MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE: SERVANTS AND TRUTH IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

In the eighteenth century it was commonly believed that Britain was experiencing a servant crisis. In consequence of the changing nature of the master-servant relationship which was shifting from a patriarchal style to that of a more contractual system, servants it was deemed had lost all sense of subordination. Particularly in London, where servants were very visible, complaints about servant behaviour were widespread and in consequence these employees were subject to a barrage of intense and heated criticism. An array of moralists and social commentators vocalised these social concerns in the conduct literature produced during the century, in which these domestic employees were berated as a bunch of unruly, troublesome misfits.

One of the principle problems associated with servants was their supposed tendency to engage in falsehoods and deceit. This group was perceived as having a notoriously strained relationship with truth-telling and were renowned for their allegedly slippery, evasive behaviours. This thesis examines how the eighteenth-century novel engages with this topic and argues that, as an emerging and innovative form, the novel offered a much more complex and nuanced perspective on this issue than has previously been recognised.

In this respect, the thesis will explore a variety of novels written during the period of 1740 to 1820. Considering works by Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Charlotte Smith, William Godwin and Maria Edgeworth, the thesis examines how each of these writers engages with representations of servants and truth. It will be suggested that while each author articulates their own unique perspective on this issue, they all nevertheless share a similar concern surrounding servants and their vexed relationship with truth-telling. By taking into consideration the extenuating circumstances and mitigating factors which contribute to and influence servant behaviour, these writers this thesis argues, offer a more balanced and enlightened assessment on the predicament of the eighteenth-century servant.

The first chapter will examine the works of Henry Fielding and argues that his portrayal of this issue is more sympathetic than is generally recognised. Considering his major novels and his social pamphlets, the chapter will suggest that while Fielding saw servants as deceitful he nevertheless recognised that these were learned behaviours which these menials were obliged to adopt. The following chapter will explore the novels of Tobias Smollett and suggests that he inserts an idealised servant figure into his satirical portrayal of contemporary Britain in

order to highlight how inappropriate and exceptional these characters are. In effect, Smollett reverses the criticisms popularly directed at servants and instead deflects the blame onto the upper classes, identifying these masters as selfish, money obsessed individuals who are destroying the patriarchal bonds of the master-servant relationship.

In the following chapters however the tone of the situation changes and this topic is treated in a more serious, sombre manner. Chapter three examines Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1793) and argues that while she depicts deceitful, scheming servants, Smith also demonstrates the tyrannical treatment to which they are subjected thereby alleviating the extent of the condemnation placed on these characters. The following chapter will examine William Godwin's most famous novel *Caleb Williams* (1794) and argues that the author reverses the traditional hierarchy of truth by representing masters and not servants as liable to perpetrate falsehoods and deceits. The final chapter will examine an array of works by Maria Edgeworth, focussing on her depiction of servants in relation to children and the communication of falsehood via oral stories and tales. While this indirect form of deceit distracts youngsters from their duty and leaves them incapacitated to fulfil their responsibilities, Edgeworth nevertheless demonstrates how these attendants can be conditioned into loyal, honest servants through education, albeit of a limited kind.

In this respect, the thesis suggests that while this issue regarding servants and their troubled relationship with truth attracted the attention of all these writers, each author had their own unique perspective on and concerns about this topic. As such there was no consensus on the subject and in effect the complex issue of servants and truth remained a much contested and divisive matter.

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INTRODUCTION

> Mr Carson: But what does it matter anyway? We shout and scream and wail and cry, but in the end we must all die.
>
> Mrs Hughes: Well. That's cheered me up. I'll get on with my work.

So goes the exchange between the butler and housekeeper in Julian Fellowes' hugely successful television drama *Downton Abbey*. Purporting to depict life in an early twentieth-century manor house, *Downton Abbey* follows the fortunes of the aristocratic Grantham family, while simultaneously revealing the lives of their servants below stairs. Mr Carson and Mrs Hughes, both loyal and devoted employees, play a pivotal role in this world, organising and delegating duties and tasks, ensuring the seamless and efficient operation of the household. While highlighting the importance of their role in securing the ease and comfort of their upper class employers, the series also offers a glimpse – albeit a rather glamorized and unrealistic glimpse- into the everyday world of the servant class.

