's adoption of the female voice is closer to what Patricia Howell Michaelson classifies as "personation" where "the reader who embodies the qualities implied in a text *becomes* that character," in the process "link[ing] reading, speech, and ethos" (186). Michaelson explains that "the reader uses strength from his [or her] own 'self' to enliven the author's text, on the one hand, or on the other, that the reader 'becomes' the author as he [or she] speaks the words of the text" (186). In the process, through "internaliz[ing]" a character's utterances, the reader "may stretch the limits of conventional politeness" (206). In essence, as I will repeatedly argue, Thelwall attempts to level the playing field by either making voice sexless, or favoring the capacity of women in certain modes of expression. Michaelson states that the

nineteenth-century reader "takes on the ethos embedded in the text as surely as the schoolboy takes on Cicero as he performs an oration" (212). In the case of Thelwall's pedagogy, however, the speaker, male or female, would be encouraged to recite Cicero. In *Plan and Objects* (1813)**,** Thelwall outlines the conditions for female pupils who attended his Institution for the Cure of Impediments. These women, according to the plan (and promotion), were to be "treated, in every respect, with maternal care and attention, and assisted in every attainment and accomplishment adapted to their sex and circumstance" (6-7). This statement suggests that Thelwall's pedagogical program was responsive to women's individual needs, even as, to ensure swift uptake of his elocutionary tenets, it simultaneously sought to enrich their educational development. Therefore, the Institution offered lessons in "the classical and scientific departments" to enact Thelwall's explicit mandate "[t]o promote still further the studies and improvement of those pupils who may have advanced beyond the proper age for female instruction" (7). It is clear that Thelwall's pupils, the women he addressed, along with the female characters he created, were intended to be knowledgeable and enlightened individuals.

The curriculum of Thelwall's Institution, and the elocutionary theory that underpins it, support and exemplify Alexander Dick and Angela Esterhammer's view of Romantic culture as performative. Explaining the multifaceted nature of the Romantic performative, they assert that "it grants efficacy to verbal utterances … [and] it is conscious of (if not obsessed with) various forms of social and political representation" (6). In reading Romanticism according to this model, the critic must adopt an interpretive framework that attends more closely to physical aspects of the text as performance, such as the voice and body, rather than using the methodology premised on print culture and the imagination that is traditionally applied to works of this time period. Thompson shows how such a performative paradigm, or mode of

"elocutionary close reading," might apply to Thelwall's elocutionary aesthetic in "Re-sounding Romanticism" (her essay for *Spheres of Action* 25-44) as well as her introduction to *Selected Poetry and Poetics* (15-17). Thelwall's "politically informed *ars rhetorica*" ("Re-sounding Romanticism" 26) epitomizes "the fifth element of classical rhetoric, *actio* or *pronunciatio*, the more practical and physical Demosthenean art of delivery or elocution (including pronunciation, gesture, tone, and other performative elements of language) as distinct from the more elegant, Ciceronian art of rhetorical figures and arrangement, which translated more easily to print" (Thompson, "Romantic Oratory" 530). It is important then to be mindful of the distinguishing features of Thelwall's modus operandi, whereby he emphasizes the body in action as the primary tool for conveying meaning rather than textual strategies used to embellish performances. In this way, Thelwall acknowledges that the speaker's experiences and beliefs also uniquely stamp each performance such that "on and off the stage," these acts are "constitutive of identity" (Dick and Esterhammer 6) and cannot be replicated by another. This distinction is crucial and is highlighted in Chapters 2, 4 and 5 where Thelwall's understanding of poetry as performative is more closely analyzed and linked to particular contexts and speakers, his elocutionary theory and his political agenda. It is important to note that Thelwall conceived of these three dynamic elements as being intertwined in purpose.

Another trend in Thelwall criticism since the publication of Scrivener's seminal *Seditious Allegories* has been to emphasize the allegorical element in Thelwall's writings. This approach, while both valid and valuable, has led some into acts of allegoresis, whereby Thelwall's own biography and commanding character take precedence and, in the process, elements of his theory are somewhat obscured. I would like to broaden the discussion, however, by contending that the primary figure of speech representative of Thelwall's entire oeuvre is not allegory but rather

personification or *prosopopeia*. To build upon Thompson's overarching argument in *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle* (2012), I suggest that Thelwall is once again engaging in dialogue with members of Wordsworth's circle, this time over the use (and misuse) of *prosopopeia* in poetry. In his advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Wordsworth expresses a distaste for "examples of bad rhetoric and worse poetry in which 'abstract ideas' … are simply capitalized and thus given a pseudo-agency or life of their own" (Kneale 51). This, in fact, leads to Wordsworth's observation (a fundamental part of his "physiological aesthetic" according to Paul Youngquist [152]), that he prefers "to keep [the] Reader in the company of flesh and blood" (*Lyrical Ballads* 177) over the representation of generic personifications. Coleridge outlines a similar aversion in his preference for the symbolic over the allegorical. In *The Statesman's Manual* (1816), Coleridge derogatorily refers to allegory as "a translation of abstract notions into a picture language which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses" (30).

For Thelwall, however, allegory is not an abstract but an embodied language; and his objective, through engagement with *prosopopeia* in performance, is not to reject but to correct its use, through careful revaluation. Instead of treating personification and allegory as conscious but inauthentic constructs, Thelwall endeavors to use *prosopopeia* in a rhetorical manner that reemphasizes the word's root meaning of masking and disguise. According to Jeremy Tambling, there is an important distinction to be made between allegory and personification. In his survey of the literary and theoretical use of the two figures of speech, Tambling argues that they work "in opposite modes" since "allegory stresses that the surface meaning is not the ultimate quarry of interpretation" while "personification emphasizes the face which appears, which is, by definition, the surface meaning" (153-154). In this respect, Thelwall's theory in practice, fully on display in his writings on and interactions with women, tends to favor the latter since

"[p]ersonification works by making identifications, and claims implicitly, by its existence, that it can conceptualize, or visualize, or realize, the 'other' in a particular form" (154-155). However, Thelwall realizes the 'other' in voice as much as (or more than) he does in face. In doing so, he also subsumes personification to the body proper, as is consistent with the ethos of sympathy and language of sensibility that he adopts.

In order to achieve his goal of enabling political and social reform, Thelwall recognized the necessity of cultivating a sympathy capable of countering corruption and amending social inequality. To return to Cecil Thelwall's address, we can see how it sympathetically it is constructed, carefully composed of moments of emotional intensity and staged spectacle, and using a lexicon that emphasizes physiological response. Her performance contains all of the elements of Thelwall's elocutionary theory, developed over the course of his early public career, practiced by him during his political heyday in the 1790s and then tested and perfected with his patients and students throughout the first three decades of the nineteenth century. While the original purpose of a sentimental language of the heart was to maintain existing societal bonds and encourage compassion, as advocated by Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry* (1757), radicals of the 1790s used the same codes and conventions in a subversive manner to fight inequality.[2] Mary Fairclough suggests that "Thelwall's conception of sympathetic communication provides a unique case, because he finds a means of claiming sympathy as a positive agent of political reform" (62). Throughout his career, Thelwall fine-tuned the language of sensibility as a rhetorical tool. As early as his first published work, the two-volume *Poems on Various Subjects* (1787), Thelwall demonstrated familiarity with its lexicon. Among various

[2] In her introduction to *The Peripatetic* (29-32), Thompson examines the influence of Smith's understandings of sympathy on Thelwall's novel.

political ends for which he used this mode was to convince his female audience that they had agency and the ability to persuade others to progressive ends. Thelwall's application of a more "radical sensibility" to "combat the hegemony of conservative sensibility" (Jones 10) is initiated in his juvenile efforts, fully on display in his work from the 1790s and then filtered and re-appropriated in his elocutionary endeavors.

Christopher Nagle, in *Sexuality and the Culture of Sensibility in the British Romantic Era*, argues that sensibility should be understood as a primary part of "the discursive infrastructure of Romanticism itself" (4). Therefore, rather than be limited to a specific context, genre or agenda, the language of sensibility should be considered in terms of its ubiquity in writing between 1780 and 1830. In her introduction to *The Peripatetic* (1793), Thompson argues that "one of the principal objects of Thelwall's satire – sentiment – is also one of its principal instruments" (28). Critics have frequently noted this delicate balancing act, crystallized in generic hybridity of *The Peripatetic*'s subtitle "politico-sentimental," in work spanning Thelwall's entire career. For Thelwall, political radicalism and reform of the body politic were inseparable from sustained sympathy and communion amongst the populace. Therefore, it is unsurprising that he would return to familiar territory through his various professional and public guises because, as Susan Manning points out, "the literature of sensibility disturbed its reader's quiescent state with seductive demands for emotional engagement" (91). In making such demands, Thelwall's corpus challenges readers, as rhetorical pleas for affection are manipulated to attain ends that disrupt and question as much as they seek sympathetic union. Recent criticism by McCann (*Cultural Politics in the 1790s*), Fairclough (*The Romantic Crowd*), Thompson (*John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle*) and Solomonescu (*John Thelwall and the Materialist Imagination*) also emphasizes Thewall's employment of the mode of sensibility as a rhetorical

strategy he often returns to, but this dissertation will be the first to address its impact as a political tool in promoting the cause of women.

The field of Thelwall studies has grown remarkably in the last decade. Thelwall's influence on the long eighteenth century has been acknowledged in monographs and collections that have broadened our understanding of Thelwall by exploring aspects of his work that accentuate but also extend beyond his political radicalism in the 1790s. This critical impetus follows and confirms Thomas Carlyle's maxim that "great men are too often unknown, or what is worse, misknown" (13). By examining Thelwall's entire public career, from his experiences in London debating societies during the 1780s to his later elocutionary performances and writings from the 1820s, this thesis addresses many of the biographical lacunae still present in Thelwall studies. It also counters the erroneous assumption that Thelwall's "story," following his treason trial, was one of proscriptive "silencing" (E.P. Thompson, "Hunting the Jacobin Fox" 95). Thelwall's narrative is better understood as a constant and successful effort to find means and methods of overcoming silence. This thesis also contributes to the growth and maintenance of an established Thelwall canon by exploring works that span his entire career, many of which have received virtually no critical attention. In the process it takes part in the "[r]eimagining [of] the British literary landscape [that] means repopulating it with the lives and works that have long been absent from conventional accounts . . . what might be called *shades* of Romanticism, shades in the double sense of both 'shadows' and 'shadings' or hues" (Behrendt 29). Thelwall is, or rather *was,* one of these shades, but, as result of the publication of full length monographs, edited collections, and chapters on his work (by Scrivener, Thompson, Solomonescu and Poole among others), much light has been shed on his importance as a polymath who contributed to a variety of fields and genres beyond his political lectures. In this way, Thelwall studies is finally realizing

the implications of the critical claim, made by Denyse Rockey forty years ago, that Thelwall had "a mind conversant with rhetoric, poetry, medicine, drama, and linguistics, and . . . a practical as well as theoretical grasp of these subjects. However, this was far from the limit of his interests, for he was also an artist, journalist, and political reformer" with "[e]locution . . . being the draw-string gathering together the products of his fertile imagination and eventful life" (157). This dissertation has benefitted, as well, from the publication of Thelwall's critical and creative writings, including significant excerpts from his elocutionary program (in Lamb and Wagner's *Selected Political Writings of John Thelwall*), his Jacobin feminist novel *The Daughter of Adoption* (edited by Solomonescu, Scrivener and Thompson) and the first anthology of Thelwall's *Selected Poetry and Poetics* (Thompson). I have added significantly to the archival work by finding Thelwall "in the interstices of other lives and archives, in the worlds of aspiration he traversed and the intellectual networks he connected through his lecture tours, and in the print traces of oral performances whose ephemeral multiplicity militates against any authoritative narrative" (Thompson, "John Thelwall: A Counterfactual Ghost Story" 204). This includes excavating and locating work by or about Thelwall in many heretofore unnoticed periodicals.

But while increasing contributions to Thelwall Studies and work on radical sensibility are important, the chief purpose of this dissertation is to offer the first sustained analysis of the different facets of what Steve Poole has referred to as the "unresolved question of Thelwall's gender politics" ("The Character and Reputation" 8). In particular, it aims to rebut Anna Clark's assertion that Thelwall "expressed hostility that women could be included in public opinion" (119). This assessment is based on very little knowledge of Thelwall, taking certain texts and talks out of context. Indeed, if one surveys his entire career and corpus, it becomes clear that one

demographic that remained consistent in the makeup of his audience was women. He also paid close attention to women writers and speakers. While criticism has begun to compare Thelwall's political, social and poetical positions with those of male contemporaries such as Burke, Godwin, Paine, Wordsworth and Coleridge, little attention has been devoted to Thelwall's engagement with women writers, artists and thinkers such as Burney, Barbauld, More, Siddons, Robinson, Wollstonecraft, Hays, Fenwick, Hemans, Mitford, and Landon. In this list, the key figure who influenced Thelwall's interest in fostering the female voice for social and political purposes was Wollstonecraft. His public sympathy with her political credo is evident throughout his career, but especially in his novel *The Daughter of Adoption*, which I discuss in Chapter 3. In addition, however, this thesis highlights many of the forgotten and nameless women with whom Thelwall was connected. These "shades" (in Behrendt's sense) – the women in attendance at debating societies, the wives and daughters of members of the provincial elite that he stayed with during his elocutionary tours, the countless authors and actresses whose work and performances he reviewed throughout his career and, of course, his two wives – first Susan and then Cecil – are of paramount importance to expanding our understanding not only of Thelwall but also of the role and place of women in the long eighteenth century. Using primarily an archival and historical approach, and making extensive use of newly discovered texts, I will emphasize the importance of Thelwall's political, elocutionary and literary theory in its intent to encourage the agency of women.

While I draw heavily upon Thelwall's theory, I also adopt the methodology that David Worrall calls "reconstructive anthropology" (*Theatric Revolution* 17). That is, I rigorously address and assess the media (debating societies, the Jacobin novel, elocutionary lecturing, theatre reviews and print culture) with which Thelwall was involved within their social and

cultural contexts. In the process, I attempt to locate Thelwall within networks of sociability (Russell and Tuite), conversability (Mee) and Romantic interaction (Wolfson). In particular, I have essayed to examine "sites which are more inclusive of female modes of sociability, and to account for forms of female participation in the public sphere more generally, as a part of a larger investigation of gender and Romantic-period sociability" (Russell and Tuite 5). It is important to note that in Thelwall's conception the delivery and performance of speech is a simultaneous "art" and "act" in which speaker, audience and author interact or "correspond" (Thompson, *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle* 93). Thelwall believed that ideas must be cultivated and then articulated in a social context that allows all members of society to participate in that development, in direct contrast to the Godwinian model of audience which conceives of constructive communication as something that develops only for fit but few members of society. When Thelwall emphatically suggests that "*a correct and impressive elocution is universally attainable*" (*Vestibule of Eloquence* 4), he subtly mirrors Wollstonecraft's assertion that since women have souls, they also must have the same rational powers of men and, therefore, the same potential to forward their causes (*A Vindication* 145-152). Like Wollstonecraft's concept of virtue, Thelwall's voice transcends the constraints of masculinity and femininity.

The egalitarian impetus of Thelwall's ideas is clarified in a series of mutual interactions or correspondences between the sexes, occurring within a myriad of institutional spaces such as debating societies, lecture halls, the homes of reformers, the theatre, and the periodical press. In her examination of the Beaufort Buildings where Thelwall delivered many of his most potent political speeches, Thompson suggests that Thelwall created a "forum space [that] would bring together people, in order to exploit the progressive, reforming, educational potential of their

intertextual, interactive crossing and conjunctions" ("From Forum to Repository" 181). This dissertation explores the particular role of women within these venues and institutions in the hope of tracing the workings of dynamic, collaborative communities. While Thelwall has never been examined in a vacuum as an exemplar of the myth of the solitary Romantic genius, he has for too long been relegated to the sidelines as a minor figure. One objective of this thesis is to put Thelwall front and center while surrounding him with a vibrant cast of female *dramatis personae*. Thelwall himself would write that "it is in 'mixed and crowded audiences' that the real lover of his species must expect to inspire that generous sympathy – that social ardour, without which a nation is but a populous wilderness" (*PEJ* 95). My thesis examines a series of instances, both public and private, where Thelwall educated, entertained and engaged with women. Thelwall's oeuvre is predicated on discourse and conversation, or what he calls "comparing intellects," that goes both ways (quoted in *The Life of Thelwall* 51). Jon Mee outlines that during the Romantic era "the desire for reciprocal dialogue" was a key channel for the dissemination of culture (*Conversable Worlds* 32) This dissertation is an attempt to trace animated exchanges from Thelwall's perspective and, when possible, to outline the reactions of his female interlocutors. The conversation is not always inspired or instigated by Thelwall. In many instances, Thelwall's understanding is shaped by his response to the groundbreaking ideas and ideals of pioneering women writers and thinkers.

Thelwall's egalitarian message was promoted and practiced in a wide variety of milieux and media. While Thelwall's representation of women is grounded in the traditional private sphere – the home – women are not limited to this space in his thinking. For one thing, his concept of domesticity is influenced strongly by Roman republican ideals and the figure of the strong, loyal, patriotic matron, as discussed in Chapter 2 below. But more than this, as each of

the chapters in this thesis demonstrates, Thelwall's female audience is both very public and very publicized. According to Behrendt, during the Romantic era, "instead of separate spheres there were in fact both overlapping and competing (or alternative spheres) . . . a good deal of the discursive ground was actually defined by the no-person's land that lay within the intersections and interstices among these variously configured spheres" (8). This thesis will explore many of these junctions– those charged places and overlapping milieux where both male and females "express[ed] many shared aspirations, convictions, anxieties, and conflicts" (Lau 2). From the outset of his public career, the lure of the female coterie enticed Thelwall into fostering intellectual interactions. One of his central aspirations was to secure "an eccentric little knot, attracted by congenial taste, and bound together by ties of friendship" (*The Peripatetic* 19). The role and position of women within this assemblage was in Thelwall's own estimation indispensable as they were essential contributors to his ideal of "sweet converse" with "congenial souls" that are "link'd" by "kindred sympathies" (*SPP* 141:88-90). Additionally, Thelwall's attention to the female voice in public performance was fundamental to his oeuvre. Therefore, this thesis will explore an extensive corpus thus far largely overlooked by critics, by closely examining individual exchanges, establishing fresh correlations and uncovering new relationships. I will expand upon the claim made by Thompson that "[i]n Thelwall's work women appear as objects of his pedagogy and agents of their own transformation, as matrons and mentors, lovers and daughters of adoption, as equal partners, and 'second selves' to whom he passes the torch of liberty" ("Poets and Poesy I Sing" 13)

Apart from establishing and exploring Thelwall's regular interactions with women, I will examine his position on the "woman question" of his time by observing the remarkably consistent tone and stance of respect that he adopted in his addresses to the opposite sex. Under

the cover of unfailing politeness and courtesy, Thelwall was able to maintain a gentle and genteel persona yet also habitually to vary how he catered and delivered his egalitarian ideas to his "mixed and crowded audiences" (*PEJ* 95). In an extended list of personae under the umbrella of "Thelwallian diversity," Nicholas Roe includes "Thelwall the Gallant" ("John Thelwall and the West Country"). This figure is first introduced in Thelwall's juvenilia and remains a perpetual presence throughout his career. Thelwall was aware of his self-positioning as gallant, and of the contradictions embedded in assuming this public guise. Indeed, the term makes an appearance in his 1804 satirical piece, "Pegasus O'Erladen; or the Orator Prostrate: A True Tale." The poem is a fine example of Thelwallian self-mockery but simultaneously provides self-reflection that captures his "many halves" – suggesting the difficulty of positioning him within one consistent and overarching critical framework:

> Half Orator he – if the world would but know it;
> And, had he the wit for't, full half way a Poet;
> Half Critic also; – Hold! – the measure is full!
> How many halves more? . . .
>
> Half student, half gallant, half busy, half idle;
> Half wanting the *spur*, and half wanting a *bridle*;
> Half giv'n to the Devil; half rever'd as the chosen; –
> In short – of his *halves* I could count up a *dozen*. (*SPP* 63:15-24)

Commenting directly on his polymath ambitions while also criticizing the confusion that could emerge from assuming so many roles, Thelwall positions himself as gallant but within a mobile context. The role is one that Thelwall would regularly tinker with and exploit, to suit particular purposes at particular points in time. Therefore, through the gallant character, Thelwall can turn

"the dominant discourse . . . inside-out through satire and appropriation" and manipulate "the spaces of discourse . . . [which] come ready-coded with a series of prohibitions" by "render[ing] strange" so that "new formations . . . appropriate [to] those spaces (and those discourses)" can emerge (Green 58).

Founded as it is in the role of the gallant, and emerging from his capacity for deference and tribute, Thelwall's feminism is of course far from modern understandings of that concept and not entirely consistent with Wollstonecraft's version of feminism, though strongly influenced by it. He could be classified as a writer "drawn to feminist arguments at least in part because of, rather than in defiance of, gallantry. Although few would openly admit it, the desire to provide women with an equal education was likely prompted to some degree by a similar desire to *save* women – the very desire, that is, underwriting male gallants' chivalric treatment of women" (Chernock, *Men and the Making* 47). A number of passages included in Thelwall's elocutionary *Selections* suggest as much. For instance, in regularly reciting the "Origin of the Respect Paid to Females by the Nations of Modern Europe" by Dr. Percy, Thelwall commented on "that polite gallantry, so peculiarly observable in our manners; which adds a double relish to the most pleasing of all social bands; which unites the lasting charms of sentiment, regard, and friendship, with the fleeting fire of love; which tempers, and animates one by the other; which add to their number, power and duration; and, which cherishes and unfolds sensibility, – that most choice gift of nature, without which neither decorum, propriety, chaste friendship, nor true generosity can exist among men" (*Selections* York 4).[3] Understanding that the presence of

[3] As a result of the composite nature and complicated publication history of Thelwall's *Selections* - multiple copies with the same generic title often published in the same year but with different title pages, contents and non-sequential pagination - I have elected to include the place of publication in in-text citations to help situate readers.

women during social interactions is ameliorative, Thelwall certainly adhered to the contemporary understanding of women as “the agents of politeness and refinement” (Klein 111). However, this “polite gallantry” is often also a front, a façade that masks Thelwall’s desire to integrate radical principles into domestic conceptions of femininity. Therefore, Thelwall ironically questions even as he adopts what Mee calls the “libertine-aristocratic notion of sociability” (*Conversable Worlds* 4). This stance is in line with Arianne Chernock’s heuristic in delineating the typology of gallants and male chivalry during the early nineteenth century. In *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism*, the critic distinguishes between male advocates who as “‘instrumentalists’ ultimately clung to traditional sexual divisions” and “‘egalitarians’ [who] were willing to contemplate, if not actively embrace, a brave new world in which sexual differences might be significantly diminished, even as they refused to abandon entirely the ‘instrumentalist’ arguments” (38). I contend that Thelwall falls into the egalitarian camp. His writings do not necessarily move beyond essentialist gender constructs as he largely maneuvers within an established framework. However, occasionally and not surprisingly, he steps outside its boundaries and challenges his audience through inquiry and subversion. Thus, while he often appropriates the female voice, his political, literary and elocutionary endeavours avoid misogynistic usurpation in favour of empathetic ventriloquism, whereby the liberated individual is ultimately empowered to effectively speak for herself. In the process, the woman in performance is able to “whisper to women about transformation, self-creation, even power” (Dudden 2).

Thelwall’s development as gallant was ongoing and responsive. According to Thompson, there was a shift in Thelwall’s tactics and personae at the turn of the nineteenth century as “poetry takes the place of polemic, seduction the place of sedition, and his interlocutors are not

the angry young men of the nineties, but enquiring and enthusiastic 'new' women of the new century" ("Citizen Juan" 90). I am in agreement with Thompson's view, but will broaden this conception by arguing that the gallant figure is re-contextualized within each milieu Thelwall inhabited during his career, including the political lecture hall, where women were also welcome. My argument for the inclusion of women in Thelwall's political vision and the spaces in which it was articulated is supported by recent archival work. Mee's republication of letters written by Thelwall's first wife, Susan, in 1792-93, suggests that Thelwall's outlook on women was far from patriarchal or exclusive. In one of the letters, Susan confidently tells her brother that "things are gone to such a length that you see it even makes us women politicians" (quoted in *Print, Publicity and Popular Radicalism* 57). Rather than confine women to the sidelines of the public square, Thelwall's career consistently encouraged active female involvement and engagement. Thus, Susan Thelwall's correspondence "convey(s) not just her sense of pride in her husband, both as a radical and literary man, but also an equally vigorous sense of her own engagement with public affairs" (57). Additional evidence of a female presence during Thelwall's political lectures can be found in a diary entry of Joseph Farrington dating from late 1795. The professional landscape artist notes that, during his lecture, "Thelwall addressed the Ladies as *Female* Citizens – He wd. not pronounce the Aristocratic word *Lad*y" (123). Both these quotations dispel the erroneous notion that Thelwall was not interested in women as a part of his political program, while also reinforcing his life-long interest in the maneuverability of language and the mutability of audience. For by the early nineteenth century, Thelwall would confidently conclude his elocutionary lectures by addressing an entirely different provincial audience made up of members of the rising middle class as "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!" ("Elocution and Oratory" 105). But while labels changed to match his changing circumstances

and personae, Thelwall's ideals of citizenship and voice remained the same, inclusive of women without ever being derogatory. In espousing a subversive agenda in which the body is an instrument of liberty, Thelwall successfully operated on the fringes of polite society, with its blushes and curtsies, while still insidiously challenging the status quo.

The five chapters that follow trace the chronological development of Thelwall's gender politics, and interactions with women, before, during, and after the best-known political phase of his life in the 1790s. They begin with his apprenticeship in London debating societies in the 1780s. In her introduction to *London Debating Societies 1776-1799*, Andrew suggests that the "questions about the nature of courtship, marriage, and morals" which dominated the 1780s "not only satisfied the new female audiences, but allowed men and women together to consider both the political and social shape they wished for their society" (x). The increased presence of women in debating societies encouraged them, directly and indirectly, to express their own perspectives and positions within a particular forum. This chapter will observe Thelwall's progressive take on what Mee has called "anxieties about female participation in the associational world" (*Conversable Worlds* 14). Questioning the entrenched idea that the domestic sphere was the sole location for female conversation, I address an important element of Thelwall's large scale design – facilitating the role women had to play in democratic discussion. Thelwall developed his own voice of sociopolitical critique through engaging and recreating debates on gender ("Prefatory Essay" to "The Seducer"), adopting the female voice (*A Speech in Rhyme*) and using references to antiquity (The Sabine Women) to fashion the ideal of the strong republican woman. This chapter will establish that the "intellectual friend of freedom" in Thelwall's lexicon could be a Female Citizen, a stalwart figure who is at the center of his complex theory of ventriloquism and voice (*The Life of Thelwall* 41). The chapter will also

explore how valuable the fair sex was to Thelwall's program to promote a form of expression "attainable by all" and how influential the debating societies of the 1780s were in encouraging his positions on pertinent gender issues (*Selections* Wakefield 2).

The third chapter explores Thelwall's interactions, real and imagined, with Mary Wollstonecraft, by addressing his experiences in London during the early months of 1797. Thelwall's *The Daughter of Adoption* (1801) also deals directly with the death of Wollstonecraft, both as homage and eulogy, to reconcile Wollstonecraft's biography, philosophy and creative works. In addition to Wollstonecraft, Thelwall came into contact with a number of important female writers and thinkers of his day, including Mary Robinson, Mary Hays, and Eliza Fenwick, who were associated with Godwin's circle at the time. These interactions influenced the composition of his novel, which enters into dialogue with a number of texts and polemical tracts written by these female authors during the 1790s. Turning to the novel itself, the remainder of the chapter will examine Thelwall's understanding of the seminal role that place, naming and matronly mentor figures play in establishing a mediated voice for women. This complex conception is best illustrated in the figure of Seraphina, who A.A. Markley rightly calls "the most vocal mouthpiece for the novel's reforming ideals" (110). As experience moves her from an ostracized outsider to a friend, newly defined and understood, Seraphina overcomes gender preconceptions. Through her emerging identity and its ability to influence others, Thelwall is able to redefine the role of wife as "Intellectual Partner" (*Selections* Wakefield 3).

My fourth chapter covers an important transitional period in Thelwall's career, 1801-05, when he worked as an itinerant lecturer of the science and practice of elocution. This new profession was premised upon his ability to capture the attention of, to connect and to commiserate with, the locals of the towns he visited. No region was more important as a

backdrop for his work than Glasgow, where he spent a substantial period of time in early 1804 rallying and recovering from the politically-motivated interference in his lectures of editor Francis Jeffrey and his cabal during an abbreviated stay in Edinburgh in late 1803. Thelwall's longing for the comfort and conversation of a supportive community resulted in an outburst of composition, including poems and letters referring to sociable daughters and female members of the literati who offered him sanctuary. By building robust social networks that incorporated both male and female figures, who then supported and endorsed his new elocutionary endeavor, Thelwall was able to disseminate his ideas and ideals to an emerging middle class – seditiously influencing the affluent. Uncovering and examining entirely new archives, and outlining an episode in Thelwall's life that has never before been examined, this chapter challenges and re-appropriates an established understanding of Thelwall, in which the Jeffrey affair marked the definite endpoint of his political career and confirmed the complete collapse of his reputation. It will replace it with a dynamic retelling in which elements of performance, drawing-room domesticity and sympathetic kinship networks in both Edinburgh and Glasgow transformed the results of one ill-fated evening from a failure into a triumph.

In the "Prefatory Memoir" included at the beginning of *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* (1801), Thelwall concedes that his early "rage for theatricals was excessive" (viii). This obsession, however, was not confined to his youth but became fundamental to his career. My fifth chapter will consider Thelwall's assessment and advocacy of women's place in Romantic theatre, touching upon hallmarks of his lifelong attachment to the stage, specifically the critical attention he paid to performances by actresses. Instead of simply being considered a form of frivolous entertainment, theatre at its best, Thelwall believed, could act as a "school of morality, as well as intellect and social refinement" (*The Champion* 1819 666). Thelwall

considered the stage as a venue for potent political expression and a means of seditiously critiquing oppressive government restrictions. The theatre was also a locale where the boundaries between private and public spheres were blurred and where aspiring actresses could break gender proscriptions. In addition, this chapter will show how, as a critic and mentor figure, Thelwall was able to nurture and encourage the embryonic skills of burgeoning female talent.

The final chapter will investigate the role of women in Thelwall's later writings and performances. Its main focus will be on a recently rediscovered satire from the Derby Manuscript, *Musalogia. Or, the Paths of Poesy* (1826-1834). This satire contains Thelwall's extended observations on burgeoning celebrity performance culture, the proliferation of women's poetry and the increasing importance of periodicals and gift books in the 1820s. Sharing little of the anxiety and apprehension of his male contemporaries, Thelwall creates a tenth "new-born Muse" who will inspire objective literary analysis to remedy the critical denigration of women writers (*SPP* 82:61). This figure highlights Thelwall's disdain for partisanship in Romantic era criticism and represents his attempt to liberate reviewers from the barriers of political prejudice and class identification. In his poem, Thelwall comments upon the works of Letitia Landon, Felicia Hemans and Mary Russell Mitford. Thelwall's commendation of particular "Lady Wits" is contrasted with a barbed analysis of the "dandy Witlings of the day," "bards of gender Epicine" and "male coquettes" who compose light verse at "Christmas-tide" and "St.Vallentine [sic]" (*Derby MS* III.961-62). The juxtaposition of an established coterie of female writers and an ephemeral band of male versifiers offers valuable insight into Romantic-era book and reception history and the changing perception of female artists. This chapter will conclude by examining how some of the ideas presented in the *Musalogia* are reflected in Thelwall's late lectures, focusing specifically on his life-long interest in education,

and the pedagogical imperative that inspires his overall egalitarian program, based on the tenets of sympathy, improvement and merit.

The end goal of this dissertation is to demonstrate that women – wives and daughters, writers and speakers, lovers and creators, established and obscure – were fundamental to Thelwall's polymathic projects and that, whenever he could manage it, he would take advantage of the opportunity to incorporate them into interaction and dialogue. Therefore, a better understanding of Thelwall's extensive career in turn offers a broader perspective upon the gender politics of the period. In the retrospective anacreontic "My Sixtieth Year," written in July of 1823, Thelwall confesses that

> Their voice is music to my ear
>
> Apollo's harp excelling
>
> And Beauty's circling arms appear
>
> A heaven for joy to dwell in.
>
> The charming sex! – the witching sex!
>
> The dear delightful creatures! (*SPP* 185:17-22)

Rather than damning with faint praise or manipulating through flattery, Thelwall praises women as "blooming," "charming" and "renovating," and concludes by asserting emphatically that they are "inspiring" and, most importantly, "[t]he better sex" (*SPP* 186:45). In so doing he expresses an attraction that goes beyond mere gallantry and contributes integrally to his larger political project. As will be explored in this thesis, one of the major *modus operandi* of Thelwall's career is to subversively question entrenched mores while giving voice to previously confined portions of society. Thelwall endeavored to free the tongues of those restricted by physical, moral, social and, by proxy, political impediments. Women were clearly a central part of this agenda and a

concern that spanned his earliest experiences in debating club societies to his final years, as senior statesman, triumphantly touring the provinces of England and being lauded with compliments in local newspapers.

Chapter 2:

"The Ardour of a Lover": Women, Thelwall and Debating Society Culture

In the "Prefatory Memoir" to *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* (1801), Thelwall reminisces about the "commence[ment]" of his "public career" at Coachmakers' Hall Society for Free Debate where he joined an industrious (if not illustrious) list of those who had there "taken … their oratorical degrees" (xxiii). Ian Newman suggests that Thelwall began attending these debating societies as early as 1783 (323). A large part of Thelwall's formative years was therefore spent presiding at these "sort of preparatory colleges" (*The Champion* 1819 409). While there has been a recent consensus that Thelwall's career needs to be viewed holistically, his early development has not yet received sustained critical attention. Roe is correct in claiming that "as a political lecturer in the 1790s, Thelwall was the voice of the inarticulate; in later years his elocution helped the tongue-tied to speak for themselves" ("John Thelwall and the West Country"). However, more work remains to be done on how Thelwall developed his *own* voice in the 1780s and how this voice was able to speak for various members of the *vox populi*.

In this chapter I will suggest that, from the outset of his career, Thelwall developed as a writer, orator, thinker and human being through ventriloquizing the utterances of marginalized members of society, including women, who were regular attendees at debating societies and often influenced topics of discussion. The figure Thelwall cut during his apprenticeship in the 1780s was that of a gallant vindicator of female virtue, who, according to the advertisement of *Poetry on Various Subjects* (1787), always "glow[ed] with the ardour of a lover" but was never "found to burn with the fires of a courtezan" (vii). Before the reverberations of the French Revolution altered the political landscape, provoking government interference that curbed

individual liberties and inspired what is conventionally regarded as his *raison d'être*, Thelwall developed his voice of socio-political critique, including a theory of sympathy, by engaging and recreating debates on gender and, more specifically, adopting the female voice.

The chapter that follows will show this development by focussing on two textual performances. In the lengthy "Prefatory Essay" to "The Seducer" from *Poems on Various Subjects* (1787), the speaker touches upon a number of ubiquitous debating society issues regarding the state of seduced women and which parties are to be held accountable for their destitution and denigration. One year later, in *A Speech in Rhyme* (1788), which originated in a debating society performance, Thelwall commandeers an entire debate on love's ability to improve a virtuous soul, by taking on, or ventriloquizing, several male and female voices. An important part of this performance is Thelwall's allusion to the Sabine Women of antiquity, who represent a stalwart republican female resolve that would reappear and be reassessed in his later work (for example the Pandolia fragment of circa 1816 that I discuss in Chapter 5). In all of these examples, Thelwall courts the good opinion of women while also assuming the voices of women characters in performance, which undeniably played a fundamental part in helping him to achieve his own "oratorical degree" (*Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* xxiii). Thelwall's progress from "[l]isping orator" (*The Life of Thelwall* 40) to confident herald of his times is marked by his ability to absorb rhetorical conventions from the debates he attended and apply them in ardent and eloquent defences of women.

Part 1: "Mixed Audiences": Thelwall's Debating Society Apprenticeship

One can gather from Thelwall's writings that the 1780s were a stimulating time of open debate, on which he later looked back as an idyllic state of unimpeded discourse that he longed to recapture. According to *The Life of Thelwall*, before the governmental crackdown on free speech in the early 1790s, "the subjects of debate at Coachmakers' Hall, had been free and unrestrained: no party in power, had, up to this time, looked upon them with any jealousy, or otherwise than as the mental exercises of young men assembled to discuss the various subjects introduced by the several parties, whose turn it was to propose the question to be debated" (48). This does not give a complete portrait of the lively and assorted audience Thelwall would have encountered during the 1780s. It does, however, reinforce the claim made by Peter Clark, in his seminal study on *British Clubs and Societies*, that "[d]ebating societies in particular were vital in stimulating social, economic, and, above all, political consciousness in the period" (118).

Advertisements for Westminster Forum and Coachmakers' Hall imply that women became more involved in debates at this time. Clark contends that by "1780 women were regular speakers, [with] special nights being set aside for ladies' debates" and that "[s]ome societies began to promote debates on 'female' issues, such as woman's work and marriage, to attract a large audience" (200). Thelwall, ever aware of the crowd to which he catered, cleverly capitalized on this increased exposure and interest. Thelwall's performances at Westminster Forum and Coachmakers' Hall mark the beginning of his associations with varied audiences and delineate "the promise of broadening participation" central to his entire career (Mee, *Conversable Worlds* 5). Instead of viewing weekly "Free Debate" gatherings as purely homosocial affairs, I would like to situate Thelwall's engagement within a vibrant discourse that

incorporated what is often referred to in advertisements and recollections as a "mixed audience" (*The Life of Thelwall* 49).[4] Before his radical attempts to rouse the citizens of England from government tyranny in the 1790s, Thelwall was passionately engrossed in gender issues and testing positions that would be reasserted, reevaluated and varied in his future writings.

In her overview of debating societies in the 1780s, Betty Rizzo speculates that the plethora of discussions during this decade "must have stimulated thought and both reflected and inflected public opinion" (34). These weekly meetings had a wide-ranging impact on the burgeoning public sphere of the era and, likewise, on the dissemination of subjects that would find full fruition in the reactionary attitudes and radical zeitgeist of the 1790s. Thelwall was fully engaged in a cultural debate that addressed "anxieties about female participation in the associational world" (Mee, *Conversable Worlds* 14). Questioning the idea that the domestic sphere of family relations was the only proper location for female conversation, I address an important element of Thelwall's large-scale design – facilitating the participation of women in democratic discussion. The "intellectual friend of freedom" (*The Life of Thelwall* 41) in Thelwall's lexicon could be a Female Citizen, a stalwart figure who stands at the center of his complex theory of ventriloquism and voice. The following pages will explore how valuable the "fair sex" was to Thelwall's program to promote a form of expression he believed was

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[4] As suggested in Chapter 1, I will here be using the methodology proposed by Russell and Tuite, which questions "a paradigmatic model of sociability that is implicity male and homosocial" (5). In "Spouters or Washerwomen: The Sociability of Romantic Lecturing," Russell examines Thelwall in the context of his 1790s political lectures at the Beaufort Buildings (127-131). This chapter will argue that Thelwall's breaching of "the boundaries between the public and the private," in order to meld the "homosocial … adapting the rituals and conviality of the debating club" and the "feminized scene of gaeity and fashion" (129), was learned and developed in his 1780s apprenticeship at the Westminster Forum and Coachmakers' Hall.

“*attainable by all*” (*Introductory Discourse* 4) and how influential the debating societies of the 1780s were in encouraging his positions on pertinent gender issues.

Thelwall’s most reflective and evocative account of his debating society apprenticeship is found in “Coachmakers’ Hall – A Fragment,” written thirty years earlier but only published while he was editor of *The Champion* newspaper (1819-21). In the poem, Thelwall (under the pseudonym L.L.) reminisces about an institution where the “tender shoots of Oratory gr[e]w” and whose topics ranged “[f]rom gauze and tiffany to Europe’s fate” (1819 410). The juxtaposition between ephemeral discussions on popular fashion and weighty disputation on political issues captures the wide diversity of topics with which Thelwall found himself engaged:

> States, Music, Politics, Plays, Love and War,
> Fashions, Philosophy, the Ton, the Law,
> Religion, Boxing, Ethics, Boarding Schools,
> Wedlock, Self murder, and domestic rules
> Give the Loquacious room their wit to show
> On what they do – and what they do not know. (410)

In its very syntax, the list weighs seeming trifles next to purportedly graver topics – both “Fashions” and “the Ton”[5] are counterbalanced with “Philosophy” and “the Law” while “Boxing” is itself boxed in between “Religion” and “Ethics.” In addition, the abundance of issues allows speakers (“the Loquacious”) “room” for expression while the “room” itself can be

[5] “Ton” derives from the French and signifies the world of fashion (*OED*). The term is frequently satirized in Thelwall’s work. Examples include the discussion between Turtle and Traffic in *Incle and Yarico* (1787) on “the necessary arts of dissimulating, ogling and coquetting” (54) of boarding schools for women. In *The Daughter of Adoption* (1801), Melinda, protagonist Seraphina’s foil, is described as having “been early initiated . . . in all the *mysteries* of *the ton*,” which make “her morals [as] fashionable as her manners” (301).

considered "Loquacious," a sounding-board for variegated voices. Before the fragment breaks off, the speaker comments upon "youthful Templars" who "moral rules display / To guide the fair in Virtue's halcyon way" (410). Based on the guises adopted in his early publications, debates and dramatic performances (as discussed below and in Chapter 5), Thelwall sympathized with this chivalrous position, but he would also have seen his younger self in the "half-grown stripling" who could "keep ideal Spouses under awe" (410). The juxtaposition in these closing lines characterizes Thelwall as both a courtly knight, defending the honour of "the fair," and a prospective groom, as well as a conjuror able to keep female auditors entranced. These two roles define his conflicted position as simultaneously an upholder of morality and a wooer in words.

Thelwall's fervid participation in debating societies emphasizes the value performers like him placed on forging an intimate relationship with their liberal, at times predominantly female, audiences. The combination of a growing middle-class readership and an engaged audience had a major impact on the ideas and ideals discussed in such public forums. This, in turn, had a strong influence on the refinement of popular culture and determination of taste.[6] In *The Life of Thelwall*, Thelwall defines these societies as a productive milieu in which "the energy and power of graphic delineation" could be expressed, along with "the enthusiasm of maintaining an

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[6] According to Christopher Catanese, "[i]n the eighteenth century, the term 'refinement' was not limited to discourses of class inequality, but was entangled in a variety of linked debates, including related economic discourses of 'luxury' (and therefore of nationalism, in the case of those perniciously *French* luxuries) and discourses of 'cultivation' (in transition from its agricultural sense to the realm of personal education); and of course refinement also remained a key concept within debates about the nature of poetry itself" (133). A career-long concern for Thelwall was refinement in the sense of intellectual improvement, a point he emphasizes, as we will see in Chapter 4, when he expresses a desire for "such gentle interchange of soul / As intellectual beings best beseems, / Improving and improv'd" (*SPP* 197:13-15). Later in his career, Thelwall addresses this form of refinement in the opening number of the *Panoramic Miscellany* (Jan 31, 1826), where he connects the "spread of periodical literature with the moral and intellectual progress of society" (1) and notes how gambling and noisy revelry have "fled before the rising sun of a far-diffusing intellect" (2-3).

argument . . . by the excitement of a mixed audience" (49). The audience, at this point in time, was likewise democratized, as is evident from an anonymously authored poem on the Westminster Forum in the *Morning Chronicle* of January 14, 1780:

> Now, Kitty, Forum's a place for debate
> On matters of taste, and matters of state,
> Frequented by people of different classes,
> Old dons and young smarts, old dames and young lasses.

The quatrain captures the complexity and upheaval of debating society culture, where "taste" can sit next to "state" and the idea of catering to "different classes" finds its parallels in entertaining an audience of mixed gender and age.[7] The final line of the quatrain emblematizes the transgressive qualities of debating halls in its run-on construction; the syllables are maintained but the line teems, as did the Forum at the time, with excitement and excess. Establishments such as the Westminster Forum, where Thelwall delivered his early orations, allowed previously marginalized groups an opportunity to participate and flourish in the arts of dialogue and dissemination of ideas.[8]

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[7] Krista Cowman states that "[d]ebating societies were considered more democratic than salons as they required no invitation, but welcomed anyone who could pay the attendance fee" and that they "provided women with a public space where they could articulate their own analysis of varying aspects of their subordination" (24).

[8] Rizzo points out that the "strictures against public speaking, which consistently indicated that speech was understood as power, were directed at women and at men of the lower social orders, in whom oratory was regarded as an unseemly distraction from their useful but silent vocations" (31). However, with the increase in numbers of societies, ownership "recognized . . . the financial expedience of attracting both genders" (34). As will be demonstrated below, advertisements from the Westminster Forum and Coachmakers' Hall, particularly during the years Thelwall regularly attended, frequently addressed questions and issues that targeted female audiences.

A survey of topics discussed during the years 1786-1788 reveals how vital were the interactions between men and women at this time. In her introduction to *London Debating Societies 1776-1799*, Donna Andrew suggests that the "questions about the nature of courtship, marriage, and morals" which dominated the 1780s "not only satisfied the new female audiences, but allowed men and women together to consider both the political and social shape they wished for their society" (x). The increased presence of women in attendance at debating societies eventually encouraged women, directly and indirectly, to express their own perspectives and positions within a particular forum. Examples taken from advertisements at this time capture a fervent desire to include women in the conversation, not only as passive auditors but also as active participants.[9] Many of them actively court a female audience, regularly proposing that "[w]hatever concerns the Female Sex must be allowed to have a serious claim to public attention" (Andrew 1787:1283). In particular, Coachmakers' Hall, a venue containing "very polite and numerous assemblage of Ladies" (Andrew 1787:1215) where Thelwall regularly participated in debates, was a hub for broad-minded discussion. Thus, at the outset of his career, Thelwall found himself heavily involved in a society that advertised itself as paying "the most respectful attention. . . to every subject Female Generosity can suggest; … no exertions will be wanting to secure a continuance of that strict order and decorum, which it is hoped will never be absent in an audience, of which Females compose a part" (Andrew 1787:1215).

[9] Unless otherwise noted, all of the commercial debating society advertisements in the daily press included in this chapter come from Andrew's detailed compendium *London Debating Societies 1776-1799*. This text was digitized by *British History Online*. Rather than include page numbers, I will be providing the year of the advertisement (if required) followed by the number allotted for the advertisement according to the editor.

Part 2: Defending "Deluded Daughters of Despair": The "Prefatory Essay" to "The Seducer"

Shortly after his first collection *Poems on Various Subjects* (1787) was published, John Thelwall engaged in a brief poetic exchange with a self-professed "female bard" named Cyani in the *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*. Her lines, addressed "To Mr. Thelwall, on his Poem of the Seducer, Lately Published," were included in the June 26th issue. The smitten speaker suggests that Thelwall's collection, largely devoted to promoting the twin "cause[s] of Virtue and of Truth," must be "commend[ed]" and "hail[ed]." In addition, Cyani fully endorses the idea promoted by Thelwall himself that he be positioned "as her sex's warmest friend." The poem ends ecstatically with the erection of a statue of Thelwall for posterity's sake with the exhortation that "ye youth of future times . . . be emulous." Thelwall politely returned the favor in "Sonnet to Cyani," published a few days later on June 29th

The freshest wreath from Pindus' laurel'd grove,
When twin'd by Beauty's hand I doubly prize;
Judge then what transports in my bosom move,
When thy soft stanzas meet my flatter'd eyes.

Tho' Fiction's robe from sight the lyrist shroud,
Her partial praise imparts an honest joy;
As Phoebus' beams, tho' hid behind a cloud,
Prolifick warmth to Earth's glad breast supply.

Yes, I confess, the love of honest Fame
Glows in my breast, with ardour unrestrain'd;

> And sweet applause, which feeds the gen'rous flame,
>
> May urge my course till added wreaths are gain'd,
>
> And trust me, fair-one, still to Virtue's praise,
>
> And injur'd Beauty's aid my honest theme, I'll raise.

In his rejoinder, the young Thelwall expresses gratitude towards Cyani for her "soft stanzas" before suggesting that such "sweet applause … feeds the gen'rous flame." This early versified tête-à-tête prefigures Thelwall's life-long interest in interacting with "fair-one[s]." Cyani's lines, her "flattery," inspire him to attain "added wreaths."

Tellingly, Thelwall's poetic conversation with Cyani roughly coincides with the first volleys between Della Crusca (Robert Merry) and Anna Matilda (Hannah Cowley) in *The World*. However, Thelwall's admission that "transports in my bosom move" as the result of Cyani's kind praise is different in both tone and connotation from "To Anna Matilda," where Merry writes of being "loved to Transport's dire excess" (25). Thelwall's delight is couched in terms at once more staid and chaste. Where his speaker partakes of "Pindus' laurel'd grove" and sheepishly benefits from the partially shielded beams of "Phoebus," Della Crusca's "Transport" can barely be contained; enchanted by the sensual, his speaker does not resort to allusions but rather seeks to capture the ephemeral "ray of bliss – a glimpse of heaven" (20). While many of the lyrics in Thelwall's *Poems on Various Subjects* indulge in Della Cruscan sensibility, the pose adopted in his response to Cyani is more decorous and proper since, as the writer of "The Seducer," he is required to tone down rakish rhetoric in order to address a serious social issue. The closing couplet of the sonnet expresses his stalwart commitment "to Virtue's praise" and

coming to "injur'd Beauty's aid" evident throughout Thelwall's career, from the juvenilia to his final compositions recently rediscovered in the *Derby Manuscript*.