In this respect, the series capitalises on the growing public fascination with servants which has dominated popular culture in recent years. In addition to this television serialisation, numerous documentaries, films and memoirs have been produced, fuelling interest and tapping into this newfound curiosity surrounding "life below stairs." Indeed even classic novels have felt the force of this influence, with the publication of *Longbourn* (2014), Jo Baker's modern rendition of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). This version of the novel moves the cherished love-story of Elizabeth and Darcy to the background and focuses instead on the lives, love-affairs and escapades of the servant characters. In this respect, these menials take centre stage, receiving a degree of attention and notice denied them by Austen, whose servant characters are by all accounts, largely invisible.

Servants are, however, far from invisible in the eighteenth-century novel, as this thesis will demonstrate. Focusing on the representation of servants, the thesis will explore the portrayal of this group's relationship with truth-telling. Examining the works of Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Charlotte Smith, William Godwin and Maria Edgeworth, the thesis shows that these novelists explore the complexities and difficulties involved in this relationship. In effect, the thesis argues that the portrayal of servants in these works is more nuanced and sympathetic than has previously been recognised. Each author however, has their own personal interpretation and perspective on this issue and in effect examines the matter in a different way. While some authors explore the reasons and motives underlying servant deceit, others concentrate on the undesirable consequences which can ensue from truth-telling. Despite the various approaches however, all these works come to a general consensus that the servant relationship with truth is anything but simple.

Over the past two decades, social and cultural historians have directed a new attention toward the everyday lives and routines of these lower-class employees. Concentrating particularly upon servants in the context of eighteenth-century England, J. Jean Hecht's text *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England*, published in 1956 provided the first intensive and in-depth examination of this topic. Recent studies by Bridget Hill, Tim Meldrum, Carolyn Steedman and R.C. Richardson have expanded upon this research, providing a more insightful perspective on the lives of those employed in domestic service.[1]

Similarly, the figure of the servant has been of interest within literary criticism, with Bruce Robbins's seminal work *The Servant's Hand* (1986) remaining the most extensive study produced on this topic. Other critics however including Janet Todd, George Watson, Jenny Davidson, Julie Nash and Kristina Straub have all engaged with this issue and challenged Robbins's theories.[2] Surveying the entire range of Western literature, Robbins argues that the representation of servants throughout the history of literature has remained relatively static and unchanged. As such, servants are liminal characters outcast to the cusp of the text, limited to serving a symbolic and rhetorical function. Their inclusion within the literary text Robbins maintains is in effect representative only, with servants standing in for the lower classes en mass. The literary servant as far as Robbins is concerned, is therefore isolated from contemporary social issues and thus historically inaccurate. Describing the generic role of the servant, he suggests that

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[1] See J. Jean Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Press, 1956); Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow: Longman, 2000); Carolyn Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); R. C. Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

[2] See Bruce Robbins, *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction From Below* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Janet Todd, 'Posture and Imposture: The Gothic Manservant in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian'* in *Men By Women* ed. Janet Todd (London: Holmes & Meier, 1981),pp. 25-38; George Watson, 'The Silence of the Servants', *The Sewanee Review*, Volume 103, Number 3 (Summer 1995), 480-486; Jenny Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Julie Nash, 'Preface: Special Issue on Servants and Literature', *Literature Interpretation Theory*, Volume 16 (2005), 129-134; Julie Nash, *Servants and Paternalism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Gaskell* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Kristina Straub, *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism and Violence Between Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009).

> The considerable textual space allotted to them is filled with much the same repertory of comic gestures and devices: expository prologues, flashbacks, oracular messages, and asides; the verbal entertainment of conscious punning or unconscious bumbling; a pointed 'doubling' of the protagonist, for example as foil or parody; an instrumental role in complicating and resolving the action.[3]

According to this reasoning, literary servants are isolated and detached from their environmental surroundings, stereotyped figures simply inserted into fictional texts. To this effect, the figure of the servant is a standard literary trope, divorced from reality.

George Watson however has taken issue with Robbins's argument, suggesting that literary representations of servants can provide us with some insight into the reality of servant behaviour. While Robbins suggests that servants are simply figures created by a ruling hegemony and detached from historical actuality, Watson argues that the consistency of servant representation undermines this claim. As these servants are regularly depicted as witty, resourceful and cheeky characters, there must, Watson argues, be some basis to their representation. While he admits that comedy often represents exceptional cases, he maintains "that the knowing and talkative servant has been too common in literature for two millennia"[4] and therefore must surely qualify as the rule, not the exception. Thus in accordance with this reasoning, he dismisses Robbins's formulation that literary servants offer an unreliable indication as to the behaviour of their real-life counterparts.

More recently, Julie Nash has voiced a qualified support for Robbins's argument suggesting that those in search of accurate servant portrayals should not turn "to fiction for an understanding of their historical situation."[5] She continues that on a survey of eighteenth-century novels one "would conclude that servants spent the vast majority of their time peeping though keyholes, reading their masters' letters, gossiping, having affairs... corrupting children.... In fact, the one thing you don't catch most literary servants doing is work."[6] Nash of course has a point, and in these fictions we are rarely provided with a realistic insight into the everyday drudgery, unceasing toil and backbreaking labour which comprised everyday reality for the majority of servants.

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[3] Robbins, *The Servant's Hand*, p. 6.
[4] Watson, 'The Silence of the Servants', p. 483.
[5] Nash, 'Preface: Special Issue ', p. 130.
[6] Nash, 'Preface: Special Issue', p. 130-131.

However, what we do get in a variety of these novels, this thesis argues, is a more realistic portrayal of their predicament on a conceptual level. While the novel may overlook the everyday routines of these domestic employees, it does consider the social factors which bear upon and influence their behaviour. In this respect, the novel illustrates the practicalities and realities of the servant position, indicating the compromised nature of their situation. Thus, in this respect, this thesis argues that the eighteenth-century novel provides a much more complex portrayal of the servant position than either Nash or Robbins would allow.

This thesis chooses to examine the complex representation of servants in eighteenth-century fiction by focusing on what might be regarded as a stereotype and subjecting it to revision: the figure on which the thesis concentrates is that of the deceitful servant. In effect, it will be suggested that the representation of this figure in some novels is much more complex than previous criticism has been willing to permit. Rogues and charlatans still abound, but alongside these representations, the novel facilitates an exploration of the extenuating circumstances surrounding servant deceit, thereby alleviating the extent of condemnation generally heaped on these characters.

In the context of eighteenth-century studies, the term “servant” is quite difficult to define. During this period, it can be seen as something of an “umbrella category”[7] which included classes such as domestic attendants, farm employees and apprentices. For the purposes of this study, the term is applied to domestic employees who work in a close and often intimate proximity to their masters. In this respect, the thesis considers an array of servants within the social hierarchy; from lowly chambermaids to authoritarian housekeepers. In fact, one’s experience in domestic service during the eighteenth century could vary greatly depending on their position in this servant hierarchy and the type of establishment in which they worked. For instance while in larger, more affluent households a servant’s duties were relatively defined, in poorer households servants, usually maids of all work, were expected to be more flexible and accommodating according to their employer’s needs.

While an individual’s experience in service could therefore vary greatly, there also existed a large divide between the male and female servant experience. Generally male servants were employed in wealthy, prosperous households and served a largely ornamental function.

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[7] Hill, *Servants*, p. 252.