Cyani's is not the only positive review to focus on the virtuous stance of Thelwall's sentimental verse. A contributor to *The London Chronicle*, for example, remarked that Thelwall's "[m]use seems to be inspired by the warm, but chaste dictates of Love" ("John Thelwall"). This contrast between restraint and excess is most evident in some effusive stanzas, written by T. Walsh, on the young Thelwall's impeccable representations of "sweet sensibility" in his first volume of poems. Walsh's lines, published in the *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* in 1787, confirm the reactive quality of Thelwall's collection:

> Too long the Muse by Dissipation's side,
> Has loosely wanton'd thro' lascivious plains
> Where lewd desire each blandish'd art supplied,
> Instilling poison with her dulcet strains.
>
> But see, fair Virtue, reasserts her claim,
> From wanton lust recals the tuneful lyre,
> And bids young Thelwall vindicate her fame,
> With strains where honour chastens soft desire …

The first stanza hyperbolically captures the effect of "[d]issipation" on the Muse through its alliterative accumulation of libidinous adjectives ("loosely," "lascivious," and "lewd"). The second stanza suggests the reestablishment of proper ethical order through its use of verbs such as "reassert," "recal[l]," "vindicate" and the operative "chasten." Here, moral authority is

contrasted with sexually heinous behaviour, a juxtaposition that Thelwall addresses in many early pieces, in particular his first volume's centerpiece, "The Seducer; or Damon and Amanda."

In this early poem Thelwall engages with popular topoi. According to Catherine Packham, "depicting the distressing fate of seduced young women was a favourite means of stimulating the exercise of fashionable sensibility, and Thelwall's poem … appears to offer the same desirable pleasures" (116). In so doing, however, Thelwall's juvenilia also prefigures his future interests, and his remarkable experiments with style and genre. Claeys suggests that "even Thelwall's youthful poetry betrays the powerful sense of injustice that would remain his dominant passion" (Introduction xv). In her more thorough overview of Thelwall's early work, Thompson states that while "[t]he imagery, versification, and subject matter are conventional enough, [. . .] there [are] hints of the social conscience of Thelwall's later poetry" ("John Thelwall, Poetry" 1388). The potent mixture of versified sentimental romance and "social conscience" foreshadows Thelwall's later reconfigurations of the novel, and various poetic forms including the sonnet, the ode and the sapphic. Before Thelwall used these forms to struggle with the slave trade, the ramifications of the French Revolution and the right of the English people to voice dissent, he addressed gender inequality and women's social roles and status while addressing women themselves as animated participants in debating society culture.

In "The Seducer," Thelwall examines the susceptibility and culpability of all of the parties involved in the superstructure of seduction. According to Katherine Binhammer, "[s]eduction narratives tell the story of a woman's struggle to decode the new semiotics of courtship and love and they offer ways to determine when to believe a lover's vows and when to recognize deceit" (18). Thelwall's *Poems on Various Subjects* engages in this discussion through its inclusion of a number of legendary tales that approach courtship from a variety of

perspectives, ranging from eschewing the snares of the seduction to finding true love despite restrictive societal forces. Romances such as "Edmund and Rosalinda," "Allen and Matilda" and "Elwin and Anna" address the struggles of young lovers separated by class or circumstance to achieve "mutual love" (9). If these are examples of when to trust "a lover's vows," then "The Seducer" underlines, and meticulously fleshes out, the circumstances of the "recognize[d] deceit" that Binhammer mentions (18). In examining a social ill from a multitude of angles and perspectives, Thelwall goes beyond convention, as the rake (Damon) is not simply vilified and his paramour (Amanda) not only treated as a helpless victim. Rather, the poem adopts a systematic approach whereby, in a Wollstonecraftian manner,[10] all parties involved in the seduction process are scrutinized morally. This approach is most clearly evident in the lengthy "Prefatory Essay on the Crime and Consequences of Seduction." This should be read as one of the author's first sustained efforts to critique oppressive social structures using a rigorous method that exposes the circular quality of tyranny in which "the causes produce the effects, the effects multiply the causes, and the causes the effects again, and so on in an endless succession" ("Prefatory Essay" 103).

While the stated goal of both essay and poem is to address how a "number of well educated women [can be] reduced to earn a wretched subsistence by indiscriminate incontinence," Thelwall is especially critical of those figures, male and female, who are complicit in yet judgmental of the process (86). Among those at fault beyond the seducer and the seduced are "[t]he rigid puritan" who callously "loads . . . with invectives" and those "happier

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[10] Susan Ferguson claims that Wollstonecraft "pushes beyond the limits of her contemporaries' political radicalism by extending that critique to the family" (431). In much the same way, Thelwall's poem foreshadows the more sustained critique of the family in *The Daughter of Adoption*.

fair-ones" who "take an inhuman pride in reprobating these deluded daughters of despair" (89). Thelwall's ruminations on "deluded fair-ones" foreshadow the sad tale of Jemima in Wollstonecraft's *Maria, Or the Wrongs of Woman* (1798) and the plight of young women deceived into destitution in Victorian-era texts. However, the primary target of his scathing ire in the "Prefatory Essay," which speaks to the rigor and all-encompassing nature of the young Thelwall's thinking, is the "unnatural conduct of the parent" (93). While the seducer figure should be "seriously reprobate[d]," he says, the father "who abandons his unfortunate offspring" must be "condemn[ed] with equal severity" (85). Thelwall later clarifies the causes and effects of abandonment in ways that emphasize patriarchal wrongdoing and complicity when he states "the seducer ruins the fair under the hypocritical mask of affection; the parent completes her ruin confessedly through resentment" (93). Indeed, Packham contends that the focus upon the sins of the father is the most original element of "The Seducer" (117).

While the strength of Thelwall's tale lies in its innovative examination of a well-worn theme, the lengthy "Prefatory Essay" also amalgamates recurring debating society issues from the 1780s, illustrating their influence on his early social conscience as well as his poetic development. For example, on January 26, 1786, at Coachmakers' Hall, the question discussed was "Is not the conduct of those parents who abandon their daughters, for the loss of honour, a principal cause of the increase of prostitution?" (Andrew 1067). In essence, this topic can be taken as a précis for the tale of Damon and Amanda that Thelwall would soon compose. About a year later, the question of parental betrayal was broached once more at the same meeting place on consecutive dates, January 4 and January 11, when the evening's discussion addressed the question "[w]hich is more blameable, the man who deliberately seduces a female, and then deserts her -- or, the father who abandons his child so seduced?" (Andrew 1172). The postscript

to this particular debate implies that Thelwall was present on both evenings as one of the "several young speakers [who] distinguished themselves on the occasion, proving their claims to the flattering plaudits they received from a very numerous, polite and liberal auditory" (Andrew 1175).

The connections between topics being discussed at Coachmakers' Hall and Thelwall's "Prefatory Essay" are further suggested when he states that the process of "seduction" is "worse than murder," and, in fact, can be seen as the act of an "assassin" (94). This line of thinking is congruent with that expressed at Coachmakers' Hall on the evening of May 4, 1786, when the debate focused on the following issue: "[i]s not the deliberate Seduction of the Fair, with an intention to desert, under all circumstances, equal to murder?" (Andrew 1108). The fact that "many respectable Ladies" (1108) proposed this particular question adds to the evidence for a high level of women's involvement in debating societies during the 1780s. According to the accompanying review, "[a]fter a debate, in which several learned and highly respected characters took a part, and which afforded equal pleasure and improvement to a very respectable audience, [it] was decided in the negative" that "intention to desert" was not "equal to murder" (1108). In his "Prefatory Essay," Thelwall argues the opposite, claiming that "the vice of seduction. . . [is] *superior in turpitude* to that of murder" for unlike murder, seduction "promotes an evil which has no end" (101-02, italics mine). His essay thoroughly addresses every facet of this particular social ill.

The "Prefatory Essay" reads like a polished, detailed version of notes to a debating performance, and it may indeed have begun as such, for Thelwall is likely to have participated in one of the debates mentioned above. Certainly the fervour and frankness of the debating-society milieu encouraged Thelwall's career-long interest in consideration through contest. The essay's

structure is dialectical, fully capturing both meanings of that concept, as a "critical investigation of truth through reasoned argument . . . by means of dialogue or discussion" while also emphasizing an understanding of "the tension produced . . . by opposing forces" (*OED*). There is likewise an important correlation between the dynamism of Thelwall's oratorical performance and the rhetorical tools frequently employed in his writing, as I have suggested in Chapter 1. While "The Prefatory Essay" does refer to his "gentle reader" (94) or "the candour of [his] readers," there are elements in the piece that show an enthusiasm best expressed in front of engaged and appreciative listeners, and that demand, in the words of Thompson, "labor," as his work "assumes, requires and stimulates the common man's rational consciousness, artful aspiration, and active participation" ("Poets and Poesy I Sing" 17). Thelwall writes

> Thus we see, the seducer is in fact a murderer, – the worst of murderers, an assassin; a mean assassin, whose abominable artifices mingle poison in the tempting cup of pleasure, to destroy the deluded wretch by slow degrees, but with excessive tortures. And, more to aggravate the crime, let us consider whose hand administers the fatal cup. Is the destroyer an avowed and injured enemy? No: but one whose specious wiles, whose perjuries, and pretended affection, drew to his power a poor, generous and unsuspecting woman, whose only faults were pity and gratitude, whose only folly having a better opinion of him than he deserved; and whose last pangs are rendered doubly severe by the recollection of his ingratitude, whom, spite of his cruelty, she still adores. Called I him an assassin? Alas! alas! how feeble is the description? Nor earth, nor hell can find a term sufficiently expressive to bespeak his guilt. (99)

Here, Thelwall uses stylistic tools that are all mainstays of effective oral delivery. For example, repetition in the opening sentence emphasizes the seducer as "murderer" and "assassin," the

doubling of diction accentuated by the inclusion of the qualifiers “worst” and “mean.” In addition, throughout the excerpt, punctuation heightens the sense: the dash intimates pensive pause, the colon stresses negative interjection, and the clever combination of the interrogative and exclamatory highlights an inability to express disgust while nonetheless to succeed precisely in doing so. Numerous sections of Thelwall’s essay read as if they are the record of a live performance. In this way, “The Prefatory Essay” acts as a precursor to the transcriptions of his passionate political orations later published in *The Tribune* (1795) or the emphatic responses to his elocutionary lectures circulated in provincial papers. Thus, a firm focus on orality and the precepts of performance is another way in which Thelwall’s debates on gender prepare for his later political and elocutionary work.

A final effective rhetorical strategy repeatedly used in Thelwall’s “Prefatory Essay” is ekphrasis, the depiction of vivid tableaux intended to inspire sympathetic responses from his audience. In his oeuvre, Thelwall repeatedly employs elements of the discourse of sensibility for political purposes. In this early instance, Thelwall experiments with style to instigate social change while developing the principles of enthusiasm central to his understanding of audience or what he would later call “draw[ing] from social sympathy the lore / Of soul-expanding science” (*SPP* 256-257:179-180). When a speaker can intimately connect with his or her audience, then oratorical sympathy, which inspires interest and promotes progress, is achieved. Thompson suggests that this particular bond “is a complex matter requiring conscious attention and thought, rational direction, and disciplined education on the part of both speaker and listener” (“Re-sounding Romanticism” 30). Thus, whether he aimed at an audience member at the Westminster Forum or a subscriber to *Poetry on Various Subjects*, in his early work Thelwall challenges his auditors and readers, both male and female, to respond.

In his defence of the “deluded daughters of despair” (“Prefatory Essay” 89), Thelwall reappropriates the familiar tableaux of Hogarth’s *A Harlot’s Progress* (1731) and a *Rake’s Progress* (1735), strikingly painting with words the progress of the seduced, through evocative images given to the hybrid reader and audience of the text (94-95). Thelwall persuasively asks them to “survey … the unhappy object of the seducer’s artifices in the different stages of her life” (94). The first representation Thelwall gives is of a stable family unit where “maternal pride,” a “doating father” and a “loving sister” complement a scene of domestic bliss (94). Once seduced, the victim loses the safety of the paradisiacal home, “the paternal hearth” (95). She then involuntarily becomes an “unhappy object, a prey to torture, want, and anguish” who is “forc[ed]” to put an “affecting smile” on a face “where the hand of art in vain endeavours to ape the flush of health” (96). Stripped of innocence and all that is sincere, Thelwall’s seduced daughter is reduced to deceitful artifice that merely masks her true nature. In fact, it is these “affected blandishments” that lead her to prostitute herself as her feigned wiles can only be “returned by the barbarous buffetings of iron-hearted bullies, or the sportive ferocity of some drunken rake” (96-97). She is unceremoniously abandoned by her family and relegated to a commodity. Thelwall clearly embellishes his tableau to ensure that his reader (or audience) “drop a tear at this melancholy picture” (97). Here, the tropes of sensibility are deployed simultaneously to raise compassion and to rouse indignation.

Of all the sentimental set pieces Thelwall employs in his “Prefatory Essay,” however, it is the last image that is the most striking. Here, using the rhetorical tool of paralepsis, in which a speaker raises a subject by either denying it or suggesting that it should not be addressed at all, Thelwall first delays describing the final portrait of the seduced daughter. This delay is amplified initially by the speaker’s inability to even appropriately capture the scene, since “[l]anguage

would fail ere [he] could recite all the tortures of the unhappy wretches" (98). Of course, the expression is ultimately reversed as strategic suspension serves only to emphasize the sordid state of the final tableau, which is vividly depicted despite the denials of the speaker.

> I will not bring to your view the straw bed, with scarce a rug to cover it; the roofless garret, or the bridewell lash. Neither will I harrow up your feelings by a description of the last excruciating pangs of triumphant disease; nor rack your imaginations on the torturing wheel of unavailing sensibility, by delineating death-bed pangs of want, or, what is still worse, the expiring tortures of a poor wretch, without a bed to lie on, groaning forth her last upon a bulk, or meeting her dissolution, amidst the howling inclemencies of a winter's night, on the marble steps of her seducer's door. (98)

This final stark portrait captures the deluded daughter, out of health and home, completely abandoned. The apparent disavowal of "sensibility" is, in fact, a direct recourse to this mode in order to elicit an emotional response.

Thelwall's tableau is markedly different from the visuals of Hogarth, which are over-populated with characters and clues as to their motivations. The fifth plate of *A Harlot's Progress*, for instance, illustrates the titular character dying of syphilis, surrounded by her soon-to-be orphaned son, indiscreet arguing doctors, a figure looting and a protective maid (see fig. 1).

(Fig 1. Fifth Plate of Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress*)

By contrast, Thelwall portrays the "death-bed pangs" of the seduced daughter and leaves her utterly alone. The first picture of familial bliss is upended as the daughter is deprived of "[t]he social thoughts and kindred sympathies / That link us to our kind" (*SPP* 254:56-7). Ultimately, the deluded daughter has no place to rest, which Thelwall stresses in the bed imagery of the aforementioned passage, which commences with the discomfort of a "straw bed" but is quickly reduced to the cold "marble steps" of her seducer (98). Thelwall captures the victim's dispossession best in this final ironic impression. She cannot head home for comfort so must resort to prostituting and prostrating herself one last time at the doorstep of the seducer who ruined her. Furthermore, Thelwall's delineation implicates the reader/audience in the daughter's woes, as they are placed, as it were, on the speaker's own clever Procrustean bed. While claiming that he wishes not to "rack [the] imaginations" of his reader/auditors with the "torturing wheel of unavailing sensibility" (98), his portrait inevitably appeals to the emotions, linking an inspiring audience and expiring daughter in suffering.

Part 3: "Winning Eloquence": The Maiden in *A Speech in Rhyme*

In order to ascertain the gendered complexity of Thelwall's public-speaking personae as it developed during the 1780s, one must pay particular attention to one of the speeches he actually delivered at the Westminster Forum, published as *A Speech in Rhyme, on the Assertion of the Marchioness of Lambert, that Love Improves the Virtuous Soul* (1788). As with the previously examined "Prefatory Essay" to "The Seducer," this offers a full view of his involvement in debating society culture, from oral presentation to written production. *A Speech in Rhyme* also offers a clever critique of what Jane Donawerth classifies as a "[c]onduct book rhetoric … preoccupied with linguistic and rhetorical signs of class and gender" (43), a full five years before Wollstonecraft's critique of the genre in the *Vindication*. While conduct book writers "tended to direct their efforts towards keeping women silent" (Michaelson 181), Thelwall challenged muteness by placing a female figure of great intelligence and eloquence at the center of his speech. It is his first sustained attempt at "narrative transvestism" (Kahn 11), to represent a strong female voice, one that in many ways prefigures the speeches of Seraphina in *The Daughter of Adoption* and Pandolia in "Pandolia's Description of her Four Lovers," as well as Thelwall's public recitals of Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* and Barbauld's "Washing Day" during his elocutionary lectures.

That the maiden effectively wins the debate on love in *A Speech in Rhyme* is of considerable importance. But she is only one of many voices in this lengthy, self-reflexive, dramatically rich and rhetorically complex performance, which begins and ends with the framing narrator, who addresses various auditors, and, in the body of the piece, quotes two male lovers, one smitten and one spurned, followed by a cynic and a man of manners, before the voice of the

mild but rational maid is raised to conclude the debate. Ultimately, as in Thelwall's later elocutionary theory, all of these voices are under the control of one individual, Thelwall himself (who actually delivered this speech and won the debate in doing so). As the "conductor" (*The Life of Thelwall* 34)—a term used by his second wife and biographer to discuss his participation in several debating societies—he is a figure of maximum agency. By enclosing an entire debate within his poem, Thelwall demonstrates an early mastery and manipulation of polyvocal expression and a careful understanding of his performance medium. Furthermore, the use of the term "conductor" confirms that Thelwall was not only a perpetual presence at these societies, but also assumed a directorial role that would later culminate in his leadership within the London Corresponding Society. His direction is both effective and affective in gaining and transmitting sympathy, which in turn involves (here as throughout his career), the adoption of different voices and genres, and engagement in what might be called the heterogeneity of experience, to achieve desired ends. As in the "Prefatory Essay" to "The Seducer" but even more so, the performance of *A Speech in Rhyme* is rhetorically startling in the way it accomplishes this variance orally for an audience, using a full range of rhetorical elements, as Thelwall anticipates, directs, and adjusts to their responses.

In *A Speech in Rhyme*, Thelwall's performance dramatizes a succession of male perspectives on love, balanced by the naïve objectivity of the poem's speaker as mediator, which gives way to the rebuttal and remonstrance of a strong female voice. After a lengthy opening frame, in which the speaker character formally addresses (and moulds his manner of address to) various audience members, including a moderator, possible critics, and general listeners, he comes to "the point in question," as announced in the title. In the survey of love that follows, he first adopts the voice of the "FOND YOUTH," smitten by a "*fond fair*," who proclaims the

importance of Love in regards to “the sweet charm of *social Sympathy*” (8). This form of communal cohesion is revealed to be ironic because it is the tenuous by-product of a base love grounded primarily on infatuation. Moreover, this position on love is immediately juxtaposed with that of another figure who, “with DEJECTED air” has been spurned by a “cruel fair” who “had long exerted each *coquettish* art / At times, to *soothe*, at times to *rend* his heart –” (9). The comparison is most fully evident in the list of “*gloomy passions*,” which lead to the fading of “*generous* feeling” and its usurpation by a “*selfish* sorrow [that] all the mind pervades” (9). Both of these contrasting arguments on love, under the guise of courtly interchange between besotted paramours, address the concept of sympathy that is an essential component of Thelwall’s social program as examined in Chapter 1. But both are equally flawed. In other words, the contrast is made between individual misunderstandings of love as either short-lived passion or social adhesive. But both lovers misread their passion and their arguments simultaneously fail because of myopic, self-seeking motives.

The third voice to enter Thelwall’s mock debate is “the surly CYNIC,” who counteracts the emotional responses of the previous two speakers by demonstrating his apparent reason (9). This character outlines an overtly misogynistic position when he suggests weak-minded men allow the opposite sex to “make CREATION’S LORD a *Woman’s Slave*” (10). He then dismisses both men by telling them “Go! To a Woman’s apron-string be ty’d” (10). In this speech, the positions of the previous speakers are questioned and condemned, as hope and despair are replaced with callous skepticism. After the misty ruminations of the two previous speakers, the cynic’s emphasis on subjugation and reasserting the power and influence of established authority is calculated to instigate a response from the debate’s broad-minded

predominantly female audience at the Westminster Forum. In him, Thelwall clearly creates a villainous foil to be later rebutted and rebuked.

The fourth speaker in *A Speech in Rhyme*'s mock debate is the man of manners, a figure of fashion who asserts superficiality over authenticity in regards to social interactions (see fig. 2). The use of this character type suggests Thelwall's familiarity with works of conduct and etiquette culture of the eighteenth century: specifically, Lord Chesterfield's *Advice to his Son, On Men and Manners* (1774), which was addressed frequently, and often negatively, in the popular press of the time. Often subtitled the "principles of politeness," Chesterfield's work "explore[s] the power of surfaces and performances" (Dean 694). Moreover, "[i]n a period when other writers described sociability as source or pleasure or of intimate connection, Chesterfield represented it as an arena for performance and control" (694).

(Fig 2. Man of Manners from Ashton's *Men, Maidens and Fashion,* p. 99)

Chesterfield's text certainly had an influence in advancing arguments for polish and gentility embedded in courtship discourse. A debate, held on April 19, 1787 at Coachmakers' Hall, examined the query: "Are the letters of the late Lord Chesterfield to his Son more injurious to the Morals of the Youth of the Male Sex, or the Reading of Novels to the Female Sex?" (Andrew

1232). The fact that the audience, on this particular occasion, "[d]etermined that reading Lord Chesterfield [was] most injurious" (1232), certainly confirms both his influence and the perception that the message being promoted in his work was damaging. Lord Chesterfield's text would also become a point of contention for Wollstonecraft. In Chapter 4 of *The Vindication*, she writes of Chesterfield's letters in relation to the degradation of women, that in order to "gain the hearts of twenty women," men are subject to an "immoral system" as "the art of acquiring an early knowledge of the world… is [that which] preys secretly on the young person's expanding powers and turns to poison the abundant juices that should mount with vigour in the youthful frame, inspiring warm affections and great resolves" (66). Thelwall joins in on this critique in his hyperbolic portrayal of the man of manners in *A Speech in Rhyme*.

In his poem, Thelwall subtly upends the polite discourse on conduct book culture with a cheeky attack upon this male type. The man of manners intends his supposed refinement to trump the harsh condemnations of the cynic and the hyperbolic emotional expressions of the enamoured and jaded lovers. His speech relies on metaphors of artifice to convey Love's ability to "mend," "polish," and "impart":

> *Love* is the *artist*, whose refining touch
>
> Imparts the *polish* we admire so much
>
> *He* brings the latent ore of worth to light;
>
> 'Tis *he* alone makes genius sparkle bright.
>
> *He* gives the soothing softness to the air,
>
> Which makes VICE *dangerous* – but makes VIRTUE *fair*.
>
> A touching sensibility he lends,
>
> Friendly to Virtue, and to Virtue's friends. (10-11)

While the sentiments expressed are no doubt positive, their impact is undercut as love is made to seem glossy and artificial. “Touching sensibility” paradoxically connotes distance and superficiality. In fact, Thelwall’s character sketch reinforces Wollstonecraft’s claim that “[t]here are quite as many male coquets as female, and they are far more pernicious pests to society, as their sphere of action is larger, and they are less exposed to the censure of the world” (*Thoughts on the Education* 81). At this juncture in the performance of Thelwall’s poem, with its punctuated pauses and hyperbolic imagery, the audience (and particularly its female members) could not have missed the insincerity of this particular speaker who is introduced as one “in whom is seen / A *winning polish*, and a *sprightly mien*, / [since] [f]rom *Men* and *Manners* he has drawn his rule” (10). A critic alert to elocutionary close reading will recognize that this passage was ironically designed to please the audience, as Thelwall’s focus on artifice ultimately undercuts the resolution of the speaker.[11]

It is no surprise then that, following the effusion of the man of manners, Thelwall has a woman take over the staged debate. The frame narrator returns briefly to “[w]eigh ev’ry [preceding] argument” (11) but is left unsatisfied, confused and “in doubt” (11) by their statements. At this point, he (and his conductor Thelwall) caters to “the gentle fair” in his audience by introducing “a MAID” who mixes serene balance with rational control:

> Lo! brightly smiling in Idalian charms,
>
> A MAID, whose beauty ev’ry heart alarms –
>
> Yet not of beauty proud, nor idly deckt
>
> In those light gewgaws which the *vain* respect:

---

[11] This concept is further addressed in Chapter 4, by examining Seraphina and Henry’s reaction to the reading of the poem by Jeffery Ruddel in *The Daughter of Adoption.* In Chapter 5, artifice and “affect” are central to my discussion of the Pandolia figure.

> Not one whose sole delight is outward grace,
>
> Who slights the *mind* to decorate the *face*,
>
> But one in whom united we shall find
>
> A RUTLAND'S *beauty* and a CHARLOTTE'S *mind*.
>
> With winning eloquence hear *her* declare
>
> The cause of Love, of Virtue, and the Fair. (11)

The male speakers, in effect, all act as foils for her, undermined in retrospect by this figure not only placed on a pedestal but also given prominence at the podium. When read in terms of its delivery, the Maiden's entry acts on a number of different levels. First, it is no doubt intended to engage and satisfy the female audience that Thelwall flattered in his advertisements to the debate at Westminster Forum. In addition, Thelwall uses aristocratic comparisons – to Lady Mary Isabella Somerset, Duchess of Rutland, who was esteemed for her "fine and faultless form" (Willing 172-173) and Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, who was a patroness of the arts and an amateur botanist regularly praised for her intelligence (Fraser 236-7) – to reinforce the mixture of outward and inward graces required to secure "winning eloquence" (11). Furthermore, this female figure resists the artificiality inherent in the characterization of the man of manners. As she eschews "light gewgaws" and the falsity of "outward grace / [which] slights the *mind* to decorate the *face*" (11), she emerges quickly as the debate's only genuine and, therefore, authoritative voice.

The success of the "gentle fair" is predicated on her ability systematically to dismantle the arguments of the previous male speakers, and to do so with exceptional rhetorical dexterity. At one point, she addresses love as a harmful and unregulated passion. Such a "passion," suggests the Maid, should not be called "by the name" (12). Rather, the speaker argues, "[l]ove's

an emotion both of *heart* and *mind*" (12). This echoes similar sentiments expressed in Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), where in the chapter entitled "Love," the author firmly contends that "the passion must either be rooted out, or the continual allowances and excuses that are made will hurt the mind, and lessen the respect for virtue" (32). Like Wollstonecraft, Thelwall's female debater thus offers a corrective to the first speaker's exhortation and praise for love through tempering. In addressing the second speaker, the spurned lover, Thelwall has the maid use his own words against him, contending against the faulty belief that "a thing's abuse / Is a fit *argument* against its *use*" (12). A fundamental part of this particular rebuttal is the notion that not all "*Women are … coquets, and light and vain*" (12). Finally, she addresses the cynic's point that reason is abandoned "*When Love appears*" (12). In order to be kind to fair ones, she says, men "[m]ust cultivate the *graces of the mind*" and she wittily reverses his earlier maxim, to conclude "*The* MAN OF SENSE *is still the* LADY'S MAN." Finally, she adds necessary moral depth to the Man of Manners' argument by talking about love in terms not of aristocratic artifice but of industry, utility and above all merit, another important word in Thelwall's lexicon.

At the end of Thelwall's polyvocal piece, the speaker who opened this fictionalized debate returns to his own voice to assert "Truth's fair record" (13): that is, the reasoning and reactions of the rational maid, who has clearly won the day. He (and through him Thelwall the conductor, once again gratifying his audience) "prove" (13) her argument by praising love's influence on members of various social classes and professions – the artist, "the SAILOR," "the POOR MECHANIC," "the PATRIOT" (13) – all types that would have been in attendance for the mock debate at the Westminster Forum.[12] These groupings prefigure Thelwall's idea that

[12] Mary Thale contends that "[p]robably the audience" in debating societies "consisted chiefly of

"every large workshop and manufactory is a sort of political society, which no act of parliament can silence, and no magistrate disperse" (*The Rights of Nature* 21) and his own adopted position "to Patriot Virtue true" (*SPP* 95:10) that would define his political persona in the 1790s.

Part 4: "The Moving Eloquence of Woe": Roman Matrons and Sabine Women

Thelwall's final example of the moral utility and social virtue of love in *A Speech in Rhyme* involves an allusion to the Sabine Women of antiquity, exemplars of female stalwartness, who sum up the portrayal of women here and point forward to Thelwall's later work:

> When ROME's thinn'd phalanx frown'd in dread array
> And the rous'd SABINE'S [*sic*] thirsted for the 'fray,
> While *Desolation* clapp'd her harpy wings,
> And hell-born Discord shook her snaky stings,
> For war and havock while each side prepare,
> Impell'd by *Vengeance* one, and one *Despair*,
> Why did the Sabine women, drown'd in grief,
> Rush 'tween the armies of each hostile Chief,
> Silence the fatal signal's dire alarm,
> And stop red Slaughter's high up-lifted arm?
> Why did they, say, their tender infants show

---

artisans, mechanics, and shopkeepers" (59). In addition, the price of admission, sixpence, was less than the fee required to attend the theatre or a more formal lecture at this time. According to Thomas Munck, the debating societies were more accessible to members of the working, middle, and lower classes (72).

And in the moving eloquence of woe,

Persuade the Chief their cruel wrath to cease,

And lull Contention in the arms of Peace?

What could the MATRONS to this conduct move?

Blush! Cynic blush! And own THAT "*It was* LOVE." (14)

The story of the Sabine Women, a popular historical subject among Renaissance and eighteenth-century painters, came down to Thelwall in two different versions, epitomizing two different roles of or perspectives on women. One focused on their abduction and rape by the Romans, emphasizing female passivity and victimhood; the other highlighted their heroic agency and sensibility by focusing on one of the women, Hersilia, who intervened between Romans and Sabines, bringing about their reconciliation (Hicks 66). It is this latter version that Thelwall highlights in *A Speech in Rhyme*, in common with several painters of the period (Macmillan 91-92). He follows Plutarch, according to whom, the "words of Hersilia, accompanied by her tears, echoed in every heart. Feelings of love between husband and wife, of the love of fathers and brothers, spread from rank to rank in the two armies" (quoted in Macmillan 92). This response exemplifies the chain-reaction effect Thelwall aspires to inspire in his auditors in the Westminster Forum and throughout his career.

One of the best-known interpretations of the Sabine Women legend from the period is found in the June 2nd, 1711 issue of *The Spectator* where Joseph Addison, in an article on women's participation in politics, observes that "[w]hen the Romans and Sabines were at war, and just upon the point of giving battle, the women, who were allied to both of them, interposed with so many tears and entreaties that they prevented the mutual slaughter which threatened both parties, and united them together in a firm and lasting peace" (76). Addison's diction here speaks

to common gendered interpretations of the female Sabines' resilient act. The "many tears and entreaties" of the mediators undercut the value and strength of their stand. Graham Barker-Benfield suggests that Addison's stance "categorizes [the sex] by subordination, weakness and domesticity" (308). This is certainly evident in Addison's conclusion, where it is proposed that "[f]emale virtues are of a domestic turn" and that "English women … should distinguish themselves as tender mothers and faithful wives, rather than as furious partisans" (76). While Thelwall's account retains the images of tears and entreaty, he replaces Addison's passive and subordinate adjectives or qualifiers, "tender" and "faithful," with a more robust sensibility that transcends entrenched gender norms. His Sabine women "drown" in grief, "rush" into action, command "silence," and perhaps most significantly, given the context, they "persuade" with their "moving eloquence" (14). Their steadfast resolve is also contrasted with the stereotypically negative femininity of "Desolation" and "Discord," characterized as temptresses with "harpy wings" and "snaky stings" (14). In the eloquence of the Sabine women, the negative implications of the preceding diction – strong 'd' words connected by alliteration throughout this passage ("desolation," "discord," "despair," "drowned" and "dire") – are transformed into something positive and liberating. This episode sets up a trope that Thelwall would employ time and time again in his future work as he manipulates the conventions of sensibility and the power of "tears" to enact social change. The example of the unfaltering Sabine women captures tenacity in the face of persecution and demonstrates love as active rather than passive agency, firm in the face of challenge, rather than a fleeting emotion subject to caprice.

At opposite ends of the eighteenth century, Addison's and Thelwall's versions of the Sabine women engage in a larger debate on Roman matronhood that, according to Philip Hicks, "provided the eighteenth-century woman with a model of female patriotism that encouraged her

to be an educated and devoted wife and mother whose commitment to the public good required not only supporting and animating male family members but also, in time of maximum danger, stepping forward alone or in concert with other women to deliver the state from enemies foreign and domestic" (52). This was another talking point surely planted in Thelwall's fertile mind during his frequent attendance at debating societies. For instance, on October 29, 1787, at the Westminster Forum, the question was asked "Was it worthy of Admiration in the Romans to sacrifice Social duties and Family Affection to Patriotism and Public Spirit?" and decided "by a great majority in favour of the Romans" (Andrew 1268). In Thelwall's case, as we will see, the ideal citizen—male or female—was one who could balance and blend family affection with public spirit. With respect to women, this conception was further developed in Thelwall's 1803 lecture "*On the Importance of Elocution as a* FEMALE ACCOMPLISHMENT, *and its connection with the* RELATIVE DUTIES *of Polished Life*" ("Elocution and Oratory" 102). In the first he distinguished between the wife as "bosom Slave" and "Intellectual Partner," contending that the "Intellectual Mother" was superior to the "pickling and preserving – the fashion-mongering" ones (102). In this lecture, he also addresses the notion that "[d]uties of individuals [are] dependent on their station in life" and "on the state of Society" (102). He then provides a litany of women's roles in antiquity, including "Penelope at her Loom," "Lucretia among her Virgins" and "Cornelia and her Children" (102), all of whom are sharp and active members of society who nonetheless retained their maternal positions.

In addressing the myth of the Sabine Women and famous women from antiquity, Thelwall is also engaging with numerous female histories available at the turn of the nineteenth century. For instance, Mary Hays would suggest in her entry on Lucretia that these exemplary women "in the earlier ages of civilization, and in the first progress towards refinement, courage

in one sex, and chastity in the other, from their immediate beneficial effects upon society, held the first rank in the heroic virtues. Among the ancient Romans, these qualities were carried to a height, and distinguished by a lustre, that has been rarely equaled, and never surpassed" (*Female Biography* Vol. 4 499). In the third volume of *Female Biography* (1803), Hays also included Hersilia among her exemplars of "illustrious and celebrated women of all ages and countries" (title page) as did Lucy Aikin in her third *Epistles of Women* (1810): "[b]old in their fears and strong in nature's right," the Sabine women, "each lift[ing] her babe" managed to subdue "[r]age," leading to an apotheosis in which "[p]eace joins their hands, Love mingles race with race, / And Woman triumphs in the wide embrace" (74:165-166, 170-171). Like Hays and Aikin, Thelwall uses the Sabine Women motif to revise traditional understandings of female passivity, figuring somatic response not as an undermining weakness but rather as a forceful tool. But he also contributes to a developing discourse about the political role of the mother figure. If not quite agents of petticoat politics, women are portrayed by Thelwall as having a valid and valuable role in the private sphere that could also have an impact beyond the hearth and home.

Thelwall references another Roman matron in a set of patronage poems, specifically addressing women who supported and sheltered him while he considered retiring from political life in 1797. These poems emphasize reciprocal exchange, negotiating between sentiment and politics as well as domestic life and the public sphere. The central character of these poems is addressed as Fulvia, an allusion to the wife of Mark Antony, and a woman renowned for her political activism and ambition, portrayed by Hays as "a woman of high and masculine spirit, who had fomented the disputes between Augustus and her husband for the purpose of detaching him from the spells of her rival" (*Female Biography* Vol. 3 328). She was "not born for the distaff or housewifery; nor one that could be content with the power of ruling privately an

ordinary husband; but a lady capable of advising a magistrate, and of governing a general of an army" (*Female Biography* Vol. 3 335). Hicks contends that, during this period, Fulvia was often used as a negative example of "Roman women as political mischief makers" and that, "depending on how her character is read, [she] could be depicted as the politically aggressive and dominating wife or as a loyal mother and wife" (55). In giving the name Fulvia to two women, Mrs. Baker and Mrs. G, to whom he writes "fan-club poems,"[13] Thelwall balances between romantic/familial ties and patriotic acts. Instead of presenting an either/or situation, he promotes a synthesis which stresses the role of the woman as central to the sustenance and revival of political rights on one hand and the voice of the people in times of trial and turbulence on the other.

This synthesis appears first in two poems of 1797, "Inscription on the Fan of Mrs. B." and "Lines Written on the Fan of Mrs. Baker." In both cases the fan is a symbol and physical memorial of friendship, figured in terms of a reciprocal relationship between male voice (the wind on the fan associated with political oratory) and female space (the fan's sheltering folds associated with both body and hearth).[14] The "double power" of this relationship is best summed up at the end of the "Lines," paying tribute to Mrs. Baker and her husband,

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[13] In "Citizen Juan," Thompson writes of "a number of young women, the wives (and especially the daughters of old radical friends" who "flocked to hear the notorious political lecturer in a new guise" during his elocution lectures (89). Thelwall "addressed some ten to fifteen amatory odes written between 1803 and 1805" to these young ladies (90). Grouping them together with poetic efforts written in 1797, Thompson calls these Thelwall's "fan-club poems" (93), as many of them "were intended (or pretended) to be written on the fans that were a necessary (but flirtatious) accessory in overheated lecture rooms and assembly halls" (*SPP* 176).
[14] Thompson addresses this relationship in the unpublished "From Sedition to Seduction: the Radical Songs of John Thelwall."

The hospitable pair, whose hearth

The social virtues loved to throng,

While patriot themes and harmless mirth

Alternate wing'd the hours along. (*SPP* 192:39-42)

Writing in 1797, while on the run from loyalist mobs and seeking to circumvent government repression, Thelwall realized, personally and politically, the significance and influence of the domestic. For him, repeatedly, the "hearth" is where the heart is, a space for protection from strict sanctions but also a space for the promulgation of important ideas and ideals. The parallelism between "patriot themes" and "harmless mirth" is not intended to destabilize but rather complement. The "social virtues" can only be established and promoted in a model site of hospitality, whereby all members of a household can discourse freely. Thus, "harmless mirth" is not a form of escapism or loss, but must in fact "alternate" with discussion of political matters, in the sense, according to the *OED*, of being "[r]eciprocal, mutual; performed in turn."

In "Ode. Inscribed on the Fan of Mrs. G (Sept. 1803)," Thelwall, now an established lecturer of elocution, accomplishes a similar end to the 1797 poem to Mrs. Baker when he extols the virtue of "the group in social love combining, / Connubial and fraternal, / Round thy hearth, matron rever'd!" (*SPP* 193:30-33). In this formulation, the "hearth" once more acts as a locus of sociability as "the notes unhallow'd, / Of lighter themes" enhances "holy friendship's kindred bond" (*SPP* 193:35-37). In this poem Thelwall refers more directly to the persecution from which he was escaping five years before, as he recalls

that precarious season

When, with the popular storm in vain contending

With winds and billows hostile!

I sometimes, from the fruitless toil withdrew me,--

To hail (how sweet!)

The social converse of the group fraternal (*SPP* 193-194:14-19)

Here Mrs. G., as "Fulvia!" (*SPP* 192:1), becomes a figure of reconciliation similar to that of Hersilia, standing between and smoothing contention from opposing forces. It is worth noting that in a later essay on this poem and another experimental ode, published in the *Poetical Recreations of The Champion* (1822), Thelwall would "disclaim all anarchy of rhythmus, as [he did] all other anarchy" at the time, suggesting "our liberty must be a liberty of order and of law" (150). In Thelwall's 1803 Ode, Fulvia as robust matriarch of a fully functioning family represents the order and law necessary to ensure "virtue's wish'd millennium" (*SPP* 198:52).[15] The poem's Pindaric balanced structure of strophe, antistrophe and epode emphasizes this order,[16] as the "sweet! . . . social converse" (*SPP* 18:19) of the home has its parallels in the "sweet converse" (*SPP* 141:88) of Thelwall's relationship with, and conversational odes to, Wordsworth and Coleridge and, as well, the "moving eloquence of woe" (14) necessitated by Hersilia, on behalf of the Sabine Women, to calm warring factions.

Rather than see this romantic reconciliation and recourse to order and law as a retraction of earlier convictions, one must recognize its similarity to Thelwall's political oratory, for example the cautious but committed sentiments expressed in his lecture "Peaceful Discussion, and Not Tumultuary Violence the Means of Redressing National Grievance" (1795). In this

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[15] This concept is addressed more fully in Chapter 4, with the discussion of "To Miss Bannatine" and Thelwall's experiences in Scotland.

[16] There is a correspondence between this form and Thelwall's principles. Thompson points out that "[t]he Pindaric ode originated in speech . . . but also in rhetorical and physical movement" and that "[t]his movement perfectly suited Thelwall's paramount laws of action and reaction and correspondence" *(SPP* 103). Thompson addresses this correlation in more detail in *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle* (236).

response to Pitt's restrictions on free speech, Thelwall argues that "[i]t is not by tumult … not by violence … [but] by reason" that the goals and desires of the people will be accomplished (224). He advocates here, as in most of his other political writings and lectures, for a stalwart form of peaceful libertarianism, a "resolution to proceed like enlightened, bold, and peaceable Citizens, determined to respect in our own conduct the sacred laws of humanity and good order, but rather to die than suffer the turbulence, injustice, and persecuting fury of others to drive us from those principles of Liberty and Justice" (224).

Fulvia's strategically generous hospitality in the ode "Inscribed on the Fan of Mrs. G," along with the Maiden's mild yet commanding advocacy of love and Hersilia's exhortation for peace in *A Speech in Rhyme,* are acts at once of reconciliation and of agency, strong defenses of principles and calls to action. In many ways they should be read as Thelwall's Roman History lectures are read, as examples of "seditious allegory" that challenge patriarchal distinctions and work towards a more equitable body politic. Furthermore, Thelwall's early embracing of "the daughters of Albion" anticipates his stylistic transition from "seditious to seductive allegory at the turn of a new century" (Thompson, *SPP* 175). In this, these poems have much in common with those I will discuss in Chapters 4 and 5. They show how, nurtured in the debating societies of the 1780s, Thelwall's voice of socio-political critique developed out of early debates on gender and the voice of women, as "[t]he state of the debating societies and the questions that they discussed are a barometer of the swings between political freedom and repression, including attitudes to the situation of women in society" (Williams 25). Furthermore, many of the motifs developed during Thelwall's apprenticeship in debating societies prefigure themes explored in *The Daughter of Adoption*, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Three:

Vindicating, Rectifying and Revivifying Wollstonecraft in *The Daughter of Adoption*

The recent publication of *The Daughter of Adoption: A Tale of Modern Times* (1801) by Broadview Press reintroduced the public to Thelwall's most important and sustained feminist statement. As a successor to *The Peripatetic* (1793), this satirical multi-generic novel offers a detailed and dramatic assessment of women's place in turn-of-the-nineteenth-century society. While much of the existing criticism on the text has concentrated on two books that portray the 1791 Haitian revolution,[17] and the rest sometimes dismissed as "mere conventional money-spinn[ing]" (E.P. Thompson 322), it is my contention that the novel demands more careful examination for its subtle yet subversive Wollstonecraftian critique and reconfiguration of conventional courtship and marriage discourse. The interwoven narratives of its main protagonists – the English gentleman Henry Montfort and the Creole castaway Seraphina Parkinson – allow for Thelwall's most sustained representation of the perils for and untapped potential of women during a particularly virulent period of backlash against female radicals.

During the 1790s, Thelwall was enthusiastically engaged with many political and social causes, and fluent in elements of feminist discourse that, as we have seen in Chapter 2, were integral components of his apprenticeship in debating societies the decade before. The first half of this chapter will explore Thelwall's interactions, real and imagined, with Mary Wollstonecraft, during the early months of 1797. Thelwall's novel also responds to the death of

[17] In his seminal *Seditious Allegories* (2001), the bulk of Scrivener's analysis of the novel addresses the revolution (221-25). Work by Corfield (2008), Markley (2009) and Kitson (2010) has continued the trend of primarily looking at political and colonial themes of books 3 and 4 of the novel.

Wollstonecraft, as both homage and eulogy, seeking to reconcile her biography, philosophy and creative works. Evidence from William Godwin's diaries reveals that, in addition to Wollstonecraft, Thelwall came into contact with a number of important female writers and thinkers of his day, including Mary Robinson, Mary Hays and Eliza Fenwick, who were associated with Godwin's circle at the time. These interactions influenced the composition of *The Daughter of Adoption*, which enters into dialogue with a number of texts and polemical tracts written by these influential women. As a result, rights-of-women issues discussed in 1797 but developed over the preceding decade reverberate in Thelwall's novel, which benefits from being placed amongst a vibrant community of texts as opposed to being read as an isolated stand-alone tome.

Thelwall's engagements with radical romantic feminists also influenced the themes and tropes examined in the second half of this chapter, which looks at the role played by matronly mentor figures, the act of naming and the concept of place in establishing a mediated voice for women. This is best illustrated in the figure of Thelwall's chief Wollstonecraft surrogate, Seraphina, whom A.A. Markley categorizes as "the most vocal mouthpiece for the novel's reforming ideals" (110). Through Seraphina's experiences as an ostracized outsider who overcomes restrictive preconceptions of male-female relationships, Thelwall is able to redefine the role of wife as "Intellectual Partner" through his protagonist's strong-willed personality and ability to influence others (*Selections* Wakefield 8). In fact, Seraphina's characterization bridges the gap between Wollstonecraft's fiction and polemic, in essence righting some of the *Wrongs of Woman* by questioning their origins, re-scripting norms and emphasizing courtship based on rational affection rather than social expectation. Ultimately, each of the novel's thematic concerns assists in clarifying Thelwall's position towards the opposite sex at the turn of the

nineteenth century, while also setting the groundwork for the pioneering elocutionary work to come in the following decades.

Part 1: London to Llyswen: The Real and Reimagined Mary Wollstonecraft

In a review of Charles Lloyd's 1819 collection *Nugae Canorae*, Lloyd's friend and occasional collaborator Charles Lamb remarked that "some of [the] tenderest pages [are] dedicated to the virtues of *Mary Wolstonecraft* [sic] *Godwin*" (164). The poem to which he is referring, Lloyd's elegy "Lines to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin," written in 1798, attempts, according to the author's preface, to do justice to "the heart and upright dignity of [an] excellent woman" (54). The overriding purpose of the poem, which is set at Wollstonecraft's gravesite, is to defend the deceased's voice and vindicate her character. Elements from Godwin's posthumous portrait of Wollstonecraft, published as *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798), are hinted at throughout Lloyd's elegy. In fact, Lloyd seems to refer directly to Godwin's candid appraisal in the poem's focus on Wollstonecraft's "disappointed loves, and impulses . . . / Sever'd from nature's destined sympathies" (56). Specifically, Lloyd is alluding to the ill-fated affairs with Henry Fuseli and Gilbert Imlay addressed, in detail, by Godwin in the *Memoirs*. In addition, the speaker takes aim at those "pedantic censurers" who question or "blame that upright singleness of soul," instead contending that he "revere[s] / That simpleness which gave to her pure lips / A ready utterance to each inward thought" (56). Yet, according to one critic, Lloyd "seems to celebrate her work almost despite himself, and he repeatedly attempts to disassociate his sympathy from any endorsement of her personal and political convictions" (Guest 106). Thus, the poem captures Lloyd's sympathetic but cautious response to a woman

whose voice would soon after be limited in popular public memory because of perceived moral transgressions and a social agenda that was ahead of its time.

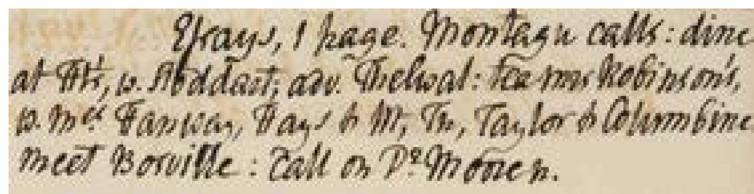
Around the same time as Lamb's review, Thelwall considered Lloyd's collection in the "Review of Literature" section of *The Champion* on October 17, 1819. Referencing Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," Thelwall comments that "[t]he 'still, sad music of humanity' breathes through [Lloyd's] gloomiest effusions" (672). Alluding to the "relative and social feeling" he had earlier adopted as the basis for his *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* (1801), Thelwall praises Lloyd's poetry as harboring no "misanthropy" but instead "chiefly" expressing "personal feelings" (672). The review continues with a brief overview of the "deep and continuous stream of feeling" in the collection before including illustrative lines from a poem entitled "Stanzas" and the *de rigueur* apology that "we regret that we can give no detailed account of the remaining contents of this tear-moving but delightful volume" (672). While the review ends with a nod and comparison of Lloyd to Lamb, there is unfortunately no reference to Lloyd's poem "Lines to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin."

This frustrating exclusion is one of many in Thelwall's oeuvre when it comes to Wollstonecraft and her work. While Wollstonecraft's obvious influence on the creation of the title character of *The Daughter of Adoption* is raised by the recent editors of the novel – Scrivener, Solomonescu and Thompson – in numerous footnotes and their appendices, Thelwall's copious writings fail to address Wollstonecraft's ideas directly. Nor, despite a recent resurgence of interest in the fractious relationship between William Godwin and Thelwall,[18] has

[18] In "The Press and Danger of the Crowd" (2011), Mee examines Godwin and Thelwall's differing understanding of crowds. In *Unusual Suspects* (2013), Johnston devotes a full chapter to comparing and contrasting their political positions. Most recently, Hansson (2017) has addressed the relationship between the two figures during the charged mid-1790s.

much been written on the influence Wollstonecraft had on Thelwall's thinking. Entries from Godwin's journal, however, suggest that Thelwall did have some degree of social interaction with Wollstonecraft and her coterie on at least two occasions at the outset of 1797. First, it is highly probable that Thelwall was present either before or during tea with Mary Robinson, Mary Hays and Wollstonecraft, among others, on January 22 (see fig. 3).

Essays, 1 page. Montagu calls: dine
at Ht's, w. Stoddart; adv. Thelwal: tea mrs Robinson's,
w. m^{es} Hanway, Hays & Wt, Tn, Taylor & Columbine:
meet Bosville: call on Dr Moore n.


Essays, 1 page. Montagu calls: dine
at Ht's, w. Stoddart; adv. Thelwal: tea mrs Robinson's,
w. m^{es} Hanway, Hays & Wt, Tn, Taylor & Columbine
meet Bosville: call on Dr Moore n.

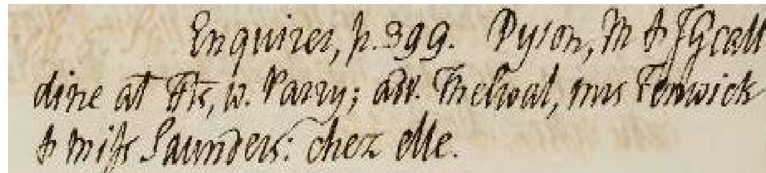
(Fig 3. 22 Jan. 1797 Entry from *The Diary of William Godwin*)

Then, a few weeks later on February 5, Thelwall is again invoked in the journal with the abbreviation "adv," which is used "to indicate that [Godwin] unexpectedly encountered the person at a meal or meeting or at an event" (Myers et al.). The editors of the diary also propose that the "adv encounter functions as a subset to a wider meeting/meal/activity and as such . . . [the] individuals listed as adv encounters are more likely to encounter each other within the physical and social confines of the broader meal/meeting/activity's parameters" (Myers et al.). On this second occasion, Thelwall was accompanied by Jacobin novelist Eliza Fenwick and one Miss Saunders (see fig. 4). The entry then states that later that day Godwin was "chez elle," which according to the editors of his journals, denotes an intimate meeting between him and Wollstonecraft (Myers et al.).

Enquirer, p. 399. Dyson, M & J G call:

dine at Hts, w. Parry; adv.Thelwal, mrs Fenwick

& miss Saunders: chez elle.



(Fig 4. 5 Feb. 1997 Entry from *The Diary of William Godwin*)

While there is no written record of the fruitful conversations that occurred, one can assume that Thelwall did have some sort of sustained contact and exchange with “the lively circle of friends Godwin had cultivated [at this time], including numerous [female] admirers whom [Godwin] termed ‘the fairs’” (Gordon 143). Thus, significantly, during the winter months just before Thelwall embarked upon the road to Nether Stowey to have his influential encounter with Wordsworth and Coleridge, he was engaged in conversation with major female figures and thinkers of the era during a productive period in which many of their major philosophical treatises and fictional works were published. In turn, the fruits of those 1797 conversations would influence the future content of Thelwall’s gestating novel.

Building upon the valuable lessons learned during his apprenticeship in the debating societies of London during the 1780s, Thelwall’s analysis of gender politics complements his contentious political lectures on Roman History, which, as seen in the previous chapter, included female role models. These lectures, given in the north of England in 1796, were intended to combat what Johnston has called “Pitt’s Reign of Alarm” (xvii). The end of the 1790s was a fertile period for works that addressed women’s place in society. Just as the government cracked down on potentially seditious public meetings, a number of “unsex’d females” (Polwhele) were publishing poems, articles, tracts, novels and plays that questioned separate spheres and deeply

rooted gender ideologies. The newly created *Monthly Magazine*, to which Thelwall frequently contributed, remained a key source for debate and discussion, including multiple articles in its early issues defending women's talents and challenging traditional gender roles. The centerpiece of each issue was a lengthy editorial entitled "The Enquirer," penned by William Enfield, whose third rumination addressed the query "Are Literary and Scientific Pursuits Suited to the Female Character?" (1796). Enfield's article emphasized that a strong pedagogical imperative went hand in hand with promoting the rights of women (181-84).

The rights of woman debate initiated by Wollstonecraft's most famous work earlier in the decade was further developed by devotees such as Hays in *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women* (1798) and Robinson's *A Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (1799). Thelwall's feminist, abolitionist and anti-imperialist novel *The Daughter of Adoption* (1801) enters into this larger debate as an extension of the discussions that took place with members of Godwin's circle at the beginning of 1797. In addition, as a Jacobin novel, Thelwall's work shares similar concerns with novels such as Fenwick's *Secresy; or the Ruin on the Rock* (1795), Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) and Wollstonecraft's posthumously published *Maria, or, the Wrongs of Woman* (1798). The novel addresses key radical issues including "the question of environment over inheritance . . . female rationality . . . and individual merit marked by sensibility and rationality rather than birthright" (Wallace 17). Thelwall's novel, written in isolation during his retreat at Llyswen in Wales, engages with the heated topics raised in the works of his contemporaries. Of all those interlocutors, however, Thelwall drew most heavily on the biographical background and ideological positions of Mary Wollstonecraft in fashioning the novel's heroine, Seraphina.

According to the modern editors of *The Daughter of Adoption*, the traumatic loss of Thelwall's six-year old daughter, Maria, in late 1799 "was folded into the death of Mary Wollstonecraft, whose *Memoirs* (written by Thelwall's friend William Godwin) and unfinished novel *The Wrongs of Woman*; *or Maria* he also read at this time" (Introduction 10-11). The juxtaposition of these two female influences marks Thelwall's ability to take loss and transform it into positive ambition and hope. On one hand, the composition of *The Daughter of Adoption* is cathartic for its author, a novelistic version of the "Paternal Tears" elegies published in *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement*, where Thelwall attempts to come to terms with the unexpected passing of his young daughter, in whom he had invested his hopes for the future. On the other hand, it reinforces his longtime values, as Thelwall likewise adopts Wollstonecraft as an emblematic daughter who personifies the "Prospective Principle of Virtue"[19] inherent in his political lectures and later realized in his elocutionary endeavors.

Thelwall identified with Wollstonecraft as a martyr to passionately held ideals as much as a purveyor of rational ideas. They were likewise victims of vitriol, persecution and tarnished reputation at the end of the century (posthumously in the case of Wollstonecraft), easy targets of satire for the writers of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, representing a "new morality" that conservative contributors like George Canning and Richard Polwhele found abhorrent and harmful to society. In fact, their injurious works are visually linked in James Gillray's artistic rendering of *The New Morality* (1798) (see fig. 5).

[19] In this lecture, published in *The Tribune*, Thelwall states that "all virtue must be of an *active*, not of a *passive* nature, and, therefore . . . it is the duty of every individual to keep his [or her] eye steadily fixed upon that which is before him [or her]" (90).

(Fig 5. Details from Gillray's *The New Morality*, depicting books by Godwin, Wollstonecraft, Coleridge, Thelwall, and other contemporaries.)

Both figures were scrutinized by writers and artists who disagreed with their political positions. As a result, Thelwall had to reconcile his private life with wide-ranging public perceptions. In Wollstonecraft's case, this was done retrospectively by others, namely Godwin, who ironically contributed to the negative reputation that would silence her voice for over a century. A key feature of Thelwall's period of retirement was his protean ability to re-invent himself, in effect using his paternal and domestic responsibilities to bolster a recreated public persona. By contrast, Wollstonecraft's legacy was left in limbo after her death, her personal life exposed for virulent critique or sympathetic treatment as a casualty. As Harriet Guest asserts

> Wollstonecraft's biography was a deeply disturbing narrative. To those who proclaimed themselves anti-Jacobins it was occasion for hostility and venomous glee, and for those whose initial impulses were sympathetic or supportive it raised troubling questions. It forced at least some of them to consider how far their principles could be applied to family, and to consider the relation between the forms of sensibility appropriate to domestic life and the enthusiasm of universal benevolence. (99)

Thelwall's experience made him sensitive to the plight of Wollstonecraft as a public figure, particularly in light of the revelations of the 1798 *Memoirs* and Godwin's editorial curating of Wollstonecraft's *Posthumous* works.

This concern corresponds to a career-long interest of Thelwall with life-writing, self-fashioning and the blurring of private and public personae. In *The Beauties of Biography, a Selection of the Lives of Eminent Men* (1792), which collects a number of life-writing efforts from Thelwall's time as editor of *The Biographical and Imperial Magazine*, the piece on John Horne Tooke opens with a fascinating reflection on the biographer's modus operandi. Thelwall attempts to ascertain how even-handedly to "delineate the political character, and trace the conduct of a man whose life has been spent in a continued series of restless opposition, to the encroachments of tyranny, or to the growing insolence of faction," especially when the concerned party is still a meaningful player in the public eye (44). He proceeds to trace two possible biographical approaches:

> The jaundiced eye of political prejudice will discolour the most disinterested proceedings on one hand, while, on the other, the ardent gaze of enthusiastic admiration may, at times, impart its own lively vigour to the objects of its contemplation, and discover, in measures, whose apparent object it applauds, a purity and sublimity of disinterested virtue, not entirely supported by the dictates of the actor's heart. (44)

Thelwall then, in a claim open to question, states that his own "judgement is too unbiased, and his heart too independent" to subscribe to these extremes on the spectrum; rather, his "bias (if any there is) arises not from personal attachment to the man, but from an honest zeal for the cause in which he is so warmly engaged" (44). The ability to manipulate personal narrative, which implies a form of the very partiality Thelwall sees himself as transcending, is fundamental to Thelwall throughout his career and is a valuable part of how he promoted himself, from nascent poet and public debater in the 1780s to esteemed and established reform advocate in the 1830s.

In crafting Seraphina, Thelwall addresses and modifies elements of Wollstonecraft's life and philosophy, in order deliberately to reframe her story. This is clearly seen in the comments of Edmunds, Henry's companion and, because of his background and ideals, one of Thelwall's own surrogates in the novel. When Edmunds offers his services to Seraphina at a time when Henry has, once again, wavered in his fidelity, Edmunds' plausible means of supporting her is to "write for the booksellers," specifically her "history. . . under some fictitious name, and call it a novel" (249). Edmunds' assurance that "every body would read it; for every body would weep over it" (249) is not dissimilar to Thelwall's own desire, in his novel, to vindicate Wollstonecraft's memory by championing core elements of her philosophy. Through once more using the conventions of sensibility explored in the first two chapters, Thelwall attempts to chasten the rage of critics at revelations of Wollstonecraft's personal conduct and instead to extract sympathetic tears from his readers. In essence, Thelwall tries to rectify Godwin's well-meaning but poorly executed assertion in the opening chapter of his *Memoirs* that "the more fully we are presented with the picture" of a person of eminence, "the more generally shall we feel ourselves an attachment to their fate, and a sympathy in their excellencies" (5). Using fiction to correct misconceptions raised by Godwin's honest account, Thelwall employs a standard of merit to accentuate Wollstonecraft's "excellencies" in his representation of Seraphina.

While *The Daughter of Adoption* is neither a biography nor a roman-à-clef, there are elements of Thelwall's representation of Seraphina that resemble that "uncomfortable position between factual and fictional truth" (xvi) that Michael Benton calls "[l]iterary biography" (37). It also shares the generic diversity characteristic of biography (Benton 37), though in this case it more closely resembles Thelwall's previous novel *The Peripatetic* than his earlier biographical writings. Yasmin Solomonescu argues that Thelwall's novel should be considered "a radical

progeny" of the Jacobin novel, "a second generation or post-revolutionary work that is markedly aware of its formal, philosophical and historical inheritance" (87-88). While partially dressed in the conventional garb of Jacobin, sentimental and gothic traditions, Thelwall's work remains difficult to classify as a result of its self-conscious mingling of genres. In this, like *The Peripatetic* but not as extreme, *The Daughter of Adoption* can be considered an "exercise in applied genre theory" (Thompson, "A Voice in the Representation" 124). As the editors of the Broadview edition suggest in their introduction, "Thelwall breaks out of the prison of eighteenth-century fiction, employing but subverting their plots and characters to enable a more thoroughgoing reform of society in place of the status quo" (17). Seraphina's strength of character emerges from her ability to communicate in many modes – particularly blank verse and Socratic dialogue with male interlocutors.

Thelwall's novel contains a number of moments in which apparent biographical allusions are complicated by fictional variations, that raise questions regarding the aim in using Wollstonecraft as a model for Seraphina. The editorial notes in the Broadview edition emphasize a succession of references to and modifications of Wollstonecraft's life. For example, the stillbirth of Seraphina's first child with Henry is considered "[a] reversal of the fate of Wollstonecraft" who had died "of complications resulting from the birth . . . of her daughter" (270). When later abandoned by Henry, who forms a "heartless union with [the] daughter of dissipation" Melinda, Seraphina contemplates suicide, stating that "if I find it impossible to forget, I at least can die. If I cannot lull my soul to the soft slumbers of tranquility – the deep – the eternal sleep of oblivion is always at command" (328). The editors suggest the line is "an allusion to Wollstonecraft's suicide attempts in 1795 after being spurned by her lover Gilbert Imlay" (328). In both examples, there is an amendment of sorts, for Seraphina's actions are

tempered, as Thelwall ruefully meditates on a deed that is not enacted. In adapting the tragic features of Wollstonecraft's life, Thelwall attempts to re-write history, idealize a blemished biographical narrative and fantastically project what could have been.

As a result of his familiarity with elements of the biographical mode, Thelwall was acutely aware of what to include and exclude, extol or vilify, when narrating someone's story. Like writers of what Benton calls "biomythography," Thelwall deals "both with historical data and with the self-projections of the author in his/her life and literature" (48). In *The Daughter of Adoption*, Thelwall endeavors, through Seraphina's characterization, to resolve the inconsistencies between the many personae promulgated in Wollstonecraft's writings and to reconcile fundamental biographical details injudiciously included in Godwin's posthumous editorial work. Thelwall seeks not only to revitalize Wollstonecraft by, in essence, giving her story a happy ending, but in the process, to ensure her reputation and assure her voice by properly (re)contextualizing her ideas. Thelwall's depiction of Seraphina as, according to the editors of the Broadview edition, an "imaginative stand-in … for Wollstonecraft," goes beyond mere eulogy and homage to accomplish something unique from the myriad of other appropriations of Wollstonecraft in works composed shortly after her unfortunate passing (456).

Through his portrayal of Seraphina, Thelwall contributes to a series of immediate appraisals of Wollstonecraft that followed in the years following her death, including biographies by Hays and Godwin and fictional renditions by novelists.[20] Thelwall is particularly engaged with Godwin's *Memoirs* (1798), chiefly the author's open, reputedly objective and controversial

[20] These include works by Thomas Holcroft and William Godwin himself. In addition, a number of authors, such as Mary Hays, Charlotte Smith, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane West also wrote novels with protagonists who closely resembled Mary Wollstonecraft in their biographical and ideological representations (Favret 131).

representation of his wife. Godwin represents Wollstonecraft as resilient, having “a firmness of mind, an unconquerable greatness of soul, by which, after a short internal struggle, she was accustomed to rise above difficulties and suffering” (*Memoirs* 24). Seraphina, too, through her stalwart resolve, repeatedly overcomes difficulties and remains the “mistress of [her] own conduct; as far as human reason can command” (337), even as she copes with her lover Henry indulging in all “the seductions of dissipation” imaginable (297). In addition, both Wollstonecraft and Seraphina share “independence [as] the object after which [they] thirsted” (*Memoirs* 31). Throughout *The Daughter of Adoption*, Seraphina repeatedly reasserts her autonomy by refusing to succumb to slander, proposing and then pushing an agenda of “humble independence” (265). However, where Godwin’s biography famously dwells upon Wollstonecraft’s indiscretions and weaknesses, Thelwall asserts, in his portrait of Seraphina, that many of her supposed transgressions are misconstrued by a hostile patriarchal system that cannot reconcile itself to her autonomous nature.

Godwin himself blurs the lines between Wollstonecraft’s life and her creative writing in the *Memoirs* when he suggests that a passage from the *Wrongs of Woman* could “be considered as copying the outline of the first period of her own existence” (9). Thus, Godwin starts the trend of reading fiction as biography of Wollstonecraft that would become so popular in the decade following her death when he writes of Wollstonecraft’s first novel, *Mary, a Fiction*, that the incidents involving Fanny in the text are true to life while those unrelated are “fictitious” (*Memoirs* 34). Thelwall, however, in line with the theme of “social and relative affection” that makes up his contemporaneous collection of *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement*, attempts to personalize Seraphina (92). He uses elements of Wollstonecraft’s own highly publicized life to avoid making her a walking emblem akin to Holcroft’s idealization of her in the earlier *Anna St.*

Ives (1792), critiqued by Hazlitt as an "abstract essence" who was far too perfect to seem human (*Memoirs of the Late Thomas Holcroft* 170). Although neither Seraphina's character nor Thelwall's characterization is perfect, and elements of Seraphina remain highly idealized, Thelwall follows his tendency, as a political and social optimist, to hyperbolize in order to inspire change. Like Maria's speeches in *The Wrongs of Woman*, certain utterances of Seraphina can be seen as directly cribbed from Wollstonecraft's theoretical writings and this may detract from the realism of her presentation[21]. However, Seraphina's power comes from her ability to overcome repressive circumstances and instigate change by altering the perceptions of male characters and redefining the traditional understanding of family.

Additionally, in his characterization of Seraphina, Thelwall attempts to right the wrongs Wollstonecraft experienced in her problematic relationships with Henry Fuseli and Gilbert Imlay. In the process, Thelwall also endeavors to apply the moral standard Godwin and Wollstonecraft would design for a state of effective co-habitation. For instance, Godwin recollects that Wollstonecraft "consider[ed]" her "engagement" to Imlay "as of the most sacred nature" (*Memoirs* 57). Thelwall echoes this by using similar hallowed language to describe the early courtship of Henry and Seraphina on the Island of Margot and during their voyage towards England. However, unlike Wollstonecraft in Godwin's portrayal of her, Seraphina does not completely give "loose to all the sensibilities of her nature" (*Memoirs* 60). Rather, Thelwall includes the out-of-wedlock sexual encounter between Henry and Seraphina under the subtitle of "Reciprocations of Tenderness" (228). By describing their union as "an éclaircissement" and "unbounded love" (238), Thelwall adopts Godwin's own assessment of his relationship with

[21] This is the case in some other characters based on Wollstonecraft, such as Caroline in Fenwick's *Secresy*.

Wollstonecraft in order to rectify earlier disappointments. In this case, Godwin's praise of their 1796-1797 courtship as "the purest and most refined style of love" and as "friendship melting into love" (*Memoirs* 78-79) is paralleled by Seraphina's tenacity in properly preparing Henry for their final conjugal coming together. Thelwall's characterization of Seraphina remedies the salacious elements of Wollstonecraft's relations while also borrowing Godwin's idealized acclaim and applying it to her correction of Henry's ill-behavior.

The lacuna between the Wollstonecraft pigeon-holed after her death by Godwin's memoir, and Thelwall's reimagining of Wollstonecraftian viewpoints, is most clearly evident in the differing depictions of Amelia and Seraphina. The opening chapters of *The Daughter of Adoption* show the courtship, marriage and collapse of Amelia's affiliation with her husband through retrospective narration and the impetus of Percival Montfort's unexpected return. In an early scene, Amelia, speaking to her confidant Nerissa, bemoans her earlier acquiescence to the whims of Montfort and her parents: "I yielded to the wishes of those to whom obedience was a settled habit, and was sacrificed, without a murmur, at the shrine of prudence" (55). On the other hand, later chapters meticulously trace the precarious yet ultimately positive relationship arc of Seraphina and Henry Montfort. In this way, Thelwall establishes a deliberate parallel between the two couples. Amelia and Percival represent an old order, where patriarchal control stifles and suffocates any potential freedom or encouragement of the female intellect. Conversely, Seraphina uses rationality to regulate her relationship by fully ensuring that Henry is prepared for a marriage dictated on terms of scrupulous equality. Therefore, the union of Seraphina and Henry at the novel's end acts as both a corrective and a fulfillment.

However, in a novel filled with twists and turns, concealment, revelation and frenetic interaction, Seraphina never has the opportunity to converse face-to-face with her eventual

mother-in-law Amelia. In this way, like the protagonist in Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, who loses a mother figure at a "critical period of life" (61), Seraphina, despite the beneficial tutelage of her stepfather Parkinson, must make do without a solid maternal figure.[22] Seraphina is evidently smitten by what she hears of Amelia's "philosophical and benevolent character" yet the fact that the two characters are kept apart is significant, especially since Amelia, in personality and ethos, is a more obvious role model for Seraphina than her birth mother, the meddling and machinating Morton (286). Seraphina constantly questions Morton, ironically inquiring for a mother who can do "better than all this" and "would wish [her] a husband who himself was virtuous and who had the power to make [her] happy" (217). Posthumously then, Amelia becomes Seraphina's foster-mother in spirit, a figurative ideal of adoption whose memorial has a more powerful impact than Morton's ever-intrusive presence. Thelwall explores the dichotomy between old and new paradigms of motherhood through Seraphina's complete lack of physical contact with Amelia. In one of the rare instances in Thelwall's writings, "sweet converse" (*SPP* 141:88) is prohibited to prove a point.

For Thelwall's didactic purposes, Amelia remains an exemplary victim of a repressive system. Her realization of autonomy comes too late as she herself admits her "mind had not yet soared to the equality of the sexes; nor had [she] acquired the firmness of character to repel oppression, and assert [her] rights" (56). In effect, by being "reduced … to the level of a puppet or a child" (55), Amelia remains the representative of a woman ensnared and objectified. Despite being presented as a romanticized foster-mother in absentia, Amelia is also a model for the all-

[22] When Parkinson is relating "The History of Seraphina" to Henry and Edmunds, he mentions that Rev. Robertson, Seraphina's first foster father, "proposed" to her birth mother "to educate and provide for [her] in a comfortable and eligible way, upon condition that [the birth mother] should renounce all claim and interference with respect to her, and even quit the island" (153).

embracing representation of females as “slave[s]” directly resulting from “contemptuous” male “tyranny” (55). Unfortunately, only after the fact is she capable of what Wollstonecraft, Hays and Robinson accomplished so successfully in their theoretical writing—that is, methodically analyzing her destitute situation. Ironically, Amelia lacks both the resolve and independence of Seraphina to actualize change; nonetheless through her muted activism she provides a blueprint for Seraphina’s realized intentions.

After Amelia’s death, Seraphina ensconces herself in Amelia’s library, marking both bestowal and renewal. Seraphina’s stay has a precursor in Hays’ *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, where Mr. Courtney’s library acts a liminal venue in which Emma is influenced by “the dangerous, enchanting work” of provocative authors such as Rousseau (60). In addition, as suggested by the editors of the Broadview Press edition, there is an obvious parallel between Amelia’s posthumous transference of wisdom and the passing of books between Darnford and Maria in Wollstonecraft’s posthumous novel, *Maria, or, the Wrongs of Woman* (286). Here, as Seraphina reads over

> Amelia’s favourite authors . . . and noted the leaves she had doubled, and the passages she had scored, she seemed to enter more intimately into her tastes and feelings; to become acquainted, as it were, not only with her thoughts, but with her heart and habits; and, in short, to enter into a sort of familiarity after death, with one who in life had been esteemed and reverenced, although she had been never known. (286)

Whereas Darnford’s plea for sympathetic attachment in Wollstonecraft’s novel is eventually revealed to be hollow and duplicitous, as a significant number of the concluding fragments point to Darnford’s desertion of Maria (285-87), Seraphina’s act of reading Amelia’s marginalia is sustaining and regenerative, especially in the context of the ostracism and accusation with which

Seraphina is greeted upon her arrival in London.

In the novel, Thelwall includes many persistent paralells between the step-daughter and imaginative step-mother. An early conversation between Percival Montfort and Amelia reveals the former's disdain for the "doctrines of … petticoat philosophers" (66). Amelia is an inspired stand-in for elements of Wollstonecraft's theory but her calamitous status likewise points to the limitations Wollstonecraft exposes in *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*. Early in *The Daughter of Adoption*, Percival Montfort is adamant that "[t]he reason and duty of a child is to obey his father" before claiming that Amelia is "spoil[ing]" her son Henry "with … foolish effeminate nonsense" (66). At this point in the novel, the outcome of the battle between the old, established order and the new philosophy is ineffectual: the confrontation between Percival and Amelia exposes flaws but does not realize concrete reform. However, years later, Seraphina convinces the stubborn and rigid Percival that her union with Henry is justified. There is an important distinction between the predecessor Amelia and her successor Seraphina. Where Amelia failed in winning over Percival regarding the education of their son, the "soft-hearted yet strong-minded" Seraphina succeeds in swaying the elder Montfort to question and overturn custom (Thompson, "Transatlantic Thelwall"). The eponymous daughter of adoption metaphorically represents a fresh beginning, affirming Thelwall's lifelong belief that merit supersedes circumstance.

Part 2: "The Organ of that Power": Overcoming Confines and Limitations

Seraphina is a perfect model for the burgeoning elocutionary theory Thelwall developed during the composition of *The Daughter of Adoption*. On the basis of Henry Montfort's declaration that she is "the organ of that power of whom [she is] unconscious" and that

"[d]ivinity speaks through [her] lips; and so speaking, becomes still more divine!" (274), one could claim that Seraphina is merely being placed on a pedestal and emptily extolled. In fact, in this scene she is treated like a ventriloquist's dummy, deprived of agency in that the divine communicates *through* her. However, Seraphina's strength lies in her ability to express and defend herself directly and consciously, not as a superficial conduit for some outside power. John Gough's theory of sonorous bodies, which influenced Thelwall at the outset of his elocutionary career, posits that the body is a finely attuned "seat of sound" that has the facility to sway and persuade (647). Gough's materialist formulations of ventriloquism (according to which the judgment must be influenced as well as the ear and voice) would heavily impact Thelwall's elocutionary conceptions. Both were interested in "the principles of oral utterance," the interaction and "complication of Moral and Mental causes" and effects in the "Science of Human Speech" (*A Letter to Henry Cline* 30-32) and the capacity of both genders to overcome social as well as physical impediments through the exercise of reason and discipline. Thus, Seraphina's characterization bridges Thelwall's stifled Jacobin political aspirations and his subsequent adoption of the role of "professor of the Science and practice of elocution" (*A Letter to Henry Cline* title page).

In a novel way, Thelwall ultimately undercuts the purely metaphysical, vatic notion of ventriloquism implicit in Henry's attribution of divinity to Seraphina, an understanding which can be traced back to Plato's *Ion* and is commonly seen in the work of Romantic contemporaries such as Coleridge, as explored in the opening chapter. Such conceptions remove agency from the speaker, reducing him or her to a vessel like an amanuensis, whose words simply serve the purposes of a higher power. By contrast Seraphina claims and embodies female agency in the "Art, or the Act of . . . delivering [her] own thoughts" (*Introductory Discourse* 2). Instead of

promoting a divisive duality, Seraphina's speech overturns gender norms. As Henry suggests in exaggerated terms, her "[t]ranscendent excellence!" makes her "more than man in dignity and firmness – in very alluring softness more than woman!" (409). As Markley contends, "[l]ike the best of the reformist heroes and heroines of the period, Seraphina embodies the finer qualities of both genders" (110). In other words, Seraphina is an early exemplar of Thelwall's elocutionary praxis (unsurprising since that praxis began at the same time he was writing the novel [*A Letter to Henry Cline* 11]). A primary concern of Thelwall's system is how each level of voice operates from inception to action to reception. As a corollary, Thelwall's theory rests on a holistic, gender-neutral understanding of the body whereby "what is connected in the mind, must be connected with equal intimacy by the voice; and what, in the mind, is transposed, interrupted or suspended, must be separated, interrupted, or suspended, in the mode of articulation" (*Illustrations of English Rhythmus* xvi).

Furthermore, many elements of Seraphina's characterization prefigure elocutionary dicta in Thelwall's *Introductory Discourse* (1805), especially "the exterior demonstration of the inward workings of the mind" (3). Unlike a number of female figures in the text, both in Saint Domingue and London, who dominate men through "[t]heatrical affectations and meretricious artifices," Seraphina's speech represents "essential parts of the original language of Nature" towards which Thelwall's elocutionary theories strive (*Introductory Discourse 11*). Her own inner Nature reflects her Rousseauian tropical upbringing.[23] When the fashion-obsessed Morton suggests that "[t]he world will make no allowance" for Seraphina's lack of "decorum" and

[23] In the novel, Seraphina is adopted by a pastor (Parkinson) who has left his church position because of ideological differences. She receives a Rousseauian education in a lush natural location on an isolated mountain in Saint Domingue. According to Scrivener, "Seraphina is brought up a free spirit, more like Rousseau's Émile than his Sophie, along the principles of Wollstonecraft and Godwin" (*The Cosmopolitan Ideal* 128).

flaunting of "familiar attentions," Seraphina responds, "from the store-house of memory, I can draw those simple but salubrious resources, that render me independent of the luxuries, the gauds, and the flatteries, and, therefore of the opinions of that world" (214-215). Seraphina, as an idiosyncratic figure freed from the shackles of custom and culture by her isolated upbringing, is not susceptible to a Burkean Nature that is curated and classified.[24]

Consequently, the polished yet natural style with which Seraphina is able to express her thoughts is as important as her adherence to Wollstonecraftian concepts. What she says is firmly aligned with her methodology of expression. Despite the unfortunate circumstances in which she often finds herself over the course of the narrative – including kidnapping and repeated betrayal – Thelwall ensures that Seraphina's utterances are always stately and measured. In fact, he reserves histrionic responses for many of the male characters in the novel, especially Percival and Henry Montfort. Thelwall also repeatedly emphasizes how Seraphina's words are received. Henry spends the novel learning how to properly read his "lovely monitress": "He gazed upon her with a sort of awful delight. The animation of her delivery – the elevation of sentiment that glowed within her bosom and beamed through her eyes, gave the heightening touches of expression and moral loveliness to the beautiful symmetry of her features" (273). Her seamless control of idea and expression is, however, repeatedly misread by men in the novel, including Henry here, whose heightened response betrays the hazard of excessive acclaim bordering on worship. A more disturbing instance of such idealized misreading occurs during the burlesque

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[24] In *The Rights of Nature*, Thelwall asserts that "Mr. B's *nature* and my own are widely different. With him every thing is natural that has the hoar of ancient prejudice upon it; and novelty is the test of crime. In my humble estimation, nothing is natural, but what is fit and true, and can endure the test of reason" (32). Later, in one of the preliminary dissertations of his elocutionary theory "*On the use, and abuse of the term Nature*," Thelwall would contend that "*Improvability* is a part of the *nature* of Man – equally applicable to physical, as to intellectual powers" (*Selections* Wakefield 4-5).

courting scene between Seraphina and Moroon, who ends up being revealed as her brother in one the novel's many unexpected twists. The overwrought language of courtship in this instance, where Moroon apostrophizes Seraphina as "O! divinest, most beautiful, and three times most angelic creature!" (331), comically masks a possessiveness whose danger is exposed in his later kidnapping of her, along with threats of rape and fears of incest. In such examples, Thelwall is addressing Wollstonecraft's critique of stereotypical heroines in the preface to *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, where she suggests ironically that they "are to be born immaculate, and to act like goddesses of wisdom, just come forth highly finished Minervas from the head of Jove" (16). There is a tendency for men in *The Daughter of Adoption*, and even sometimes the narrator, to adopt this conventional attitude in regards to Seraphina. However, the novel sets up misinterpretations in order to satirize the dangerous and counterproductive responses that they encourage.

Throughout the novel, there is a tension between the outright worshipping of Seraphina, which removes her agency, and listening to Seraphina, which, in effect, levels the playing field between observer and observed as it involves both her mind and her body. Here, as in his elocutionary theory, Thelwall emphasizes the universal nature of communication whereby, regardless of gender, physicality and utterance successfully combine to foster capable citizens able to exercise their abilities freely and unimpeded. Such listening is promoted by the novel's medical figure, the humorous Dr. Pengarron, who, in trying to convince rigid Percival Montfort of Seraphina's inherent goodness, insists that "looking is nothing to hearing. Such sentiments! – such language! – such feelings! – so noble! so generous! so amiable! so magnificent! So disinterested! so divine!" (427). To some extent Pengarron is inclined to use the same idealized language, and is therefore vulnerable to the same potential for misinterpretation (evident here in

the repetition of "such" and "so" to register his enthrallment and exclamation points marking exaggeration). However, Pengarron also represents open-mindedness in his willingness to be persuaded by listening, and his acceptance of the power of Seraphina's intellect as well as her body and external appearance. When Pengarron confidently claims to Montfort, "you shall see her, and hear her, and know her, as I have" (430), his hope is predicated on Seraphina's deft ability to persuade, using voice not in any Siren-like manner but rather as a tool capable of clearly ordering and articulating her ideas and ideals. Throughout the novel, Thelwall traces Seraphina's transition from a mysterious and exotic oracular figure, the personification of Wollstonecraft's "highly finished Minerva" (*Maria* 16), to an independent physical force who breaks the staid decorum of London society in order to reform it.

Another method through which men in the novel misread Seraphina and deny her agency as a speaker is naming. Over the course of *The Daughter of Adoption*, numerous attempts are made to pigeonhole Seraphina with titles, epithets and sobriquets. After chiding the elder Montfort for accusing Seraphina of being a "*[k]ept mistress!*," Doctor Pengarron questions whether society is "to be led by the nose by cant names" (429). His humorous but defiant conclusion, "[a] murrain o'your nick-names" (429), best encapsulates the rejection of a complex process of designation that is evident from Seraphina's introduction. In this way, Thelwall's novel is concerned with subverting common reductive stereotypes applied to women and critiquing male identification practices. As we will see, throughout the text, Seraphina manages to elude definitive classification despite the fact that she is repeatedly referred to by "cant names" (429).

Every character seemingly wants to dictate and tell Seraphina's story. The range of reactions reveals Thelwall's critique of labelling. When Henry exclaims "my lovely monitress –

my friend! – my mistress! – my wife! by the last and best, of those dear names, shalt guarantee my reformation" (274), he does not yet comprehend the fallaciousness of his assertions. While her roles may vary, each possessive pronoun suggests that Henry has not yet grasped the equality that Seraphina stalwartly proposes and on *her* own terms. Only at the end of the novel does he finally understand that "when hearts are once actually united, the pronouns *my* and *thy* are, in this sense, obliterated and expunged—it is *our* efforts, *our* earnings, *our* necessities from that day" (409).

Seraphina is first assigned a sobriquet before Henry Montfort has even laid eyes on her when she is dubbed "his fair recluse" (139). Like the residents of St. Domingue who gossip about her, he identifies her as an alluring, exotic and idealized Other and struggles to determine her value without bias. Her stepfather, the Godwinian Parkinson, tries to dismiss Henry's initial prejudice by prefacing her "History" with the notion that the "respect" she is owed "rests upon the solid basis of personal merit" (152). But it will take the whole plot for Henry to learn Parkinson's lesson, which is also Thelwall's – a fundamental tenet of his egalitarian literary criticism, for instance, is the notion that class, rank and gender should not undermine judgment of inherent artistic value. In his "An Essay on the English Sonnet" (1792), for example, Thelwall suggests, in reference to Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*, that works should be "estimate[d] … not by their titles, but their merits" (408). Thus, a repeated distinction within the novel lies between the titles by which Seraphina is perceived and the independent identity she attempts valiantly to maintain.

Another more serious "cant name" that misleads characters in their judgment of Seraphina is that of "strumpet," the term used by the villainous Lewson to convince Dr. Pengarron of Seraphina's deceit (293). Lewson alleges that he is attempting to rescue his friend

Henry "from the arts and fascinations of a strumpet – a stale, who … lived with him for upwards of two years, as a hired prostitute" (293). Such derogatoriness is merely the flip side of the tendency on the part of male characters to idealize Seraphina as a goddess, or "an innocent maiden" according to Edmunds (258). The hard-hearted Percival Montfort eventually takes a third perspective, insisting by the novel's conclusion that Seraphina is an "instrument of comfort and reconciliation" (457). By covering multiple points on a wide-ranging spectrum, having different characters brand Seraphina as a wanton strumpet, virtuous maiden or figure of stalwart resolve, Thelwall is able to use his protagonist as a yard stick to measure the many lenses through which women were viewed in late eighteenth-century England. Ultimately the point of Thelwall's Wollstonecraftian critique is to argue for the removal of gendered designations, along with possessive pronouns, according to the "New Philosophy" of "social equality and reciprocal love" (474) of which Seraphina becomes the commanding, level-headed representative.

Through Seraphina, Thelwall creates a model woman, fully developed and independent in her view on life and society, a millennial figure who defies all expectations forced upon her. When Parkinson introduces her as "a female historian, a philosopher, and a poet" (139), all conventional roles and anticipated prospects are questioned. Parkinson's assertion that she is "a sort of phenomenon" (152) further broadens her qualifications and buttresses her unique status in the novel. It is Seraphina who ultimately dictates how she is perceived, using feminist rhetoric to forge and then strengthen her identity. While she ends up becoming Henry's wife by novel's end, by this point this appellation has been questioned along with all others, and replaced by the more progressive notion of "friend":

> I am, indeed, the friend of Henry Montfort – this breast alone can ever know with how dear a friendship I have loved, and shall continue, till death, to love him. He is, indeed,

> my friend – my only friend … But this friendship, this affection – call it by what ardent name you please – shall never be a snare to his unwary passions – a mildew on the promised harvest of his nobler virtues. (245)

In her *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft would suggest that "[f]riendship is a serious affection; the most sublime of all affections, because it is founded on principle, and cemented by time" (151). This is echoed in Godwin's promotion of "friendship" as "one of the most exquisite gratifications, perhaps one of the most improving exercises, of a rational mind" (*Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* 190). Seraphina's repetition of the term, along with her playing with etymology, helps to redefine "friendship" for her particular purposes. Her recourse to *philia*, or deep attachment, following her earlier escapades in *eros*, demonstrates Seraphina's ability to subvert assumed ideals. In essence, she is able to realize the ambitious goal posited by Mary Robinson in her contemporaneous *A Letter to the Women of England* (1799): women are "not the mere appendages of domestic life, but the partners, the equal associates of man" (3).

Indeed, Seraphina repeatedly defies categorization by rigorously confronting the stereotypes levelled at her. A key element in Seraphina's personality is a Wollstonecraftian self-awareness that acknowledges that "[t]here are many wives, … who, in reality are nothing but purchased concubines" (252). Seraphina is acutely conscious of the numerous "name[s]" bestowed upon women by "the censorious world" (252). Through her repeated assertions that "she will never be degraded to [the] rank" (252) of wife as the role is conventionally comprehended, she is able to achieve agency by usurping the process of naming. Seraphina's scrutiny of appellation constructs is nowhere more evident than in her careful consideration of the label "the wife":

> In short all circumstances seemed to conspire to call for the constant attentions and solicitudes of *the wife*: and, though Seraphina disdained to assume *a name* which till the ceremony had been performed would imply a falsehood; yet she determined from thence forward to sustain *the character* of a relationship, whose *duties* she was called upon to fulfil. (400)

The distinction Thelwall makes between the methodology of "assum[ing] a name" and the process of "sustain[ing] *the character*" is an important marker of both his feminist and larger political ideology (400). More specifically, the artifice of assumption is here displaced by the ability to "sustain," with all its connotations: as a means of giving support, undergoing hardship and legalistically admitting as valid. In the process, Thelwall is able to wrench the appellation of "*the wife*" from its derogatory corollary of "*duties*." Ever wary and apprehensive of the notion of duty, Seraphina's choice to adopt the roles of friend and wife is conscious and willed, as opposed to obligated.

Another idea represented in *The Daughter of Adoption* is Seraphina's ability to manipulate the language of courtship, specifically the ability to deny or defer, in order to expose the gender-based shortcomings of society and establish her own autonomy. Much as Robert Bage does in the earlier Jacobin novel *Hermsprong, or Man as He is Not* (1796), Thelwall uses the subtext of flirtation and flattery in the text to critique and satirize. The eponymous hero of Bage's tome "learn[s] to hate the language of slavery in all its forms, especially in the form of adulation" (325). Similarly, Seraphina is never "pleased with . . . artifice" or the backhanded praise bestowed upon her (390). Instead, in Socratic dialogue rather than the empty tête-à-tête of paramours, she repeatedly favors "the language . . . of a rational being" (353). Her main mode of agency is, ironically, denial. Seraphina's repeated rejections are comparable to those of another

orphan, Fanny Price, from Austen's *Mansfield Park*. The motif of refusal in Austen's writing, also seen in *Pride and Prejudice*, is most clearly explicated in *Northanger Abbey*, where Henry Tilney, Catherine's love interest, states that "[m]an had the advantage of choice; women only the power of refusal" (58). When, in Thelwall's novel, Henry assumes that "this day shall see [Seraphina] the wife of Henry Montfort," she immediately undercuts his demanding assumption (274). Her threefold negation, "'No, Henry, no,' replied she, resuming an elevated firmness of tone and gesture –'No,'" reinforces a resolute position in which Seraphina ultimately controls and shapes her own destiny (274).

By emphasizing her "firmness of tone and gesture," Thelwall also ensures that Seraphina's elocutionary comportment matches her steadfast stance. The statement that follows, "It was not by *professions* you won this heart; nor by professions shall you gain this heart" (274), emphasizes the lacuna between Henry's intentions and his utterance. By pointing out Henry's declaration as false but also punning on the fickle nature of his professional predicament, Seraphina gives her paramour a stern ultimatum. Henry must distinguish himself by his conduct and not simply resort to hereditary rights; he must determinedly "become the laborious husband of a laborious wife, and maintain the independency of himself and his little ones by parsimonious abstinence and inglorious toil" (404). Hearkening back to the social commentary he engaged in during his apprenticeship in debating societies, topics explored in the previous chapter, Thelwall evaluates Henry's tendency towards aristocratic libertinism and, by the novel's end, as in so many of his early moral poems and engaging public contests, the rake is chastened, tamed and reformed.

In its play upon the subject of female refusal, and progress from there to acceptance, Thelwall's novel not only acts as a precursor to Austen's work but, more pressingly, engages

with the Jacobin novels of the female contemporaries with whom he discoursed in the winter of 1797. In Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, for example, rather than wait for the man to declare his affections, Emma challenges convention in an excessive but nonetheless rational manner. However, in the case of this particular protagonist, the stratagem ultimately backfires as the narrative is hijacked by jealousy and deceit. In the preface to her work, Hays suggests that Emma's tale is meant as "a *warning*, rather than as an example" (36). Like Emma, Maria in Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* also misinterprets her lover. But in Thelwall's case, the slow, persistent courting of Henry Montfort by Seraphina demonstrates the opposite, a success achieved despite misunderstanding and a repressive social context. Seraphina spends the second half of the novel methodically testing and ironing out the inconsistencies in Henry's character detailed in the opening chapters. Henry's true coming of age is postponed; this bildungsroman attains its climax not amid the colonial conflict of St. Domingue but rather amidst the (not unrelated) capitalist bourgeois menaces of late eighteenth-century London.

Seraphina's productive use of the power of refusal is not confined solely to the younger Montfort. She subverts expectations once more in her later interactions with Henry's father, Percival Montfort. Upon encountering the elder Montfort, she prefaces their discussion by stating

> I came to plead the cause of mutual loves – I came to vindicate the claims of nature, stamped and imprinted in the feelings of our united hearts – I came to combat, with the arms of reason, the unfeeling arrogance of parental tyranny: and I thought that I had arguments of sufficient cogency and appeals sufficiently forcible to compel reluctant attention, and triumph over the obstinacy of inveterate prejudice. (432)

Thelwall once more uses anaphora (the repeated "I came"), along with a not so muted allusion to Julius Caesar's famous "Veni, vidi, vici," to emphasize her persuasive command of oratory. The

verbs Thelwall has Seraphina choose to make her point ("plead," "vindicate" and "combat") accentuate her virile rhetorical approach relying on reason and forceful physical presence. Seraphina acts as a destabilizing figure when she questions Montfort's request that she blindly follow his desires and dictates. Her interruption, "Obedience! Pardon me, sir!" to his request is another pivotal moment of rejection and redefinition. In then referencing her stepfather Parkinson's influence on her upbringing—specifically, his advice that in all matters there should be "no submission but to reason; no obedience but to justice and honour" (455-456) – Seraphina undermines the entrenched ideologies of domestic servitude and filial duty. The incident further demonstrates Seraphina's ability to achieve results by saying no. Judith Thompson characterizes her as "the unmoved mover of a convoluted series of actions that eventually bring about the moral reformation of both her wayward lover and his tyrannical father" ("Transatlantic Thelwall"). Seraphina's resolute defiance stems from questioning established conventions and, in this case, shifting the idea of obligation away from mutable individuals to immoveable ideals.

Seraphina's most strong-willed rebuke of convention comes in the middle of the novel when she repels the advances of the man who turns out to be her half-brother, the faux-aristocrat Moroon. In a comparable manner to her reactions to both Montforts, Seraphina rebuffs Moroon's overly ornate and superficial attempts at endearment. Once more, Thelwall incorporates another pronounced repetition in having Seraphina, with "great firmness," utter "Hold, sir!" three times, which "interrupts" Moroon's advances (324). This echoes the trio of "Nos" she had given Henry earlier in the text. Seraphina then offers an alternative position that defies established custom, suggesting she is "already, in the eye of nature, of justice, of morality – and, what is more, in every sentiment and feeling of the heart, the wife of another" (333). Once again, Seraphina's assertive ability to reject the requests of dominant male figures reveals her innate sense of

independence. Seraphina's three rejections demonstrate feminist leanings but the conclusion of the novel likewise implies Thelwall's realization that positive progress must be achieved within perimeters. In essence, the bulk of *The Daughter of Adoption* is spent delaying the union of Henry and Seraphina, her constant denials testing his marriage mettle. The entire second half of the novel prolongs any firm resolution to Henry's bildungsroman, or rather, emphasizes Seraphina's attempts to remedy the protagonist's flaws through patience and gradual amendment. In this way, Seraphina's relationship with Henry acts as an analogue for Thelwall's political engagement in the new century – manifesting a tempered radicalism that optimistically emphasizes steady reform. The novel thus acts as a prelude to Thelwall's return to public life after surviving the suppression of the Gagging Acts and his own self-imposed exile – a new mode of disseminating liberal ideas that would focus on the importance of domestic ties and the preeminence of the individual voice.

As a result, *The Daughter of Adoption*, despite its succession of refusals, ends with acquiescence as Seraphina finally agrees to marry Henry in a conventional manner. In *The Monthly Review*, an anonymous critic would call out Thelwall's apparent inconsistency as, in the novel's resolution, Seraphina "at last consents to be made [Henry's] wife" (quoted in *The Daughter of Adoption* 534). Thelwall's response is found in his "Prefatory Memoir" to *Poems, Written Chiefly in Retirement*, published concomitantly with *The Daughter of Adoption*: "the purity of the sexual intercourse consists, exclusively, in the inviolable singleness of attachment; - but . . . nevertheless, whatever be our theoretical opinion of the ceremonial part of the institution, it is an absolute moral duty, in the present state of society, to conform with the established usage'" (xliv). Ultimately, Seraphina's choice is consistent with Thelwall's stance on marriage as developed in his own thinking, correspondence and readings of Coleridge, Godwin and

Wollstonecraft. In a February 1797 letter to Thelwall, Coleridge expressed reservations about a sentence in Thelwall's pamphlet *The Rights of Nature* that suggested that a man's children "however begotten—whether in marriage or out" are his heirs in nature (*PEJ* 493). Coleridge followed this critique with a defense of matrimony from a domestic perspective: "instead of tacitly allowing that I meant by it to encourage what Mr B. & the Priests would call licentiousness, (and which surely, Thelwall, in the present state of society you must allow to be injustice, inasmuch as it deprives the woman of her respectability in the opinions of her neighbors) I would have shewn that such a law would of all others operate most powerfully in favor of marriage" (*Collected Letters* 305-306). In his 1795 "Introductory Address," Coleridge had argued that "general Benevolence is begotten and rendered permanent by social and domestic affections" (*Lectures 1795* 46). As we will see, if the end goal of *The Daughter of Adoption* is to redefine the constitution of a family, then its building must rest, pragmatically, on the foundation of a blissful conjugal relation.

In the same letter to Thelwall, Coleridge elaborates on contemporary complications of marriage, using language that is strikingly similar to that of Thelwall's "Prefatory Memoir" and Seraphina herself when she expresses a disdain for "forms and ceremonies" and claims that "the bond of conjugal chastity exists . . . in the purity of the heart" rather than "the gingle of mystic phrases" (253). Marriage, Coleridge suggests to Thelwall, does not imply "the effect of spells uttered by conjurors, but permanent cohabitation useful to Society as the best conceivable means (in the present state of Soc. at least:) of ensuring nurture & systematic education to infants & children" (*Collected Letters* 306). In other words, a daughter of adoption is most beneficial to society when she becomes a mother capable of confidently nurturing future generations of

citizens. Both Coleridge and Thelwall rest their arguments on the same basis as Wollstonecraft, who emphasizes the role of the mother.