Performing such roles as valets as footmen, their purpose was to reflect their master's status and for this reason they were well groomed and usually of a handsome demeanour. Theirs was a life of relative ease and comfort, involving light and "non-productive" duties.[8] The majority of female servants on the contrary, were employed for their labour value and as such were expected to fulfil physically demanding, menial duties. Further exacerbating this disparity was the fact that females were paid much lower wages than their male counterparts. Perhaps the most glaring difference however between attitudes toward male and female servants was in relation to ideas of "virtuous behaviour." Indeed male attendants were expected to be suave, seductive ladies-men of loose virtue and of an amorous inclination. However if a female servant were to be tainted by a sexual indiscretion of any sort, she would in all likelihood be promptly dismissed from her position and branded with an infamous reputation. In the realm of eighteenth-century domestic service, sexual discrimination and double-standards were the norm.

However, on the whole a life in service generally offered some tentative sense of stability and security for both male and female servants. Most servants "lived-in" within their employer's household and as such were provided with bed, lodging and food. Although the work could be hard (particularly for females low down the servant hierarchy), employees were usually guaranteed nourishment and shelter in addition to their wages. Nevertheless, the servant experience could also be a lonely, isolating and depressing existence. Separated from family and friends, obliged to work long hours and oftentimes subject to difficult working conditions under tyrannous employers, a servant's lot could be pretty grim. Thus while a life in domestic service may have had some advantages, it also had its various drawbacks.

Eighteenth-century Britain was perceived as being in the throes of a "servant problem." As Keith R. Wark observes, "as a body, servants rarely satisfied their masters. However, in the eighteenth century complaints about them were particularly widespread and shrill."[9] With the influx of luxury arising from trade and the overseas empire, money became an increasingly important and attainable commodity. This new commercial ethic was viewed as threatening the hierarchical foundations of society while having a particularly devastating impact on the patriarchal nature of the master-servant relationship. In consequence, servants, it was lamented, were no longer genuinely attached to their masters but were instead primarily bound by desires of financial remuneration and compensation.

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[8] This view that male servants were merely ornamental appendages of their masters who contributed little to the economy in terms of productive labour is reflected in the 1777 Manservant Tax which taxed employers who employed male servants. The employment of a male servant was generally viewed as an unnecessary extravagance and hence male domestic labour was classified as a luxury. For further discussion see Steedman, *Labours Lost*, chapters 2 and 5.

[9] Keith R Wark, 'Domestic servants in Leeds and its Neighbourhood in the Eighteenth Century' in *Publications of The Thoresby Society: The Leeds Historical Society, Second Series, Volume 8* (Leeds: Thoresby Society, 1998), pp.1-17 (p. 15).

The shift in the nature of the master-servant relationship while challenging the traditional social structure was also perceived to have a very visible impact on the behaviour of servants. It was generally bemoaned that these employees, puffed up with a new sense of independence and autonomy, refused to behave in the humble and submissive manner which became their station. As a result, these attendants were regularly berated as lazy, incompetent, drunken wretches who abused their position of trust and exploited the generosity of their masters. In consequence, an array of moralists and social commentators vociferously bemoaned the current state of British society while levelling a torrent of abuse at these supposed reprobates. One of the most vehement critics of the servant class was Daniel Defoe, who, in his pamphlet *Every-Body's Business is No-Body's Business; or, Private Abuses, Public Grievances* (1725) vented his feelings of spleen and choler against this group. Singling out female servants for particular notice, Defoe rages about "the Inconveniences daily arising from the Insolence and Intrigues of our Servant Wenches"[10] and details a catalogue of abuses supposedly perpetrated by these employees.

In response to this perceived crisis, society capitalised on the vision of the idealised servant character. This character was loyal, devoted to the family, selfless and emotionally attached to their master. As Kristina Straub has observed, "the good servant willingly gives up his or her economic agency to the larger goal of an economically healthy family, assured that his or her own security lies in a combination of strong familial bonds and personal thrift."[11] Unconcerned with financial matters, the ideal servant would in effect overlook economic concerns of remuneration and recompense for services rendered. It is a version of this idealised retainer which Tobias Smollett draws upon in his novels. Yet by portraying society generally in a satirical manner, he questions the validity of this stereotype by demonstrating how ill-fitting and out of place these characters are in their social environment.

Indeed contemporary criticism has demonstrated the fallacy of this idealised servant image which was capitalised upon by eighteenth-century commentators. Recent research has highlighted the fact that complaints regarding the conduct and behaviour of servants predate this era, and can be traced back at least to the Elizabethan era.[12] Janet Todd supports these findings, observing that “servants at no time in Western Europe were quite what masters would wish and that the faithful retainer was ever the exception not the rule.”[13] Thus there is evidence to suggest that this nostalgic servant figure embraced by eighteenth-century society was in essence an idealised, romanticised vision that rarely, if ever existed. Problems with servants it appears had existed for a long time.

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[10] Daniel Defoe, *Every-Body's Business is No-Body's Business or, Private Abuses, Public Grievances* (London: Sam Ford, 1767), p. 4.

[11] Straub, *Domestic Affairs*, p. 10.

Yet despite the actualities of the situation, these fears nevertheless existed and were prevalent throughout society. An explanation for this situation can possibly be attributed to the expansion of the middle-class which occurred during this period. In consequence, there was a higher demand for servants, especially in London. D.A. Kent discusses this issue, and, building upon eighteenth-century estimates, suggests that by 1750 there were approximately 67,500 servants in the metropolis, comprising about ten percent of the overall population.[14] Indeed, newly affluent members of the bourgeoisie required the labour of servants not only to fulfil practical duties but also to serve as a status symbol, thereby securing the former’s somewhat tenuous social position. Coinciding with this, the advent of the enclosure system decreased rural employment opportunities for youngsters, hence encouraging mass migration to the metropolis. Thus it appears that in proportion as the servant population increased so too did the complaints regarding their conduct.

In an attempt to reform the wayward behaviour of these supposed “reprobates” a number of conduct manuals were produced. As R.C. Richardson has observed,

> The ‘servant problem’... was constantly discussed and complained of by early eighteenth-century employers. In the light of this experience, not surprisingly, a new literature appeared underlining the rapidly deteriorating seriousness of the situation, the reasons behind it, and the desperate need to stem the swelling tide.[15]

These publications however were not limited to the early part of the century but were published throughout the period. Directed alternatively to masters and servants, these works generally emphasised the duties and responsibilities incumbent upon each party in an attempt to secure harmony within the domestic abode.

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[12] For further discussion see Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 130-133.

[13] Todd, ‘Posture and Imposture’, p. 26.

[14] See D.A. Kent ‘Ubiquitous but Invisible: Female Domestic Servants in Mid-Eighteenth Century London’, *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 28 (1989), 111-128 (p. 112).

[15] Richardson, *Household Servants*, p. 180.

In his account of the origins of the novel, J. Paul Hunter identifies conduct manuals as an important contributing source in the evolution of this species. Indeed Hunter suggests that the extensive print culture of the eighteenth century played a pivotal role in the novel's formation. As such he considers a wide selection of writings including biography, newspapers, periodicals and conduct manuals as bearing an influence upon the emergence of the genre. Emphasising the eclectic nature of the novel, Hunter suggests that it is "almost as if writers... surveyed the field of things in print, made a list of needs being addressed in literature and para-literature, and set out to create an inclusive form"[16] which would contain all of these elements. Indeed, in its consideration and treatment of the master-servant relationship, the novel clearly references many of the topics discussed in conduct manuals and pamphlets of the time. As such there is an overlap between these two genres, with both focusing upon and intently analysing the dynamics of this relationship.

While conduct manuals discussed a range of issues pertaining to servants, many drew specific attention to the issue of servant veracity. Indeed in accordance with the evidence provided in these texts, it was commonly feared that servants were prone to deceitful and underhanded behaviour. For instance, Thomas Broughton begins his *Serious Advice and Warning to Servants* (1763) by addressing employers, conceding that "The many frauds, forgeries, &c. which have been committed of late years by Servants, may justly alarm you, and raise some uneasy apprehensions in your breasts."[17] These employees were generally characterised as slippery and evasive characters and as such employers were advised to keep a close eye on their domestic affairs and monitor the behaviour of their servants accordingly.