In addition to Thelwall's dialogues on marriage with Coleridge, he also adjusted marital models posited by both Godwin and Wollstonecraft. The extended courtship of Henry and Seraphina clearly responds to Godwin's famous dictum in *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* that those who "vow eternal attachment" in haste are reduced "to make the best of an irretrievable mistake" (193). In fact, Seraphina's persistent rejections emphasize this. She has no part to play in the established repressive marriage market. Wollstonecraft likewise advocates against indulgence in a fickle passion that is finite, contending in her *Vindication* that

> [t]he woman who has only been taught to please will soon find that her charms are oblique sunbeams, and that they cannot have much effect on her husband's heart when they are seen everyday . . . When the husband ceases to be a lover, and the time will inevitably come, her desire of pleasing will grow languid, or become a spring of bitterness; and love, perhaps the most evanescent of all passions, gives place to jealousy and vanity. (109-110)

The irony, of course, in both of the quoted statements is that Godwin and Wollstonecraft eventually consented to marry, another biographical truth Thelwall adapted in his novel. However, whereas the story of Godwin and Wollstonecraft ended in tragedy, *The Daughter of Adoption*, as will be demonstrated, concludes in an expansive and optimistic manner.

A final facet of the role of women in society Thelwall addresses in *The Daughter of Adoption* is the shifting value and influence the author assigns to women in terms of the spaces they inhabit. Thelwall's novel examines and questions the claim made by Hays in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* that women "remain insulated beings, and must be content tamely to look on"

(85). While Seraphina is more or less a recluse for large parts of the novel, she inhabits a variety of shifting settings, from the remote tropical isolation of La Soufriere where she enters the plot, to the vacation in the "romantic mansion of Ridgmont" in the Lake District that resolves it (481). In between there are a number of moves in London (one of which takes her to the address of Wollstonecraft). In this way, she allegorically enacts Thelwall's lifelong concern with the exclusion and inclusion of women in the public sphere. But if much of the plot concerns Seraphina's many displacements, then the closing chapters show her settled, at the center of a new extended family.

Seraphina's nomadic placement represents the tension between the philosophies of isolated personhood and societal sympathy. According to the Broadview editors, Seraphina "must reconcile the ideal of individual rational judgment with the reality of life in a community" (Introduction 32). Her inability to find a stable home for much of the novel emphasizes both her outsider persona and London culture's initial inability to accept her. Thelwall critiques both her own romantic insularity and society's resistance to embracing such a unique female figure. A number of authorial intrusions within the text highlight reversals to the idea of decorum, as the narrator directly appeals to the sensibilities of his readers each time Seraphina speaks or acts in a manner that does not adhere to the dictates of the "Ton" or popular fashion. By the novel's end, Seraphina manages to make and maintain a place for herself by clearing away prejudice and refusing to be enslaved to convention.

In many ways Thelwall's handling of place in *The Daughter of Adoption* looks back to his early work, collected and published in the two-volume *Poems on Various Subjects* (1787). This is especially true of the romantic bower on the Isle of Margot off the coast of Saint Domingue where Henry and Seraphina first meet. This setting develops the tension between

splendid seclusion and adherence to societal norms seen in a number of his juvenile Spenserian romances, legendary tales, amorous fables and what he himself called "moral lay[s]" (*SPP* 30:126). These poems covertly critique the marriage market, as their heroes and heroines repeatedly attempt to bypass invasive parents and rich suitors in order to develop unions instead based on reciprocation. More often than not, the young lovers of these poems find themselves in "little cottage[s]" or "sequester'd shed[s]" (*Poems on Various Subjects* 2) where, in the manner of Shakespearian and Restoration comedy, they are able to escape, question and subvert patriarchal notions identified with the city. In "The Turtle's Nest," for example, the pastoral maiden Serena seeks a temple "built to purest Love" (*Poems on Various Subjects* 166). A clear contrast is outlined between the turtle's nest, where genuine love can find a home, and the "busy town," portrayed as a place where "Simulation's treacherous art, / Pleasure's lure, Detraction's dart / And Vanity corrupt the heart" (167). In the end, Serena summarily rejects the advances of "[o]ld Clodio, whom her friends approv'd / By titles and by grandeur mov'd," and acquiesces to her lover Strephon's logic, "retir[ing] within the peaceful grove" so that both might "taste [the] uncloying sweets of love" (168).

As expressions of both wish-fulfillment and social critique, early pieces like "The Turtle's Nest" diagnose and resolve through fantastical projection the inherent problems of the era's marriage market, where women were treated simply as "wares . . . useful for a man's expansion of wealth and property" (Burwick 351). The resolutions of Thelwall's early lyrics are problematic, however, because they are so idealized, thus failing to examine social realities and particular circumstances. In other words, a flawed system of gender differentiation is ephemerally addressed and easily overcome but not deconstructed in any systematic manner. However, in *The Daughter of Adoption*, Thelwall artfully interrogates and reconstructs the

Romantic bower by emphasizing Seraphina's repeated displacements. In the Bower of Margot, Seraphina and Henry briefly create a personalized paradise comparable to that proposed in "The Turtle's Nest," with explicit echoes, also, of Milton's Eden, in the "surrender[ing] in bridal purity" of "another Eve … to the arms of her second Adam" (188). Tellingly, Thelwall refers to the lover's sanctuary as their "little universe" (189) but, as with Eve and Adam, sanctuary is temporary, associated with unconsciousness and isolation (both protagonists are ill and/or unconscious for much of their brief stay on the island, and they seldom interact face to face). The island retreat is also framed by violent realities that cannot easily be escaped—on one hand the horrors of Saint Domingue, on the other the perilous habitation of London society (188). Like Adam and Eve, they are exiled from their paradise, as is reinforced by a later allusion to Milton, when Seraphina exhorts Henry to "consent to eat with me the daily bread of solicitude and toil" (403).

Thelwall's telling description of the Bower of Margot as "little" makes it the type of many other retreats found throughout the novel, as each established locale or place of sequestration that Seraphina must soon abandon is qualified by this quaint epithet. Seraphina finds herself a nomad sojourning through a cluster of "littles," attempting to negotiate the borders between individual and community, her restlessness often at odds with her stern resolve. This state of perpetual movement parallels elements of Thelwall's own peripatetic career. After the "little universe" of Margot, Seraphina, Henry and his servant Edmunds establish a safe haven in a "little cabin" (223) on the boat back to England. In this secluded space, the trio discover the benefits of "[l]ove, exalted by generous sentiment, mingled with the refinements of taste, and the enjoyments of intellect; and friendship, humble friendship!" (223). However, this bond, while authentic, is tenuous since it lasts only as long as the voyage. On either side of their travels are

inescapable customs and conventions. As a result, the "little cabin" provides only a temporary respite.

These small spaces are more clearly delineated in terms of gender upon Henry's return to the expansive environs of London, whereupon Seraphina is relegated to Amelia's "little study" (286). This restricted nook provides Seraphina great comfort but also maintains the gendered dichotomy between private and public spheres. Henry is free to "dissolve in voluptuousness, in the recesses of fashionable obscenity, or mingl[e] in the orgies of bacchanalian revelry," while Seraphina is surrounded by books that emblematize "the scene of all her solitary pleasures – or solitary reflections" (299). By accentuating Seraphina's intelligence while simultaneously exiling her to a state of seclusion, Thelwall suggests that despite her personal merit, her space in society is both intellectually limiting and physically limited. In short, both body and mind are confined. Be that as it may, Thelwall uses the bildungsroman frame to carefully delineate gendered parallel narratives. In other words, while Seraphina is reading and expanding her intellect in solitude, Henry is aimlessly engaging in infidelities and whiling away his time with harmful acquaintances. Thelwall satirically suggests that the freedom allotted to men is paradoxically constricting while the only place for rational women appears consigned to "cabined, cribbed, confined" locales (*Macbeth* 3.4.25).

Through the use of different places in *The Daughter of Adoption*, Thelwall thus assesses the lack of legitimate space for female voice. However, while Seraphina cannot find such a space, she establishes a standard by generating and willing the proper conditions for her success. As the editors to the Broadview Edition succinctly suggest, "Seraphina attempts to live in defiance of patriarchal norms" (Introduction 31). Ultimately her values prevail and her quest succeeds in the creation of an inclusive and expansive family in the novel's denouement. The

diminishments and limitations of the "little" are overcome in a concluding vision that expands both geographically (as they visit the "gigantic mountains" and spreading prospects of northern Yorkshire) and relationally (as the Montfort family grows to include numerous adoptive parents and children) (454).

Addressing the question of whether or not there is a place for a rational woman of the New Philosophy in society, Seraphina initially comes to the Godwinian conclusion that "happiness . . . is to be enjoyed in a small circle of enlightened and congenial minds" (275). However, by the novel's conclusion, this core circle exponentially expands, such that Henry Montfort in contemplating "The world! – The world!" comes to question "How many of those petty circles we call worlds are there upon this little sphere?" – the little . . . expansive in the end however!!!" (455). Similarly, in the novel's final pages, a flummoxed Dr. Pengarron ponders the prospect of "the universe … be[ing] our family" (475). This concept, embodied with Seraphina at its focus, is crucial to explicating the value Thelwall placed on the domestic affections and their role in promoting universal benevolence.

One can make a connection between the reconfigured conception of family espoused at the end of *The Daughter of Adoption* and core elements of Thelwall's elocutionary theory, especially the "EXPANSIVE PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN VIRTUE" which is "the climax of the argument" of his introductory lecture (*LFG* 88).[25] Its imitation of an all-encompassing Virtue, meant to rouse and resonate with the audience, can truly be felt only if read aloud:

> VIRTUE is, in reality, an expansive principle – that acts not alone upon individual impression; but soars to generalization and takes the universe in its fold. With passion for

[25] During his pamphlet exchange with Jeffrey, Thelwall uses the uncommon variant spelling "Jeffray," which I will be following in my in-text citations.

> its goad, and reason for its rein, it looks beyond itself, (not only *behind*, but *before*;) and, even in the reciprocations of kindness, or the pursuits of individual gratification, it forgets not the general welfare. Its gratitude is not confined to the personal benefactor; it is extended to the benefactors of mankind … Such is Virtue – if I comprehend the term. It has its source, indeed, in individual *feeling*: for till we have felt we cannot *know*: but its indispensable constituents are comparison and generalization; which can only proceed from discourse. Hence from the central throb of individual impulse, the feeling expands to the immediate circle of relative connections; – from relatives to friends and intimate associates; from intimate association to the neighbourhood where we reside to the country for which we would bleed! – from the patriot community to civilized society – to the human race – to posterity – to the sentient universe: and wherever the throb of sensation can exist, the Virtuous find a motive for the regulation of their actions… Such are the expanding undulations of virtuous sympathy. (88-89)

As an accomplished public speaker, Thelwall realized that words must move but also that the meanings of words are mutable. The preceding passage contains an excellent example of persuasion when Thelwall signals the expansion of virtuous feeling from the "immediate circle of *relative* connections; – from *relatives* to friends and intimate *associates*; from intimate *association* to the neighbourhood where we reside to the country for which we would bleed!" (89; my italics). Thelwall is here punning and playing, for auditory effect, with the fluidity of language itself, moving from an estranged position to one of total immersion in and with others. "Relative" is first used singularly as an adjective to denote connections that move away from the "individual impulse." The "circle" expands to initially include "relatives." Similarly, the pluralized "intimate associates"' is then qualified by a return to particular comparisons

associated with the act of "association" itself. The excerpt in question comes full circle through such clever turns of phrase. As a result, Thelwall addresses the complex nature of "discourse," whose locus is within the individual but whose actualization requires dialogue with others. In *The Daughter of Adoption*, Seraphina gradually builds and develops a network that questions established commonplaces and whose forward motion does not encourage retreat but rather expansion.

The preceding passage from Thelwall's introductory lecture also connects to *The Daughter of Adoption*'s key realization that gender is ultimately subsumed in the ripple effect of universal compassion. The use of alliteration and the obvious emphasis Thelwall chose to place on certain words (evident in his notes through italicization) add to the sublimity of virtue as an "expansive principle" that "looks beyond itself, (not only *behind*, but *before*;)" (88). The line wonderfully captures a desired state of *be*-ing that transcends the individual (beyond), space (behind) and time (before). Such moments of transcendental expansion are familiar in Romantic poetry and philosophy, from Wordsworth's speaker in "Tintern Abbey" who longs for a "blessed mood" in which "the burthen of the mystery" is "lightened" (38-41), to the prospect of "one Life within us and abroad" at the heart of Coleridge's philosophy ("The Eolian Harp" 26). What differentiates Thelwall from his contemporaries is that the individual experience becomes pleasantly overpopulated. This moment of expansion in Thelwall's probationary lecture not only echoes the familiar topoi but is also customary in his oeuvre. In one of his most famous political lectures, on the "Moral Tendency of a System of Spies and Informers," Thelwall details the state of the man of virtue who "feels and enjoys the noble superiority of nature [but also] looks in the face of his fellow creature; and . . . sees indeed a brother – or a part rather of his own existence; another self" (9). The climax of Thelwall's depiction of this individual, the apex being a state in

which the individual "feels one nerve of sympathy connecting him with the whole intelligent universe" (9), is mirrored in the "EXPANDING PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN VIRTUE." Ultimately, at the end of *The Daughter of Adoption*, Seraphina is that Virtue personified, and she becomes the locus, the central point, of a wave of good fortune, a munificent undulation, that washes over the novel, reimagining and re-appropriating contemporary society. If we consider Seraphina as an ur-figure for unexamined facets of Thelwall's feminism, she is then a prototype for the millennial band of "virtue's wish'd millenium" from the poem "To Miss Bannatine" (*SPP* 198:155), in which the beleaguered Thelwall, coming out of retirement, placed great faith during his elocutionary tours of the early nineteenth century. I shall look more closely at one such band in the following chapter.

Chapter Four:

“To Soothe a Stranger’s Woe”: Recovery and Thelwall’s Social Networks in Edinburgh and Glasgow (1804)

Thelwall’s period of itinerant lecturing in the science and practice of elocution between his emergence from exile in Wales in 1801 and his return to London in 1806 showcased his ability to charm, connect and commiserate with the locals of the towns he visited. He had developed these skills during the 1790s when, according to Charles Cestre, who had access to a now missing manuscript of Thelwall’s diaries, the lecturer maintained close ties with “a large number. . . of artisans, shopkeepers, dissenting ministers, schoolmasters, by whom he was entertained during his tour through the provinces, in whose company he treated philosophical and political topics, and who subscribed for his books” (106). He relied on the same networks when he returned to public life at the turn of the century, changing his subject matter and extending his geographical range. His visit to Glasgow in particular, where he spent several months in early 1804, rallying and recovering from a crisis precipitated by the disruption of his lectures by the editor Francis Jeffrey during an abbreviated stay in Edinburgh, shows the importance of these sympathetic networks of sociability, and especially their female members, in his development.

Behind the traumatic happenings in Edinburgh and within the relatively safe confines of epistolary exchange, Thelwall was encouraged and egged on by his friend, Wordsworth, whom Thelwall had recently visited in the Lake District before peripatetically setting off to Scotland to expound upon his theories of elocution. Wordsworth jealously guarded his own enmity towards Jeffrey for the critic’s unfavorable appraisal of his poetic aspirations, along with those of his fellow Lake Poets, in a review of Southey’s *Thalaba the Destroyer* in the inaugural issue of the

Edinburgh Review.[26] Wordsworth remains an ominous background presence to both the pamphlet exchange between Jeffrey and Thelwall and the events of that fateful evening in Edinburgh. While in Glasgow, Thelwall resided with like-minded liberals including Robert Grahame and Dugald Bannatyne, who were sympathetic to both his political positions and his elocutionary ambitions. During this time, Thelwall communicated frequently with editor and biographer Robert Anderson back in Edinburgh, pondering and plotting an ideal time to return and lecture in the city. All of these figures are representative of what Thompson calls the "widening circles of intellectual aspiration and improvement" ("Poets and Poesy I Sing" 16) that define Thelwall's re-emergence following his ostracization in the late 1790s, confirming that his disappearance from the London scene did not spell his demise. Thelwall's contacts in Scotland took the place of Wordsworth and Coleridge as confidantes. Of particular value, Thelwall's longing for "ample patronage" ("Elocution and Oratory" 105) brought him into contact with the women of these families and aspiring literati associated with them, to whom he addressed, or with whom he exchanged, poetry. By building robust social networks that incorporated women and men, who then supported and endorsed his new elocutionary endeavor, Thelwall was able to disseminate his ideas to an emerging middle class – seditiously influencing the affluent – thereby in some measure realizing and extending that expansive family of "social equality and reciprocal love" (474) that he had idealized in *The Daughter of Adoption*.

The narrative trajectory of this chapter covers a relatively brief but transformative period of crisis and recovery, with its nadir in Edinburgh, December 1803, followed by Thelwall's convalescence in Glasgow and then his successful return to the capital of Scotland in the late

[26] On Wordsworth's antagonism towards Jeffrey, and his "egging on" of Thelwall to attack and give him a "drubbing" on his behalf, see Thompson's *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle* (169-70).

spring of 1804. Here I will reconstruct and study three influential intersecting circles, whose individual concerns – politics, sympathy, education, equality and literary reciprocity – are those that govern Thelwall's long term understanding and engagement with women. Despite being "[r]e-scripted as a professional lecturer on the politer provincial circuit" (Poole, "The Character and Reputation" 5), Thelwall's underlying political and social interests remained the same, and he would maintain and develop them throughout his career. In addition, for each section, I will examine the way in which Thelwall's Scottish poems modify ones written in the Wordsworth circle. In short, the purpose of this chapter will be to contest an understanding of Thelwall established by E.P. Thompson in his influential essay "Hunting the Jacobin Fox" (1994) in which the Jeffrey affair marked the definite endpoint of Thelwall's political career and confirmed the complete collapse of his reputation.[27] Instead, I will challenge Thompson's version with a dynamic retelling in which elements of performance, drawing-room domesticity and sympathetic kinship networks in both Edinburgh and Glasgow transformed the results of one ill-fated evening from failure into triumph, and assured the survival of Thelwall's radical values in a new form.

[27] The very absence of critical attention to this episode (or anything after it chronologically) confirms that it is established. In E.P. Thompson's article, the Jeffrey affair marks an end to Thelwall's public career and a clear victory for the Scotch reviewer over the English bard/future elocutionist. When Thompson's article was published, the bulk of the criticism on Thelwall focused on his political impact in the 1790s – largely ignoring his work (and its breadth) in the nineteenth century. In the past decade, with edited collections such as Poole's *John Thelwall: Radical Romantic and Acquitted Felon* (2009) and Solomonescu's *John Thelwall: Critical Reassessments* (2011), critics have begun to take a more holistic, wide-ranging approach to Thelwall's career. Just as Roe (2009) offers "another view of 'the Jacobin Fox'" in exploring his different "lives," so I will be looking at the narrative posited by E.P. Thompson and offering correctives based on my own archival research.

Part 1: Behind the Screen: The Stranger Rebuffed

Considering what would soon transpire, there is a sad irony in the promotional advertisement Thelwall placed in the December 3rd, 1803 issue of the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*:

> With some degree of confidence in the experience thus obtained, but with a larger proportion of diffidence, resulting from the high reputation of the neighborhood he approaches, the Lecturer upon the Science and Practice of English Elocution, presents his proposals to the University and Literary city of Edinburgh – the Northern Capital of British Intellect – the acknowledged Well-head of Polite and Oratorical Criticism, and the Renowned Seat of Science and Liberal Enquiry! He approaches, as a *Stranger* – unconnected, and unknown. The importance of his Science is his only introduction; – the liberal thirst of knowledge is the only source of his reliance; – and he solicits no other patronage that that which may result from an indulgent appreciation of the diligence and success with which he has cultivated the Vocal Language of his country: –
>
> The Genuine Vehicle of the Oratorical Energies of Britons! ("Mr. Thelwall Proposes")

As a rhetorical performance, this is an excellent example of Thelwall positioning himself in his new role as "professor of the Science and practice of elocution" (*A Letter to Henry Cline* title page). The opening lines of the advertisement suggest a modest entrance into Edinburgh, followed by a series of deferential statements hyperbolically praising the richness and variety of the neighborhood as a cultural center. Thelwall's introduction of himself "as a Stranger – unconnected, and unknown" asserts his place as expectant exile, hoping for *xenia*, the Ancient Greek concept of hospitable guest-friendship, from enlightened and open inhabitants. In his puff,

Thelwall attempts to depoliticize his contentious past through a kind of gentrified reinvention. Here, he is building upon the socially (and literally) mobile persona he marketed as early as the fall of 1802, where his reentry in the public sphere came with the caveat that his lectures were "totally unconnected with political subjects" ("Sunday's Post" 4). Unfortunately, Thelwall's search for patronage in Edinburgh based on "no other grounds than the merits of his Elocutionary Labours" did not, initially at least, achieve the success he so ardently desired ("Mr. Thelwall Proposes").

The main reason for Thelwall's initial failure was the fact that Francis Jeffrey, editor of the recently founded *Edinburgh Review,* which in April 1803 had already issued a caustic appraisal of Thelwall's *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* (1801), was in attendance at the announced "Probationary Lecture" (*LFJ* x). Jeffrey's review of Thelwall's poems had focused primarily on the collection's "Prefatory Memoir," ruthlessly ridiculing any references to Thelwall's lower-class upbringing, and dismissing him, poetically and politically, as part of a "crowd of injudicious pretenders" (197). Jeffrey extended the ridicule into the lecture by, according to Thelwall, orchestrating a conspiracy of laughter that went round the room, destroying the desired effect of Thelwall's performance. This offense provoked a tit-for-tat exchange between the English Bard and Scotch Reviewer (which Thelwall called the "Edinburgh Controversy"), including Thelwall's initial pamphlet *A Letter to Francis Jeffray, Esq*., rapidly followed by Jeffrey's *Observations on Mr. Thelwall's Letter* and then *Mr. Thelwall's Reply to the Calumnies, Misrepresentations and Literary Forgeries* of Jeffrey. At the center of this rigamarole was Thelwall's adamant, even slightly obsessive, desire to discover "the lurker behind the screen" who, on the evening of his initial lecture, "confounded by … forced laugh[ter] … the lecturer and audience" (*LFG* 81). Thelwall's overt reference to Act 3 scene 4 of

Hamlet would not have been lost upon either the critics he was lambasting or the audience he was addressing. Throughout the Edinburgh exchange, Thelwall assumed the role of Hamlet, bent on revenge, whose sole purpose was to expose the calumny and cant of Jeffrey's Polonius. In this process, Thelwall manipulates the trope of the "unconnected, and unknown" stranger to achieve redemption and resurrect his public career ("Mr. Thelwall Proposes"). Ultimately, the greatest consolation Thelwall received as an outsider was from the daughters and protégées of the members of his expanding social network with whom he resided during his early elocutionary tours. These women revivified his sagging spirits after the initial blow of the Jeffrey affair and renewed hope in the exciting egalitarian enterprise that would define his livelihood in the nineteenth century.

In his riposte to Jeffrey, Thelwall suggests that the greatest repercussion resulting from the critic's untimely interruption of his probationary lecture was a disruption of the bond the lecturer was attempting to forge with his audience. As explored at the end of Chapter 3, central to Thelwall's elocutionary endeavor in its continuity with his still radical (though now unspoken) political values was his firm belief in elocution's ability to instill "expanding undulations of virtuous sympathy" that would overcome false divisions in society, and create a community based on social parity and mutual affection (*LFG* 88). When, as a result of Jeffrey's interference, the "undulations" failed to expand and the stranger's longing for acceptance was harshly denied, Thelwall cut short his planned course of eighteen lectures, originally intended to extend into January, and spent the rest of December composing his replies to Jeffrey, forcing him into an exchange fraught with accusations, misunderstandings and even delusions. In the New Year he departed for Glasgow, where one can trace the origins of his recuperation and regeneration by examining the political affiliations of his hosts and the outsider pose he adopted in the lyrics he

composed during his stay. Despite a temporary delay in his desire to achieve virtuous sympathy, Thelwall would find, in the comforts of intimate associations like the family of Robert Grahame, reassurance and renewed optimism.

Research into the political affiliations and accomplishments of Grahame, "long one of the principal lawyers in Glasgow," reveal a kindred spirit who would have readily welcomed Thelwall into his home (Samuel and Tweed 15). Grahame "from his earliest days was distinguished as an unflinching Reformer and Liberal, in the most extended sense of these epithets" and was eventually "[c]hosen first Provost of Glasgow after the Reform Bill" (Samuel and Tweed 15). Like Thelwall, he had experienced government pushback and social recrimination for his political positions, including his disapproval of the American War and "the foolish, tyrannical, and oppressive mis-government which cost Britain her finest provinces" (Samuel and Tweed 15). Furthermore, Grahame was one of the lawyers who defended the Scottish patriot Thomas Muir in 1794. In the eighth sonnet of his *Poems, Written in Close Confinement* (1795), Thelwall had sympathetically identified with Muir as a fellow prisoner, victim of repression, and one of "the virtuous few, / That sacred cause of Freedom still pursue" (*SPP* 98:13-14). Like Thomas Erskine then, the lawyer who had defended Thelwall, Grahame used his profession to protect patriots accused of questioning authority and subverting the status quo, in stark contrast to young advocates in Edinburgh like Jeffrey and his cabal, whom Thelwall satirized for using their skills in swindling, attacking, and promoting false taste. As a final point of similarity to Thelwall, Grahame, in his position as Lord Provost, formed "The Glasgow Emancipation Society," having for its objective "the abolition of slavery throughout the world" (Samuel and Tweed 17). Clearly, Grahame and Thelwall shared a keen interest in promoting a

number of similar social and political causes,[28] so it is not surprising that the stranger would have been well-received in Grahame's home at White Hill.

Shortly after having arrived in Glasgow, in late January 1804, Thelwall wrote a series of lyrics to the daughters of the liberal-minded families with which he interacted during his time in the city. One, aptly titled "The Stranger," is addressed to Anne Grahame, Robert's eldest daughter, who was seventeen during Thelwall's visit to White Hill. The setting of the lyric, a drawing room in which the speaker first tells his tale of woe and Anne then reciprocates by playing a song for him, has its fair share of resonances in Thelwall's oeuvre. As a poem that captures the speaker's reaction to a musical air being played or sung, it is reminiscent of Thelwall's December 1792 essay "On the Influences of Music, considered as a Source of Domestic Recreation" in which Thelwall recounts the impact of a daughter who "possessed the elegant accomplishment" of song and was able to "cast the spell of social enchantment over the senses" of her auditors (407). As "the centre of union in this delightful little sphere," the young woman is objectified but her power is acknowledged:

> [I]t is true, indeed, the person of this fine creature (who is just at the age which is generally most interesting to the mind of man, who is prevented, from individual attachment, from regarding the sex with any other sensations than those of sentiment and esteem) the symmetry of her form, the polished graces of her manners, and the simplicity of her dress and countenance, might altogether have a considerable influence in heightening the effect. (407-408)

[28] Thelwall's abolitionism was established during his early apprenticeship in debating societies, where "he entered with an almost diseased enthusiasm" into "discussions on the Slave Trade" (*Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* xxiv). His sympathies are also expressed in a lost abolitionist epic he wrote in his youth, *The Daughter of Adoption* and his ode "The Negro's Prayer."

The draw of the drawing room is evident in “The Stranger” as well. In this context, Thelwall uses the figure of the outsider in a manner different to that proposed in his earlier Edinburgh promotional effort. There is greater intimacy in Thelwall’s lyric, as the speaker has already been welcomed and is in the process of telling his story, which is supportively received without any reservations, eliciting tears “from Anna’s eye / To hear a stranger’s tale of woes” (*SPP* 196:3-4).

In many ways, the stranger’s stance in Thelwall’s poem may usefully be compared with that of his fair-weather friend Wordsworth in his better-known lyrics addressed to Scotswomen during his Tour of Scotland with his sister Dorothy in the fall of 1803. Whereas the speaker of Wordsworth’s poem seeks to determine (but in fact leaves indeterminate) what “The Solitary Reaper” is singing, Thelwall appears much more interested in the provincial polish he would later extol in *The Champion* essay on “Song Writing,” where he implied “the Scots are an informed people, and blend a sort of intellectual refinement even with their rustic simplicity” (*SPP* 179). But if there is one poem written during Wordsworth’s trip to Scotland that is comparable to Thelwall’s “The Stranger” lyric it is “To a Highland Girl.” In her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, Dorothy Wordsworth would write of meeting two girls near Loch Lomond and being impressed by “the beautiful figure and face” of the elder and their general “innocent merriment” (4). William’s speaker remarks that the highland girl’s beauty appears like a dream but one he can rejoice in because it is real. He goes on to state that she is fortunate to live in a such a sheltered place so “remote from men” as she is “ripening in perfect innocence” without the customary barrier of feminine shyness (122). When Wordsworth’s speaker states that he wishes he could be like a brother or father to her, the reaction mirrors one expressed by Thelwall’s speaker in his lyric:

Enchanting maid! as o'er thy form,

  In holiest rapture roves my eye,

I feel the father – struggling – warm –

  And (homeward glancing) heave the sigh.

Oh! that my bud of sweetest bloom –

  My little maiden – far away,

May such maturing grace assume,

  As Anna's opening charms display; (*SPP* 196:17-24)

There are aesthetic differences between the two poems, however, as Wordsworth's speaker finds comfort in treating the meeting as a prototypical spot (of time) that memory will heighten, while the reaction of Thelwall's speaker is raw and immediate. Although the overall tone of his lyric is one of longing, it is nonetheless premised on reciprocal relations. Wordsworth uses his Hibernian travels to capture the picturesque nature of the standardized Scottish tour, but Thelwall's trip both draws on and is motivated by more fractious and politicized events that require human affection to instigate recovery. In this context it is significant that he regards Anna as a surrogate daughter in the passage above, reminding us again of parallels between the philosophies of sympathy articulated in his 1801 novel and his 1804 poems.

Thelwall's recuperation in Glasgow is marked by the idea that "expanding undulations of virtuous sympathy" begin with minor yet significant acts of reciprocal consideration between individuals (*LFJ* 88). In this way, Thelwall's thinking was once more "influenced by the moral philosophical understandings of sympathy … inherit[ed] from mid-century Scottish thought" (Fairclough 60). In Anne Grahame, Thelwall finds comfort in compassion, emphasized in the

language of sensibility of the lyric's refrain, "sooth[ing] a stranger's woe" (*SPP* 196:28). The line itself alludes to one of Thelwall's favorite sentimental ballads, "The Hermit, or Edwin and Angelina," by Oliver Goldsmith. In that poem, two estranged lovers are eventually reunited but, at its commencement, "nothing could a charm impart / To soothe the stranger's woe" (57-58). More presciently, in Thelwall's own earlier moral fable, "Sir Malcolm by the Tweed," included at the end of *A Speech in Rhyme* (1788), the "dew-drops" that result from "hear[ing] a stranger's tale of woe" sympathetically link the lovers Malcolm and Matilda (18). At the beginning of that poem, Sir Malcolm does not have "[a] sympathizing heart" despite being successful in military battle and combat (16). Enter Matilda who, by the side of a dying and fallen sage, conjures a tale of compassion and calamity for those left behind. This awakens newfound "sensations" in Malcolm and once "[l]ove pierc[es] his heart" so does "soft pity" enter the "wound" (22). A key image in this early narrative is Malcolm's somatic response; overwhelmed with emotion, he is unable to speak and instead mimics Matilda's sympathetic reaction, "sighing as she sigh'd" (22). What is most notable about this interchange is how, ultimately, it leaves the male protagonist "[s]ilent" and instead gives power of speech to the female figure, whose agency becomes the focal point of the tale. In essence, Malcolm is converted:

> He who erewhile no pity felt
> Now oft, at even-tide,
> At tales of woe in tears will melt
> By his Matilda's side. (22)

While steeped in convention, Malcolm's transformation into a man of feeling is instigated by a fluent female's agency. Similarly, the stranger in Thelwall's lyric begins to achieve consolation

only by experiencing the "sympathising grace" of Anna's tears and musical performance (*SPP* 196:6).

A more developed version of this form of sympathetic response can be found in *The Daughter of Adoption,* where Henry and Seraphina share a powerful emotional response to the reading of a moving poem. After their companion Edmunds recites "the plaintive strains" of Jeffery Ruddel pining for a lost love "*so far away*," they spontaneously identify with a "subject . . . too near to the[ir] hearts":

> Numbers were not requisite, in this instance, nor the embellishments of fancy, to awaken their sympathy. They sympathized relatively, as it were – as the mother sympathizes over the sufferings of her child; merely because it does suffer; not like the stranger, who must be tricked into pity by the exaggerations of eloquence and the plaintive harmony of well-arranged syllables. (226)

Thelwall here uses the figure of the stranger in yet another way, as an outsider waylaid and played by deceptive rhetoric and meter. Solomonescu deftly analyses the dichotomy presented in this passage between trickery and "truth to nature" that "would become one of Thelwall's main preoccupations . . . when he returned to society as a self-made professor of elocution" (94). This observation is valuable because it calls attention to the artifice inherent in Thelwall's self-fashioning. The hyperbolic rhetoric of the pamphlets against Jeffrey may well be balanced, softened or recuperated by the gentle pathos of "The Stranger" lyric. Throughout, however, as in so much literature of sensibility, Thelwall is playing a part for effect – while the sympathy evoked is genuine, made more authentic by the gender and age of the listener, the entire event remains staged, a fabrication intended to affect as much as have an effect.

A final significant element of Thelwall's poem to Anne Grahame is its use of song. Thelwall's interest in this medium dates back to political efforts from the 1790s and would continue in his collaborations with composers Gesualdo Lanza and Dr. Joseph Kemp in the 1810s, and his periodical essays and reviews into the 1820s. Thelwall's particular interest in Scottish song is evident, for instance, in his review of *Cunningham's Songs of Scotland* from the *Panoramic Miscellany* (1826). In that piece, he praises the ability of "Scottish songs [to] breathe, so often, the genuine warmth of nature, and [remain] pregnant with real interest" (674). This review contains an extended effusion on Anne Lindsay's "Auld Robin Gray," whose protagonist Jenny, "appeals, with her artless tale, to our sorrowing sympathies" (676). He is critical of the editor Cunningham for questioning and accusing Jenny of scheming, ignoring the purer motives of her narrative. Thelwall's "The Stranger," composed in an explicitly musical meter (in this case the ballad), likewise contains a song, for it is Miss Grahame's passionate playing that assists in reenergizing Thelwall's sagging spirits:

> Why at that note from Rhudland's plain,
> This mournfull thrill? – this tender glow?
> 'Tis Anna wakes the mournful strain,
> And wakes to soothe a stranger's woe. (*SPP* 196:13-16)

The song Miss Grahame is playing is Anne Grant's "Marsh of Rhuddlan," which, the author suggests, refers to a place closely connected with "the defeat and death of Caradoc, King of North Wales, . . . in 725, when the Saxons, under Offa of Mercia, routed the Welsh with great slaughter" (Grant). Grant's song thus subtly resonates with Thelwall's *Hope of Albion*, in particular the "Massacre of Bangor," an excerpt from the unfinished epic that he recited regularly during elocutionary lectures and that deals with a similar slaughter in Wales during the Saxon

wars of the eighth century. Rhuddlan like Bangor was a spot sacred to the Welsh's oft-frustrated ambitions of national independence. The circumstance of this Scottish lass playing a Welsh melody seems to speak to Thelwall's lofty goal of arousing "the Oratorical Energies of Britons!" ("Mr. Thelwall Proposes"). In essence, a British patriot listens to a young member of the rising middle class Glasgow elite play a Welsh song about another patriot who "rush'd to the combat, to die or be free" (Grant). Thelwall undoubtedly saw his own position and values mirrored in Anne Grahame's choice and delivery of this "mournful strain" (*SPP* 196:15). However, rather than wallowing, Thelwall is wakened, ushering in and signaling the positive impact of members of "the liberal and enlightened city of Glasgow" on his recovery ("Letter from Mr. Thelwall" 341). Thus, buried beneath the surface of Grahame's playing are a number of layers and resonances in "The Marsh of Rhuddlan" that Thelwall recognized and subtly exploited in his poem. As in his earlier "seditious allegories,"[29] at once simple, rich and elusive, Thelwall takes a seemingly tame domestic scene and transforms it into an arena of political martyrdom and reclamation through commiseration. This deceptively simple lyric marks a shift characteristic of Thelwall's elocutionary lectures: as "a means of preserving vitality under stifling conditions of repression," they produced works that do not appear "merely as quietist alternatives to his frustrated political ambitions, but as the very means by which, in changing

[29] As suggested in Chapter 1, the phrase is drawn from Thelwall's *The Rights of Nature* (1796), where the author states, "in the midst of . . . persecution and proscriptions, Socrates was found, as usual, in the places of public resort . . . uttering seditious allegories and condemning the desolating tyranny of the Oligarchy" (23). Scrivener uses the concept as the basis for his argument in *Seditious Allegories*: "Political repression and anti-Jacobinism were the conditions under which Thelwall and other Jacobins had to write . . . Repression made allegory a useful literary form, the ambiguity of which was convenient at trials. Allegories also appealed to popular audiences used to interpreting and Aesopian texts. Moreover, the repression was so severe, that anti-Jacobin reaction so relentless, the political conflict so sharp, that another kind of allegory was commonplace: even when Jacobins wrote about ostensibly apolitical topics, readers could find a displaced meaning nevertheless" (xxiii).

circumstances, he sought to promote his democratic, egalitarian and humanitarian principles" (Solomonescu 10).

Part 2: Achieving "Virtue's Wish'd Millenium": The Stranger Revived

Another established Glasgow family that provided a hospitable circle for Thelwall and his developing elocutionary system, with another daughter to whom he addressed a poem illuminating his egalitarian and reciprocal values, was the Bannatynes. Dugald Bannatyne was a self-made man who in many ways resembles the hard-working Thelwall presented in the "Prefatory Memoir" to *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement*, laboring diligently to climb the social ladder. Bannatyne began his path to upward mobility first "enter[ing] his family's small textile factory, caring [for] the craft of weaving stockings" before becoming involved with "the hosiers of Trongate" and their extensive building scheme in Glasgow and then being "appointed Postmaster in 1806" ("The Glasgow Story"). The note that prefaces the unfinished *Memoir* of Bannatyne (1896) suggests Dugald "was remarkable for great sedateness and sagacity, great earnestness of purpose, and thorough reliableness . . . [while being] possessed of considerable literary tastes and attainments, and enjoy[ing] the friendship of many distinguished men of the day" (1). Though we do not know if Thelwall was one of those men, Dugald's daughter Mary certainly is the object of Thelwall's attention in "To Miss Bannatine," a substantial blank-verse conversation poem that highlights her intellectual stature and equality, and shows how the circles of reciprocal exchange in Glasgow ultimately took the place of the Wordsworth circle in his development, but also acknowledges the difficulty of sustaining such exchange in the face of political prejudice. Mary's intellect is confirmed by a telling sketch near the end of the *Memoir*

of Dugald Bannatyne, which reveals that she achieved great success in "Dr. Garnett's botany class, where she had been adjudged on par with Mr. John Pattison, and a first prize had been given to both" (71). The July dating of this letter implies that Mary attended one of the popular courses of Thomas Garnett, the English physician and natural philosopher, who was a professor at the experimental Anderson's Institution in Glasgow. Chernock has argued that the Institution's acceptance of female students "was a significant development" and "an ambitious plan to level the educational playing field" (*Men and the Making* 50). In his *Observations on a Tour through the Highlands* (1800), Garnett states that "during the summer[s]" of his time in Glasgow, he had "give[n] a short-course on botany, and the theory of agriculture" (199), which strengthens the evidence that Mary attended a series of these summer seminars. In his retrospect, Garnett proudly claims that "nearly half of [his] auditors" at each course of his lectures were "ladies" (202). The fact that Mary shared first-prize honors emphasizes the gender parity encouraged by Garnett, an attitude shared by fellow Anderson Institute professor George Birkbeck and his good friend, itinerant elocutionary lecturer John Thelwall.

During his stay in Glasgow, Thelwall showed a keen interest in including women in his own scientific lectures, advertising an elocutionary talk on "the importance of Elocution as a Female Accomplishment, and its connection with the Relative Duties of polished life," which took place on February 4th, 1804 ("Elocution of the Fair Sex"). Like Garnett, Thelwall was interested in exposing, and compensating for, gaps in women's education at this time. Satirically outlining "the progress of Female Education, from the Housewifely days of pickling and preserving, to the Age of Fillagree [sic] and Silk-Picture," he suggests that the intellectual development of women has been restricted, their opportunities limited to chores and the decorative arts (*Selections* Wakefield 9). Thelwall would have agreed wholeheartedly with

Garnett's conclusion that "[t]he frivolous pursuits for which the fair sex have been condemned, ought not to be imputed to them, but to their education" (204). Both individuals were interested in expanding the range of female intellect, motivating minds through actual lessons and courses rather than reinforcing established norms through restrictive and limiting busy-work.

At this time, one contentious area of study for women was botany. June Sturrock has commented upon the "great surge of popular interest" in the field during "the second half of the eighteenth century, which fostered a new association connecting the floral, the sexual, and the female" (57). It is interesting to examine Mary Bannatyne's triumph in Dr. Garnett's class in the context of conservative authors such as Richard Polwhele, who vilified women studying science in "The Unsex'd Females" (1798):

> With bliss botanic as their bosoms heave,
> Still pluck forbidden fruit, with mother Eve,
> For puberty in signing florets pant,
> Or point the prostitution of a plant;
> Dissect its organ of unhallow'd lust,
> And fondly gaze the titillating dust. (29-34)

This stinging criticism, emphasizing the untoward eroticism inherent in botanic classification, was published around the same time Mary would have won her award. As Theresa Kelley has recently argued, botany "was by turns or by degrees an appropriate female accomplishment and a disturbing activity" (98). As with elocution, it could be either marketed as a necessary skill or vilified as a transgressive act. According to a July 1802 letter to her father, Mary's success in this study encouraged "her Aunt Stewart [to] procure her Withering's *Botany*" (*Memoir* 70). This invaluable work, also acquired and used by Dorothy and William Wordsworth, reflected a "new,

more hospitable method of teaching" which was "singled out as being of particular interest to female readers" since it simplified the difficulties inherent in understanding Latin, which was a language largely off-limits to women at the time (Pascoe 198). The fact that Mary, in Thelwall's words, had a "blush of sweet ingenuousness" (*SPP* 197:7) hints at a vibrant and inquisitive mind that clearly was nurtured by an open and liberal education.

A part of Mary's education, no doubt, involved spirited discussion within the reformist network of Glasgow. According to Thelwall, "the genuine zest of social intercourse" can be achieved only when both men and women are given open and amicable social conditions in which to communicate ("Elocution and Oratory" 102). In the "General Plan and Outline" (1803) of his lectures, he states that there are "[n]o parties really social from which Females are excluded" while even more strongly asserting severe "mischiefs from such exclusion, to morals, to intellect, to taste" ("Elocution and Oratory" 102). In this manner, members of the opposite sex are able to educate through conversation – not only *what* they say but, as importantly, *how* they say it. Thelwall echoes Scottish philosophers, such as David Hume, and Irish elocutionists, like Thomas Sheridan, who contended that "women figured as 'virtuous' and 'sympathetic' creatures who had succeeded in transforming men from barbarians into civilized subjects through polite conversation" (Chernock, *Men and the Making* 42). However, Thelwall did not place limits on what topics could be discussed between the sexes, thus broadening polite conversation to include political and scientific discourse.

In his elocutionary theory, like his precursor Thomas Sheridan, author of *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1762), Thelwall promotes the inclusion of women in conversation from a therapeutic standpoint. In *A Letter to Henry Cline* (1810), which summarizes the progress of his own successful educational institution, Thelwall postulates that female society acts as a curative

and palliative for gentlemen with maladies, insofar as those who "could never get out a syllable" discover that their deficiency "entirely disappear[s] in the presence of gay assemblages and female society" (69). In another section, Thelwall praises the uniqueness of human expression, making no gender distinction, and lauding the "organic and intellectual faculties" which are "the badges only of our species" (81). He treats elocution as a levelling all-purpose accomplishment, whose value far outweighs other, more superficial subjects for which parents are happy to pay a premium, cheekily dismissing the way children "at a price" are taught "to dance the fandango, or hurry their fingers over a piano-forte" (81). Thelwall thus critiques the inculcation of hollow achievements in the education of girls and women. He then qualifies his earlier statement by suggesting he is "no enemy to any species of accomplishment" before slyly referring to "the rationality of comparative appreciation" (81) which, through rhetorical sleight of hand, implies that his area of expertise, the cultivation of eloquent expression, should take precedence over insipid and trivial activities.

Consistent with *The Daughter of Adoption* then, and well before he opened his own school, Thelwall was, amongst a large and multi-generational crowd, taking up arms against a type of pedagogy common during the period, that highlighted the acquisition of superficial accomplishments, primarily intended for women to attract and gain a husband before then being abandoned for maternal duties. In her *Letters on Education* (1790), radical writer Catharine Macaulay had advised parents to "[c]onfine not the education of [their] daughters of what is regarded as the ornamental parts of it" (87). Nonetheless, a focus on the ornamental remained the norm in the early nineteenth century, and was certainly so during Thelwall's stay in Scotland. For instance, an advertisement placed by Mrs. Newall in the February 8th, 1804 edition of the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal*, "inform[s] the public that YOUNG LADIES may be taught Sewing,

Dresden Work, Tambouring, Embroidery, Filigree, Leather Work, Drawing and Working of Maps, Artificial Flowers, and various kinds of Coloured Work" at her newly opened school ("Mrs. Newall's Institution"). More intellectual courses of study, however, are given subordinate status, almost as an afterthought, being relegated to the second paragraph of the ad: "Also, English, Writing, Arithmetic, and Geography: French, Music, Drawing and Painting, and Portrait Modeling in wax" ("Mrs. Newall's Institution"). Furthermore, any particular scientific study is omitted altogether in Newall's classroom. This can be strikingly contrasted with the broad education Mary Bannatyne received. In fact, one could contend that Mary attains the ideal posited by Wollstonecraft in her *Vindication*, where it is confidently speculated that "[g]ardening, experimental philosophy, and literature, would afford [women] subjects to think of and matter for conversation, that in some degree would exercise their understandings" (172).

All of these observations on Thelwall's elocutionary system and the education of women constitute a backdrop for "To Miss Bannatine." This poem complements the content of Thelwall's lectures, which encouraged encyclopedic study for women along with sustained and intellectually rigorous interactions with the opposite sex. In "To Miss Bannatine," one can trace the correlation between Thelwall's theory and praxis, alongside traces of ideas of sympathy from the Scottish Enlightenment's "culture of improvement" (Glover 8). This is obliquely addressed in the ameliorative "improv'd and improving" from Thelwall's lyric (*SPP* 197:15). Lambasting "cold forms of courtesy," the speaker calls for "free communion, round the social hearth" between genders (*SPP 197*:11-12). Such a "gentle interchange of soul" naturally encourages intellectual enlargement ("improv'd) but the process of interaction itself ("improving") fruitfully leads to greater rational progress (*SPP* 197:13). In this way, Thelwall, in a Wollstonecraftian manner, reformulates the place of women, attributing them greater agency and influence as

"Intellectual Partner[s]" rather than confining them to the derisive and limiting position of "Bosom Slave[s]" ("Elocution and Oratory" 102).

Nevertheless, such a state has not yet come to pass, as is evident in the insistently conditional syntax of the poem, which also gestures towards the chilling effect and lingering politics of the Jeffrey affair:

> Mary, if rightly in thy beaming eyes
> I read thy gentle heart, we were not form'd
> For foes; and had we met in happier hours
> When no discordant feuds had rent in twain
> The bonds of blest affiance that should link
> Man to his neighbour, in that blush I read
> (That blush of sweet ingenuousness) how soon
> Our souls had sympathis'd. Then had we held,
> Not transiently, as now, the boon of chance,
> This stinted converse; nor, with formal phrase,
> Imp'd the cold forms of courtesey; but oft,
> In free communion, round the social hearth,
> Enjoy'd such gentle interchange of soul
> As intellectual beings best beseems,
> Improving and improv'd. (*SPP* 197:1-15)

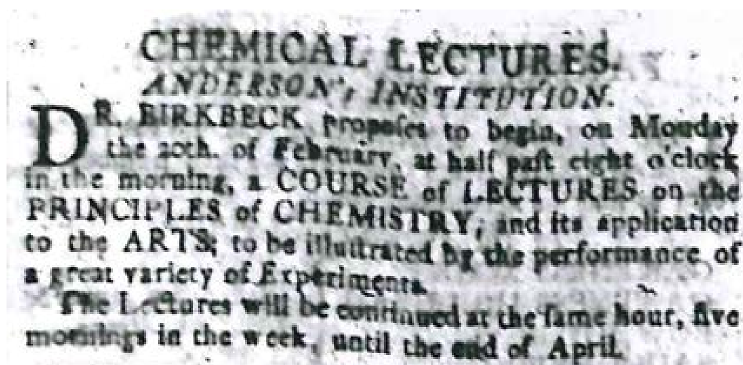
The idealized terms in which Thelwall constructs their interaction, as having the potential to be a "blest region" or "wish'd millennium" of kindred sociability and equality, are haunted by the reality that stands in their way: an atmosphere "of feuds and strife, and Envy's bitter wrong, /

And wanton Calumny's soul-vexing wrath" that "mar the social compact" (*SPP* 198:53-55). There is a reference to "The Stranger" (composed two months earlier) insofar as "White-Hill's social roof" is named as the center of that "kind circle, where we chanc'd to meet" (*SPP* 198:59-60). But though the setting here is not specified, it is clearly not White-Hill.