However quite often it was argued that servants were only enabled to behave in this manner due to the very lack of supervision and vigilance exercised by employers. Thus in order to encourage the good behaviour of servants it was generally recognised that masters should lead by example. "Good masters beget good servants" was a motto gaining credence during this period and it was oftentimes acknowledged that masters were partially responsible for the conduct of their employees. Indeed even Defoe, despite his hostility toward servants, acknowledges this fact, reflecting in *The Family Instructor* (1715) how many careless masters let their servants "go where they please, and do what they please"[18] with disastrous results.

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[16] J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (New York: WW Norton, 1990), p.55.

[17] Thomas Broughton, *Serious Advice and Warning to Servants* (London: J Rivington, 1763), p. iii.

[18] Daniel Defoe, *The Family Instructor* (London: Eman Matthews, 1715), p. 251.

Significantly, such discussion implies the recognition that servants were not pre-programmed to behave in a certain way but on the contrary that their characters were formed in response to their environment. In her work Kristina Straub discusses this issue and elaborates on the protean and fluid nature of servant identity. In this respect she observes that "Good servants, like good children, do not come naturally, but must be made through a laborious process of early and ongoing instruction."[19] Expanding on Straub's argument, this thesis suggests that the culturally formed nature of servant identity is recognised by the authors discussed in this thesis and informs their depictions of servant characters.

By demonstrating how servants are responsive to and formed by their social milieu, these novels embrace empirical ideals which emphasised how character is formed through the senses and external social factors. Ian Watt acknowledged this relationship between empiricism and the novel in his influential text *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), suggesting that this contributed to "formal realism"[20] – a defining characteristic of the genre. By focusing on the figure of the servant in particular, this thesis highlights the powerful implications of such Enlightenment ideals, illustrating how the novel engages for instance, with traditional notions of the natural hierarchy. By demonstrating how the behaviour of servants is culturally determined, the novel confronts such traditional ideologies which held that people were born with inherent characteristics suitable to their social station. The impact of these Enlightenment ideas becomes increasingly apparent in the latter part of the thesis with Charlotte Smith, William Godwin and Maria Edgeworth all discussing the principle of "improvable reason." Engaging with the contentious notion of servant education, all of these chapters, to varying extents, demonstrate how education can influence and impact upon servant behaviour.

Conduct manuals also catered to this idea that servants were, to some extent, amenable to instruction. In an attempt to reform servant behaviour and eradicate the vice of deceit, a multitude of such texts directed at a servant readership emphasised the fundamental importance of truth-telling and honesty. Indeed one text, *The Footman's Friendly Advice* (1730) written by the former servant turned publisher Robert Dodsley, identified that "Honesty is certainly the principal virtue belonging to a Servant."[21] Furthermore the anonymously authored *Advice to Servants of Every Denomination* (1792) advised attendants to "Adhere to the truth; for falsehood is detestable; and he that tells one lie, must tell twenty more to conceal it." The tract continues, counselling servants to "Be strictly honest, for it is shameful to be thought unworthy of trust."[22] A good and honest servant it was generally proclaimed would not only earn the respect and esteem of their masters but in effect would live a happier, contented and more rewarding life than their reprobate, wayward counterparts.

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[19] Straub, *Domestic Affairs*, p. 26.

[20] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Hogarth, 1987), p. 33.

[21] Robert Dodsley, *The Footman's Friendly Advice* (London: T Worrall, 1730), p. 9.