"To Miss Bannatine" emphasizes education in terms that speak to Mary's own interests and accomplishments. The middle section of the poem covers a range of prospective talking points that would have anchored conversation between Mary and Thelwall, beginning with innocuous poetic tropes, focusing on elements of landscape and the picturesque – "towering hills," "dells" and "luxuriant" and "fertile plains" (*SPP* 197:19-20) – before deftly maneuvering toward a lamentation over missing an opportunity to enact one of Thelwall's core philanthropic beliefs, whereby "sad strains of moral Sympathy / [can] school the social heart" (*SPP* 197:26-27). The final topic of Thelwall's projected tête-à-tête is the most unconventional, that of "Science reckless" (*SPP* 197:29). Thelwall uses this Miltonic inversion to emphasize the carefree, open-ended nature of this taboo topic of discussion. The "common friend" (*SPP* 197:30) mentioned in the lyric is George Birkbeck, whom Thelwall invites to join in "sweet communion," leading to a longed-for "blending" of "wisdom profound / With social merriment" (*SPP* 197:31-33). By including the word "blend," Thelwall puns upon Birkbeck's passion and profession – his position as professor and lecturer in chemistry at Anderson's Institution, who preceded Garnett as the teacher of (indeed, the founder of) the mechanics' classes. According to Thompson, the lifelong friendship Thelwall formed with Birkbeck in 1804 "planted the seeds" for the former's "school of elocution" and the latter's "Mechanics Institute" (*John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle* 203).

In his *Short Prospectus of the Philosophical and Chemical Lectures* (1800), Birkbeck

outlines a popular course on "the philosophy of science" which invited and encouraged a mixed audience (quoted in *A Pioneer* 133). Despite an economic downturn in Glasgow, which had negative repercussions on the academic session of 1803-1804 and led to lectures being discontinued, by spring of 1804, "the Chemistry class had been reinstated and was being attended by forty 'Ladies and Gentlemen'" (Butt 33). Notwithstanding the lower numbers, the success of these lectures over other classes was stressed in a Minutes of Anderson College meeting dating from March 21st, 1804. Here, Birkbeck would report "43 pounds" gained from the popular courses, which raised more money than other lectures given on astronomy, geography and mechanics at this time (Butt 35). The fact that Birkbeck, in Thelwall's poem, is called Mary's "not reluctant guide / Thro' the bright maze of science" (*SPP* 198:62-63), implies that she may have been one of the ladies in attendance at the "Chemical Lectures" advertised in the February 20th, 1804 edition of *The Glasgow Herald* (see fig. 6).


CHEMICAL LECTURES.
ANDERSON's INSTITUTION.
DR. BIRKBECK propoſes to begin, on Monday the 20th. of February, at half paſt eight o'clock in the morning, a COURSE of LECTURES on the PRINCIPLES of CHEMISTRY, and its application to the ARTS; to be illuſtrated by the performance of a great variety of Experiments.
The Lectures will be continued at the ſame hour, five mornings in the week, until the end of April.

(Fig. 6. Ad for Birkbeck's "Chemical Lectures" from 20. Feb. 1804 *The Glasgow Herald*)

In addition, the dating of Thelwall's poem, March, 1804 coincides with the time Birkbeck was holding his lectures, further implying that Mary was a regular attendee at these lectures. Almost twenty years later, in the inaugural address delivered upon the opening of the progressive Mechanics Institute in London, Birkbeck would proclaim that "the inquiring spirit of the age has loudly demanded that the door of science should be thrown open, and that its mysteries should be

revealed to all . . ." (*A Pioneer* 55). Birkbeck experimented with this egalitarian ideal during his time in Glasgow, with Mary Bannatyne being a clear example that gender should never be a barrier to educational advancement.

In "To Miss Bannatine," Thelwall surreptitiously breaches barricades of drawing-room etiquette to envision and articulate a space where both genders can (and indeed did) operate equally, happily and communally. Complementing this notion, the speaker carefully balances concepts including change and stasis, hospitality and homage, the private and the public, the provincial and the metropolitan. In this case, Thelwall's desire for millennial renewal might be tempered, carefully conforming to social constraints but, as he had done so nimbly since the sedition trials of 1794, Thelwall is simply adapting to context. The body politic becomes focalized in the woman's body, which, in a manner to be developed further in later work, becomes an instrument of liberty.[30] As a result, in this poem in particular, Thelwall operates on the fringes of polite society while articulating a carefully delineated hermeneutic that subtly challenges the status quo.

The form and style of "To Miss Bannatine," unlike those of the other poems he composed in Scotland (primarily written in rhyming quatrains), are also reminiscent of Thewall's early conversational odes in blank verse, inspired by his dialogue with Coleridge, and included in the 1801 collection *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement*. Because of this, "To Miss Bannatine" can be read as partially revisiting and rewriting what has become Thelwall's most anthologized poem, "Lines, Written at Bridgewater." The replacement of Wordsworth and Coleridge by Mary

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[30] This concept is more fully addressed in Chapter 1, specifically Thelwall's theory of the body as "a living instrument" in "The Song of Eros" (*SPP* 180:9) and McCann's analysis of Thelwall's notion of the "self [as] a work of aesthetic synthesis" ("Romantic Self-Fashioning" 221).

Bannatyne and George Birkbeck signals a significant shift in Thelwall's model community. Whereas, in "Lines, Written at Bridgewater," the speaker longs for escape to a pantisocratic pastoral ideal, the latter poem finds comfort in the urban and urbane "kind circle" that met under "White Hill's social roof" in Glasgow (*SPP* 198:59-60). There are likewise numerous stylistic and verbal echoes between the poems that intimate both continuity and progress. The "kindly interchange of mutual aid" (*SPP* 141:95) of the earlier poem becomes a "gentle interchange of soul" (*SPP* 197:13). "Sweet converse" (*SPP* 141:97) mutates into "sweet communion" (*SPP* 197:31), the subtle alterations in diction implying a turn to the spiritual over the material, solidifying close connection and hallowed reciprocation. While in "Lines, Written at Bridgewater," Thelwall adopts a retrospective Wordsworthian tone when he writes of a hoped-for "Golden Age reviv'd" (*SPP* 142:147), the striking phrase "virtue's wish'd millenium" (S*PP* 198:52) from "To Miss Bannatine" is prospective, suggesting that Thelwall emerged from his elocution experiments of the early nineteenth century with a reformist vision that would fortify his second act.

Indeed, "virtue's wish'd millennium" represents Thelwall's desire for social amelioration and "some other region" in which democratic hopes can be achieved (*SPP* 198:49). His emphasis on "such realm / (Or such regeneration)" (*SPP* 198:54-55) speaks to the progressive ideals embedded in his elocutionary theory. The dichotomy between "realm," from the French *royaume*, with its aristocratic connotation signifying a territory over which a sovereign rules, and the yearning for "regeneration," is vital to understanding Thelwall's reformist system. The clever word play suggests incremental advancements to improve the existing order rather than wholesale usurpation or revolution. In other words, change the mindset of individuals by giving them voice, and a changed society will naturally follow. Consequently, Thelwall uses

imaginative compensation to remedy a deficient state and generate change through the aspiration for “sweet communion,” “[t]he lore of Friendship” and “pure affiance” (*SPP* 198:31,38,48). Nevertheless, “To Miss Bannatine” is, in effect, a poem of wish-fulfillment. The insistently qualified syntax suggests the prospect of something unattained or “evermore about to be” (Wordsworth, *The Prelude* 542). Yet this prospective orientation is similar to that of Wollstonecraft, in her *Vindication*, who espoused a belief in unrestricted “enlarging,” so that the female mind could be best “strengthen[ed],” thus releasing women, from the shackles of “blind obedience” (93). Through his wholesale encouragement of Mary Bannatyne as a rational being capable of enlightened conversation, Thelwall seconds Wollstonecraft’s idea that by letting women’s “faculties have room to unfold and their virtues to gain strength,” society could then judiciously “determine where the whole sex must stand in the intellectual scale” (*A Vindication* 105).

I want to conclude this section by comparing Dugald Bannatyne’s response to his daughter Mary’s winning of that botany award in 1802 with Thelwall’s more liberal but still carefully qualified conclusion in “To Miss Bannatine.” The tenor of Bannatyne’s letter is reminiscent of the advice presented in the advice presented in conduct books by Reverend Fordyce and Dr. John Gregory. In *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters*, Gregory suggested that “if [they] have any learning, [women should] keep it a profound secret, especially from men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a women of great parts, and a cultivated understanding” (36). In the letter to his daughter, Dugald’s tone is similarly cautious as he tells Mary, “I do not wish you to be considered by the world as aspiring to literary pre-eminence. Your mind should be furnished with knowledge as a means of happiness to yourself, but never to be made a display of. In the journey through this world triumphs of the understanding always

create enemies, while a superiority in the kindly affections of the heart begets again kindness, and even of enemies makes friends" (71). One wonders if this warning is intended to proscribe and silence and what effect it had on Mary, who married in 1805 (hinted at the end of Thelwall's poem, confirmed in the Bannatyne *Memoir*) and then disappeared from the record.[31] Nevertheless it does share parallels with Thelwall's own reading of Mary's "gentle heart" and eventual longing for "kindred minds / Dwelling in kindred intercourse" (*SPP* 198:56-57). The primary difference between the two approaches is that the Thelwallian imperative, personally, professionally and publicly, was to put on display – to both show and tell – never to hide or withhold. In fact, the success of his elocutionary experiment was predicated on his pupils, regardless of gender, being able to overcome their impediments and express themselves perceptively, persuasively, and assertively. Thus, Thelwall subverts the traditional understanding of accomplishments and, by promoting the benefits of elocution to families such as the Bannatynes, in rising "circles of Commercial Opulence" like Glasgow, he truly believed his method would assist in enhancing the "[p]rospects of the rising generation from the expanded intellect of Females in the present day" (*Selections* Wakefield 9).

Part 3: Reciprocation and Renewal: The Stranger Returns

This chapter's final section will explore a significant literary network, located in Edinburgh, which was connected with both Birkbeck and the Grahame circle in Glasgow, and with which Thelwall was engaged when he returned to the Scottish capital in late spring of 1804.

[31] There is, however, in Dundas Ontario, an archive of letters between Mary and her stepson Mark Young Stark, who became a noted ecclesiast in nearby Ancaster, which I have not consulted.

Illustrating one of Thelwall's lifelong interests, this group focused actively on encouraging and developing nascent female talent. Thelwall desired to achieve this through a form of reciprocation that matched the elocutionary theory he was developing at this time:

> According to Thelwall's anatomical rhetoric of resounding, the poet-speaker is to the reader-audience as the larynx is to the chest or diaphragm: the primary organ is the source of the impulse but the power of sound depends upon its relation with recipient or resounding organs. This leads to theories of both literary creation and social expression that are much more democratic, interactive, and multivocal than dominant Romantic theories of imagination or solitary genius. (Thompson, "Resounding Romanticism" 26)

Even though he left Edinburgh temporarily deflated at the end of 1803, events in the Scottish capital and the possibility of a prosperous return were never far from Thelwall's mind during his productive stay in Glasgow. We know this through the discovery of correspondence between Thelwall, Birkbeck and Dr. Robert Anderson (no relation to Professor John Anderson who founded the Institution in Glasgow, and died in 1796). The mentorship of Anderson, best known for his work as editor and biographer of the *British Poets*, a widely distributed anthologized series, was widely recognized by aspiring poets such as Robert Pearse Gillies, who in the first volume of his *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran* (1851), recollects sending original poetry, in 1803, to "the then well-known Dr. Robert Anderson, of Edinburgh, who acted as editor-general to all incipient poets" (178).

Along with Grahame and Bannatyne, Anderson was a vital member of a sympathetic Scottish network that shared political stances; he was "in his politics a sound whig, and from his earliest youth showed the highest respect for the civil and religious liberties of mankind" (Nichols 70). Anderson was also recognized as being "very attentive to the interest of men of

letters, and peculiarly so to that of young persons in whom he perceived any indications of genius" (Nichols 70). Like Thelwall, he was an honest and shrewd critic of embryonic abilities.[32] It is clear from the outset of their interaction that Thelwall and Anderson were kindred spirits. Both sought to nurture the emerging abilities of female writers; Anderson, for his part, was a mentor and confidant for established author Jane West, for Anne Bannerman, and for little-known author Jessie Stewart, a recurring figure in the early 1804 correspondence between Anderson and Thelwall.

In fact, Stewart is mentioned in three letters written during Thelwall's time in Glasgow, illustrating how this connection was mutually beneficial to both men as they sought to encourage vibrant voices within a receptive literary environment. Given his own difficulties at the time, Thewall's specific interest in Stewart might have been sparked through her small oeuvre of poetry, in which the ability of attachment to counter hardship is highlighted. It is also important to recognize that Robert Anderson's correspondence confirms the important part his own daughter played in encouraging Stewart's poetic career. Anderson refers to his daughter as Stewart's "most intimate friend," who acted as a "female amanuensis" in transcribing numerous drafts of her poetry (quoted in Nichols 117). In fact, the edition of one of Stewart's poems, "Ode to Dr. Thomas Percy" held at the National Library of Scotland is a presentation copy, dated Edinburgh, July, 1803 and incribed to "to Miss M.S. Anderson . . . from her affectionate friend." Yet again, this is a clear example of the reciprocation common among members of the Anderson group and crucial to Thelwall's own social networking.

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[32] Thelwall refers to "[t]he Ens of embrion Poets, in the Womb / Of deep futurity" in "The Song of Eros" (*SPP* 180:22-23). According to the *OED*, Ens is a "being or entity; essence." The idea makes a more sustained reappearance in *Musalogia. Or the Paths of Poesy*, which will be examined in Chapter 6.

In his first letter to Anderson, dated January 16th, 1804, Thelwall asks if Anderson's daughter had "received at the hand of [his] printer a Copy of [his] Letter to Jeffrey, + anr, with which I presumed to trouble her, for Miss Stewart." Thelwall is initating an exchange of writing, hopeful that Stewart might respond in kind with her own original work after receiving Thelwall's first philippic against Jeffrey. This suggests that Thelwall viewed the interactions of the literary circle as premised on a liberal exchange of thoughts and texts within a stimulating social network in which men and women equally participate. This point is reinforced in Thelwall's next letter to Anderson, dated February 9th, 1804, which ends with "[p]oetical remembrances also to Miss Stewart" and the anticipatory statement "I am impatient for her Ode." Here, Thelwall signals his wish to deepen the connection with the up-and-coming poet originally established through Anderson, with more meaningful exchanges. It is important to consider the context of these interchanges, for they occur at a time when Stewart's "Ode to Dr. Thomas Percy, Lord Bishop of Dromore; occasioned by reading the reliques of Ancient English Poetry" was being circulated privately in MS form and was in the process of being considered for publication. The final reference to Stewart occurs in Thelwall's last letter to Anderson from Glasgow, dated March 12, 1804. He invites Anderson's circle, including "Mrs A. + the Ladies all—not forgetting Miss Stewart" to attend his lectures at the King's Arms Tavern in a month's time; here he would also reconnect with members of a Grahame family in Edinburgh. It is clear that Thelwall was attempting to marshal his resources and create a social support group of like-minded individuals who would wholeheartedly endorse his return to public life in the place where his attempts to promote his elocutionary theory were thwarted just months earlier. Ultimately, Thelwall recruits these relationships to help him personally and professionally to blunt the rejection of conservative critics and to give him the impetus to continue with his endeavors.

The dynamic reciprocation between Thelwall, Anderson and Stewart extends to other authors in an exchange that went beyond personal correspondence and discussions. Thelwall turns his attention to print and begins to publish the poems he crafted during his stay in Scotland. These poems, and the networking of Thelwall's writing circle, appeared in various editions of *The Poetical Register*, *and Repository of Fugitive Poetry*, edited by R.A. Davenport. These volumes gave Thelwall a wider audience in London. It is worth noting that in the preface to the second edition of the inaugural volume, the editor gives special thanks to "the very gratifying and effectual kindness . . . of Dr. R. Anderson, of Edinburgh" since "[m]any of the best pieces in the volume were obtained" from his diligent collecting and encouragement (1:v). This praise underscores the influence the Anderson circle had on Thelwall's decision to publish in this outlet.

From a wider perspective, the purpose of this miscellany, addressed by its editor in the same first installment, was to gather as much poetry as possible, primarily works unpublished but likewise so-called fugitive and ephemeral pieces that appeared sporadically in newspapers and journals. Its miscellaneousness was criticized by the well-known poet Anna Seward, even though her own work was included; she thought it should include only "celebrated writers now living" (44). But the eclecticism of the collection suited Thelwall's egalitarian ethos and he was happy to participate in furthering this agenda. Indeed, this was one way that Thelwall's involvement with *The Poetical Register* assisted in resolving the Edinburgh controversy of late 1803, at least for him. By publishing in it, he thumbs his nose at the elitism that was so pronounced in Jeffrey's criticism of Thelwall's poetry and elocutionary profession as the work of a "tradesman." He reinforces his own democratic poetics by approving of Anderson's similar project, and ensuring

that his pieces were included alongside a diverse range of poets represented in the early editions of *The Poetical Register*.

Among the poems in *The Poetical Register* that highlight values shared by Thelwall is the Reverend George Hay Drummond's "Epistle to Robert Anderson" (107). Its speaker welcomes the spring before calling Anderson and his circle to find solace and pleasure in "rural solitudes" (109). In this ideal setting, the speaker implores the group to

> . . . let us some few hours employ
> In contemplation's holy joy;
> With sweet society between,
> To gladden and improve the scene (109)

This description resembles the rural haven depicted in Thelwall's "Lines, Written at Bridgewater," where "hermit-like seclusion" (*SPP* 140:57) is eschewed in favor of connections with "some few minds congenial" (*SPP* 140:60). Drummond's praise of the same "sweet society" that Thelwall enjoyed during his time in Edinburgh shows why Anderson's group supplemented and perhaps displaced Thelwall's earlier affiliations with the Wordsworth circle. Near the poem's end, Drummond's speaker also emphasizes the importance of women in the Anderson circle: "let the female group be there, / No bliss compleat without the Fair!" (110). He concludes that "the tuneful tender Adeline" would lead the charge by "wak[ing] the wild notes of her lyre" (110). This reference reveals that Jessie Stewart (who used the pseudonym Adeline in the poems published in *The Poetical Register*) was a central figure in the circle. Drummond's description of the Anderson circle shows that in Edinburgh, too, Thelwall became a contributing member to a literary cohort that engaged, through reciprocal verses, in the type of "sweet communion . . . blending . . . wisdom profound / With social merriment" he had equally

discovered in Glasgow (*SPP* 197:31-33). The reciprocation that Thelwall so ardently desired and that was ultimately denied by Wordsworth and Coleridge (both of whom spurned his advances due to his radical political affiliations) is reestablished in the shared sweetness Thelwall encounters in Scotland. Thelwall achieved this desired correspondence through the multiplicity of responses collected in *The Poetical Register* that created a unifying platform from which to exchange and critique ideas. What follows are a few examples of interchanges generated within this supportive circle.

Thelwall's own contributions to *The Poetical Register* at this time highlight the most interesting juxtaposition between Thelwall's recovery and network building in Glasgow and the supportive interactions of the Anderson circle in Edinburgh. The first three pieces he published, "Absence," "The Tear, to Miss Geddes" and "The Stranger. To Miss Grahame," express a longing for home and an ardent desire for sympathy, to soothe his bruised ego after his trying time during the Jeffrey affair. These renderings of loss and isolation, and their remedy in sociability, are placed side by side with similar poems of support in the face of adversity by other members of Anderson's group. The most poignant poem in this 1804 issue of *The Poetical Register* is Stewart's own "To Miss M.S. Anderson, On the Close of the Year 1802" (130). It touches upon themes of grief but also the restorative power of friendship and, more adroitly, the sustaining power of poetry. Opening with a few stanzas eulogizing "several of [their] early companions who are now no more" (130), it is akin to Thelwall's own juvenilia, particularly "Elegy X: New Year's Night," where the speaker states that "[r]evolving seasons bring no joys to me" (*SPP* 259:48). Stewart's lines mark seven years "[s]ince first [her] soul confessed the powers divine, / That Friendship consecrates and calls her own" (131),

For thee blest Friendship weaves her deathless bowers,

Bright in the sunshine of a purer sphere,

And Virtue watches o'er the opening flowers

That mock the changes of the varying Year. (132)

Stewart's poem validates the value of fervent attachment to others, including its addressee Miss Anderson, that survives well beyond the earthly plane and confirms the solace and reciprocity found in the community of active participants. Similarly, in Thelwall's "The Tear. To Miss Geddes" – a companion piece to the "The Stranger. To Miss Grahame" discussed earlier – Thelwall receives sustenance from the "balm of all ills, and the cure of all woes" (*SPP* 196: 23) of his patient auditor, personified as "Beauty," who listens to the speaker's recounting of "the woes of days that are past, / Of afflictions and trials severe" (*SPP* 195:1-2). In both instances, the addressed figures become "sunbeam[s] of hope" (*SPP* 195:19) through an established or just encountered friendship that comforts and renews.

Ultimately, Thelwall's vision of correspondence finds its most complex articulation in the written responses to the private circulation of Stewart's poems, specifically her ode addressed to Percy. These response poems mingle praise with immersion in poetic narrative. They include an ecstatic response by Henry Boyd, "Ode, occasioned by reading an Ode to Bishop Percy." Other responses that should be considered include Boyd's to Stewart's manuscript poems, which generated an equally engaging and provocative reply from the author that preaches a militant understanding of community action. Although these responses have various subjects, they share a purpose in encouraging, even empowering, writers to make their voices heard. In particular, Boyd's response to Stewart's Ode deserves closer examination. He responds stirringly to Stewart's composition, concluding his poem with this stanza:

Worthy of high command,

Hark! the Virgin's potent hand

Strikes the chords of pain and pleasure,

In a sweetly-varied measure;

She with Pythic ardour firing,

Felt within the God inspiring;

And whilst the shell resounded Percy's praise,

We heard the heaven-born strains of Arthur's golden days. (80)

Boyd's response is a response to Stewart's, which in turn was based on Percy's own response, as an antiquarian, to anonymous voices in the past, in collecting ballads and miscellaneous works and gathering them into a collection for popular public consumption. Much like Thelwall's reaction to Anne Grahame's playing of the lyre in "The Stranger," the speaker in Boyd's poem welcomes Stewart's "sweetly-varied measure" (80). Both poems endorse a rhetoric of reciprocity and resounding, a microcosm of the "EXPANSIVE PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN VIRTUE" (addressed at the end of my previous chapter) that was a fundamental part of Thelwall's introductory lecture in Edinburgh that prompted the derision of Jeffrey and his associates (*LFG* 88). What Thelwall was unable to achieve upon his first foray into the lecture hall at Bernard's Rooms in Edinburgh is realized in the directly and indirectly resonant textual interchanges of *The Poetical Register*.

Yet another piece by Boyd from the same issue of *The Poetical Register*, entitled "On Reading some MSS poems," addresses numerous unpublished pieces of Stewart's poetry. Boyd's poetic paean includes the exaggerated claim that "[e]ven mighty Shakespear marvels to behold / The sudden wonders of thy wizard hand" (99). Stewart's company is prominently exalted in the final stanza of the poem, where the speaker foresees that

‘Tis thine to claim the Muses noblest right,

O seize the holy harp in Zion strung;

And emulate the solemn bard of Night,

And him that lights primaeval glories sung. (100)

For Boyd, the prophetic power of Stewart’s poetry places her in the company of King David, Edward Young and Milton. Boyd’s response can be compared to a similar reaction captured in Thelwall’s unpublished “Ode to the Zephyrs,” written during his years of elocutionary touring. In this lyric, Thelwall’s speaker implores the poem’s recipient, Katherine Browne, to join the “nymphs of Britain” (*SPP* 195:51) in not only “wak[ing] the lyre” (like Anne Grahame in “The Stranger”) (*SPP* 196:9), but also militantly appropriating it with the Zephyrs whom he urges to

Seize your airy harps and call

From Fancy’s bower and Pleasure’s hall

The virtuous joys that shall engage

Each heart in Freedom’s golden age. (*SPP* 194:33-36)

As with Boyd’s praise of Stewart’s vatic abilities, Thelwall portrays the “eye[s]” of the women he beholds in “Ode to the Zephyrs” as “[s]uffus’d, perhaps, with tearful sympathy” and “[b]right beaming with prophetic extasy” (*SPP* 194:28-29). While no doubt hyperbolic, both poems, through the same diction, use passion to promote regenerative forms in which confident sound replaces restrictive silence. The imagined writing community in *The Poetical Register* inspired original art which nurtured and promoted female poets whose powers were proven by the very responses they garnered. In this way, the medium and the message intertwine to create a sophisticated series of reader responses that remain individual poems as well, in a perfect enactment of Thelwall’s central principle of co-respondence.

As is typical in the response poems from *The Poetical Register*, Stewart (as Adeline) repays the restorative favor by writing "To the Rev. Henry Boyd," composed two months after Boyd's piece. Maintaining the reciprocal imagery of the interchange, she commends Boyd for his ability "to wake the long-resounding shell" and capture the essence of Dante in his translation (102). Just as he had enthusiastically experienced her manuscript poetry, so does she

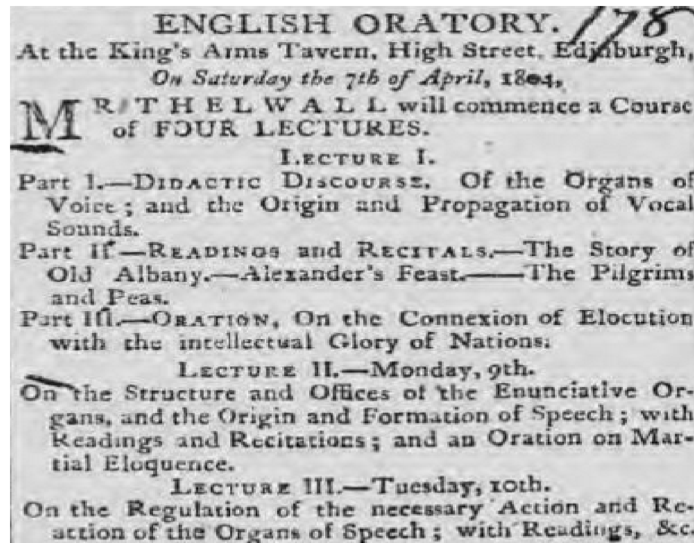
> With thee . . . Eternal Power arrest,
>
> In crystal mountains, Jordan's rolling wave,
>
> While thrilling awe inspires the throbbing breast,
>
> As way-worn armies tread his deepest cave. (104)

In a Thelwallian vein, Stewart's poem transcends mere empty praise by suggesting that Boyd's translation can have transatlantic repercussions that will instigate societal change. Writing that "[t]hese solemn sounds aroused my startled soul," she calls for a return to the "glorious days in Freedom's blissful reign / When living fires shall the cold bosom warm, / Galled in Oppression's adamantine chain" ("To the Rev. Henry Boyd" 105). Here, the speaker desires "Zephyrs of the west" to carry the message of sovereignty embedded in Boyd's translation "to sun-bright isles, where Nature groans oppress, / And drags the loathed existence of a slave" (105). Thelwall has a similar focus and tone in "Ode to the Zephyrs," where women, "with patriotic ardour swelling high / Against oppressive pride" (*SPP* 194:21-22) initiate "Freedom's golden age" (*SPP* 194:36). As with Thelwall's Ode, Stewart's poem goes a step beyond the intimacy of the Anderson collective to address the abolitionist concerns so central to and passionately advocated by Thelwall and all his closest connections, including, as we have seen, Robert Grahame and Dugald Bannatyne, revealing a social conscience that was common in all of the circles Thelwall frequented. Ultimately, these responses, ranging from admiration to support in their awareness of

social issues, are testaments to the vibrant writing communities and networks of sociability that Thelwall found and fostered. In turn these close connections motivated Thelwall to ponder his next move and effectively to advance, for a second time, his elocutionary theory in the Scottish capital.

In his February 9th, 1804 letter to Anderson, Thelwall began pondering a return to Edinburgh, inquiring how many "respectable persons . . . should wish any repetition of my elocutionary experiment there." However his sign-off to Anderson, his wife and daughters reasserts Thelwall's continued antagonism towards the city, singling out their family as "among the few social exceptions to the general impression of inhospitality which the Edinburgians have stamped upon my mind." Thelwall remained on the fence. On March 12th, 1804, he remarked, after a number of "mature deliberations" with Birkbeck, that "without a tolerable certainty of considerable support either from the fashionables, or the learned bodies I ought not to repeat the experiment." In fact, Birkbeck himself was apparently "very averse altogether to the idea." Nonetheless, Thelwall would encourage Anderson to test the waters, inquiring "how far would hostility against me now be popular + how far would any description of persons venture to shew . . . countenance to . . . my undertaking 'before men.'" After having made a strategic error during the first visit to Edinburgh, where he expected to be received on his merits in polite society and was caught off-guard by the disruptive tactics of members of the *Edinburgh Review*, Thelwall summons his streetwise knowledge of group psychology and audience dynamics to plot a cautious but determined return. Having fine-tuned his elocutionary approach during his time in Glasgow, his return to Edinburgh would be marked by careful strategizing.

In opposition to the lengthy promotional piece published in the December 3rd, 1803 edition of the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal*, Thelwall's return to Edinburgh was a triumph inconspicuously advertised in the April 7th, 1804 issue of the *Caledonian Mercury* (see fig. 7):



ENGLISH ORATORY. 178

At the King's Arms Tavern, High Street, Edinburgh,

On Saturday the 7th of April, 1804,

MR THELWALL will commence a Course of FOUR LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

Part I.—DIDACTIC DISCOURSE. Of the Organs of Voice; and the Origin and Propagation of Vocal Sounds.

Part II—READINGS and RECITALS.—The Story of Old Albany.—Alexander's Feast.——The Pilgrims and Peas.

Part III.—ORATION, On the Connexion of Elocution with the intellectual Glory of Nations.

LECTURE II.—Monday, 9th.

On the Structure and Offices of the Enunciative Organs, and the Origin and Formation of Speech; with Readings and Recitations; and an Oration on Martial Eloquence.

LECTURE III.—Tuesday, 10th.

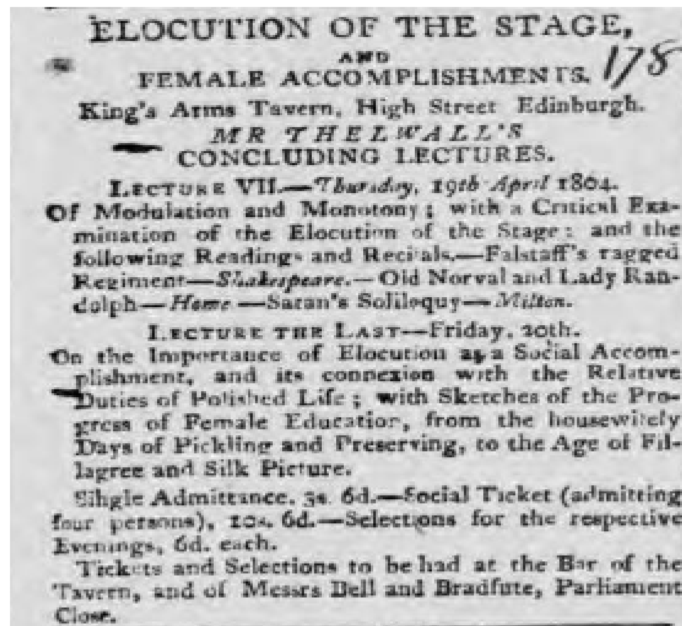
On the Regulation of the necessary Action and Reaction of the Organs of Speech; with Readings, &c.

(Fig 7. Thelwall's "English Oratory" Ad from 7 Apr. 1804 *Caledonian Mercury*)

Adapting the pugilistic metaphors that Wordsworth had used to encourage him, Thelwall clearly saw his reappearance as analogous to a martial effort, as he suggests in his March 26th letter to Anderson: "I shall come with Selections made up, + every thing in order for an immediate attack, if forces can be rallied for the Onset. The Tavern in the high Street, must of course be the scene of Action. There is I suppose no other place where the trenches can properly be opened." It is worth noting that, in his letter to Anderson, female forces were also called into combat when asked to attend Thelwall's lectures, echoing the fierce battle-hardened tone adopted in his "Ode to the Zephyrs." In this lyric, Thelwall predicts that "Oppression" will "fall" and that "equal rights" shall be shared as the result of the resoluteness and "charms" demonstrated by the "nymphs of Britain" (*SPP* 195:51-55).

Upon his return to Edinburgh in the spring of 1804, as he had tactically done in Glasgow, Thelwall offered a sendoff lecture on "Female Accomplishments." Its placement as the last

lecture reinforces the importance he emphasized on his own vital role in spearheading and improving “the progress of Female Education” (see fig. 8).



ELOCUTION OF THE STAGE,
AND
FEMALE ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

King's Arms Tavern, High Street Edinburgh.
MR THELWALL'S
CONCLUDING LECTURES.

LECTURE VII.—*Thursday*, 19th *April* 1804.
Of Modulation and Monotony; with a Critical Examination of the Elocution of the Stage: and the following Readings and Recitals.—Falstaff's ragged Regiment—*Shakespeare.*—Old Norval and Lady Randolph—*Home.*—Satan's Soliloquy—*Milton.*

LECTURE THE LAST—Friday, 20th.
On the Importance of Elocution as a Social Accomplishment, and its connexion with the Relative Duties of Polished Life; with Sketches of the Progress of Female Education, from the housewifely Days of Pickling and Preserving, to the Age of Fillagree and Silk Picture.

Single Admittance. 3s. 6d.—Social Ticket (admitting four persons), 10s. 6d.—Selections for the respective Evenings, 6d. each.

Tickets and Selections to be had at the Bar of the Tavern, and of Messrs Bell and Bradfute, Parliament Close.

(Fig. 8. Thelwall’s “Elocution of the Stage, and Female Accomplishments” Ad from 5 Apr. 1804 *Edinburgh Evening Courant*)

One can see his concluding performance as being in tandem with the very calculated offer of tickets for “the four Ladies” from Anderson’s circle in hope of “their constant attendance” (Letter to Robert Anderson, 26 March 1804). In light of the military language that immediately precedes this paragraph in Thelwall’s March 26th letter, the tickets appear to be weapons he is handing out to further bolster his battalion. Most likely the four ladies in question are Anderson’s wife, his daughter, Miss Hannah Grahame (probably related to the Glasgow Grahames) and either Miss Stewart or Miss Bannerman.

The role of Hannah Grahame as not only a member of Anderson’s circle but also a crucial figure in Thelwall’s restorative return to Edinburgh is evidenced by the final poem Thelwall composed during his tour of Scotland: “Hannah’s Eye. To Miss Grahame of Edinburgh. Written in the neighbourhood of Roslin Castle, April 1804” (*SPP* 31). As its subtitle suggests, it

describes an excursion he made with her (and probably other members of the circle) at the time of his second and successful lecture series in Edinburgh. She does not appear to be the same individual addressed in "The Stranger" (who is Anne Grahame), but a daughter of one of the Grahame families in Edinburgh, possibly part of an extended kinship network. Like the person, the poem is both akin to and different from "The Stranger." In its assured and sanguine tone, "Hannah's Eye" offers a striking contrast to the regret and sorrow of the Glasgow poems, probably reflecting Thelwall's growing confidence after the successful Edinburgh lectures. However it is similar to "The Stranger" insofar as its historical setting is associated with another battle for national independence associated with a song. Whereas the Battle of Rhuddlan in Anne Grahame's song was Welsh, the Battle of Roslin alluded to in "Hannah's Eye" saw an underdog Scottish army of 10,000 defeat 30,000 overconfident English infantrymen. By setting the poem in the environs of Roslin Castle, Thelwall may be responding to a chapbook ballad of 1803, published in Glasgow and entitled "The Battle of Rosline," which commemorates the encounter:

The Scots cried out with bravery,
  We disdain their English knavery,
  We'll ne'er be bought in slavery,
Till our last blood is spent. (4)

To some extent, then, Thelwall may be engaging here in the same kind of seditious seductive allegory that he did in "The Stranger," pointing to the continuity of his political principles. But more notable is the way the poem swerves from the historical and from the kinds of sociopolitical commentary found in so much of Thelwall's landscape writing.[33] One could apply

[33] Not only does Thelwall ignore the battle, he also makes no mention of surrounding contemporary industry, the Springfield Paper Mill and, at the time, recently established Roslin Glen Gunpowder Mill, which he would have passed during his ramble, and would normally have

Marjorie Levinson's new historicist reading of "Tintern Abbey," which argues that Wordsworth deliberately evaded the historical realities associated with his subject matter, to Thelwall's rigidly apolitical lyric. But what takes the place of history and politics in "Hannah's Eye," and gives the poem its power, is the presence of the eponymous companion and what she represents, specifically the power of friendship, meaningful bonds and the quiet resolve that comes from sympathetic union with others.

More relevant than "Tintern Abbey" are two other Wordsworth poems with which Thelwall's lyric engages in dialogue: "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways" and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud." All three share imagery associated with the eye. In "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways," Wordsworth uses "[a] violet by a mossy stone / Half hidden from the eye" (5-6) as a symbol of Lucy's reclusiveness, emphasizing her isolation among "the untrodden ways" (1). In a probable echo of Wordsworth's lyric, Thelwall's speaker discovers "a beauteous flower" (*SPP* 31:17) that, hidden "underneath a rustic bower, / Seem'd half retiring from [his] view" (*SPP* 31:19-20), but that shares the "shape and size" and "tint of blue" of Hannah's eye (*SPP* 31:21-22). But whereas Wordsworth's "half-hidden" flower commemorates a life "unknown" (9) and passed away, the referent of Thelwall's "half-retiring" flower is alive and present beside him. Whereas Wordsworth's poem is retrospective and elegiac, Thelwall's is restorative and reformative, consistent with his "Prospective Principle of Virtue," as noted in Chapter 3.

The sociable, outward- and forward-looking orientation of "Hannah's Eye" also contrasts with the eye imagery of Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (which postdates and

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noticed, in a poem like "On Leaving the Bottoms of Gloucestershire" or prose and verse excursions like *The Peripatetic*.

may be responding to Thelwall's poem). Wordsworth's well-known lyric again emphasizes solitude, going so far as to eliminate the poet's real-life female companion (his sister Dorothy) from the poetic version of the experience. By contrast Thelwall emphasizes companionship, with his speaker emphasizing that "not in *lonely* thought I rove / With hermit step and vacant eye" (*SPP* 31:9-10), for he is accompanied by Hannah's "gentle form" (*SPP* 31:13) along with their "loitering friends" (*SPP* 31:25). Later on in the poem, the "vacant" eye is replaced with that of Hannah/the flower, and her "speaking glances" (*SPP* 32:31) continue to communicate, consistent with his lecture "on the exterior accomplishments of elocution," which, like this poem, concentrates on "the play and sympathy of the Features," emphasizing the corporeal dimension of the "Eloquence of the Eye" (*Introductory Discourse* 11). The metaphor of the eyes as a form of speech is in direct opposition to what Wordsworth includes in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," which uses Thelwall's word "vacant" to set up the famous image of "the inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude" (22-24). It is as if Wordsworth answers Thelwall's "speaking" eye with his theory of the imagination acting as a bulwark against ephemeral matters of history and politics. The eye for Wordsworth (who began to distance himself from Thelwall at about this time, adopting an increasingly Tory tone) turns egotistically inward, whereas the eye for Thelwall is a tool to impart sympathy and achieve social progress and healing.

A final difference between "Hannah's Eye" and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is their closing strategy. Both poems end by anticipating the future moment when this experience will be a memory enabling perpetually renewed joy and restoration transcending space and time; but whereas Wordsworth's transcendence reinforces the solitary inward nature of imagination, Thelwall's comes from transferable friendship and other social connections, ending with an Edenic but outward-oriented process of naming the other:

And if, perchance, some kindred flower,
  In southern groves I chance to spy,
  I'll think of Roslin's rural bower,
And call that flow'ret Hannah's eye. (*SPP* 32:41-44)

Rather than either Wordsworth's "egotistical sublime,"[34] or the resignation so prevalent in Thelwall's Glasgow poems, what we find in "Hannah's Eye" is a poem of quiet resolve and social communion, where communication almost becomes intuitive, and renewal is seen in the poem's opening invocation to the prospect of spring and soothing "April suns" (*SPP* 31:1). Thus this lyric is a fitting bookend to another episode in Thelwall's career that showed the "up & the down / Of [his] Fortune's freak & frown" (*SPP* 85:50-51). At this juncture, he had overcome the shock and hostility of the Edinburgh Controversy, in large part because of the people within his social network who assisted him in weathering despair and conflict, enabling him to turn his eye, and his voice, back outward.

Thelwall's sojourn in Scotland marked a new beginning rather than the ill-fated end proclaimed by E.P. Thompson in his influential essay "Hunting the Jacobin Fox." Rather than placidly accepting that Thelwall "was not the victor of the exchange" with Jeffrey in Edinburgh and that this led to the death of the "political fox" (128), I have argued that the fox survived in a different form, fortified and gradually renewed by the bonds of the large social network with which Thelwall associated. The archival work I have done in this chapter challenges E.P. Thompson's narrative that "nothing survived of the Patriot except his fading notoriety" (123). My narrative of renewed resolve is confirmed by a notice in the *The Monthly Magazine*, which announced that Thelwall "ha[d] just concluded a very successful Course of Lectures on the

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[34] The term is Keats's, aptly applied to Wordsworth in a letter of 1818 (*Selected Letters* 147).

Science and Practice of Elocution, to a numerous audience, at Edinburgh, where also he has been employed upon some serious cases of impediments of speech, for the cure of which he has discovered and new and efficacious process" ("Literary and Philosophical Intelligence" 466). His success, as has been argued, owes much to patrons like the Grahames, the Bannatynes and the Andersons whose hospitality sustained and encouraged Thelwall. As important were the numerous women – Anne Grahame, Mary Bannatyne, Jessie Stewart and Hannah Grahame – associated with these interconnected circles with which he came into contact during his time in Scotland.

Chapter 5:

“Sweetness and Science”: Empowering the Voice of the Actress

> The Theatre, in reality, presents its attractions not to one but every faculty – and to the understanding, to the passions – to the moral feelings – to fancy, memory and imagination. It can instruct as well as delight. It speaks, at once, the language of the eye and the ear. It is poetry, picture and music all united. It realizes magic, annihilates space, turns the wings of Time backwards, and makes the past and the distant live and breathe before us. It delights us with the world of realities, and the world of fictions; – It ministers alike the most intense affections, and the most careless hilarity; and equally extracts enjoyment for our wonder or our sympathy – our laughter and our tears. (*The Champion* 1820 12-13)

Thelwall’s panegyric addresses the many ways in which the stage can be an effective elocutionary tool. Its generic hybridity, along with its ability to revive the past, testifies to its capacity to elicit strong responses from the audience. In the “Prefatory Memoir” included at the beginning of *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* (1801), Thelwall concedes that his early “rage for theatricals was excessive” (viii). This passion, however, was not confined to his youth but extended throughout his career. This chapter considers Thelwall’s assessment and advocacy of women’s role in Romantic theatre, touching upon his lifelong attachment to the stage and both his personal relationship with actresses and the critical attention he paid to performances by them. If, as Steve Poole suggests, one of the major “challenge[s]” of Thelwall scholarship is “to reinterpret the non-political in political terms” (“Thunderer, Recluse or Apostate?” 208), then Thelwall’s reviews and instruction of actresses deserve such reinterpretation. He considered the stage to be a “school of morality, as well as intellect and social refinement” (*The Champion* 1819

666), a democratic locale where the execution of voice was paramount and where aspiring actresses, through powerful performances, could critique government restrictions and break gender proscriptions.

This chapter is divided into three sections exploring how Thelwall, as a critic and mentor, nurtured women's burgeoning talents. The centerpiece of the first part is the unpublished "An Occasional Address, Spoken by the late Miss Goddard, at the Theatre Royal Norwich,"[35] in which Thelwall ventriloquizes the female voice, intermingling his own anxieties at the time with the voice of Sophia Goddard, a gifted actress who unfortunately died at a young age. I address both Thelwall's preference for private readings and theatricals, which stretch the limitations of established gender relations, and the role provincial communities played in promoting actresses. The second section considers Thelwall's most significant relationship with a young actress, his second wife Henrietta Cecil Boyle. The principal focus is an unpublished dramatic fragment featuring Pandolia, "a woman of entrancing wit, commanding voice, ebullient energy and self-possessed agency," who embodies Thelwall's understanding of women's role on the Romantic stage (Thompson, "John Thelwall: A Counterfactual Ghost Story" 219).[36] My analysis contextualizes the piece within an extensive period of pervasive suppression of theatrical works, where censors rigidly moderated and controlled what could be shown and said on the stage at licensed theatres. The chapter's final section explores subversive undertones in Thelwall's theatre reviews from *The Champion* (1819-1821) that have parallels with the egalitarian principles of his elocutionary theory and hearken back to earlier political positions. I focus on Thelwall's comments on actresses – both reactions to established professionals and detailed

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[35] While this poem is undated, it must predate the death of Sophia Goddard in 1801.
[36] Judith Thompson gives a date of circa 1816 for the composition of the Pandolia fragments (*SPP* 201).

analyses, commentaries and suggestions given to debutantes. Mastering the art of elocution allows actresses greater agency on stage and gives them voice, literally and metaphorically granting them the power to properly converse and reciprocally sympathize with their audiences and, by proxy, the larger body politic.

Part 1: Harmonizing Private and Public Performance: The Example of Sophia Goddard

A telling anecdote from Cecil Thelwall's *The Life of John Thelwall* offers a glimpse into collaboration between the sexes in private theatrical displays and tête-à-tête dramatic readings, which "blurred distinctions" between social and domestic space (Russell, "Private Theatricals" 211). It reveals that Thelwall "was allowed, at the age of thirteen, to play Altamont, to the Fair Penitent of a young lady of his own age, at a ladies' boarding-school in the neighborhood" (12). A staple of Romantic-era theatre, Nicholas Rowe's *Fair Penitent* (1703) includes as its antagonist Lothario, the original of the lascivious rake figure that Thelwall so stridently critiqued during his Debating Society apprenticeship. In stark contrast, Altamont, the fair penitent's cuckolded husband, is a figure of compassion who elicits sympathy. Symbolically speaking, this role provides an antecedent to the persona that Thelwall cultivated throughout his career, of a courteous yet candid gallant, "'to Virtue & her friends a friend'" (*SPP* 273:655). Furthermore, his early foray into a ladies' boarding-school anticipates another feature of his later career, in which he networked within mixed groups, coteries or what he calls in the lengthy note to "An Occasional Address, Spoken by the late Miss Goddard," the "flock[s] of beautiful young creatures by whom in frequent social parties [he] was in the habit of being surrounded" (Derby MS 535). As has been addressed throughout, these young fans are unswervingly present: during his participation in debating societies in the 1780s, his mid-1790s political heyday, his

interactions with significant women writers and thinkers before leaving London in 1797, and his visits to a myriad of provincial towns that hosted his elocutionary lectures between 1801 and 1805. The theatre was another venue for protest and progress, an establishment in which Thelwall regularly socialized and networked with women.

"An Occasional Address, Spoken by the late Miss Goddard, at the Theatre Royal Norwich" is an important poetical attempt by Thelwall to ventriloquize the female voice, emphasizing tenets of his elocutionary theory and the value that proper instruction and invested encouragement plays in developing nascent talent. Thelwall composed numerous prefatory performance pieces for himself and others to deliver during his career, in support of various political and philanthropic causes.[37] In a November 1820 issue of *The Champion*, Thelwall considered an "occasional address" that he believed "had considerably more merit than is generally assignable to ephemeral compositions of this description" (732). He stated that "[i]t was delivered with a touching and beautiful simplicity, *con amore*" by actress Mrs. West (732). The piece was a success, suggested Thelwall, because "[s]he had made the sentiment her own; and it came in the simplicity of her nature and her feelings; which this lady may be well assured, will at all times be more effective in securing the hearts & sympathies of an audience than all the overstrained imitations of the convulsions" of more imperious actresses (732). At least twenty years before, he had clearly expected a similar result from his own prefatory piece written for Miss Goddard, which, the endnote states, was delivered and acknowledged with "great éclat" (Derby MS 537). As with the Maiden in *A Speech in Rhyme* and Seraphina in *The Daughter of*

[37] The earliest of these that we know of was the prologue to Holcroft's *Love's Frailties* in 1794 (Green 60), while two "Occasional Addresses. Designed for Drury Lane & Covent Garden Theatres on the Nights given to the Fund for relieving the Distresses of the Irish Peasantry" in 1822 are included in the Derby Manuscript (III.881-85).

Adoption, in his address, Thelwall adopts the female voice, carefully choreographing a particular performance whose intent is to deeply affect a gracious and receptive audience. The presence of author, performer and audience in the design of the piece stresses the interactive ethos of Thelwall's elocutionary program, as "eliciting a response, it forge[s] a bond between speaker and audience to create a true corresponding society" (Thompson, "Romantic Oratory" 538).

As in *The Daughter of Adoption*, Thelwall in this address manipulates features of biography to create an alternative narrative and, more importantly, to generate sympathy in the intended audience. Sophia Ann Goddard was the daughter of Florimond,[38] a member of the London Corresponding Society who spoke on behalf of Thomas Hardy during the infamous 1794 Treason Trials (Barker 358). The fortune of the Goddard family, specifically that of Sophia, had its parallels with Thelwall's own life trajectory: exile, retreat and reemergence on the provincial circuit. At the outset of his own retirement from the public eye, Thelwall mentions the Goddards in a letter to Hardy, dated January 16, 1798, where he affectionately asks "Is it true that the iron hand of Misfortune has fallen on that good family? How has my dear Sophia succeeded?" (quoted in Corfield and Evans 234). By this point in time, Sophia had encountered significant struggles on the London stage but, a year later, would remerge triumphantly on the Norwich theatrical scene (see fig. 9).

[38] Florimond Goddard, a clock- and watch-maker, "testified to Hardy's peaceable disposition, and asserted that when the society was dispersed from the public-houses, Hardy "desired particularly, when we got to a private house, that no member would even bring a stick with him'" (Barker 358).

Courtesy of Alick Williams
SOPHIA ANN GODDARD
artist unknown

(Fig. 9. Portrait of Sophia Ann Goddard in Highfill et al, p. 245)

Goddard's personal history, partially related in a lengthy endnote Thelwall wrote to accompany the poem, is helpful in contextualizing "An Occasional Address" as a performance piece. Omitting and accentuating key information, Thelwall elegizes Goddard while also employing the tropes of sensibility he would use in his own self-fashioning efforts.

According to the theatrical compendium *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors*, Sophia Ann Goddard was born in 1776 and died in 1801. She made her first stage appearance at Margate in Kent in July of 1797 (Highfill et al. 244). Later that year, she made her debut in London, playing Letitia Hardy in *The Belle's Stratagem* at Drury Lane Theatre on 10 November 1797. In both roles, she was savagely critiqued by the *Monthly Mirror*. This denunciation would lead to her leaving the London stage (Highfill et al. 244). Thelwall does not address this part of her career in his supplementary note. The *Mirror* reviewer implies that Goddard had "fallen sacrifice to the art of puffing" (quoted in Highfill et al. 244). Thelwall indirectly alludes to such reviews in "An Occasional Address" itself, where he has Goddard reflect upon the stifling impact of "Critic Pride" upon "embryon powers" that unfortunately "[s]ink the pale victims of untimely strife" (Derby MS 531). Instead, he advises, in a point that would be emphasized in his elocutionary

lectures and then later crystalized in his overview of the London literary scene in the *Musalogia*, that a supportive "benignant Candour" is required of the critic (Derby MS 533). Fortunately, in December 1798, Miss Goddard joined the theatre at Norwich, where, according to Thelwall, "she was very well received, & became. . . a great favorite" (Derby MS 535). There, she played Portia, receiving positive reviews in the *Norwich Mercury* (Highfill et al. 244). She then took on the role of Jane Shore, which led one reviewer to compare her to Sarah Siddons, the highest compliment that could be given to an actress of the period (244). The transition from London to Norwich represented renewal and a fresh start, which would have appealed greatly to an ostracized Thelwall at the turn of the century. The address is another instance of Thelwall directing biography for a particular purpose.

Given the change in circumstance and mood associated with Norwich, the city plays as important a role in the "Occasional Address" as Glasgow does in the lyrics addressed to various daughters of provincial elite that Thelwall wrote during his 1803-1804 sojourn in Scotland. A point that is stressed in the "Occasional Address" is the importance of regenerative place, space and community. The speaker, Goddard and the piece's by-proxy writer, Thelwall, find refuge in "this kind, this hospitable scene" (Derby MS 533). In the city of Norwich itself, there is a "circle sought" (Derby MS 533) and thus a communitarian dimension that is vitally important to Thelwall's larger longing for private reciprocity and public reform. In this respect, Norwich has a double value for it is also the city in which Thelwall found solace after the 1796 kidnapping attempt in Yarmouth that led to his retirement in Wales. Thelwall tellingly uses the verbs "instructed," "foster'd," "favour'd," "bless'd" (Derby MS 533) to describe the impact of Norwich's populace upon Goddard. It is, in part, the nurturing citizenry that allows for professional success and, more importantly, societal progress. The city is able to "dwell for ever"

in the speaker's "heart" because the "ever kind" Norwich community ("[t]his circle sought") embraces and cultivates the efforts of "the venturous Novice" (Derby MS 533). Here, the act of "blessing" so common in the nature poetry of his contemporaries Wordsworth and Coleridge is transferred to the community, which bestows benediction upon the promising actress (see fig. 10).

(Fig. 10. Norwich Theatre Royal in Winston and Mackintosh, p. 72)

In "From Second City to Regional Capital," Corfield examines England's largest provincial town and its "reputation for radicalism" (154). Thelwall himself would commend the "the friendly, the enlightened, the animated circles of Norwich" in the "Prefatory Memoir" to *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* (xxxviii). Later he would write, in a letter dated July 8, 1796, that the city "is the very centre of public spirit, liberal sentiment, and just principle" and that its defining quality was "warmth" since "there are here many excellent citizens of both sexes, whose leisure and literary accomplishments will enable them to be most valuable correspondents" (*The Moral and Political Magazine* i). The "Occasional Address" captures that social and intellectual life of a vibrant city rife with potential. Corfield suggests that "Norwich brimmed with urgent debate," rightly earning itself the moniker of "the city of sedition" (161). Miss Goddard's words, her "strong emotions of the ingenuous soul" which "[s]well in the

bosom, but the tongue control!" (Derby MS 533), pay tribute to a segment of society that would become Thelwall's auditors and co-conspirators in the early nineteenth century. The Norwich of Goddard's address stands in for the countless provincial towns that would welcome, accept and sustain Thelwall's ideas when his reputation remained mired in infamy in the metropolis. Like the radical literary intellectuals Amelia Opie, and Anne and Annabella Plumptre, Sophia Goddard, in her position as actress, should likewise be considered as a fundamental part of the sustained "'intelligentsia'" that was "renewed in each generation" (Corfield 151).[39]

While Thelwall's "Occasional Address" focuses on Goddard's public persona, her participation in private performances is also significant. The lengthy note that concludes the Address in the Derby Manuscript also relays that, while in London, Thelwall had "rehearsed with her one of the scenes between Ld. and Lady Townley, in *the Provoked Husband*" (Derby MS 535). The statement is revealing when considering the ubiquity of private performance, especially readings of dramatic scenes by men and women, in Thelwall's career, from his turn as Altamont in *The Fair Penitent* to his interactions with women students who attended his Elocutionary Institute in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Worrall has highlighted a "lost culture of domestic amateur performance" during the Romantic Period, emphasizing its ability to be "immensely attractive and socially disruptive" ("Drama" 185). Likewise, Russell suggests that private theatricals "blurred distinctions between the intimate sphere of the family and the social and political realm . . . reveal[ing] profound anxieties about the stability of the domestic order – and the control of women in particular – which were increasingly regarded as necessary to the wellbeing of the nation as a whole" ("Private Theatricals" 201). A well-known

[39] An example of an intellectual woman from a slightly later generation in Norwich is Harriet Martineau (1802-1876).

example to support this particular line of argumentation is, of course, the performance of Inchbald's *Lovers' Vows* in Austen's *Mansfield Park*. However, Mr. Yates' (and possibly Austen's) condemnation of the "itch for acting" (121) contrasts with Thelwall's self-professed "rage for theatricals" (*Poems, Chiefly in Written Retirement* viii*)* and public defenses of the stage. In the former instance, the clandestine private theatrical, which tests mores and decorum, takes place at an isolated country mansion. For Thelwall, rehearsing dramatic scenes, one on one, with young actresses and pupils, was commonplace in city and country, an open transgression maintained within certain boundaries of politeness but still questioning and stretching limits of gender and behavior.

Part 2: "My Metamorphist! Proteus Paramount": Introducing Henrietta Cecil Thelwall

Undoubtedly, the greatest example of Thelwall's interest in actresses is his mentorship of Henrietta Cecil Boyle, the aspiring thespian he took on as a pupil by 1816 and, after the death of his first wife Susan, married, despite an age difference of over thirty years. She became a real-life "daughter of adoption" and then a partner, in a May-December relationship that became a point of public gossip, as is both anxiously and humorously acknowledged in Thelwall's own writing.[40] A belated marriage announcement, published in the *Liverpool Mercury* on Friday, June 27, 1817, summarizes the abridged theatrical career of Thelwall's "youthful and blooming" second wife. Signed BENEDICT, it states that the new Mrs. Thelwall was "for a short period the

[40] In his self-mocking doggerel "Auto-Biography" (1822), Thewall writes that he "took [Cecil] for a wife, / In the evening of his life, / Who, for years, might have been his grand-daughter" and proceeds to address the public's perception of his marriage (*SPP* 269: 190-192). The subtitle of "The Woodbine and the Oak; An Apologue," composed during Thelwall's courtship of Cecil and published on their wedding day, is "From Fifty-Two to sweet Seventeen – who wish'd he were but Thirty-Four" (*SPP* 36).

interesting votary of Melpomene" and made a "splendid debut at Covent Garden Theatre" ("To the Editors of the Liverpool Mercury"). However, she "relinquished her golden prospects and flattering expectations; and the charms of studied pathos and artificial declamation have yielded to the all-subduing eloquence of love" ("To the Editors of the Liverpool Mercury"). Thelwall's courtship of Cecil is detailed in many love poems and theatrical fragments published in *The Champion* (1819-1821), where they follow political editorials and news of interest while leading into the Theatrical Review section of the paper. In the case study of intimate biographical details that follows, I examine how Cecil inspired the construction and delivery of Pandolia, a subversive character who appears in three poems in the Derby manuscript and dominates one of them. Pandolia best captures Thelwall's understanding, aspirations and apprehensions regarding women and performance during the period.

According to Thompson, "[w]e do not know exactly when she became Thelwall's pupil, but by July 1816 he was serving as her de facto manager, seeking engagements among his theatrical contacts" ("John Thelwall: A Counterfactual Ghost Story" 208). Thelwall's professional interest in Cecil's career seems first to have been publicized in advertisements placed in the April and May 1817 issues of the *Morning Chronicle*. In these advertisements, Thelwall promotes a series of lectures that took place at his Institute on "the Characters sustained by Mrs. Siddons, which [were] illustrated by the Recitations of a Lady; a pupil" ("Coriolanus, Brutus and Cato"). In yet another example of his egalitarianism, Thelwall's lectures on the theatre addressed men and women evenly. Cecil's performances accompanied the theoretical component of Thelwall's presentations, complementing his points by emulating some of Siddons's most famous Shakespearean performances, as Lady Macbeth, Constance, Queen Catherine and Hermione, reenacting the "clear . . . flow of articulate harmony, diffused through

the crowded space of a theatre, and sustained with [the] dignified expression" that Thelwall perceived as Siddons' greatest elocutionary strength (*The Champion* 1819 378). In their collaborative effort, Thelwall and Cecil did not read in the abstract, passively, silently or privately, as in closet drama. They performed the plays of Shakespeare aesthetically and philosophically, marveling at their beauty, wisdom and truth to nature while also reading them actively, that is, performing them instrumentally and socio-politically, realizing in them a way of speaking out and acting in and upon the world.

The partnership enacted in this performance at Thelwall's Institute is emblematic of a life-long pedagogical imperative that promotes interaction between genders. In the "General Outline" to his *Selections*, for example, Thelwall emphasizes the "[i]mportance of cultivating the faculty of discourse" (Wakefield 2) through "conversational elocution," which cannot be maintained, Thelwall contends, when "young men of fortune are seclude[ed] … from eligible female society" (Wakefield 6).[41] At the same time, however, Thelwall's interactions with women in the theatre do not fit the "ethics of gallantry," first established by David Garrick in the eighteenth century, which fosters a patronizing tutorial relationship between critic and actresses (Donkin 63). Thelwall's gallantry implies a more pragmatic, balanced and equal relationship between teacher and student. This is reflected in one of the therapeutic strategies he used in his Institution, which Judith Felson Duchan, in her overview of Thelwall's elocutionary theory, calls "presumed competence" (192). This methodology involves trusting in the abilities and motivations of the pupil while fostering an open and encouraging learning environment. In an

[41] To understand Thelwall's use of the word "eligible" (from his lecture notes), one has to read it in the larger context of this particular oratorical dissertation "On the Importance of Elocutionary Education" (*Selections* Wakefield 6). In this instance, presenting his ideas to the rising middle class in the provincial cities he would lecture in, Thelwall defers to established custom.

unpublished letter to theatre owner R.W. Elliston in Birmingham on the possibility of procuring parts for his apprentice and future wife, Thelwall suggests that a part of "developing the latent powers of youthful genius" includes allowing the "pupil . . . to find her own way in it to a considerable degree" (Letter to R.W. Elliston). With its eventual shift from the pedagogical to the passionate, its blurring of lines between engaging a student and literally being engaged to his student, this passage demonstrates the ambiguities and complexities of Thelwall's attitudes to women. A poem musing on the development of feelings for his future wife, entitled "Thoughts and Remembrances," captures the same "pedagogical erotics" (Thompson, "Citizen Juan" 98):

> If she bow'd,
> 'Twas not in feeble passiveness of soul
> That knows no instinct of self-governance, –
> But as a daughter to a father bows,
> Who, or if stern or soothing, but displays,
> Alike in commendation or reproof,
> His fond heart's kindness, and o'er-anxious love. (*SPP* 262:82-88)

The gentle unease expressed in so many of Thelwall's works involving women (which in some ways mirrors our own at his gendered language) is "o'er-anxious," with the not-so-muted allusion to *King Lear* suggesting that the steadfastness of Cordelia may not always be positively reciprocated. Thelwall would praise Cordelia as an exemplar of the "the modest plainness of filial sincerity" (*The Champion* 1820 823). However, Pandolia, a character largely influenced by Thelwall's pedagogical practice and theatrical interactions with Cecil, is not at all submissive. She is in fact an antiphon to the pioneering but reserved characterizations popularized by Siddons, whom Jeffrey Cox credits with promoting a "power [that] seems to arise with her

ability to portray women whose sexual power is evident but contained" (37). By contrast, Pandolia's power, at once sensual and witty, is undeniably overt and her "self-governance" strong-willed and infectious (*SPP* 262:84).

The only criticism to date on Pandolia is by Judith Thompson, who maintains that the figure is the product of the middle-aged Thelwall's attraction to Cecil, this "dynamic and protean actress," combined with "understandable fears about potency and performance" that accompany their courtship ("Citizen Juan" 67). While Thompson focuses on lines in the fragment that address Thelwall's anxieties about marrying a younger woman, I emphasize the way Pandolia represents his vexed feelings about the role of actresses on stage. During his tenure as editor of *The Champion*, and especially in the final months of 1819, the "Original Poetry" section contained several poems inspired by Cecil. Strategically positioned before many of Thelwall's theatrical reviews, these poems suggest that parallels can be drawn between the wooing of his younger wife a few years earlier and a renewed interest in theatrical elocution, especially in how it relates to women's performance. During this prolific period, he also published two short poems on the Pandolia figure, both of which establish the character's strength of character and ability to affect an audience.

Amidst the crisis that surrounded the passing of the Six Acts on January 1st, 1820,[42] Thelwall included in *The Champion* the following lines, entitled "Pandolia," later published in the *Poetical Recreations of The Champion*:

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[42] These government measures were adopted "to suppress political meetings and publications, and by 1820 every significant working class radical reformer was either in jail or exile" (Casaliggi and Fermanis 25). John Gardner claims that these actions "were particularly oppressive" as "justices were allowed to search houses without warrants; meetings in excess of fifty people were prohibited [and] newspapers and periodicals were taxed almost out of existence" (58). By 1822 Thelwall had narrowly escaped another jail sentence and lost his

From her eyes how bright the fire –

Beaming shafts of Phoebus' lyre!

Eyes that a double warmth inspire,

And kindle genius with desire.

From her lip what rapture flows! –

Now it warbles, – now it glows:

Lips that a double charm disclose; –

At once the nightingale and the rose. (190)

Just as the Six Acts repeated the Gagging Acts from which Thelwall suffered in the 1790s, so this poem recalls his response to and recovery from silencing and repression in his poems in retirement and his Scottish conversation poems, showing how important it was once again to recreate the circles of friendship that had previously given him solace. To that end, the repetition of "double" in the third line of each stanza is reminiscent of diction found in "Lines, Written at Bridgewater." In the earlier poem, the concept of "double birth" has numerous connotations, signaling "Thelwall's wedding anniversary and his birthday" along with his "departure from Somerset" and the "renewal of his relationship with Coleridge" (Thompson, *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle* 46). Pandolia's double "warmth" and "charm" signify mastery and an inspired rebirth for the auditor awed by her abilities.

One can also trace connections between this poem and the elocutionary practice Thelwall developed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The poem captures what Andrew McCann

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newspaper and his Institution, as a result of government suppression (Scrivener, *Seditious Allegories* 197-202).

has deduced as a fundamental tenet of Thelwall's elocutionary theory, the "self [as] a work of aesthetic synthesis" ("Romantic Self-Fashioning" 221). Pandolia's impact upon her listener arises from the emotional intensity of the spectacle she performs, as well as the poet's use of diction emphasizing physiological response. As with "Hannah's Eye," a poem examined in Chapter 4, "Pandolia" embodies ideas suggested in Thelwall's lecture "on the exterior accomplishments of elocution," where he concentrates on "the Language of the Features," emphasizing the corporeal dimension of the "Eloquence of the Eye" ("Elocution and Oratory" 103). His description of the eye-beams as "[b]eaming shafts of Phoebus' lyre!" that "kindle" both "genius" in the speaker and "desire" in the auditor suggests that the entire body participates in the communicative medium. In the second stanza, Thelwall's accentuates Pandolia's vocal dexterity. The double image of "the nightingale and the rose" captures not only the subtle tones and unfolding inflections of delivery but also the overall physicality of expression in both sound and gesture. In his "General Outline," Thelwall claims that there is a "necessary connection between Elocutionary distinctness and propriety, and exterior grace and harmony of the Features" ("Elocution and Oratory" 97-98). Outward and inward elements combine in the poem for effective "rapture," a loaded noun that Thelwall employs to underscore not only a state of "intense delight or enthusiasm" but also the rhapsodic "expression of such ecstatic feeling in words or music" (*OED*). The diction thus captures the doubled result of "rapture" as it applies both to the speaker's commanding action and the auditor's enthralled reaction.

The "double charm" of this lyric contrasts starkly with a second poem featuring the Pandolia figure, "Pandolia. A Sapphic," written in Sapphic stanzas. Published in *The Champion* on September 19th, 1819, it outlines the more dangerous allure of this protean performer:

Beauty with wit reciprocally blending
Give to each charm resistless fascination,
While the sweet smiles, that, playing in her eyebeams,
Strike the beholder,

(Like the first radiance of the morn, that wakens
Songs of fresh joyance and the rosy fragrance
Spring is perfum'd with!) in the breast enkindle
Gladsome emotion.

Yet the poor wight shall in his broken slumbers
O'er his fate murmur, who, in luckless season,
Trusts to those smiles. Him never more the dawn shall
Waken to gladness. (*SPP* 201)

The first two stanzas seemingly establish a positive reciprocity, the desired state of "conversation sweet / With a few congenial minds" so central to Thelwall's oeuvre (*SPP* 167:25-26). By blending "[b]eauty with wit," "the beholder" is fervently "st[ruck]" by Pandolia. The "rapture" of "Pandolia" is repeated through the establishment of a sympathetic bond achieved by "enkindl[ing] … [g]ladsome emotion." However, the interruptive "Yet" warning with which the final stanza opens suggests that the "poor wight" who is susceptible and "trusts" Pandolia's wiles and smiles, will fall victim and "never more… Waken to gladness." Thelwall's poem expresses an anxiety about the *femme fatale* akin to that found in Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," published a few months later in the rival publication the *Indicator*. Keats's "wretched wight" (1)

meets a fate similar to Pandolia's "poor wight." Both poems likewise use the dawn image and waking from "broken slumbers" to stress the victimization of their respective protagonists. The difference between Keats's and Thelwall's *femmes fatales* is that, in "Pandolia: A Sapphic," she does not speak or sing but is confined to "sweet smiles." In this case, she is denied utterance or, in Keats's phrase, "language strange" (27). While Thelwall's first "Pandolia" poem invokes the positive associations of "charm," the second effort ("Pandolia: A Sapphic") exposes the dangers of an allure predicated on manipulated artifice.

The differences between the two Pandolia pieces published in *The Champion* highlight a dichotomy also prevalent in Thelwall's theatrical reviews from the period. He is critical of affectation, repeatedly chiding actors and actresses for "perpetually mistaking ornament for elegance" (*The Champion* 1820 398). Such censure speaks to a disconnect between natural representation and artificial projection similar to that which Solomonescu sees in his elocutionary theory: "[w]hile Thelwall follows the 'natural' elocutionists in insisting the speaker's delivery will be all the more effective if he actually feels the passions that he wishes to convey, he nonetheless allows a role for 'art' in the management of those passions" (174). Thelwall is ambivalent regarding "'tricking' the audience into sympathy by 'the exaggerations of eloquence and the plaintive harmony of well-arranged syllables'" (152). Solomonescu points out that one of his "main preoccupations" during the later half of his career as "self-made professor of elocution, prosodist and speech therapist" was the difficulty in distinguishing between "trickery" and "a sort of enhanced 'truth to nature'" (152). In short, Thelwall was concerned with the role artifice had to play in expression, acknowledging its value in persuasion but likewise its potential danger in rupturing the bond between speaker and audience – that is, the fear that artifice misused may also encourage a fundamental disconnect from authenticity.

This ambivalence becomes even more attached to Pandolia in the third appearance of this figure, "Pandolia's Description of her Four Lovers," an unpublished dramatic fragment from the Derby Manuscript, dated by Judith Thompson at circa 1816. Here she performs, for two potential suitors, her authority over four former ones. Near the end of the scene, one of Pandolia's interlocutors employs a paradoxical image to explain her guile, exclaiming "Centripedal Centrifugals!" and suggesting her ability "at once" to "attract[] and repel[] equally" (*SPP* 204:146-147). As an actress, Pandolia captures Thelwall's apprehensions about women's enigmatic "charm" and their influence on the stage, which in turn ought to be seen in the larger context of the theatre of the time.

Based on her analysis of the Derby Manuscript, Thompson concludes that it is difficult to conclude who actually wrote the poem as

> There are at least two hands. One is Thelwall's own, the hand in which most of the poems in the manuscript are written – sometimes more elegant in faircopy, at times more rough and rushed in multiple revisions. This hand is responsible for the title of this dramatic fragment, and numerous corrections, elisions and revisions, including those that convert Pandolia's first speech into Thelwallian sapphics. But the hand in which most of the fragment is written is a very different one; childish, rounded and upright, it looks very much like that of a young girl. ("John Thelwall: A Counterfactual Ghost Story" 221)

Therefore, this composition may be the sole or partial creation of Cecil, growing out of her work with Thelwall, and perhaps commenting or revising his earlier pieces, especially *A Speech in Rhyme*. However, this is not the place to enter into speculation about its authorship. Regardless of who initially composed the text, it is fair to look at this remarkable dramatic piece as a

collaboration, similar to the cooperative effort between mentor and pupil demonstrated in the lectures on Sarah Siddons at Thelwall's Institute in the spring of 1816.

The further context appended to "Pandolia's Description of her Four Lovers" in the Derby manuscript, indicating that the piece was "a scene rejected from an unpublished Drama as not sufficiently dramatic" (*SPP* 201), raises questions as to the circumstances under which the scene was rejected, and why the play from which it was excerpted was unpublished. Although there are many possible reasons for this, one plausible explanation for its exclusion relates to the restrictions imposed by censors on the legitimate theatre during the period. As Worrall points out in *Theatric Revolution*, the Georgian era was a period of pervasive suppression of theatrical works, with censors rigidly controlling what could be shown and said on the stage (1). In this context, Thelwall's dramatic fragment can be read alongside an extended list of works that were suppressed or that questioned the practice of censorship and government control of various forms of cultural expression. Just as he had defended the illegitimate sonnets of Charlotte Smith in 1792,[43] so would Thelwall write passionately in defense of unlicensed, minor theatres in the early 1820s, demonstrating his steadfast opposition to censorship and astute awareness of its effects. Similarly, just as the Two Acts in 1795 were inspired by the challenge issued by Thelwall against government-imposed regulations on free speech, so would he be at the center of the controversy over the Six Acts of 1819. Pertinent specifically to Thelwall were "the Seditious Meetings Prevention Act" that "required permission for a public meeting of more than 50 people," "the Blasphemous and Seditious Libel Act" and "the Newspaper and Stamp Duties Act," which resulted in "increase[ed] taxes to include those papers publishing opinion rather than

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[43] According to Bethan Roberts, Thelwall's 1792 essay "is a rebuttal to conservative critics who refused to acknowledge Smith's English and irregular, 'illegitimate' sonnet forms" (554).

news" (Casaliggi and Fermanis 554). As editor of *The Champion*, Thelwall advocated for parliamentary reform, criticized the government's activities during the Peterloo massacre, and defended the figures involved in the Cato Steet conspiracy. These interests are evidence that "Thelwall's enduring adherence to radical thought beyond the 1790s and over several ensuing decades must now be seen as vital to any understanding of his life" (Poole, "Thunderer, Recluse or Apostate?" 210). In this light, the Pandolia fragment could be read as a pantomime piece that, through its questioning of gender conventions, parallels the larger radical reform context of the time and challenges some of the inflexible legal restrictions of the Regency reign. Following a pattern established earlier in his career, Thelwall plays with settled conventions, teasing rather than appeasing as he constructs a transgressive character who dominates the drama. The fragment's supposed lack of sufficient drama or spectacle, as Thelwall's headnote suggests, may cover for a subversive undermining of authority and a challenge to decorum.

Like so many of Thelwall's amatory odes, the dramatic fragment functions through "a kind of 'seductive allegory' that operates in a manner similar to his seditious satires, although taking a more chivalric tone" (Thompson, "Headnote to 'Songs of Love,'" *SPP* 176). In this allegory, each of Pandolia's four lovers represents a member of an established male hierarchy who will be toppled with each seduction. As in so many of Thelwall's other works, the depiction of Pandolia's performance embraces sentimental conventions while mocking and subverting them. Thus, she simultaneously conquers and critiques a series of male archetypes: the reflective poet, the fashionable gentleman, the curmudgeonly philosopher and the martial hero. Her first victim is "the Poet, melancholy dove!" who "[m]urmur[s] & sigh[s] o'er a doleful ditty" (*SPP* 202:11-12). Her seductive strategem involves mimicry, as she "[t]un[es] [her] voice" and adopts a pose by "[g]ently affecting melancholy sympathies" in order to appear as "another sentimental

Sapho" (*SPP* 202:20-21). This particular disguise is relevant since the Sappho figure was identified with major female poets of the period, from Elizabeth Montagu to Mary Robinson and later, as suggested in Thelwall's own *Musalogia*, Letitia Landon (discussed at greater length in Chapter 6). Much like these female authors, Pandolia fits a sentimental type; the inherent irony of her situation is that it is a feminized male poet and writer of elegiac verses who is lampooned, defeated at his own game and "sent" off to "the woods to carve [his] name / On oak & ash" (*SPP* 202:28-29). Thelwall's fragment is both self-reflexive and allusive, as the reference to this act conjures up Orlando using flora as "books" in the Forest of Arden, "carv[ing] on every tree / The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive [Rosalind]" (3.2.5-10). Pandolia's personality has much in common with the authority-challenging protagonist in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, a role successfully played by Cecil during her brief run at Covent Garden in the fall of 1816. William Hazlitt would review Cecil's performance as Rosalind in the noteworthy "Miss Boyle's Rosalind" (on October 5, 1816), praising it as "one of the chastest and most pleasing pieces of comic acting we have seen for some time" (*A View of the English Stage* 362). Later, Hazlitt makes a distinction, in line with Thelwall's thinking, between the "character of mere manners, like Lady Townley, where there is always supposed to be an air or affectation of a certain agreeable vivacity or fashionable tone" and "a character of nature, like Rosalind, who is supposed to speak what she thinks, and to express delight only as she feels it" (363). Arguably, the creation of the Pandolia's character was based on Cecil's apprenticeship as an actress with Thelwall in the summer of 1816. Even though it was never published, one can assume, especially based on the revisions and corrections present in the Derby Manuscript, that it was privately performed at Thelwall's Institute. Therefore, one can trace similarities between Pandolia and the list of "miscellaneous characters," including Lady Townley from *The Provoked Husband*, Letitia

Hardy from *The Belle's Strategem* and Rosalind from *As You Like It*, that Thelwall sent to theatre manager R.W. Elliston to assist in "developing the latent powers of youthful genius" (Letter to R.W. Elliston).

The seductive storytelling Thelwall employs in the dramatic fragment cannot be easily pinned down; as in his earlier use of seditious allegory, its meaning is essentially mobile and open to a multiplicity of interpretation. In this way, its method resembles that of Pandolia in her second conquest, which likewise contests conventions. In this instance, she cleverly cajoles a dandy, Philomides, through the "gay windings of [a] mazy dance" by positioning herself as a "zephyret of the air" (*SPP* 202:48). Associating Philomides' effort with Milton's *Comus*, with its dancing and emblematic, elaborate costumes and scenery as well as with pantomime, Thelwall pokes fun at popular cultural practices, just as he had criticized facile exterior accomplishments like dancing the fandango, and vigorously defended the social and intellectual importance of elocution as more than just a "frill" (see Chapter 4, Part 2, above). Pandolia's elusiveness mirrors the imagery of the "mazy dance" that follows. The "sing[ing]" and "danc[ing]" (*SPP* 202) of the stage directions at this moment suggest a symbolic representation of polite society and the ballroom bourgeois world Burney depicts in *Evelina* and Austen in the opening chapters of *Northanger Abbey*. Furthermore, the re-enactment of the dance with her current suitors reinforces her complete dominance. As an illustration of illegitimate theatre, the dance becomes a site of pointed social and political critique, akin to the drawing-room scenes dominated by Lewson and Melinda that Thelwall satirizes in *The Daughter of Adoption.*[44] Using and abusing pretence to serve her own desires, Pandolia is able to outdo her decorously adept partners, taking full advantage of every "panting pause," verbal utterance ("glittering shafts & tit[i]lating jests")

[44] For example, Chapter 1 of Book 8.

and “stealing glance” (*SPP* 202:55-57). Whereas in his earlier verse, Thelwall repeatedly depicted the male seducer figure as an immoral rake and social pariah, in this case, Pandolia usurps the role, caricaturing social mores to suit her desires and expectations.

Perhaps Pandolia’s greatest success is in the seduction of her third suitor, a cynic misogynist, the “truss’d philosopher” named “Sage Polythemon” (*SPP* 202:68-69). This character “deems all passions illegitimate” (*SPP* 203:81). He is a man, insists Pandolia, who “holds our sex as unessential ciphers – / Physical crudities! Mere non rationals!” (*SPP* 203:85-86). In this case, Pandolia has to alter her strategy by using silence and “formal looks” (*SPP* 204:111) slyly to undermine and govern. The pose adopted by Pandolia shares similarities with that of Chaucer’s Wife of Bath. Both figures confidently use their rhetorical powers to critique misogynistic positions. Thelwall’s 1795 *Tribune* essay “On the Causes of the CALAMITIES and DISTURBANCES that afflict the Nation” quotes the following lines from Chaucer’s “Prologue”:

> Perdie, If women had written stories,
> As men have, in their oratories,
> They would have told of men more wickedness,
> Than all the works of Adam would redress. (quoted in *PEJ* 250)

Here Thelwall takes a common story of gender inequality and adapts it into an allegory of class to demonstrate that “the powerful orders have the opportunity of painting the common people in whatever light suits them” (*PEJ* 251). Through Pandolia, it returns to its origins of gender critique. It also captures the irony in this association as it pertains to Thelwall’s own life, since

the Wife of Bath is a notorious literary example of a promiscuous older woman who has her way with younger men.[45]

There are many levels of meaning in Pandolia's representation. She certainly captures the essence of what Thelwall saw and appreciated in Cecil and so many of the young debutantes he extolled and educated in *The Champion* reviews: potential, flexibility and strength. Pandolia likewise captures the libidinous desires and sensuality of Thelwall's later verse, which he sometimes manages to present in a remarkably playful, light-hearted and tongue-in-cheek manner in spite of underlying anxiety. In "Citizen Juan," Thompson suggests that the amorous verse in the Derby Manuscript offers "a frank acknowledgement and exploration of desire in middle (and even old) age, a theme treated not with stereotypical satire or mawkish sentiment (although there is some of both) but with sympathy, self-reflexive critique and, not surprisingly, political consciousness" (89). Most importantly, through her powers of affect and authority, Pandolia offers a social critique of men and a vindication of women, specifically the actress in the highly charged milieu of Romantic theatre. Understanding the "import in the measur'd phrase" (*SPP* 204:109), she is able to overcome silence by finding a voice to outfox her misogynistic counterparts.

One particular elocutionary characteristic seen in the Pandolia fragment is "martial enthusiasm," a largely nationalistic mode incorporated in Thelwall's lectures during the Napoleonic Wars (*The Vestibule of Eloquence* 39-64). The image of the Sabine women

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[45] As addressed earlier in this chapter, Thelwall himself expressed anxiety regarding the age difference with his second wife. In "The Winter's Rose," subtitled "Fifty-Six and One and Twenty. A Phenomena," the speaker symbolically refers to "[a] living rose . . . [o]n wintry lap reclining" (*SPP* 33:12-13). In her headnote to "The Pandolia Fragments," Thompson has argued that the fragment "(self) mockingly capture[s] different elocutionary personae of Thelwall (and perhaps other male members of his household)" (*SPP* 201). Her "John Thelwall: A Counterfactual Ghost Story" further discusses the ambiguities and ironies of the poem.

established in the earlier *A Speech in Rhyme*, then re-imagined in “The Song of Eros,” is completely reconfigured in the dynamic, militant stance of Pandolia. In *A Speech in Rhyme*, the speaker uses the trope as an exemplar of the “moving eloquence of woe,” whereby words and tears are employed to “stop red Slaughter’s high up-lifted arm” (14). In “The Song of Eros,” Thelwall focuses on Hersilia herself, head of the Sabine women, who uses “the latent power / Of suasive tones” to soothe sides, calm heated emotions and broker peace (*SPP* 180:46-47). In the Pandolia fragment, the military imagery shifts from diplomatic entente to full-out offensive. Her description of the last of her four lovers, Thumoleon, from the Greek meaning lion-hearted, is a tour de force of martial strategy and resounding power:

O! for my man of Mars, my red hot soldier,
I had my high heroics: voice and port
Right Amazonian: helm and shield and spear
Seem’d in illusive gesture bodied forth,
As in big words I thunder’d o’er the field,
And talk’d of wounds, duellos, charges, feints, --
Of cities captur’d and of trenches storm’d
“To arms! To arms! – The trumpet sounds to arms!”
I sung; and twenty trumpets swell’d my voice.
My mouth a cannon was; my eyes, a file
Of glittering musquetry, from which I pour’d
Such well-directed vollies, that the heart
Of my quail’d foe, thro all its squadrons, bled;
Staff and ensigns prostrate at my feet

Sue'd for capitulation. (*SPP* 204:122-137)

One can trace a clear progression in Thelwall's thinking as Hersilia's earlier mollifying tone is usurped by the forceful "twenty trumpets" that "swell[]" Pandolia's "voice." Although female agency and vindication are already central to *A Speech in Rhyme* and "The Song of Eros," by the time of the composition of "Pandolia's Description of her Four Lovers" Thelwall is deliberately toying with a more slippery depiction of femininity. Pandolia is more akin to those female patriots or "nymphs of Britain" (*SPP* 195:51) praised in the "Ode to the Zephyrs" from the Derby Manuscript examined in Chapter 4. Their "charms," the closing stanza suggests, will inspire the "triumph" of "Freedom" and future "[f]raternal bliss and equal rights" (*SPP* 195:51-54). In Pandolia's open militancy, seen in her comments on the "man of Mars" (*SPP* 204:122), the "martial enthusiasm" of Thelwall's elocution lectures is fully feminized, and the stoic but ultimately passive peacemakers emblematized by the Sabine Women and Hersilia become "Right Amazonian" (*SPP* 204:124). The aforementioned passage's extended metaphor, connecting Pandolia's body parts – the "mouth" and "eyes" especially, which are integral to Thelwall's elocutionary theory – to martial imagery – "cannon" and "glittering masquery" (*SPP* 204:132-133)—adopts the traditional blazon. But Pandolia autonomously applies it to herself rather than it being bestowed upon her; and she does so in order to subdue her paramour into "capitulation" (*SPP* 204:131). Pandolia's winning of the "man of deeds" (*SPP* 204:145) exploits the Sabine Women motif to take the passive peacemaker and put her on the warpath.

Pandolia's hyperbolic yet "well-directed vollies" (*SPP* 204:134) at the martial hero also have an impact on her auditors, Soph. and Dolometis, who congratulate her rhetorical prowess, commending her as a "fine tactician" (*SPP* 204:138) capable of "shew[ing] the better part of generalship, / And play[ing] the politician" (*SPP* 204:143-144). In the process of destabilizing

male romantic hierarchy, Pandolia defies authority by undermining the pomposity both of politics and politesse, ingeniously adopting manners and social conventions in order to satirize them. In his entry on "Elocution" from Abraham Rees' *Cyclopedia; or a New Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, Thelwall exposes an ambiguity within dramatic representation that inherently encourages radical action. Under the subheading "Elocution of the Stage," Thelwall claims that since "the drama deals in the *extremes* of passion and emotion; … its moral requires that it should exhibit those passions bursting all bounds of decorum, and triumphing over the restraints of reason" ("Elocution"). Pandolia is represented as deliberately adopting a role, "pip[ing] in other strains" (*SPP* 204:121), to assume and assert authority.

The main difference between Pandolia and earlier incarnations of the figure in *A Speech in Rhyme* and "The Song of Eros" is captured in the opening salvo to her two current suitors, when she confidently asserts that "most marvelously / I do affect them all: as you shall hear" (*SPP* 201:7-8). These new conquests, Dolometis and Soph, while applauding the ridicule she bestows on her former lovers, show their own folly and insecurity in their asides, apparently oblivious to the way she is manipulating them just as she had the others. The word "affect" is frequently repeated in the dramatic fragment. Thelwall is too fastidious with language not to attach a loaded significance to the recurring use of the term. When she boasts of winning over the melancholy poet, Pandolia insists that she outdoes him at his own game: "Thus, most affectingly, I him affected" (*SPP* 202:28). Later, when Pandolia dances with her aspiring paramours, she uses "glittering shafts & titilating jests," along with "blushes well applied" and "such speaking sighs" in order to "*affec*t[] to the highth!" (*SPP* 202:58-62). As for her relationship with the cynic, she strategically employs "mere mummery" to "affect[] him / Even to the bathos of his own profound" (*SPP* 203:102-103). Pandolia's repeated use of "affect" plays

upon its different denotations and connotations while likewise reflecting Thelwall's own polymathy.

Of the many meanings of "affect" listed in the *OED*, five are particularly relevant to "Pandolia's Description of her Four Lovers." First, "affect "can suggest one's ability "to take to, to be fond of, show preference for; to fancy, like, or love." On a superficial level, Pandolia's takeovers each involve this understanding of the term. More valuable is the second implication that affect can indicate one "assum[ing] a false appearance of; to put[ting] on a pretense of . . . counterfeit[ing] or pretend[ing]." Pandolia's feigning is most evident in the imitation of each conquest's voice. However, Pandolia is not simply a *femme fatale*. This is clear from a third sense of "affect," which is "to have an effect on the mind or feelings of (a person); to impress or influence emotionally; to move, touch." Her success is predicated on her ability to persuade. Thus, each of the rapturous responses of Dolometis and Soph clearly demonstrates her elocutionary prowess and authority. In addition, Thelwall would have been aware of the legal definition of the verb, which is "to … convict of a crime or offence; to show to be guilty or illegal" (*OED*). This, in fact, is the context in which he himself uses the term in his speech on the *The Natural and Constitutional Rights of Britons*, where he claims that government restrictions have "affect[ed] the vitals of British Liberty" (*PEJ* 40). Pandolia's latent political power stems from her judicial authority and mastery of vocal expression. A final connotation evident in Pandolia's employment of affect is its connection to medicine, specifically "[o]f a disease: to act on, lay hold of, or attach (a person, organ, etc.) contagiously" (*OED*). This definition suggests a more sinister reading of the character, whose supreme dominance infects and is transmitted from victim to victim. Thelwall's rich use of the word "affect" captures Pandolia's vexed characterization as a simultaneously amiable and deliberately subversive figure. Through her,

Thelwall uses meretricious ornament to, ironically, destabilize the very object – as subject – that it is describing and exploiting. Throughout Thelwall's oeuvre, there is evidence of his ability to imitate and exploit a genre or form to critique the very structures and implications of that genre or form. *The Peripatetic* and *The Daughter of Adoption* are the finest examples of Thelwall's satiric mastery, which caricatures and undermines as often as it mirrors. Demonstrating an ability to mimic and ventriloquize, Thelwall is able, via Pandolia's representation, to illustrate seductively seditious rhetorical dexterity.

As with the suitors who bestow so many names upon Seraphina in *The Daughter of Adoption*, Pandolia's admirers respond in awe and operate as foil figures. For example, Soph calls her "my female Caesar!" (*SPP* 201:9), revealing the double-edged nature of such praise. While the exhortations are clearly positive, they also reveal a desire on the part of her male counterparts to possess her. The repeated use of "my," suggesting ownership, is similar to the possessive diction that Seraphina chides Henry over in *The Daughter of Adoption*. The list of adoring appellations given by Soph speaks to Pandolia's mutable nature: "daintiest wit!," "Pythian priestess," "dimpled Socrates" "fine tactician," "encyclopedia," "metamorphist" and "Proteus paramount" (*SPP* 204:136-140). As both a character and an actress, Pandolia enacts fundamental tenets of Thelwall's elocutionary theory, in the process exemplifying his ideal goal of fostering engaged and intelligent citizens. This ambition is epitomized in the moniker "encyclopedia," which connotes an ambitious mastery of multiple fields of study and understanding. In Rees' *Cyclopedia*, Thelwall would insist that

> [I]t is not in the science of the green room, the library of the prompter, and the technical knowledge of stage trick, to make a finished action. To deliver language well, it is necessary to fully comprehend it, not loosely and colloquially merely, but grammatically,

> etymologically, and sympathetically; to detect the nicest shades of allusion and discrimination, and enter into the sentiment of the author; to realize the passion where passion is, and the character, where the composition is characteristic. ("Elocution")

The "elocutionist," Thelwall concludes, must simultaneously take on "the rare and valuable character of an *English scholar*" ("Elocution"). This passage captures a desired ideal – the supremacy of studious mastery over gaudy display. In this way, Pandolia, through the fullness of her knowledge and control of language, presentation and performance, meets Thelwall's high standards of a consummate speaker who has complete control over herself and her audience.

Part 3: Promoting Agency and Political Protest: Thelwall's Reviews in *The Champion*

Thelwall's understanding of the actress figure was not limited to private readings and the composition of unpublished dramas. The third section of this chapter addresses Thelwall's theatre reviews, focusing on his consideration of young female actresses and how his comments on their performances not only reflect elements of his overarching elocutionary theory but also hint at how theatrical performance itself can be a form of political resistance. The origins of this view of theatrical performance may be seen in James Gillray's satirical print "Copenhagen house" (1795), which depicts Thelwall at the apex of his reputation as a theatrical political orator (see fig. 11). While the caricature focuses on the exaggerated physical gestures of the orator – the man in blue with the raised clenched fist – equally interesting is, in Steve Poole's wonderful phrase, the "collective grotesquerie of his dullard audience" ("Gillray, Cruikshank & Thelwall" 4).

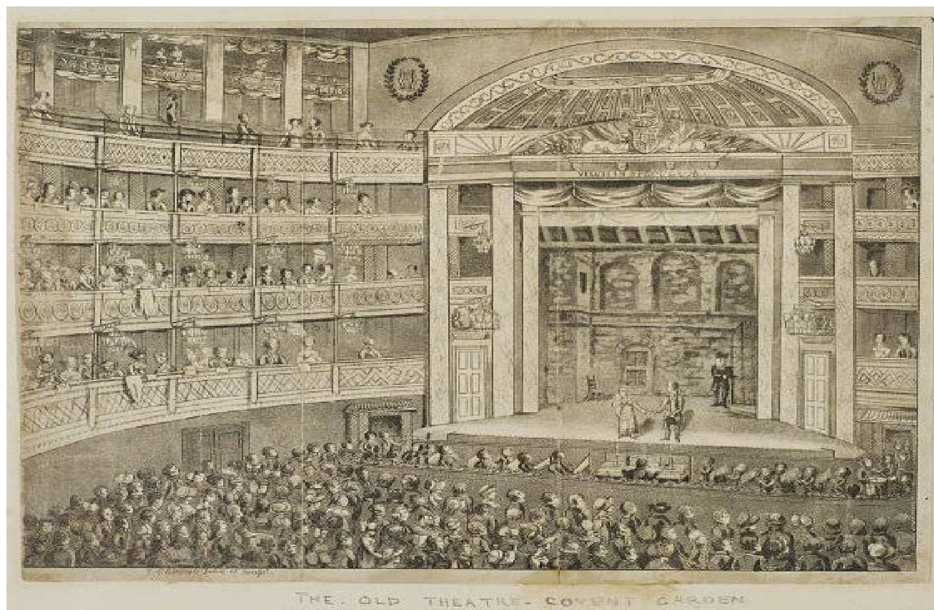
(Fig. 11. Gillray's "Copenhagen house" from The British Museum)

Gillray's satiric print captures the number of citizens, reportedly ranging from 100,000 to 150,000 individuals, in attendance. Regardless of the political motivations of both the speaker and his audience, however, Thelwall's capacity to reach large crowds without aid of amplification was truly exceptional. In *The Life of Thelwall*, Cecil Thelwall describes the speaker's entrance into the crowd: "on his appearance, shouts, long and re-iterated, re-echoed through the dense moving mass of human beings" yet "when he addressed them … the silence and attention which prevailed, indicated … the influence and popularity of the speaker" (378). The accomplishment at Copenhagen Fields speaks to Thelwall's lifelong goal of mastering vocal power in order to attain "communion sweet" with not only a "few congenial minds" but also the larger general populace (*SPP* 167:25-26). Thelwall's idealistic objective of empowering the marginalized and freeing the "bastilled tongue" (Thompson, "Resounding Romanticism" 44)[46]

[46] While the precise phrase is Thompson's, it is based on a metaphor used by Thelwall in his lecture *On the Moral Tendency of a System of Spies and Informers* (38). This metaphor is addressed at the end of this chapter.

would extend to a number of the “new character[s]” he would “venture[] to assume” (*The Champion* 1819 12) over his lengthy career – in this case, as commentator upon and counsellor of up-and-coming actresses.

Thelwall returned to politics by purchasing *The Champion* newspaper in late 1818. For three years, he penned a plethora of as-yet critically unexamined front-page editorials, original poetry and theatrical and literary reviews. Analogous to Thelwall’s celebration of the working class at Copenhagen fields in 1795 is the concern he devoted to the aspiring actress trying to deliver her lines in the cacophonous and cavernous London theatre halls of the Regency era (see fig. 12).



(Fig 12. “Covent Garden Theatre” in Thornbury’s *Old and New London: Volume 3*, p. 232)

While occurring in radically different venues, both oratorical performances require tremendous control of voice and effective projection to “awaken and influence and impel” an audience (Thelwall, *Introductory Discourse* 11). The language and diction of “Thelwall’s diverse writings testify to his conviction that the sympathetic connection between part and whole is always a political one” (Fairclough 768). Thus, whether in open or enclosed spaces, at the political

rostrum or on the polite stage, Thelwall's speakers engage in democratic activities intended to unify and empower.

Focusing on critiques, commentaries and suggestions given to ingénue actresses, I will argue that seditious undertones in Thelwall's theatre reviews from *The Champion* mirror the egalitarian principles of his elocutionary theory and thus also recall the political impetus of his activism in the 1790s. Thelwall repeatedly plays the part of mentor to a seemingly endless series of up-and-coming performers. Using his ubiquitous trope of the voice as "an instrument, which, properly tuned and tutored, will discourse most sweet melody" (1821 713), Thelwall assumes the role of speech therapist and educator to cure habitual physical impediments and foster still embryonic talents. If his time as editor of *The Champion* reintroduced him to a charged political scene, then his prolific but little known theatre reviews showcase many tenets of his elocutionary theory along with his reformist political agenda. Composed during the build-up to and aftermath of the Peterloo massacre, the Queen Caroline affair and the Cato Street scandal, Thelwall's appraisals go beyond platitudes and stock assessments to argue for the unimpeded, and politically charged, exchange so central to his entire oeuvre.

In his copious reviews, Thelwall advocates for women's equality in the important milieu of Romantic-era theatre. He asserts that improvements in the "power and management" of voice must be complemented by the blending of "both sweetness and science in considerable degree" (*The Champion* 1820 599). Sweetness, a pervasive and rhetorically charged term in Thelwall's lexicon, pertains to a sensual mode of achieving communicative sympathy. Mee suggests that, as a recurring trope in Thelwall's work, it implies "a form of exchange with the potential to reach out into a democratized idea of the public" (*Conversable Worlds* 171). Mediating between clinical assessment and aesthetic appreciation in his theatre reviews, Thelwall addresses

impediments as much as he reviews play performances. Thelwall uses science to indicate confidence in moderating the body's capacity for expression along with the ability to remedy mental and physiological impediments. He advertised his Lincoln's Inn Fields "Institute for the Cure of Impediments" in London as a venue for "the cultivation of habits of Oratorical Facility and Impressiveness" (*Plan and Objects* 4). Fundamental to his elocutionary theory were "the discoveries of real science" that could be then applied "to the highest refinements of grace and elegance" (*Results of Experience* 2). It is not surprising, then, that a major focus in *The Champion* reviews is to expand upon "the zeal of professional science . . . for the benefit of all those who are in the habit of theatrical, or any other species of elaborate declamation" (1820 30). Hence the notion of properly managing the voice and its application to the stage has its echoes in the elocutionary program explored in the previous chapter, which Thelwall developed at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The repeated references to his elocutionary theory in *The Champion* reviews cement the notion that Thelwall saw novice actresses as benefactors of his instruction who could profit society by finding and refining their genuine voices through performance. In combining the art (sweetness) and act (science) of elocution, the performer is able to "excite and impress" a captivated audience (*Introductory Discourse* 2), as Thelwall insists in all his writings and lectures. Of course, as is *de rigeur* in so much of his work, Thelwall relies on sensibility, which, according to Christopher Nagle, works "to connect others through its stimulating effects" (4). The actress transforms impassioned dramatic speeches into rhetorical pleas for "kindred sympathies" (*SPP* 141:89) that could easily be manipulated and used for ends that disrupt and question as much as they entreat for benevolent union.

Thelwall's *The Champion* reviews also address a major external impediment to speech as

physical venue plays a crucial role in determining oratorical accomplishment. Thelwall's reviews are a product of period and place, and a reaction to the change ably addressed by Melynda Nuss in *Distance, Theatre and Public Voice, 1750-1850*. Nuss focuses on the juxtaposition between intimacy and progress, using distance as an overarching metaphor since "the physical distance between actors and audiences" epitomizes "the difficulty of reaching new audiences" (7). As a result, writers of the period, "imagined impossible theatres . . . [:] theatres that preserved old notions of theatrical and coterie intimacy while gaining the reach of mass distribution" (4). In his reviews, Thelwall draws on his elocutionary theory to consider the problem of maintaining an affective connection between actors and audience as theatres became larger.

While his elocutionary work focuses almost exclusively on physiological concerns, Thelwall's theatrical reviews hint at new challenges to proper performance. As a result of the building of larger theatres at the beginning of the nineteenth century, many plays were "rendered nearly incomprehensible by poor lighting, poor acoustics, and the rowdy behaviour of the spectators themselves" (Gaull 81). Thelwall was keenly aware of the deficiencies of these new spacious and commercial theatres. After the reopening of the Little Theatre in the Haymarket in 1821, for example, he lambasted the architectural layout of the location since the "projecting sounding board … which deforms the proscenium" demonstrated "the total ignorance of acoustics, or the science of the diffusion of intelligible sound" (*The Champion* 1821 572). To meet the challenge of new theatres, a corrective means of expression was required and this was conveniently offered in Thelwall's elocutionary training. By overcoming "technical circumstances," an actress could, in the words of Nuss, "break[] through the communicative frame, commanding universal attention and acclaim" (8). Thelwall's tried and tested elocutionary system offered the means of successfully accomplishing this by combatting

“[b]ombast” with the “the fine turns and touching sentiments of genuine and pathetic poetry” (*The Champion* 1820 413).

Acting in part as a promotional plug for his elocutionary institute at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, which he was still running in tandem with his *The Champion* editorship, Thelwall’s lengthy digressions or false apologies often end with the claim that the comprehensive critiques “are not, however, a wit too subtile [sic] to be worthy of the attention of every actor and actress – of every public speaker or reciter who may wish to cultivate or acquire a forcible, harmonious and expressive enunciation, or surmount the deficiencies of a feeble, or untractable voice” (1821 237). Thelwall’s theatrical reviews are distinguished from those of his contemporaries by the minutely detailed attention he gives to actors and actresses on “that true perfection of operative harmony, in which rhythmus, punctuation and rhetorical expression present themselves, at once, in indivisible unity” (*Selections for the Illustrations* xxii). Thelwall uses any forum he can to promote his understanding of elocutionary theory and its utility to improving both the art of stage performance and to raising awareness of the undercurrents of political discourse present at the time**.**

Although often apologetic for “niceties too refined, perhaps, for newspaper criticism” (*The Champion* 1821 572), Thelwall rarely holds back from providing detailed digressions that amplify the tenets of his elocutionary theory. This attention to specifics can be seen by comparing his approach with that shown in other publications. For example, an 1821 review in the rival *The European Magazine, and London Review* praises Mrs. Brudenell’s performance in Otway’s *Venice Preserved*, with the simple claim that her “exterior is highly favourable; . . . her countenance is expressive, and her voice sweet and feminine” (283). By contrast, Thelwall’s

review of the same performance in *The Champion* is meticulous in its focus on the particular nuances of expression:

> Her voice is sweet and musical, and her articulation distinct; but they would be more powerful and expressive, and her rhythmus (of which her ear seems to be tolerably perceptive) would be much more complete and obvious, if she would avoid the common mistake of giving the quantity of vowels instead of the tunable consonants. We are perfectly aware that this is a very nice distinction, and that it is very difficult to make it intelligible upon paper. But let any person with a nice ear and a quick perception of time, or quantities, take the dissyllable *ruin*, for example, on which, in one instance especially, the error we are speaking of was particularly conspicuous, and dividing the bar, or natural time of its pronunciation, into eight parts or semiquavers, assigning four of these parts to the initial and two to the final liquid (remembering always that the notes of speech are accentual inflections, not graduated monotones) and leaving a semiquaver only to each of the vowels, – he will find an affirmative accent, clear, powerful and expressive, produced with little effort. (1821 572)

In this instance, Thelwall's criticism is corrective, focused on a single word appearing repeatedly in Belvidera's speeches. Oftentimes the word falls at the end of her exhortations, in reference to her oppressed situation, as when she exclaims "I see my Ruin" (55). Thelwall's advice is meant to encourage the actress to enunciate mindfully in order to acknowledge the elegiac nature of her character's destruction. This idea corresponds with Thelwall's fervent belief that the distinct and correct utterance of each word counts, especially when delivered from the stage. As a highly engaged spectator and interpreter of dramatic performances, Thelwall was convinced that properly spoken words can influence the audience's reaction and create intimate connection with

characters. In this instance then, Thelwall acts as a *de facto* stage director. However, Thelwall's explicit instructions that fuse musical notation with parsing word choices provokes a more profound analysis of his review. The word "ruin" also appears in other important moments of the play: Belvidera remembers herself as "an only Child / Expos'd to all the Outrages of Fate, / And cruel Ruin!" (50) and earlier proposes "The Game is for a matchless Prize, if won: / If lost, disgraceful Ruin" (17). In these cases, Thelwall's script for the female lead to emphasize "ruin" subtly directs the audience to carefully consider the social contexts and complicity surrounding her ruin, a word implying, and propelled by, moral judgment. Thelwall's minute investment in proper pronunciation reflects the role played by this play in particular in his political life. As Sean McEvoy puts it, "Thelwall deliberately sought to use *Venice Preserved* for radical ends" (182). During his trial for High Treason, the deliberate reactions of Thelwall and his associates to seditious elements of this play in particular were used as evidence by the prosecution. According to Paula Backscheider, Thelwall and "his reformist friends vigorously applauded and demanded encores of parts of the play that highlighted government corruption and the hardships of ordinary people" (53). Noting the same scandalous "encore [of] republican sentiments," Green argues that "Thelwall stages an opposition between the people (the audience) as narrated pedagogically (by plays such as *Venice Preserved*) and the people as performative, appropriating and disturbing the very pedagogical discourses and spaces which attempt to define them" (59).

For Thelwall, then, the stage became yet another location in which elocutionary delivery and political power were entwined. His reviews, like his poems, are not simply recreations from the serious matter of the newspaper, but forms of political commentary in themselves. The same thing is evident in his treatment of the Queen Caroline affair. Upon her return to England in 1820, Queen Caroline became a popular figurehead for the reform movement, encouraging vocal

disapproval of royal abuse, along with "the assertion of middle- and lower-class values in opposition to aristocratic vice . . . and the novel involvement of women in public debate" (Carter 248). At this time, Thelwall was enthusiastically writing about how the recitation of "[t]he words 'long live the Queen' which close the last speech of Lady Ann" in *Richard III* "caused a tumult of long-continued applause in the theatre" (*The Champion* 1820 542). A few months later, he would observe "the enthusiasm with which many passages applicable to the present times … were received" in regards to the wronged titular character of *Cymbeline* (1820 698). Jane Moody claims that Thelwall "conceives of theatrical performance as a valuable yet fragile form of political culture which is always dangerously vulnerable to state intervention and control" (63) and his theatrical reviews were a sly means of addressing a highly charged political situation through a distanced yet still subversive medium. Thus, on multiple levels, theatrical performance could be treated as a form of political liberation and expression, both by and for aspiring actresses, a place and mode in which artificial barriers were overcome, timorousness defeated and, most importantly, sympathetic identification achieved between performers and spectators. The Queen Caroline situation suggests that actresses could, through effective enunciation and proper delivery, consciously become the vehicles of germane political ideas, whether overtly and covertly expressed.

Many of Thelwall's reviews are focused on actresses making their first appearances in both the major and minor theatres of London. His comments on these young performers reflect his career-long concern with developing and encouraging female talent. There is much that can be gleaned about the proper execution of elocution from Thelwall's reviews. In many ways, because the reviewer addresses concrete subjects, in a series of test cases, rather than dealing in theory or abstraction, these appraisals help to elucidate principles that are merely sketched in his

published elocutionary works. In the process, the reader receives comprehensive correctives on "ill-directed art" (1820 621). Furthermore, to complement the notion of elocution as an established science, these reviews allow Thelwall to expound and expand upon the idea that "[t]he art of the developing the powers of the speaking voice is, in reality, but little understood" (1820 621). Key ideas in Thelwall's reviews include the concepts of volition and judicious instruction, avoidance of excessive emotionalism by adhering to the dictates of nature, engagement in proper "prosodial perception" (1819 523), promoting egalitarian merit and, finally, the provocative claim that while "great physical power is not necessary, a correct system of utterance is" (1821 262).

The first conviction evident in Thelwall's reviews of rising actresses is in their ability to succeed by properly following his specific directives. For instance, a Miss Warwick is commended since "[t]he quality of her voice is excellent [and] she has great compass" (1821 149). However, the reviewer then warns, "she lacks one attainment which, perhaps, can only be supplied by able and judicious instruction – facility in bringing forth the powers of her voice" (149). The notion of "judicious instruction" is reiterated throughout Thelwall's reviews. After diagnosing the elocutionary shortcoming, a lisp, of one Mrs. Boyle, Thelwall affirms, "this is a defect which every one *may* remedy who *will*; and the actress is much mistaken who imagines, that the effect will not be a rich reward for the trouble" (1820 781). In its emphasis on everyone's capacity to overcome weakness through practice and gradual amelioration, this statement embodies the democratic impetus inherent in his elocutionary agenda: all people have the capacity to speak effectively, even though success is predicated on the intrinsic resolve of the individual. Thus, a complex dynamic between mentor and mentee develops, and informs

Thelwall's interactions with his female students, in a give-and-take that involves acquiescence, intimacy and action.

In his reviews, Thelwall is also critical of the excessive emotionalism that results from overwrought performance, as it prohibits sympathetic connection. The "judicious actress," he suggests, should at no point need to resort to "tear[ing] herself to pieces and stretch[ing] the feelings of her audience upon the rack" (*The Champion* 1820 731). He addresses this negative form of exhibition repeatedly in *The Champion* reviews. For instance, he considers Miss Foote's portrayal of Shakespeare's Imogen a success since she did not indulge in the predominant "exacerbating style – the affectation of all emotions in extremes" of the time (1821 326). Ultimately, it is "the modest undertone of [her] representation" that wins over the reviewer (326). This assessment is in line with the claim Thelwall makes in notes to his elocutionary *Selections*, where he states, "the Drama [is] not a Deception, but a living Picture – Its Elocution should follow Nature" (Wakefield 6). While Thelwall is not quite suggesting that "all the world's a stage," he is implying that the stage can educate through mimesis. In applying elocutionary notions in his theatrical criticism, Thelwall contends that "[i]nstruction labours in vain when habits have been constructed by long practice" (*The Champion* 1820 478). His role as adviser involves the removal of impediments that stand in the way of his core egalitarian concepts: natural expression and the authentic realization of vocal power.

The performer's ability to comprehend the natural rhythmus and harmony of the English language is also congruent with Thelwall's elocutionary theory and applied to theatrical representation. For example, while he is raking a Miss Taylor over the coals regarding her performance at the Surrey Theatre (1819 523), his observation on "the genuine harmony of verse" leads to a digression on "unit[ing] the exactness of proportion with the ease and fullness

of variety," "dividing … clauses not by caesurae alone; but by diversified means of the emphasis of time, of force, and of quantity" and the value of "accentual close, and … suspensive pause" (523). Often painstakingly minute in his comments, Thelwall is clear that his "aim, in reality, is the diffusion of just principles of criticisms, and the improvement of our theatrical elocution" (523). Later praised for Imogen, Miss Foote is here censured for not "enter[ing] more completely into the rhythmical harmony of the author" (523). Thelwall comments that "Shakespeare evidently wrote from his feelings, and was a master of his language; the music of his versification, when correctly delivered, is always, therefore, an echo to the sentiment" (523). He then complains, "[w]hat a pity that false systems of emphasis and utterance – that a want of prosodial perception in the speaker should so often mar this harmony" (523).

In line with the rest of his criticism throughout his career, a fourth standard for elocutionary achievement is judgment based upon merit. Thus, a "Young Lady" in *The Duke's Bride; or The Ruins in the Forest* is praised for her "sweetly pathetic" performance of the female lead Emily (1821 695). Thelwall suggests "[h]er reception was such as evinced at once the discernment and the indulgence of her auditors; and the applause with which she was repeatedly encouraged, bespoke a full perception of merits which might ultimately reward the fostering" (695). His views on unrestricted merit have a precedent in Thelwall's review of Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*[47] and prefigure his endorsement of popular women writers, including Hemans, Landon and Mitford, in the mid-1820s, which I examine in the final chapter. All three considerations, from different points in Thelwall's career, share the standard benchmark of criticism based on inherent ability (refined through training) as opposed to social or gender interdictions.

[47] Explored in relation to Seraphina from *The Daughter of Adoption* in Chapter 3.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the theatre reviews reveal that Thelwall's elocutionary agenda emphasizes the notion that disproportionate physical exertion is harmful to both the individual and society. In the elocutionary lecture notes included with his *Selections*, Thelwall would hint at the "[r]ange and compass of the human Voice," suggesting it was "all Instruments in one" (*Selections for the Illustrations* lxvi). The healthy body must maintain an equilibrium, which necessitates a viable and applicable scientific method to assist in the production of sweet music. In *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle*, Thompson suggests that "Thelwall's orator is like a conductor and his organs are the instruments of the orchestra; while the student begins as an instrument or mere player, the ultimate aim is to prepare the student/reader to command at least his/her own organs, and at best, the organs of the body politic" (178). One important implication that can be drawn from Thelwall's musical metaphor is that distinct and articulate expression can be generated without exercising great corporeal energy. In other words, out of perceived weakness can come remarkable potency. This power, if harnessed properly, can have a social impact and actualize political change.

Ultimately, the goal of Thelwall's elocutionary project was to improve vocal projection. Thus, the previously discussed changes in the material makeup of the London theatres are crucial to understanding the *modus operandi* behind Thelwall's critical reviews. Michael Eberle-Sinatra suggests that "[t]he expanded stages of London theatres at [this time] reduced the sense of intimacy between audience and actors, and as a result any subtle acting skill was lost in barely audible performances for those members sitting furthest away from the stage" (105). This physical fact encouraged grandiosity, pantomime and other forms relying on gesture, exaggerated affectation and, most grievously, forced delivery. A great fault in the delivery of lines was often sentences "apt to go off in too high a note" since "too much force and stress [was

placed] upon the adjective" resulting in the "final substantive … run[ning] off too hastily and with too little power" (*The Champion* 1819 813). This assertion sets up a fascinating juxtaposition in which "too much force" can paradoxically lead to "too little power" (813). In earlier political tracts like "Peaceful Discussion, and not Tumultuary Violence the Means of Redressing National Grievance" (1795) and *On the Moral Tendency of a System of Spies and Informers* (1794), Thelwall emphasizes control and a measured response to oppression, rather than kneejerk violence. In the former tract, Thelwall had hinted at the power of the theatre as a venue for expression and change:

> [G]o even into the playhouses (lately the headquarters of aristocracy), and see how the torrents of popular opinion is changing in our favour – hear with what applause and attention every democratic sentiment is received, and with what languor every sentiment of aristocratic domination is endured. ("Peaceful Discussion" 226)

In his address to actresses, he repeatedly reminds them that the best mode of expression is not irrational exacerbation but harmonious sweetness. In the process, power can be seditiously attained by marginalized members of society. By overtaking the "headquarters of aristocracy," actresses can appeal to the wide range of social classes in attendance at plays, emphasizing "democratic sentiment" through careful and designed delivery (226).

First developed in his lectures "On the Management of the Voice" and then reinforced in his theatre reviews, a notable distinction is the difference between "Power, or Force" and volume or "loudness" (*Selections* Wakefield 4). In his review of another "fair *debutante*," Thelwall commences by suggesting that she appeared, during a solo scene on stage, "completely overpowered" and "seemed as if she would have sunk into the earth" (1821 126). Nonetheless,

> Her voice is clear and sweet, and of excellent quality; it seems to be of considerable compass, and has much variety of expression; and her under-tones have a melting softness – a tender pathos, in which she has, perhaps, no rival. Her taste and execution are pure and exquisite – free from all *finesse* and trickery. (126)

In the preceding passage, there is a notable contrast between the anonymous actress's body, potentially limited by the physical constraints of the theatre, and her voice, filled with potential and possibility.

Variety is repeatedly highlighted in Thelwall's elocutionary theory, where, on the topic of "Modulation, or Variety of Tone," he claims that "monotony [is] not a defect of organization, but of early ill-habit" (*Selections* Wakefield 4). A telling caveat to this statement is Thelwall's belief in the "superior facility of the fair sex" regarding mastery of tone (4). This assertion is one of numerous instances in his elocutionary writings where Thelwall affirms that women are physiologically more capable than men in regards to range and tone. In the aforementioned case, authentic accomplishment results not from how an actress appears on stage but from the methodology she uses to maximize her voice. Thus, despite the apparent odds the aspiring actress faces at the beginning of the review, Thelwall concludes that, by the end of the performance, she "had taken entire possession both of the ears and hearts of her audience" (1821 126). In the process, sweetness and science coalesce, and the actress finds her voice by overcoming external circumstances.

While it may seem a stretch to see a direct parallel between the vocal power of an actress in the theatre and the democratic power of the theatre in society, it is important to recognize that Thelwall's purpose in purchasing and assuming editorial control of *The Champion* newspaper in late 1818 signaled a clear "effort to re-enter political life despite twenty-one years' absence from

the public arena" (Claeys, Introduction xxxv). Thelwall himself says as much in his poetic "Auto-Biography" (1822), composed shortly after he lost the newspaper, once again for political reasons. In the poem, Thelwall admits that after their marriage he was advised by his wife to "retire to a cot & live snugly" and escape the "strife / That has sometimes look'd threat'ning & ugly" (*SPP* 269:207-208). Nevertheless, he was ready once again to risk all for the sake of politics, for

> … maggots of state
> Had got in his pate,
> In spite of his former hard lesson;
> And to Champion the press
> And Corruption redress
> Became his Quixotic profession. (*SPP* 269:209-214)

In subsequent stanzas, Thelwall expands upon the *raison d'être* of his largely reformist and libertarian endeavor to do away with corruption in all forms. He declares that he was "too stubborn to bend / To party's end" in addition to being "[t]oo proud for patron courting" and that he would not succumb to political retirement or forced insularity (*SPP* 269:217-219). This appears to prove the adage that you can take the rebel out of the rabble, but never the rabble out of the rebel.

Another important entry Thelwall included in Rees's *Cyclopedia* implies that a speaker's success in achieving sympathy can be realized only if a like-minded response is encouraged in his or her listeners. Under the heading of "Emotion," Thelwall proposes that "a mode of utterance applied to appropriate passages and on proper occasions, expressive of disturbance and agitation in the mind of the speaker, reader, or reciter" can be "calculated to produce a like

disturbance and agitation in the minds of the auditors" ("Emotion"). The parallelism of this passage ironically enforces a syllogistic order that inspires disruption in an audience. While, according to Thelwall, the end goal of "genuine emotions" is "the excitement of corresponding sympathy," the process by which reciprocation occurs is one that skirts sedition ("Emotion"). Akin to the claim Thelwall would make during the 1790s of it being "ten times better, to be immured oneself in a Bastille, than to have the Bastille put into one's mouth to lock up one's tongue from all intercourse and communication with one's heart" (*On the Moral Tendency* 38), the elocutionary tracts and theatrical reviews, despite purporting to be apolitical, demand a similarly unguarded open expression. Ultimately, as Tara-Lynn Fleming has argued, "oral recitation was not only a form of education and sociability; it also served a symbolic and even political function as a public display of one's intellectual and verbal capacity" (150).

In the *Introductory Discourse* to his elocutionary system, Thelwall writes of moments "[w]hen really actuated by any strong and genuine emotion, the tone becomes affected; the physiognomy assumes a sympathetic expression; and bursting thro' the boundaries of fashion and the chains of unnatural torpor, each limb and muscle seems to swell and struggle with inspiring passion" (21). These words describe the reception of Miss Goddard at Norwich's Theatre Royal; the future Cecil Thelwall at her husband's Institution, on the London stage and in the Pandolia fragment; and the countless debutantes whom Thelwall celebrated and cautioned in *The Champion* theatre reviews. The sentiments expressed correspond with much of the desired effect Thelwall wished for actresses under his direct and indirect tutelage. The language of the preceding passage suggests that, with Promethean stalwartness and resolve, freedom of expression can be attained. In an enlightening entry on "Energy" from Rees' '*Cyclopedia*, Thelwall depicts a creative moment of epiphany in which "the entire and reciprocal exertion of

the mental and organic faculties of the speaker, the co-operati[ng] energy of thought, language, enunciation, tone, look, gesture, and deportment" is actualized ("Energy"). The image presents an almost Blakean concept of the exultant and expressive body. Just as Thelwall was able to rouse the masses on Copenhagen Fields in 1795, so, he argued, could young actresses communicate compassion while simultaneously finding their voices and acting in private and public, during the late Regency era.

Chapter 6:

Print Culture, Women's Writing and Education in Thelwall's Later Writings

In previous chapters, I have looked at a variety of Thelwall's professional roles and the spaces associated with them: a member of debating societies in Chapter Two, a novelist in Chapter Three, a poet and elocutionist in co-responsive Scottish networks in Chapter Four, and a playwright, mentor and critic in and of young actresses in Chapter Five. To provide a full account of Thelwall's oeuvre, this final chapter will consider his role as a literary critic and editor, especially in *Musalogia. Or, the Paths of Poesy*, "a mock heroic essay on criticism and satire of popular poetry of the 1820s" found in the Derby Manuscript (Thompson, "Citizen Juan" 87), but also tracing the development of his literary criticism through his reviews. I will investigate Thelwall's constructive criticism of individual women writers, minor and major, and highlight views on female education expressed in the *Musalogia*, highlighting his belief that more effective methodologies could be employed to promote female interests. Lastly, I will examine Thelwall's more developed arguments on elocutionary theory, along with audience responses to his late lectures and journalism. His extensive involvement in the periodical press over the course of his career led to innumerable reviews of publications by women writers which articulate principles and illuminate threads still evident in his last major periodical, the *Panoramic Miscellany*. The areas of overlap and the differences between these writings reflect the advancement of women's causes over the course of almost fifty years. These societal changes mirror changes in Thelwall's own critical acclaim as he journeyed from an ambitious apprentice to a perceived rabble rouser to a celebrity elocutionary reformer who was still involved in promoting democratic principles that slowly began to began to be accepted and were partially realized in law before his death in 1834.

After a lifetimes experience of "up[s] & down[s]" (*SPP* 272:357) in the world of publishing, with numerous proclamations and repudiations as a literary critic, and hirings and firings as an editor, the 60-year-old Thelwall sagely surveys the literary landscape of the 1820s in his unpublished verse satire *Musalogia. Or, the Paths of Poesy* (which Thompson dates 1822-1827) (*SPP* 272). Thelwall's mock-epic captures a zeitgeist of turbulent transition. The piece borrows diction and imagery from literary reviews he wrote at the time, expanding and clarifying his overall theory of criticism. The Thelwall on display in *Musalogia* adopts a paternal position as sage advisor to a coterie of up-and-coming women writers. He is enthused by their expanding literary output and, true to form, he seizes the moment to proffer stylistic advice and encouragement. The burgeoning celebrity performance culture of the age also provides Thelwall with the occasion to laud the efforts of particular popular writers – Felicia Hemans, Mary Russell Mitford, and Letitia Landon – with insightful critiques and praise. This is in keeping with his career-long interest in supportive, co-responsive literary circles. Complementing the *Musalogia*, Thelwall's literary reviews, especially in the *Panoramic Miscellany* (1826) but extending back to his earliest editorship of the *Biographical and Literary Magazine* (1789-91), address numerous women writers, underscoring his interest in mutuality rather than a hierarchy of talent determined by gender. The increasing prevalence of periodicals and gift books confirmed Thelwall's view that the egalitarian ideal could be achieved through print in the same way that elocutionary mastery "is attainable by all" so all voices could be heard and recognized (*Introductory Discourse* 4).

Part 1: The "Illumin'd Friend": Thelwall Reviewed and Reviewing

The "I knew a Youth" passage of Thelwall's late satirical poem *Musalogia* demonstrates regret that he did not receive the criticism he required to grow as a poet:[48]

> In all the puerile pomps of style
>
> That youth with meteor glare beguile,
>
> Obscuring the ingenious thought
>
> That in his sentient bosom wrought:
>
> For no illumin'd friend was near
>
> To scan his song with critic ear. (*SPP* 272:643-48)

This self-deprecation has its origins in the often disparaging reception of Thelwall's own verse at the hands of critics. For instance, the largely complimentary appraisal of his first collection, *Poems on Various Subjects* (1787) in the *English Review* commenced with an almost dismissive examination of the poet's background, rather than the poetry itself, acknowledging that "[a]uthors and authoresses of this description, that is, of low degree, have frequently of late years *made a demand* on the public" (449). Later, in his 1803 review of *Poems Chiefly Written in Retirement* (1801), Francis Jeffrey focused almost entirely upon the biographical "Prefatory Memoir" and accentuated its negative impact, by lumping Thelwall with "a crowd of injudicious pretenders" (197). When he finally gets to the poems themselves, it is to reject them as "middling" before ironically concluding that "we shall be happy to find that [poetry] affords him a subsistence; because it is a great deal better than his politics" (202).

[48] Thompson places this passage in the "Autobiographies" chapter of her edition of Thelwall's poetry and poetics, and comments on it as such in her headnote.

Knowing from experience the importance of supportive, constructive criticism, Thelwall himself in the reviews he wrote and published throughout his career became an even-handed commentator. As a result, Thelwall adopted, in the words of Angela Esterhammer, "a more deliberately pedagogical mode of lecturing *to* younger female writers, who are … treated with notable seriousness and respect" ("John Thelwall's *Panoramic Miscellany*"). For example, in his review of "The Poetry of Miss Landen" [sic] in his 1826 periodical the *Panoramic Miscellany*, Thelwall says that the critic's goal is be "*useful*" and to aim at "fair and instructive" evaluation (74, 82). He implicitly contrasts himself with critics who either sarcastically rebuke writers or hyperbolically extol their virtues with backhanded or inflated compliments. Rather than endorse the passive "puffing" of such "Journalizing Gallantry," Thelwall in the *Musalogia* contests the simplistic claim that critics cannot "stint the praise when Ladies write" because "'All must be sweet that's feminine'" (*Derby MS* III.961). The adjective "sweet" has a positive connotation in the majority of Thelwall's writings, more often than not signifying an ideal state of social correspondence or reciprocity; "sweet converse" (*SPP* 141:97), "sweet communion" (*SPP* 197:31), and "communion sweet" (*SPP* 167:25) are repeated phrases in Thelwall's conversation poems, for instance. But here the word is used in a pejorative manner to signify something derivative, empty, and harmful, as Wollstonecraft uses it in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* when she excoriates "*sweet* docility of manners" or "*sweet* attractive grace" (111).

The question remains, however, what alternative does Thelwall provide to a criticism that essentially pimps and primps? In the first Canto of the *Musalogia*, Thelwall proposes the invention of a tenth "new-born Muse" (*SPP* 82:61), referring in a lengthy footnote to the faulty application of the appellation to both the popular religious prophet Joanna Southcott and the conservative novelist and moralist Hannah More. Thelwall's appeal for a fair-minded "Critic

Muse" (*SPP* 82:75) is consistent with the disdain for partisanship in criticism that is evident throughout his corpus. This figure represents Thelwall's attempt to liberate the reviewer from barriers of political prejudice, class identification and gender discrimination. In retrospect, the creation of the "Critic Muse" in the *Musalogia* should be read as the culmination of an interest that is palpable as early as the opening salvo of *A Speech in Rhyme* (1788) in which the speaker desires to subvert the "*snarling critic* [w]ith [his] snake-like hiss" (5). But as a muse is traditionally feminine, this definition of the critic is particularly appropriate to the appraisal of female writers and depictions of women in Thelwall's writing. As has been demonstrated in earlier chapters, there are shades of the Muse's candor (see below) in Seraphina's rational exhortations in *The Daughter of Adoption*, and gender parity is equally apparent in his elocutionary tracts and lectures, directed at an audience of young women from the growing provincial middle class, and in his theatrical reviews in *The Champion*, where he allotted equal time to male and female actors. The most fruitful parallel that can be drawn is between Thelwall's "Critic Muse," whose ultimate goal is to apply "[c]ensure [that is] then severe,--but candid too" (*SPP* 274:705-706) and his own early support of Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*. In an essay from 1792's *Universal Magazine*, he boldly claims that Smith's sonnets are superior to those of Milton. Thelwall also critiques hierarchical assumptions and established conventions by contending that Smith be liberated from the perils of "critical bondage" in order for her work to be evaluated based on its "natural distinction of merit" (409). Thirty years later, echoing his review of Smith's sonnets, he makes merit the primary evaluative criterion of the Critic Muse in the *Musalogia*: "Lady Wits" should be "rated by their worth alone" (*Derby MS* III.961). This egalitarian survey of versifiers both male and female in the poem is consistent with its overall evaluation of the democratic open-endedness of print culture in the 1820s.

In estimations of female talent from the period by many critics, certain social norms were imposed on women's writing and used as rigid evaluative standards. Critical perspectives could be heavily biased by strictures of modesty and morality, creating value judgments that influenced opinion and led to attacks on works that failed to meet social standards. According to Mary A. Waters, "male critics during these years were often patronizing towards women writers, nudging them towards acceptably 'feminine' subject matter and literary forms while holding their productions to a lower standard of quality than similar works by male writers" (15). Thus, a dichotomy is apparent in the criticism of women writers whereby, on one extreme, they were hyperbolically (and, therefore, emptily) lauded for their virtues, while on the other, both their writing and their gender were belittled. Furthermore, "[e]ven when women writers were favorably reviewed, . . . it was said that their special limitations as well as special talents derived from the fact that their lives and education were so different from and so much more circumscribed than men" (Haworth 726). In opposition to this approach, however, "Thelwall's critic muse is an egalitarian who judges the merits of a poet's verse without reference to reputation or social status" (Solomonescu 134).

One of the *Musalogia*'s strengths is the copious notes Thelwall included in the manuscript to clarify and expand upon points only hinted at in the poetry. Richard Gravil has rightfully argued that these "prose notes are perhaps the most valuable part" of the poem (357). In these often witty ruminations, Thelwall offers a specimen of the criticism expected in the new poetic millennium that he at once heralds and assesses. Thelwall's approach, consistent throughout his career and in line with his pedagogical prerogative, relies on the Enlightenment strategy of demystification, of calling "things by their right names." The egalitarian ethos emerges from a reappraisal of hierarchical titles. By slightingly classifying Alexander Pope as

"the first of gentleman Poets," Thelwall can then categorize Milton, Shakespeare and Spenser as "poets beyond the reach of all titular distinctions of gentlemanship" (*Derby MS* III.740v). Holding out hope for Lord Byron, Thelwall foresees a time when judgment will rest on the quality of the work itself rather than recourse to social designation. At that time, the poet will be recognized by the "classical dignity of plain Byron" (*Derby MS* III.740v). On the other end of the social spectrum, Thelwall muses on the criteria for ascertaining "real Genius" (*Derby MS* III.736v) amongst members of the lower class. Again he re-contextualizes in order to establish a new benchmark of reasonable, or rather rational, criticism: "let it first be tried by the test of comparison not with the stupidity & ignorance with which it is surrounded, but with the talent & intelligence with which it is to be brought into contact" (*Derby MS* III.736v). In "wonder hunting" lower-class poets who are extolled simply because they can produce poetry, Thelwall diagnoses the dangers of these individuals being "puffed into temporary reputation & high self-opinion" (*Derby MS* III.736v-737v). Such "brief mock-patronage" (*Derby MS* III.737v) is ultimately injurious to the writer, he suggests, because of its lack of honesty and authenticity.

Therefore, from the perspective of class, Thelwall seeks to do away with what, in *The Peripatetic*, he had labelled "*tyrant badges of distinction*" (79). Ultimately, a critical methodology based purely on the concept of merit finds its way into Thelwall's criticism of women writers. For instance, in a largely negative review of *Legends of the North* by Mrs. Henry Rolls, he insists that readers

> must neither be influenced by the indulgence of former receptions, nor by the consideration that the authoress is the sister of a Baronet. The praise, if praise we give, must be founded on the merits of the work itself; and, if we stumble on defects, we shall have the consolation of reflecting, that justifiable censure need not be restrained by any

apprehensions that, by diminishing the fame of the poetess, we might also diminish her bread. (*Monthly Magazine* 1825 157)

This approach is consistent with the overall attitude shown during his time as editor of the *Monthly Magazine* (1824-1825) and its sequel the *Panoramic Miscellany* (1826).[49] In the "Notice to Correspondents" from the May issue of the *Monthly Magazine*, Thelwall says, "Every work he notices must be measured by the standard of its own merits, and by that only . . . The only fair advantage which authors can derive, from sending . . . their works, is, that, they should be early noticed, and that they will avoid the hazard of being overlooked, which, in the multitude of publications with which the press is perpetually teeming, must inevitably be the lot of many a work, even of sterling merit and importance; but let them not hope to be shielded from impartial criticism" (296).

Throughout Thelwall's career as reviewer, he defends the "impartial criticism" (296) of female authors in particular. In fact, the consistency of Thelwall's critical method is remarkable. The December issue of the *Biographical and Imperial Magazine* (1789), which Thelwall edited, includes a detailed review of *Poems* by teenage sisters Maria and Harriet Falconar. This slim collection, published by radical bookseller Joseph Johnson, addresses subject matter that corresponds with Thelwall's "enter[ing] with an almost diseased enthusiasm" into "discussions on the subject of the Slave Trade" during his apprenticeship in the debating societies, as recalled in his "Prefatory Memoir" (*Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* xxiv). The young Thelwall,

[49] Thelwall started the the *Panoramic Miscellany; or* the *Monthly Magazine and Review of Literature, Science, Arts, Inventions and Occurrences* after he had lost editorship of the *Monthly Magazine* in 1825. According to Scrivener, the "new owners" of the *Monthly Magazine*, "which he edited from December 1824 to the end of 1825 . . . fired him because of his Radical politics. His very last stint as editor came the following year, when he edited his own but very short-lived journal (January to June 1826), *The Panoramic Miscellany"* ("John Thelwall and the Press" 120).

aged only 25 but already sounding like a seasoned veteran of publishing, laments the all too common circumstance in which "the progress of improvement … [is] impeded by the indiscriminating applauses with which the first productions of genius are generally received" (Review of *Poems on Slavery* 67). According to Thelwall, this leads to "false ideas of excellence which [are] adopted by the delusive ardor of youthful fancy" and, "instead of being corrected by criticism, are encouraged into habit" (67). In short, facile criticism that extols the virtue of works written by first-time authors and excuses them of any fault simply because of age, gender or class, is a hindrance to their development, as it merely glosses over inconsistencies and placidly accepts defects. The long-term impact is harmful as this type of criticism stunts growth through pigeonholing and infantilizing potentially talented writers.[50]

The approach that Thelwall adopts in his early review of the Falconars' *Poems*, and that becomes a hallmark of his critical method, is to directly address the intellect and sensibility of those he is critiquing while deftly remaining deferential and decorous. He asks that the Miss Falconars "not be offended, when [he] treat[s] them with that sincerity their sex so seldom meet with, and tell them, that they must not too eagerly listen to all the commendations of popular approbation" (67). By this, Thelwall is certainly referring to the high praise given in the preface to their collection, whose anonymous author extols the virtues of these "self-taught daughters of harmony" and "lisping Saphos [sic]," comparing them with the likes of contemporary authors "Seward, Williams, Barbauld and More" who have successfully written on the slave trade (iv-vi). This particular form of chivalric but enlightened and relatively egalitarian appraisal recurs throughout Thelwall's criticism and is especially evident in the theatre reviews he would write in

[50] As we will see, Thelwall addresses these points directly in the opening lines of his "Address to Sappho" in the *Musalogia* (*SPP* 208:1-13).

The Champion thirty years later. Thelwall applies botanical and horticultural imagery repeatedly in his review to emphasize the notion that these young women have "a genius well worthy of careful cultivation" but still require "careful nutriment" (Review of *Poems on Slavery* 67). According to Thelwall, "genius in its vernal dawn" calls for "the correcting hand of criticism, to lop exuberances, and root out the weeds of common growth" (67-68). The basis of his approach to the sisters prefigures claims made about misguided authors in the *Musalogia*; namely, that "[i]f merit rais'd, or puff'd, they soar, / The more the highth, the fault the more; / As gloss'd example tends to draw / The Tyro more from Nature's law" (*Derby MS* III.743v).

Another Thelwallian technique already being developed in this early review is the inclusion of excerpts from the works being assessed that elicit not only praise and criticism but also substantial and specific editorial commentary. This particular approach, according to Esterhammer, distinguishes Thelwall's criticism from those of other periodicals of the time:

> The fundamental rhetorical bias of [Thelwall's critical writing] seems best described as the pedagogical mode of *lecture-discussion*. When applied to Thelwall's journalism, this means that he as editor persistently gestures toward conversational exchange with contributors, correspondents, and readers. Yet he maintains a controlling role in the conversation: his voice is that of the lecturer who initiates topics and frames the contributions of others by claiming the last word. ("John Thelwall's *Panoramic Miscellany*")

This interactive approach is evident in the passages contained in his reviews. Unlike other periodicals that would include excerpts to either extol or damn authors, Thelwall incorporates stanzas in which words and phrases are stressed by capital letters, italics or inverted commas to emphasize strengths, weaknesses and desired revisions or exclusions. He assumes the *ex post*

facto position of editor, focusing on the minutiae of a few lines, which implies intimate collaboration as opposed to detached critique, personal investment as opposed to pedantic finger-wagging. Thelwall concludes his assessment of the Falconars' collection stating that he "should not have particularized these defects, if it were not that the authoresses being so young, we thought it of the utmost consequences to their future improvement that their faults should be pointed out to them" (Review of *Poems on Slavery* 69). He thus assumes the position of kind mentor while maintaining a proper distance. In the process, Thelwall adopts the role of a critic who is constructive, helpful and dedicated to developing fresh talent.

This kind of constructive tactic is evident through his career, including in the many reviews he composed during his time as editor of the *Monthly Magazine* and the *Panoramic Miscellany* in 1825-1826. For example, in his critique of *Sibyl's Leaves: Poems and Sketches* by Elizabeth Mills, Thelwall asserts that the collection contains

> the *indications* of genius – the incipient germs of a poetic mind: a taste not yet corrupted by sparkling affectations of the day, but certainly, as yet, not quite trained and disciplined to the correctness, nor elaborated to the polish that might give efficient energy and coherence to its conceptions, or the brilliancy of expression, and nice adjustment of varied harmony, which should adjourn poetic song. *(Panoramic Miscellany* 810)

The language of this assessment echoes in the *Musalogia* as well, where, referring to the lessons learned from his own poetic upbringing, Thelwall cautions against some who

> … immature, in youthful hour,
> Ere Taste & Judgement's guiding power
> Instructive point the 'aspiring way,

Are led thro flowery paths astray;

From negligence of critic lore

Than dearth of Genius sinning more. (*Derby MS* III. 969)

The function of the critic, then, is ultimately one of guidance, assuming an earnest parental role, where failure is tantamount to "negligence" (*Derby MS* III. 969).

In his review of Mills' poetry, Thelwall develops patterns present in his general position as mentor and guide, namely pointing out the stylistic perils of "glittering affectations" and "meretricious eccentricities" (*Panoramic Miscellany* 810). This diction clearly connects to the deceit of perceived feminine artifice which he earlier critiqued, for example in the criticism of women of fashion from his early play *Incle and Yarico,*[51] the characterization of Melinda in *The Daughter of Adoption* and the false authenticity projected by many of the actresses addressed in *The Champion* theatre reviews. In the second Canto of the *Musalogia*, as well, affectation is a term that is repeatedly raised and condemned. Thelwall remains critical of "[p]ert Affectations," the heaping on of "trope by glittering trope" and an overreliance on "gaudy phrase from meaning free" (*Derby MS* III.964). The effect of such flimsy devices is to rob the audience or readers of authentic expression and mar the long-lasting impact of the work, both of which Thelwall addresses in the following celestial analogy: "let off, at flash, by crude inflation; / Meteors become of affectations; / Or, like to rockets, in the air / Scatter their sparks & disappear" (*Derby MS* III.964). In other words, the impression is temporary, and ultimately alienating, as it reduces the recipient (whether reader or audience member) to mere spectator, unable to participate in and identify with the sentiments expressed. As he had done in his elocutionary lectures and theatre

[51] In this anti-slavery piece written in 1787, Thelwall critiques the behaviour of "boarding school misses" who learn gain the "intriguing and wonderful knack" of the arts of "desembling [sic] and cunning" (54-55).

reviews, Thelwall promotes natural expression in his analysis of literature. Examining a collection by another young female poet, Louisa Stuart Costello, Thelwall warns that "imitation betrays into mere mannerism" so that "in poetry, especially, the modes of expression, and run of the verse, should grow out of the subject, and emanate from the sentiment and the feeling" (*Monthly Magazine* 1825 453). In this case, Costello is truly successful when she is most genuine, for only when she "dismisses the affected lilting of an inappropriate versification, and resigns herself to her own feelings, and the perceptions of her own ear," is there "a vein of taste and tenderness in her effusions that entitle her to attention and should inspire her with confidence to seek no other guide" (*Monthly Magazine* 1825 453). In this review, Thelwall is able to combine the democratic impetus of his elocutionary program with a theory of poetics that emphasizes authenticity over artifice.[52]

One of Thelwall's most detailed reviews is on the well-known L.E.L. in "The Poetry of Miss Landen" in his 1826 periodical the *Panoramic Miscellany*.[53] This establishes interests similar to those expressed in his earlier review of the Falconars' poetry, but also demonstrates, in conjunction with the ideas expressed in the *Musalogia* at roughly the same time, a mature and concrete understanding of the power and influence of poetry. Thelwall's opening salvo echoes

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[52] As Jacqueline Labbe suggests, this dichotomy has been firmly established in scholarship of the Romantic period, so much so that "although there exists a healthy critical debate of the terms, in the end sincerity and authenticity were held to be a main goal of Romantic writing" ("Smith, Wordsworth, and the Model of the Romantic Poet"). Tim Milnes and Kerry Sinanan preface their collection of essays on *Romanticism, Sincerity, and Authenticity* by stating "Romanticism's preoccupation with authenticity and sincerity intensifies concerns and questions that had pervaded philosophy and literature throughout the eighteenth century . . . a concern that focused on the authenticity of the selves who wrote . . . as well as the sincerity of the feelings they expressed" (2).

[53] This article has not, as yet, received much critical attention. It is not included in the appendix of McGann and Reiss' volume of Landon's *Selected Writings*. To date, the only critics to address this essay in any detail are Solomonescu in *John Thelwall and the Materialist Imagination* (132-136) and Esterhammer in "John Thelwall's *Panoramic Miscellany*: The Lecturer as Journalist."

the position adopted in the earlier review: although "Miss Landen should not find in us as *flattering* a panegyrist, perhaps she may find a more *useful* critic, than in some of those, who, by unmeasured admiration, exalting her above her sphere, may pervert the youthful judgment they ought to have instructed, and occasion her, hereafter, to sink as much below, as they have endeavored to raise her above the just standard of her estimation" (74). Landon, Thelwall suggests, is a victim of the puffing of William Jerdan, editor of the *Literary Gazette*, a critique commonly found in periodicals of the time. Nevertheless, rather than simply dismiss Jerdan's effusive praise of Landon, Thelwall adapts some of his imagery to underline his own divergent position, as he had done with the style of political opponents like Burke earlier in his career. For example, Thelwall modifies the lavish sentences of tribute Jerdan had used in his review of *The Improvisatrice*. Jerdan claims "we doubt not the ability to discover some of the faults of youthful composition in her strains; but we would most sincerely pity the person who could notice them amid the transcendent beauties of thought, expression, imagery, and fervent genius, with the blaze of which they are surrounded and illuminated" (quoted in McGann and Riess 293). Thelwall does not place Landon herself in the ethereal sphere so much as imply that "[s]he has . . . a sparkling of brilliant ideas and happy conceptions, which, if their rays are more distinct, and their courses more defined, might be hailed as constellations of poetic genius" (75). Whereas Jerdan uses starry imagery to cover up Landon's shortcomings, Thelwall revises the image to point out clear promise but also fervently to caution against a tendency towards "transient impression" over "permanent effect" (76). In the process, "[c]oncerned that Jerdan is misguiding his young protégée, then in her early twenties, Thelwall presents himself in the *Panoramic* essay as an alternative mentor and father figure" (Solomonescu 132).

As with his review of the Falconars' *Poems*, Thelwall proceeds like an editor to break down particular passages of Landon's *Troubadour*. Once more, he critiques and suggests rewrites for certain lines. Landon's talent, Thelwall concludes, remains incipient and thus the impact of her lines acts "like the brief changes of a Vauxhall firework; where catherine wheels turn into blazing suns, and constellations of stars into writhing snakes of phosphorus; and then, bursting in a shower of rockets into the air, scatter their short-lives splendour thro' the gloom, and leave not a trace behind" (78). The overall tone of the piece is almost scientific (Solomonescu 133), in line with the raison d'être of the *Panoramic Miscellany*, as Thelwall assumes the role of lecturer as much as reviewer (Esterhammer, "John Thelwall's Panoramic Miscellany"), and his close readings of particular passages are accompanied by digressions on what constitutes "*the genuine language of poetry*" (82). The rigor that is emphasized in the recommended amendments to her verses is meant to encourage a singular "motive" of "fair and instructive criticism" (82). The intention is not to "wound" but rather to emphasize that L.E.L. has abilities to improve upon. Rather than receiving a "temporary éclat," the reviewer desires that she find "a permanent station among the honoured poets of our truly poetical language" (82).

In its emphasis on "permanent station" (82), Thelwall's review parallels the second Canto of the *Musalogia*, which addresses the state of contemporary poetry, specifically the work of Landon, before entering into an extended digression on the difference between fancy and imagination. The botanical imagery of the review of the Falconars' volume is replaced by celestial analogies,[54] in line with the late-career trend that Solomonescu traces so deftly in *John*

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[54] Thelwall's use of scientific imagery is consistent with the tone and tenor of much of his late work, and the impetus behind many of the articles included in the *Panoramic Miscellany* (1826). Furthermore, it corresponds with Miss Bannatine's pursuit of "the bright maze of science" (*SPP* 198:63), explored in Chapter 4, and is also fundamental to the progressive pedagogical program of Maria Edgeworth examined later in this chapter.

Thelwall and the Materialist Imagination (132-142). In her reading of the Landon review from the *Panoramic*, Solomonescu states that Thelwall "suggests that the poet is a sort of chemist or alchemist whose imagination transforms the gross matter of 'science' or knowledge into something vital and sublime" (133). Arguably then, Thelwall's appreciation for Landon's verse is bolstered by the fact that Thelwall is willing to use her work as an experiment for testing his notions of the fancy and the imagination, which engage with those of Coleridge. In his marginalia to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Thelwall would second "Coleridge's assertion that fancy and the imagination are distinct faculties, remarking that the distinction had been a 'favourite topic' of his lectures for the past 10 or 15 years" (Solomonescu 129). In an extended editorial note on "The Philosophy of Contemporary Criticism" from the *Monthly Magazine*, Thelwall would differentiate between "youthful *fancy*" and "Imagination," claiming "till it is organized and assimilated into order and coherence, it is not imagination, any more than atoms are a world, or meteoric coruscations, however brilliant, are a sun that can give warmth and light and vitality to a universe. Imagination is not the ignition of a fire-work, it is permanent and durable creation" (*Monthly Magazine* 1825 334).

The celestial analogies Thelwall makes in the "The Poetry of Miss Landen" are strikingly similar to those included in the paean to the imagination from the second Canto of the *Musalogia*.

> Imagination! – in thy mood,
> By half-rock'd Wits ne'er understood,
> Who Fancy's coruscations deem
> The warmth of thy creative beam,
> And in each scatter'd spark survey

The force of thy concentric ray! – (*Derby MS* III.964-65)

These lines are directly followed by a passage focusing on those latent or embryonic geniuses who have not yet quite reached those celestial heights but who are not "per force, of Folly's train" (*Derby MS* III.969). These individuals, such as Landon, require candid criticism to assist them in achieving their poetic potential. It is notable that, while Thelwall's examples of imaginative success are gendered male (Milton and Shakespeare), he does not gender his discussion of incipient genius. There is also a correlation between the aforementioned passage and Thelwall's assessment of Landon in the *Musalogia*. Thelwall instructs Landon that her poems "shew sparkles of ethereal fire, / Which could concentric skill unite, / might kindle to an astral height" (*SPP* 210:118-120). However, he insists, "in coruscations spent," her talent currently "[f]alls trackless from their firmament" (*SPP* 210:121-122). In fact, the repetition of imagery (and specific diction such as "concentric" and "coruscation") from the Landon section, as well as the whole thrust of the Canto, tends to identify the hypothetical figure of embryonic genius with Landon. By pointing out defects in Landon's writing, Thelwall is able to illuminate not only her potential but also areas of strength that she might further develop. Throughout, Thelwall maintains a firm hope that she will one day stand among the upper echelon of poets, ranking alongside Milton and Shakespeare in a manner similar to his assessment of Charlotte Smith's sonnets in 1792, where he concludes "[o]ver the epic field, Milton, of all British bards, triumphs without a rival, Shakespeare in the dramatic, and in the sonnet, Charlotte Smith" ("An Essay on the English Sonnet" 414).

Part 2: "Dandy Witlings" and "Incipient Poetess[es]": Musings on the *Musalogia*

In the second Canto of *Musalogia*, Thelwall gives extended and balanced aesthetic assessments of the writings of Felicia Hemans, Mary Russell Mitford and Letitia Landon, the last of whom he calls with a mixture of aplomb and caution "Sappho."[55] These appraisals connect to the reference made earlier in this chapter regarding the "Critic Muse." Thelwall's consideration of particular "Lady Wits" is starkly juxtaposed with his attack on male versifiers later in the poem. With a zeal matching that of Z, a.k.a. John Gibson Lockhart, in his infamous dismantling of Keats from *Blackwood's* magazine, Thelwall critiques, through pastiche, the male poets whose works were published in literary annuals and popular "Souvenieres" of the time:

And you, still more effeminate!

Ye Dandy Witlings of the day,

In more than Miss-like glitter gay,

With painted phrase & mimic mien—

Ye bards of gender Epicene!—

Ye male coquettes, who veil with care

Your blushes in a *nomme de guerre*!— . . .

--Ye poetasters all, who throng

The Row & Stalls with frequent song—

Who on your grey-goose quils presume

[55] Numerous poets had assumed or been given the title of Sappho, as the preface to the volume by the Falconar sisters discussed earlier implies. The most famous was Mary Robinson, who "had been known as 'the English Sappho' since the publication by John Bell of her first volume of poems in 1791" (Daniel Robinson, *The Poetry of Mary Robinson* 17).

As feathers from Pegasian plume,

And strut & glitter for a day

In transient fame & present pay! (*Derby MS* III.961)

By the time of its composition, three of the major male poets of what was to become the mid-twentieth-century canon – Keats, Shelley and Byron – were already dead. In addition, Wordsworth and Southey, addressed in the first Canto of Thelwall's satire, had become stately, stodgy figureheads of establishment. Playing the part of ringers, the "bards of gender Epicine" excoriated by Thelwall filled the void by composing slight light verse published promptly at "Christmas-tide" and "St.Vallentine [sic]" (*Derby MS* III.961-62). In their work, we do not find effusions of the "egotistical sublime" (Keats, *Selected Letters* 147), but genteel precursors of Hallmark card sentimentality. Thelwall portrays a transient band of male poets cashing in – the pun of "present pay" addressing both its timeliness (immediate financial gratification) and medium (as gift) – by publishing in a forum directed primarily towards a middle-class female audience. In this instance, style trumps substance as the passage considers the negative tendency towards artifice and "affectation" addressed earlier in this chapter, captured wonderfully through its exaggerated alliteration and wordplay visual and aural – "glitter gay … mimic mien . . . present pay."

This group of prim pretenders are dismissively crammed into the lines of Thelwall's satire, given no room to breathe and suffocated in their seemingly shameful *nomme de guerre* anonymity. Each sassy sobriquet – "Dandy witling," "bards of gender epicene," and "male coquettes" – serves hyperbolically to up the ante by baldly summoning charges of effeminate

writing.[56] Through this bracing contrast between restraint and excess, with his measured review of female writers set against his over-the-top lampoon of male poets, Thelwall engages in a satire that is successful precisely because it subverts the rhetoric of the normative hierarchy. In other words, the impassioned language, most prominent in the repeated and derisive "Ye" apostrophes of the quoted passage, are part of a deliberately bathetic performance that mimics what it mocks. While Thelwall's assessments of Landon, Hemans and Mitford free them from the critical shackles of the periodical press and annual anthologies in which they were regularly published, the male figures catalogued are presented simply as slaves to the demands of those particular media. Their ideas are not even addressed by Thelwall. Instead, these male poets are trapped by the paraphernalia of production as their art is reduced to the prettified instruments of their affectations – "gilt-paper" and "grey-goose quills."

Despite the poem's caustic critique of "Dandy Witlings of the day" (*Derby MS* III.961), I would hesitate to classify the *Musalogia* solely as a satire since that term does not completely capture the tonal duality, in fact polyvocality, of the text,[57] whereby, as has been demonstrated, astute applause is mixed with caustic critique and curt dismissal. Gravil states that the poem gives "a sad portrait of a man estranged from his radical roots, embittered by the fame of poets he cannot respect and . . . prevented from finishing it by a disabling consciousness that his

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[56] Such denigrating charges of effeminacy constitute a form of gender bias on Thelwall's part. As addressed in Chapter 1, he adopts "libertine-aristocratic notion of sociability" (Mee, *Conversable Worlds* 4) and is in some ways conventional in his gender values and language. However progressive, he is a man of his age, and there are limits to his feminism, especially when seen from a contemporary perspective.

[57] In this, Thelwall's late poem has affinities with the Menippean satire of his earlier novel, *The Peripatetic*. In her introduction to it, Thompson states that this type of satire is "carnivalesque, subversive, and dialogic form that is particularly prevalent in periods of cultural and political transition and upheaval" (38). In fact, the *Musalogia* can be read as an updated version of "Typopictoromania: An Epic Fragment" from *The Peripatetic*, an earlier mock-epic satire on print culture.

dyspepsia is resulting in a very patchy performance" (357). This assessment, however, does not take account of the evaluative mode Thelwall develops in the poem proper. In fact, one of Thelwall's satirical targets is the master of romantic satire, Byron, whose own hermeneutical approach is questioned since, according to Thelwall, he cleverly, but unproductively, "[h]eap[s] contempt with random aim" (*Derby MS* III.749). By contrast, Thelwall's observations reveal exhaustively and meticulously, for better or worse, the fashionable fads and poetic trends of the time – including, among many, such "prevalent Schools of Poetry" as "the Dashing & Flowery – the Fastidious & precise – Boudoir Poets or Superfines – Cocknies and Vulgarians" (*Derby MS* III.741v). Placed alongside and intermingling with these schools are a set of reputable female writers that, according to Thelwall, surpass the stigma of ephemeral coteries. Thelwall's inclusion and treatment of them suggests that Gravil's interpretation of him as simply upset and embittered at his own fate is incorrect (357).

In Thelwall's evaluations of popular female writers, the satire expertly applied to the "male coquettes" gives way to constructive criticism, sexless in spirit and containing no overt application of gender conventions. Thelwall praises the potential of Landon's verse but likewise applauds the poetry of Hemans and prose of Mitford for their skill in merging "Sentiment & Taste" and properly harmonizing each "polish'd line" (*Derby MS* III.961). For over three hundred lines, Thelwall carefully avoids using terms tied to either normative male or female writing of the period. In fact, at no point does he use the common appellation of "poetess," which Susan Wolfson contends is "a keyword in the aesthetic apartheid that emerged in the 1820s as she-poets were proving popular and commercially potent . . . [since] [d]istinct from the man of letters, a poetess radiated sentiments, effortless grace, domestic culture, and the lesser genres" (*Borderlines* 41)**.** Through a process of negation, that is, juxtaposing them with their male

compeers to show what they are not, and without either the fretfulness or the condescending indulgence of many of his contemporaries, Thelwall delineates the 1820s as the decade of the professional woman writer. Although this facet of Thelwall's oeuvre has received little critical attention, the second half of the *Musalogia* caps off his "lifelong interest in cultivating (and interpreting) the voices of women, as pupils, as actresses, as lovers, as daughters, as fellow poets and as muses" (Thompson, *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle* 218). A seasoned veteran of the British political, literary and social scene, Thelwall has a mixed and conflicted relationship with the publishing zeitgeist of the 1820s, a decade that witnessed the realization of some of the lofty goals which defined his radicalism in the 1790s.

As already suggested in my analysis of "The Poetry of Miss Landen," Thelwall's assessments of female writers in the *Musalogia* have antecedents in his review and editorial work for the *Monthly Magazine* and the *Panoramic Miscellany*. In the second Canto of the *Musalogia*, through a combination of mentorship and pedagogical reassessment, Thelwall offers a pointed critique of the construction of the female poet. He applauds Felicia Hemans' ability with "sylph-like touch to wake the Lyre, / Such grace of chasten'd ardour bring / To modulate the sentient string" (*Derby MS* III.961). In this passage, rather than doing something different, Thelwall uses gendered stereotypes to praise Hemans' talent. However, Thelwall is more dynamic in the admiration expressed in his review of *The Forest Sanctuary* from the *Panoramic Miscellany*, which includes high praise for the title poem of the collection, suggesting that "[i]t is not the mere sparkling of fancy, that glitters thro' her compositions; nor has she mistaken affectation for originality, and eccentricity for inspiration. Her light is that of the undying lamp" (810).[58] This

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[58] The language Thelwall uses in this review is similar to that previously examined in his assessment of Landon. The "undying lamp" resembles "the concentric ray" from the *Musalogia*.

now established poet, contrary to the inexperienced Landon, emanates a "steady ray, the instinctive warmth of genius: replenished, it is true, and sometimes, perhaps, rather too conspicuously, from the Lamp of Other Times, but shining always clear and beautiful, whether beaming over the expanse of nature, or shedding its reflection over the classic page" (810). Unlike Francis Jeffrey, whose assessment of Hemans dismissively limited her work to the "fine exemplification of Female Poetry" (Review of *Records of Woman* 54), Thelwall points out Hemans' bold capacity for innovation and experimentation instead of gendering the poetry. Whereas Jeffrey, in James Najarian's phrase, "intervenes not only to label her work, but police it" (523), Thelwall instead extracts from its essence to comment upon what makes her work enduring by offering discerning but not unqualified praise. Sharing the encyclopedic knowledge required of the expert actor or master of elocution, Thelwall emphasizes Hemans' complete absorption by her "subject," as "it has full possession of her, and she of her subject; and what she feigns, becomes a part of the history of nature, because it is vital with natural feeling" (*Panoramic Miscellany* 810). Once more, Thelwall highlights the sought-after ability to create, through a positive process of affecting,[59] a superior "reality" that accurately reflects "Nature's law" (810). While Thelwall does not deal directly with the subject matter of Hemans' ambitious poem, his acceptance of her skill acts as an endorsement for the idea that "during the mid 1820s, Hemans became an ardent, if conflicted, feminist who wrote [poems] . . . in which she railed thrillingly against the mortal dangers for British families inherent in the ideology of manly patriotic sacrifice, arguing instead for the life-giving and life-restoring power to be found in woman-centered, but regendered, images of home, community and peace" (McGavran 541).

[59] In this instance the ability to affect is a bit tempered in comparison to its use by Pandolia, explored in Chapter 5. In this case, I mean "affection" in the sense of emotional power rousing an audience, not affectation as artifice.

Thelwall approves Hemans' ability to harness the power of sympathy to unite individuals and inspire benevolent action.

The next figure to whom Thelwall devotes significant space in the *Musalogia* is Mary Russell Mitford, who is singled out for her ability to capture "Nature true" (*Derby MS* III.759v). Specifically, Thelwall's praise of, and attention to, the "unsung" (*Derby MS* III.758v) Mitford was no doubt partially predicated on the fact that a few of her sketches, which would eventually be collated and collected into *Our Village*, were first published in the *Panoramic Miscellany*. Nonetheless, in the *Musalogia*, Thelwall is complimentary of Mitford's ability to "[t]hrow" her "light Arcadian veil" over "village path & dale," in the process giving the "rustic groups" she portrays authenticity and "breath[ing] a freshness more serene / O'er vernal bower & meadows green" (*Derby MS* III.758v-59v). One of the published sketches, "Rachel Ford," is emblematic of what Tim Killick has called her "nostalgic depictions" addressing "broad concerns about the increasing industrialization of the country and the loss of an older way of life" (3). The narrative begins by describing "a happy family and a pretty scene" and the entrance of the title character, a shy and reserved orphaned niece taken in by the Ford family (*Panoramic Miscellany* 38). The culmination of the story involves her Uncle, Robert Ford, reacting violently to the misbehavior of an outsider, the young Italian Stefano. Rachel's act of kindness, giving "her own sixpence, – her hoarded sixpence, and put[ting] it in Stefano's hand" (38) is, in and of itself, a conventional sentimental set-piece, but it is also a fine example of the desired sympathetic union between mind and body, reason and emotion emphasized by Thelwall in *The Peripatetic* and consistent with a number of selections included in his elocutionary lectures. For instance, the "Old Albany" excerpt from Burney's *Cecilia* shows an elocution of "*strong, agitated, and varied*" pathos (*Selections* York 1), but also illustrates a moral lesson about sorrow and authentic suffering.

Similarly, Thelwall's "educational anecdote" entitled "The Child and the Lady Bird" concludes with a child learning an awareness of the other. Mitford's "Rachel Ford" ends with a tableau that rivals these selections:

> It may be imagined that the dear child was no loser by her generosity; she was loaded by caresses by every one, which, for the first time in her life, too much excited to feel her bashfulness, she not only endured, but returned. Her uncle, thus rebuked by an infant, was touched almost to tears. He folded his arms, kissed her, and blessed her; gave Stefano half-a-crown for the precious sixpence, and swore to keep it as a relique and a lesson as long as he lived. (*Panoramic Miscellany* 40)

The sketch thus concludes on a note of reciprocity where all parties benefit greatly by Rachel's act of "generosity." The orphan is lauded and herself grows from the experience by overcoming her coyness and "return[ing]" appreciation. The uncle, "rebuked by an infant," likewise realizes the error of his ways and the piece closes on a positive note, the denouement emphasizing a lesson learned and order restored. Killick contends that "Mitford's vision is of a socially inclusive, non-partisan country village, open to all who are willing to engage wholeheartedly with its belief system" (7). Like Thelwall, she effectively utilizes tropes of sensibility to achieve compassion and encourage social cohesion. What attracts Thelwall to the sketches of Mitford is their authentic ability to capture the realities of rural life along with fostering an emotional and physiological response through moments in which one "looks into the face of his fellow creature" and witnesses "a part rather of his own existence; another self – feel[ing] one nerve of sympathy connecting him with the whole intellectual universe" (*On the Moral Tendency* 11).

In the *Musalogia*, Thelwall compares Mitford's writing with that of Wordsworth, who is also treated even-handedly, with criticism and applause, like the women writers, and not grouped

with the Dandy witlings and other male writers. In the first Canto, Thelwall commends Wordsworth's ability "in simple story" to "breath[e] a charm / The soul of Sympathy to warm" (*SPP* 83:66-68).[60] In comparing Mitford to Wordsworth, then, Thelwall places her in one of "the roles of 'second self' sons and daughters (of adoption) in the de- and reconstruction of paternal reputations" that was a hallmark of Thelwall's career (Thompson, *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle* 271).[61] Mitford's work also shares the elocutionary "tones of thrilling power [which] impart / A moral pathos to the heart" of Wordsworth, whose poetry Mitford liberally references in her sketches (*SPP* 83:55-56). Thus in a way her stories correct Wordsworth's "unnerving tendency towards bathos," which is criticized in the first Canto of Thelwall's poem (Solomonescu 134). As a result, the prose of Mitford, like the poetry of Hemans, captures the essence of what Thelwall perceives as Wordsworth's positives - his "strength of thought" and "depth of feeling" – as a writer (*SPP* 83:40-41).

The contemporary author who receives the most attention from Thelwall in the *Musalogia* is Letitia Landon, complementing and adding to his initial assessment in the "The Poetry of Miss Landen" from the *Panoramic Miscellany*, as already mentioned. Even before that 1826 review, Thelwall's antipathy towards critics who sound "her praises more loudly than discreetly" is seen in the *Monthly Magazine* during his brief tenure as its editor in 1825 (210). He

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[60] The language in these lines echo those used to describe Mitford's writing in the previous paragraph. Both passages use the image of the author "breathing" novelty and genuineness into their rural descriptions and moral tales.
[61] Thompson, in an endnote, expands upon the connection between her allusions to "Wordsworth's 'Michael' ('to be my second self when I am gone') and Thelwall's *The Daughter of Adoption*" (288). This thesis has addressed the many adopted daughters in Thelwall's writing, as the motif is established in his 1801 novel and then actualized in his relationship with the daughters of the provincial reformers with whom he resided during his elocutionary lectures, the actresses he mentored while in London and the writers (aspiring and established) he addresses in his late literary reviews and the *Musalogia.*

writes that she is “worthy of having her fame and her talents rescued from the overlaying adulation of those who disgrace, not exalt her, by ill-written panegyrics and indiscriminate adulations – which look to the judicious like interested puffs; and to herself, if she have not the good taste to despise them, can only act as intoxications of the ear that pervert the inward sense” (*Monthly Magazine* 1825 61). Thelwall’s main object of attack in the *Musalogia*, whose aim is to criticize critics as much as contemporary authors, is thus William Jerdan, editor of the *Literary Gazette*, condemned by numerous opponents for “puffing,” or overtly praising Landon, at the outset of her career:

> [Jerdan], at each glittering line,
> Exclaims, in raptures, “how divine!”
> While Judgement turns with dazzled eyes
> From beautiful absurdities,
> And grieves that in the petted child,
> The incipient poetess is spoil’d. (*SPP* 209:37-42)

Here, Thelwall mixes false ecstasy (“‘how divine!’”) with Wollstonecraftian ideas, beautifully captured in the half rhyme, “in the petted child / The incipient poetess is spoil’d,” where the final word’s double meaning of indulgence and ruin is mimetically enacted. Thelwall treats Jerdan’s reviews as a form of harmful infantilizing and empty extolling of virtues that is similarly, and more famously, condemned by Wollstonecraft in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. In the second chapter of that work, Wollstonecraft considers the way women are educated into societal expectations by subtle persuasion and empty praise. By pointing out the dangers of Jerdan’s negative means of positive reinforcement, Thelwall’s *Musalogia* assesses the pedagogical wrongs built into the system – the *strictures* that the *structure* enables. By applying

Wollstonecraft's paradigm of women as children to the treatment of successful female writers, Thelwall suggests that the talents of these individuals are, *de facto*, handicapped in the literary marketplace because of an unhealthy degree of homage that does not adhere to the dictates of reason and abdicates autonomy. In addition, the concept of "the petted child" is a central motif in Thelwall's writing on women and the argument against a pervasive kind of social conditioning that figures in his other writings; this is most prominent in the *The Daughter of Adoption* where the heroine, Seraphina, is strong and self-sufficient because she has been raised outside of an indulgently repressive tradition, as opposed to Amelia, Nerissa, Moroon and Melinda, who have in different ways been weakened by, and rendered victims of, the system.

Nowhere is Thelwall's Wollstonecraftian critique of the "intoxicating" homage that "men condescendingly use to soften [women's] slavish dependence" (*Vindication* 76) more evident than in the stultifying and crippling image of the "he-nurse" that Thelwall uses to describe sycophantic criticism in the *Musalogia*. In this particular instance, Thelwall cleverly reverses gender typology, perhaps playing on the "unsexed female" motif popularized by Polwhele in his infamous 1798 attack on "a female band despising NATURE'S law" (2), and turning it on its head. In the following quotation, the female image of "gall[ing]" milk (1.5.47) (from Lady Macbeth's "Unsex me here" monologue) is transmuted into the indulgent and deceptive male sweetness of "the doating he-nurse":

> Sappho, whose lip, perchance, the Muse
>
> In cradle touch'd for nobler views
>
> Than that she should be rock'd & pap't
>
> By dry-nurse Critic winter-sapt—
>
> A thing of dogma, pun & quibble,

Imbecile drawl & canting snivel,

With thick conceits in brain betwaddled,

Like half-form'd chick in egg that's addled, –

Whom Grub-street fit would scarce confess

To clout the bantlings of her press: –

Sappho, thus dandled, premature

By doating he-nurse to a pet,

And of precocious fame secure. . . . (*SPP* 208:1-13)

The recurring trope of incipience, displayed in this passage through Jerdan's "premature" handling of Landon's abilities, concretely emphasizes Thelwall's belief that it is nurture, and not nature, which leads to essentializing myths of gender. Thus it is only the nurture provided by a fair but rigorous criticism that can overcome these myths, and allow female genius to shine.

Part 3: Cultivating the Human Mind: Female Education

Given its emphasis on nurture and its Wollstonecraftian echoes, it is not surprising that a final thread of critique and analysis evident in Thelwall's *Musalogia*, in line with Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*, suggests that faulty education and improper training are major impediments that limit women's voice. This weakness is evident in the reference Thelwall makes in his poem to "[m]isses who their primers thumb / 'In numbers lisp, for numbers come.'" (*SPP* 81:29-30). In these lines, Thelwall addresses two of his greatest pet peeves – restrictive and misguided anthologies used as teaching tools and, through the allusion in the second line, the equally constraining closed couplets of Alexander Pope. In a note to the poem, Thelwall remarks

that Pope's "elaboration & polish [are] more superior to his comprehension, energy & power" (*Derby MS* III.739v). In this way, suggests Thelwall, "dandled" female poets are doubly inhibited, through being exposed first to facile content, and then to its recitation or iteration through suffocating verse forms. The underlying assumption of the *Musalogia,* and a life-long concern of Thelwall, is that women, because of limited engagement in society and the confines of a circumscribed curriculum, have had their freedom curbed, thus limiting their literary expression. On this subject, Thelwall critiques Sarah Trimmer, a profound social conservative, when he suggests that "lest a thought too high should soar, / [female authors] select their themes from Nursery lore; / Enter their Muse with Mrs. Trimmer, / And con their language from the Primmer" (*Derby MS* III.954). Thus, the *Musalogia* critiques a common kind of female education in the period. The pedagogy of Trimmer, along with the prophetic writings of Joanna Southcott and the conformist musings of Hannah More also discussed in Canto I, are singled out as forms of simplistic, didactic pedagogy composed by "pedants, sycophants, and drivellers" censured by Thelwall in *The Peripatetic* (11). In the *Musalogia*, Thelwall is especially critical of Hannah More, deprecating her "playwriting, play-reprobating, & ultimately super-sanctified novel writing" (*Derby MS* III.735v). Thelwall's satirical barbs are not far removed from those of Byron, who in *Don Juan* characterizes Donna Inez as "a walking calculation" and:

> Miss Edgeworth's novels stepping from their covers,
>
> Or Mrs. Trimmer's books on education,
>
> Or [More's] 'Coeleb's Wife' set out in search of lovers
>
> Morality's prim personification. (Canto 1.16.121-124)

However, Thelwall does not attack Trimmer, More or Edgeworth as bluestockings like Donna Inez, but as sanctimonious and repressive. Furthermore, while dismissive of the works of

Trimmer and More, Thelwall actually approved of the enlightened pedagogy of Maria Edgeworth, who along with Anna Laetitia Barbauld, was an influential figure in the development of Thelwall's own philosophy of education.[62]

Basing her educational theories primarily on the work of early Enlightenment thinker John Locke, Barbauld believed that a child's education began very early and encompassed all aspects of her upbringing. In an article from the 1798 issue of the *Monthly Magazine* entitled "What is Education?," Barbauld suggests that instruction "includes the whole process by which a human being is formed to be what he is, in habits, principles, and cultivation of every kind . . . This education goes on at every instant of time; it goes on like time; you can neither stop it nor turn its course" (168). In the April 1825 edition of the *Monthly Magazine*, Thelwall included an addendum to Barbauld's obituary, praising her early contributions to the periodical and extolling her for "the lead taken . . . in improving the system of early domestic education" (282). The educational theories of Maria Edgeworth and her father Richard Lovell Edgeworth also called for children to be equipped to reason for themselves. Her *Progressive Lessons; or, Harry and Lucy Concluded*, would be reviewed in the *Monthly Magazine*, where she is considered "as one of the greatest (we think we might say *the* greatest) benefactresses of society . . . among the writers of the present generation . . . [since] [h]er various works are applicable to the educational development and cultivation of the human mind, from the first drawings of infant intellect to the period of its full maturity" (1825 446). Thelwall goes on to suggest that "from the pen of Miss Edgeworth nothing can flow which is not dictated by general benevolence, and a thorough knowledge of human nature; and which, consequently, cannot fail of being eminently useful"

[62] He borrows from and alludes to both in *The Daughter of Adoption* (18-19).

(1825 446). As a key component of his own rational pedagogical program, both Barbauld and Edgeworth's writing are extolled for both their pragmatism and their progressive thought.[63]

However, Thelwall was also keenly aware of the particular educational restrictions placed on women. On this point, it is worth examining articles by contributors to publications that Thelwall edited. Once more, a correlation can be established between his early and later career, namely, in the publishing of pieces that examine the role of women written by correspondents in 1789 and then again in 1825. In the 1789 issues of the *Biographical and Imperial Magazine*, edited by Thelwall, the two-part "On the supposed Superiority of the Masculine Understanding" by a Lady ("Roxana"), covers a number of woman question issues that would become career concerns for Thelwall. Three years before the publication of Wollstonecraft's famous treatise, the author writes of women being "reduced to mere automatons in the most active and best part of their lives" (294). What follows is a portrait not so different from that painted in Thelwall's own "Prefatory Essay" to "The Seducer;" women who are "pale-faced, decrepit, weak, [and] deformed . . . daily presented to view: who have been tortured into a debility which renders their existence wretched, and leaves them only the melancholy hope that a friendly consumption may relieve them, by death, from their unhappy situation" (294).

The second part of Roxana's essay addresses how men are negatively impacted by women being placed in such destitute positions. The author contends that "[m]en contribute to

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[63] By "progressive thought," I am referring to Edgeworth's utilitarian theory of education, not her politics. According to John Howlett, Edgeworth "is unique in that she was one of [the] female progressive thinkers to emerge directly from an upbringing that sought to practice the kinds of educational philosophy and regimen she herself was later to espouse" (84). Recent work has also been done to illuminate Edgeworth's pedagogical program as "seminal and progressive . . . because of its support of scientific inquiry" (Scantlebury and Murphy 104).

their own wretchedness when they neglect the culture of [women's] minds" (358). In addition, the author hints at the "zest of social intercourse" that Thelwall himself would later espouse in his elocutionary lectures when she writes that the interaction of men and women in social settings provides a "mixture in society [that] improves both the sexes" (358). She likewise addresses the position of women as martyrs that would become a staple of Felicia Hemans' oeuvre in the nineteenth century: "Yet how often do we feel the hapless female, with patient virtue, smothering concealed wretchedness, and enduring her afflictions with a fortitude which would do honour to the greatest hero that was ever drawn by the hand of fiction" (358). The tone of this article, however, remains predominantly despondent and points out, clearly and concisely, the confined position of women at the end of the eighteenth century. Roxana offers a critique but very few solutions.

During his final stint as editor of the *Monthly Magazine* (1825), Thelwall once again included pieces by correspondents who address the role of women in society, specifically in regards to their education or lack thereof. The December Supplementary issue contains a lengthy article on female education that is critical of accomplishments whose "only use . . . [is] to entrap a husband, whose ears, apparently, are expected to be somewhat larger than his brains" (484). The author desires an alternative to "blue-stockingism, or puppy-nursing, or female sanctification, or snuff-taking, or triple-language learning, or eternally pain-practicing, or any other female nuisance" (484). At this point, the correspondent (G.-) might be accused of Byronic misogyny; however, G.- goes on to praise the stellar contributions of contemporary writers, including Edgeworth, Burney, Hamilton, Opie, Lady Morgan, Macauley, Baillie, Siddons and Madame de Stael (485), many of whom wrote on education. Many of these figures are also

praised throughout Thelwall's oeuvre[64]. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of an established tradition points to the hope for a better future that is so crucial to Thelwall's reformist program. Both "virtue's wish'd millenium" from "To Miss Bannantine" (*SPP* 198:51) and the "Poetical Millenium" predicted in the *Musalogia* (*Derby MS* III.3v) are predicated on the proper education of women, which is largely based on sound, solid foundational texts produced by women. Thelwall addresses female authority in education as "a knowledge and perception of the infant character that is essentially feminine: an intimacy with cradled thought, . . . which the lordly sex, whatever may be their superiority in some other respects, cannot well attain" (*Monthly Magazine* 1825 446). In this case, Thelwall defers to superior female experience rather than making assumptions like Rousseau, who infamously declared in his influential educational novel *Emile* that women "should learn many things, but only such things as are suitable" (38).

Despite the proliferation of women in print, only limited progress in female education had been attained in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Echoing anxieties expressed in the Roxana article, the author of the piece from the *Monthly Magazine* writes that if you "[d]ebar one-half of society from knowledge, from instruction, from happiness, . . . so closely is their fate entwined with own own, that you almost risk the destruction of society" (485). A thread emerges in this line of thinking that connects Thelwall to the work of previous writers on female education: *what* women are being taught matters as much as *how* they are being taught this knowledge. As has been addressed, the elocutionary system designed by Thelwall insists that the perfect practitioner be a person who has a comprehensive understanding of how the emotions

[64] As we have seen, Thelwall thought very highly of Edgeworth's educational theories. In addition, Burney's writing was regularly included in Thelwall's elocution *Selections*. In his lectures on drama, Thelwall devoted equal time to male and female "actors of the day," singling out Siddons' performance of Lady Macbeth as "unrivalled" (Watkin 27).

operate and is able to discourse intelligently on a varied number of topics. Indeed, comparable to Thelwall's valorizing of the "Intellectual Partner" in his elocutionary lectures ("Elocution and Oratory" 102) , G.- contends that "Women were formed to be our wives, not pieces of household furniture, or animals for our amusement, like monkeys and kittens; they were formed to be our partners: not sleeping partners only, but active intelligent partners, capable of conversing with us, of understanding us, of adding their share of knowledge and talent to the delight we experience from our own, of entering into all our pleasures, and of softening all our pains" (485).

However, as in the case of the assertions made by Wollstonecraft in the *Vindication* on the grounds for improved female education, the ultimate end goal is not necessarily radical, nor does it desire to destabilize the existing social structure. In fact, the majority of the article by G.- places a priority on household duties and "the regulation of a family" (486). This is similar to the earlier assertion made by Roxana that a primary responsibility for women is that they have been "assigned the care of making the first impressions on the infant minds of the whole human race" ("On the Supposed Superiority" 295). The essay ends by addressing what constitutes the proper subject matter for female education: "whether, therefore, we consider women as wives or mothers – as regulators of our families, or instructors of our youth; whether we regard their happiness or our own, as intelligent members of a community of which they form an equal share, in every case we shall admit that their education requires as great attention, and embraces as wide a range of objects, as our own" ("Female Education" 487).

Part 4: "Signs of the Times": Thelwall's Late Lectures

Despite his prolific reviewing and editorial work, Thelwall continued to exert his greatest influence in the final decade of his life as a lecturer. It was in the lecture hall that his critical ideas and ideals reached and influenced a large audience. His lectures also garnered a number of comprehensive reviews detailing and reacting to Thelwall's now established and respected elocutionary program. In the September 22nd, 1830 edition of the *Taunton Courier*, a correspondent writing under the pseudonym Alpha wrote an opinion piece responding to a Thelwall lecture he had attended. He would remark that "Mr. Thelwall is a keen observer of the 'signs of the times,' and though an admirer of antiquity, and almost a worshipper of the great names with which true eloquence and the drama are associated, yet he is too genuine a philosopher, not to exult in the unprecedented diffusion of knowledge, which the last thirty years have witnessed" (7). Alpha's assessment mirrors Thelwall's own concern with and involvement in the "diffusion of knowledge" that had flourished since the outset of the nineteenth century. In fact, Alpha's words echo the sentiments Thelwall had himself expressed earlier in the *Musalogia*, in addition to editorials in the *Monthly Magazine* and his own *Panoramic Miscellany*. Alpha's reflection on class in his editorial captures Thelwall's own position and the continued impetus of his late-career provincial elocutionary lecturing. The *Courier* contributor claimed that "the lecturer in a forcible and truly eloquent manner" illustrated "[t]he advancement of the middle and lower orders of society, in every pursuit wherein intellectual exertion is demanded, the comparative listlessness and inactivity of the higher classes, and the acknowledged fact of the former pressing closely upon the magic circle wherein literature and science were formerly supposed aristocratically to dwell" (7). In 1830, Thelwall still remained

concerned with issues of class and social mobility present from the outset of his career. The difference is that the tenor of the times had changed and the formerly closed "magic circle" was now more open to the "undulations of Virtuous sympathy" that Thelwall had prophesied at the outset of the nineteenth century (*LFG* 88).

The opinion piece from the *Taunton Courier* also demonstrates how Thelwall's audience had evolved, specifically in public opinion and perception, since the 1790s. Whereas the caricaturists Gillray and Cruikshank treated the masses swayed by Thelwall's rhetoric as grotesque, carnivalesque figures (Poole, "Gillray, Cruikshank & Thelwall"), the provincial populace present at his elocutionary talks in the 1820s and 1830s are repeatedly referred to as "very respectable persons" and members of the "numerous and fashionable class" ("To the Editor of the Taunton Courier" 7). In the process, one can trace Thelwall's own transformation from radical felon to fashionable forerunner of the 1832 Reform Bill. In *The London Adviser and Guide* (1786) by John Trusler, in the Amusements, & c. section, the author simultaneously commended and condemned "debating societies; at Coachmaker's-hall . . . and the Westminster-forum, Spring Garden; where certain questions, political, civic and moral, are discussed, and everyone may give his opinion," by suggesting that "of course these places are crowded with low people; but what you hear is often entertaining" (164). By the 1830s, many of the low people had become part of the emerging middle class, and the obscure confining spaces of London were replaced with genteel lecture halls across provincial England.[65] According to an article from 1829 in the *York Herald*, "[n]othing gives greater promise that the next generation will greatly surpass the present, in every kind of knowledge that improves and dignifies the human character,

[65] This transition is touched upon by Gillian Russell in "Spouters or Washerwomen: The Sociability of Romantic Lecturing" and Sarah M. Zimmerman in "Romantic Women Writers in the Lecture Room."

that the eagerness with which young people now desire every opportunity of improvement" before recounting with negative nostalgia that "[i]t is but as yesterday, when instead of crowding a Lecture-Room, many, like those whose ears hung with delights on the lips of the Lecturer, would rather have enjoyed the grosser pleasures of a *dog-fight*, or the delectable spectacle exhibited by *Pincher* or *Vixon* drawing a badger from beneath a barrow. We truly hope that day is gone for ever!" ("Mr. Thelwall's Lectures" 3).

As demonstrated, women attended Thelwall's lectures throughout his political and elocutionary career. In an entry dating from late 1795, Joseph Farrington would note that "Thelwall addressed the Ladies" who attended his lecture "as *Female* Citizen – He wd. not pronounce the Aristocratic word *Lad*y" (123). This quotation dispels the erroneous notion that Thelwall was not interested in women as a part of his political philosophy while also reinforcing his life-long interest in the malleability of language and the mutability of audience**.** By the 1830s, Lady had lost its aristocratic connotation in Thelwall's lexicon,[66] and reviews from this time suggest that parts of, if not complete, lectures continued to be directed at members of the opposite sex. There remains some ambivalence, however, in perceptions of what a Lady must or could hear. One January 15th, 1830 review from the *Morning Post* reveals a particular gender bias and limit, insofar as the author proposes that "[t]o the Ladies, in particular, whose delicate frames require protecting from the hurtful and dangerous habits, which are too generally taught and copied in the management of the voice, the most useful instruction was conveyed" ("Mr. Thelwall's Lectures" 3). This assessment captures the anxiety inherent in Thelwall's own position on women, in its exhortation to provide and protect yet also delight and enlighten.

[66] This shift is signalled at the outset of the nineteenth-century with the concluding address to his course lectures, which begins "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!" ("Elocution and Oratory" 105). In the *Musalogia*, Thelwall refers to both "Lady Bards" and "Lady Wits" (*Derby MS* III.960).

Women were always at the forefront of Thelwall's elocutionary theory (figuratively and literally, as, throughout his career, he would ensure, in the words of one reviewer, that "front seats were retained for them"); nevertheless political perceptions and ideologies, particularly after the treason trials of 1794, influenced the degree to which Thelwall's ideas were received. A 1798 excerpt from *Burney's Diary and Letters*, for instance, recalls a discussion on "loyalty, and then its contrast, democracy," in which Princess Augusta

> narrated to [Burney] at length a lecture of Thelwall's, which had been repeated to her by M. de Guiffardière [French Reader to Queen Charlotte]. It was very curious from her mouth. But she is candour in its whitest purity, wherever it is possible to display it, in discriminating between good and bad, and abstracting rays of light even from the darkest shades. So she did even from Thelwall. (388)

This anecdote perfectly captures the many layers involved in the responses of Thelwall's female audience to his ideas in the turbulent post-Revolutionary period in England. In this case, Thelwall's egalitarian concepts have been tempered and re-filtered. Burney implies that only at two removes, and after being filtered through her "candour," are the "dark" democratic designs of the political lecturer made acceptable. Nevertheless, while the Thelwall of this passage is an ominous and dangerous figure, it is worth noting that his lectures still had an impact on members of the aristocracy. In contrast, writer and critic Maria Jane Jewsbury, in a letter to Dora Wordsworth from February, 1831, expresses a different perception on having attended one of Thelwall's elocutionary lectures in Manchester:

> Thelwall – you know who I mean, Lord Erskine's Thelwall is . . . in Manchester [;] he brought a letter of introduction to me & I called on his intelligent & interesting wife (she *must* be his second) – she spoke much of Mr W – & of Thelwall's wish to meet him

again. We sent in tickets to his lecture, I went of course to one – in full dress, ringed, watched watch chained, gold chained, & breast pinned & hair curled, he looked for his years a very fine old man – & in his face there was something to me . . . Catalanish. ("Letter, from Manchester")

Here, Thelwall's earlier appearance of ominousness remains in Jewsbury's classification of him as someone dark and foreign ("Catalanish") but this only seems to strengthen and increase his appeal. Her whole assessment of the lecture experience is one of social necessities and elaborate display. Whereas Thelwall's early lectures made a scene because of their controversial nature, his later presentations are marked by popular approbation.

During these late lectures Thelwall continued to both instruct and, in the words of one anonymous reviewer from the March 12th, 1824 edition of *The Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, "eulog[ize]" women because of his "partiality for the fair sex" ("Theatricals: Haymarket –" 3). In the later reviews, substantial in their praise and detailed in expanding upon notions hinted at in Thelwall's lecture outlines, one can trace his continued concern with female education. An 1827 letter to *The Bristol Mercury* signed G.C. asserts that "the chief object of this good and eloquent man was to excite in *them* [women] the ambition to perform well their important duties in the early education of their children, and to instill in them the absolute necessity of proceeding with temper and patience in that arduous task, the neglect of which, or an erroneous mode of performing it, was often attended by a habit of *stuttering*, *gasping*, and *weak lungs*" ("Mr. Thelwall's Lecture at the Mechanics' Institute" 3). This review also outlines tenets of Thelwall's theory of education which are consistent with the early sources out of which, as we have seen, it grew. For example,

> [h]e advised them to attempt nothing by violence, or intimidation, or by any means, in these early nursery lessons, to dwell long on any task, but to consider *play* quite as useful as study, so as to produce a healthful mind by means of a healthful body, and above all to allow them to expand their lungs on all occasions; for unless the bellows is kept in order, the organs of speech will never do their duty properly – and assuring them these organs only gather strength by exercises – and are capable (as was proved by his own constitution) of any degree of exertion without injury, when under proper training. ("Mr. Thelwall's Lecture at the Mechanics' Institute" 3)

These sentiments resonate with "The Child and the Lady Bird" anecdote from his *Selections*, where he argues that the understanding of pupils must be "*directed*" rather than "*distorted*, by a negligent or improper education" (*Selections* York 3). In addition, the educator must "proceed with caution" and impart information using a "tone and countenance of solicitous affection" (3). Key to his elocutionary theory is the principle of encouraging rational expression in all citizens, which encourages gender equity.

More importantly, the mention of Thelwall "eulogizing" the "fair sex" shows that, in the recital portion of his lectures, he continued to offer addresses, original and borrowed, to the women in the audience. Women remained fundamental to Thelwall's polymathic projects and he would take advantage of the opportunity to courteously pay tribute to them. Another poem by Thelwall himself, "The Fairest and the Best," published in *The Morning Post* in 1824, was likely performed during his lectures at that time. The poem commences with much misunderstanding regarding personified Beauty, a stand-in for the women in Thelwall's audiences. A detailed critique of Beauty is offered by the Cynic, who plays a contrarian role similar to that seen in *A*

Speech in Rhyme and "Pandolia's Description of Her Four Lovers." But his negative accusations are countered by the main speaker in a paean that, naturally, reflects a number of facets of Thelwall's by-now well-known elocutionary theory. The speaker claims

> in [Beauty's] smiles to find
> The speaking picture of the mind,
> And in thy fair proportions to trace
> The inbreath'd charm, the vital grace; –
> See feeling in thine eyebeam speak,
> And temper dimple on thy cheek;
> Upon thy forehead's ivory throne
> Honour and truth and candour own;
> Hail in thy blush love's hallow'd glow,
> That warms, not soils, the chaster snow;
> And on thy roseate lips descry
> The soul's instinctive harmony. (3)

This blazon captures a number of points made in Thelwall's lecture "On the finishing Graces, and higher Accomplishments of Elocution," specifically how "[c]ountenance should correspond with the Tones" (*Selections* Wakefield 3). All of the exterior features in the aforementioned description reveal the ideal of a "Superior Charm and Dignity of Expressions, and Animation" that Thelwall was fond of illustrating in his lectures through "the various Traits of Female Beauty" (*Selections* Wakefield 1802 3). As he had done so effectively in Scotland and the provincial parts of England at the outset of the nineteenth century and then expanded in his detailed assessment of actresses during his time as editor of *The Champion*, Thelwall here

poeticizes elements of his elocutionary theory in order to concurrently compliment "the identity of fitness and beauty" and complement his confidence in "the superiority of female elocution" (*Selections* York 15). The "speaking picture of the mind" propounded in "The Fairest and the Best" would have made for a natural addendum to Thelwall's regular "Address to the Ladies; with a Digression on Intellectual Attractions." His firm belief that there is "[n]o genuine Beauty that is not illuminated by Sentiment, and Feeling" is a fundamental thematic concern of the poem ("Elocution and Oratory" 103). Thelwall's approach here combines aesthetic appreciation with rational application.

Much like the personified Beauty in the "Song of Eros, or Triumph of Love" and "Anacreontic" ("Come Reach me Old Anacreon's Lyre!"),[67] the female ideal universally praised in "The Fairest and the Best" presents the body, regardless of gender, as an instrument of liberty. McCann's concept of the "self [as] a work of aesthetic synthesis" ("Romantic Self-Fashioning" 221) [68] is once more evident in the image Thelwall presents, of mind and body triumphantly united by "the soul's instinctive harmony" ("The Fairest and the Best" 3). Once the individual body is reformed, he or she can have a formidable impact on the body politic. This ideal stretches back to Thelwall's political writings and lectures from the 1790s but is honed and pedagogically fulfilled in his elocutionary work in the nineteenth-century. As James Allard claims, there is a "sense of body consciousness that seems to pervade [Thelwall's] writings: not only an awareness of himself as a physical, embodied being subject to certain laws and a vision of the nation as existing by those same laws, but a conception of politics as embodied action

[67] In the "Song of Eros," "Beauty" emerges "from the waves, / Flush'd with primeval glow, in polish'd grace / Of motion, form and feature" (*SPP* 180:16-18). In the "Anacreontic," the speaker "sing[s] of beauty's charms divine, – / The breast that heaves, – the cheek that glows, / And beaming eyes like stars that shine" (*SPP* 183:26-28).
[68] This idea is explored fully in the opening chapter.

requiring an awareness of and sensitivity to what it means to be embodied to be politically effective" ("John Thelwall and the Politics of Medicine" 80). An important entry written by Thelwall for Abraham Rees's encyclopedia, however, implies that this strategy can only truly be successful and productive if a like-minded response is encouraged in listeners. Under the heading of "Emotion," Thelwall proposes that "a mode of utterance applied to appropriate passages and on proper occasions, expressive of disturbance and agitation in the mind of the speaker, reader, or reciter" can be "calculated to produce a like disturbance and agitation in the minds of the auditors." The diction ("disturbance and agitation") used in this passage expresses disruption, validating what might be called Thewall's rhetoric of ruckus, which is masked by an unequivocal equilibrium of gentility. As a result, all auditors walking away from Thelwall's elocutionary lectures absorb the lessons given, and are then able, in turn, themselves to educate and instigate, or as he defined the purpose of elocution, to "awaken and influence and impel" ("Introductory Discourse" 11). It is a classic example of sympathy, but informed by and catalyzed into action through performance.

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

Thelwall's crucial but minimally examined contributions in print and public can be read as expressions of support for marginalized female voices and the body of his work understood contextually as a career devoted to supporting women's rights among other goals. Thelwall's contributions underscore Thompson's claim that "[m]ore than any of the male Romantics, he publicly championed and actively empowered the voices of women" ("Poets and Poesy I Sing" 12). Thelwall was able to achieve this end by focusing on this disregarded group as subjects, audiences and agents capable of advocacy. In his promotion of public speaking, using both theoretical and practical suggestions as well as manipulating established tropes and conventions, Thelwall sought to liberate both the means and modes of expression in order to develop societal awareness and recognize the plight of the Other. Regardless of socio-economic considerations, Thelwall envisioned the speaker as empowered to articulate his or her views, at the rostrum, to challenge and confront prevailing societal assumptions and operating principles. Real life examples include Cecil Thelwall defending Queen Caroline and actresses attending his elocutionary lectures who overcame peculiarities of speech to deliver stellar performances. To make his point, Thelwall literally performed the strong female figure in front of an audience when presenting his poem *A Speech in Rhyme* and continued to cement his place as a women's supporter through his rendering of Seraphina in his novel *The Daughter of Adoption*. Ultimately, these historical and creative illustrations attest to Thelwall's career-long use of Wollstonecraftian rhetoric to highlight both the significance of finding one's voice and also the consequences of the newfound confidence in expression that Thelwall hoped would usher in "virtue's wish'd millenium / where feuds and strife… / [m]arre'd not the social compact!" (*SPP* 198:51-54).

As a complement to his creation of fictional characters and his ventriloquism and adoptions of the female voice, an important facet of Thelwall's philosophy was to engage with women and encourage their aspirations and hopes for improvement. Throughout his lecture tours, his work at his Elocutionary Institution in London and finally in his determination to forge connections with up and coming female writers, Thelwall endeavored to find occasion for mentorship. Through extensive research, it became evident that Thelwall's encouragement, approving yet corrective, centered in specific locales. These milieux, including debating societies, lecture halls, drawing rooms, and theatres, are "sites which are more inclusive of female modes of sociability" (Russell and Tuite 5). Examining Thelwall's myriad ways of expressing his aim of female equality, it is clear many of his ideas came through interaction, conversation and collaboration with both women and liked-minded men that these spaces encouraged. He sums up these experiences as those experienced by "kindred minds / Dwelling in kindred intercourse" (*SPP* 198:57-58). To achieve his goal of enabling a more responsive democracy that recognizes those on the margins, Thelwall himself recognized the necessity of cultivating individual sympathy for specific citizens while generalizing in the form of communal sympathy for the collective. Adapting and integrating different facets of sensibility discourse into his writings through conveying the visceral experiences of his characters, Thellwall trusted the audience's reactions would provide insight and lead to examination of limitations that ultimately would be rectified through compassionate actions. Therefore, Thelwall's emphasis on understanding would *de facto* eliminate bias and lead to an inherent desire to radically alter current conditions to foster cohesion.

Despite much that is progressive in Thelwall's program, however, and while there is still more archival material on Thelwall's interactions with women to explore and examine, it is my

contention that his perspective on women's societal roles remains conventional. My research allows me to tentatively conclude that Thelwall's advocacy of the advancement of women occurs within an accepted realm of gender identity, where a woman's primary responsibility was to excel in the role of "Intellectual Partner" and "Intellectual Mother" ("Elocution and Oratory" 102) by educating her male and female children. However, despite this adherence to stereotypical views of women, Thelwall regularly steps outside gender boundaries and conventions, and confronts his audiences and readers with Seraphina's bold claims about female autonomy and Pandolia's ability to subvert male authority through affectation. In reference to these obvious deviations from standard views of female subservience, Thelwall seems to move from Chernock's classification of certain men involved in the making of British feminism as "instrumentalist," toward a more "egalitarian" position; however, given his wide range of writings, it is evident that Thelwall negotiates "with much slippage between the two … poles" ("Cultivating Woman" 523) suggesting that his ends were not necessarily and solely focused on any radical ends of female empowerment. Indeed, I believe his work was oriented toward, as Chernock elegantly states, "creating a more egalitarian relationship between the sexes [which] was intimately bound up with creating a more humane, tolerant, participatory, and, above all, rational citizenry—in other words, with creating a more perfect version of British Enlightenment" ("Cultivating Woman" 513). In this way, Thelwall's interest in elevating women to a higher plane socially whenever possible, without renouncing his personal views, was rooted in carefully cultivated democratic and moral principles of inclusivity that reached fruition in the reforms of the 1830s. As explored in this thesis, one of the major *modus operandi* of Thelwall's career is subversively to question entrenched mores while giving voice to previously disenfranchised portions of society. Thelwall endeavored to free the tongues of those fettered by

physical, moral, social and, by proxy, political impediments. Women were clearly a fundamental part of this agenda and a concern that spanned his earliest experiences in debating club societies to his final years, as senior statesman and prolific publisher, triumphantly touring the provinces of England and being lauded in local newspapers.

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