If servants could not be goaded to behave in socially acceptable ways, these texts also had recourse to scare-tactics and emphasised the horrendous consequences which could ensue from telling falsehoods. Indeed as Thomas Broughton ominously warns his readership, minor deviations from veracity often lead to major transgressions and "They who once come to pilfer small matters, will, when they have an opportunity, venture upon larger sums; and run all risks to gain their ends." Thus he proceeds that "if you once comply, though but in trifling instances, your honesty is gone; and when the Devil tempts you next, you will not scruple to take whatever offers, till you are discovered, and the Law lays hold of you, and passes a terrible sentence upon you."[23] Broughton then testifies to the validity of his warnings, referencing a number of criminal cases which resulted in the execution of wayward and misbehaving employees. These consequences however are not restricted to the temporal realm, with John Waugh preaching how "Almighty God threatens to shut (deceitful servants) out of Heaven, and to give them *their portion in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone*."[24]

While servants were depicted as liars, it was also recognised that the forms and methods of deceit they employed could be manifold and various. In this respect, although outright deceit was condemned, more inventive and indirect forms of dishonesty were also discountenanced. For instance, servants were often criticised for succumbing to the practice of eye-service; an act whereby employees behaved well when under their masters' vigilance but once out of their presence became lazy and disobedient. Servants were also regularly accused of tarrying on errands and generally being profuse or wasteful with their masters' food stores. Highlighting the issue of time-wasting for instance, Waugh proclaims that

> You are not therefore at liberty to dispose of that Time and Labour, as you please, which in Truth is not yours but your Master's by his Purchase, and your Promise and

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[22] Anonymous, *Advice to Servants of Every Denomination* (Walsall: F Milward, 1792), p. 1.

[23] Broughton, *Serious Advice and Warning*, p. 8.

[24] John Waugh, *The Duty of Apprentices and other Servants* (London: Joseph Downing, 1713), p. 16.

> Engagement; and to waste or detain what is thus agreed for, is a Defrauding them of what is their due.[25]

Similarly, Anne Barker comments on the deceitful nature of the popular practice of the market-penny. According to this established custom, a servant received a discount from a certain retailer in return for using their services and would pocket this gratuity. Remarking on this practice, Barker insists that

> It has been a maxim with many to suppose themselves entitled to what is generally called the Market-Penny; but this is an ill-judged and dishonest notion. To purloin or secrete any part of what is put into your hands, in order to be laid out to the best advantage is as essential a theft as if you took the money out of the pockets of those who entrust you.[26]

Thus while these practices may not be direct forms of robbery, in the eyes of these commentators they nevertheless amounted to theft and were ultimately criminal misdemeanours.

In this respect there was an attempt not only to eradicate the bad habits of servants but also to codify and regulate their behaviour. It is possible however that the situation was not as straight forward as it may appear. Indeed as the master-servant relationship was undergoing a transformation from a patriarchal to contractual style system, many of the traditional perquisites were being removed. While this was a cause of much tension, it also meant that the boundaries between acceptable and deviant behaviour were becoming blurred and contested. As such, the line between entitlements and theft was often fiercely debated between master and servant. In this respect, the questionable behaviour of servants was open to interpretation; they could be seen as laudable defenders of the old, traditional order or thieving, criminal miscreants.

This ambiguity surrounding the changing nature of the economy was, Liz Bellamy argues, fundamental to the emergence of the novel as a genre. While more conservative members of society waxed lyrical over the traditional economic values which emphasised civic humanist principles, a more progressive and materialist ethos embraced new capitalist ideals of financial accumulation and maximisation. This debate Bellamy continues was reflected in the literature of the era with the displacement of the epic by the novel genre. Emphasising values of military strength and martial prowess, epic standards were at odds with “what was identified as an increasingly commercial and feminized state.”[27] Alternatively the novel, born out of this contentious cultural context, emerged as the literary form suitable to the articulation and expression of these new economic concerns.

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[25] Waugh, *Duty of Apprentices*, p. 19.

[26] Anne Barker, *The Complete Servant Maid or Young Woman's Best Companion* (London: J Cooke, 1770), p. 8.

Viewed in light of this shifting economic context, the ambiguity of the servant position is highlighted. One eighteenth-century author however who had no such doubts regarding servant behaviour was Jonathan Swift. For Swift, the behaviour of these attendants was motivated by selfish reasons and a predominant desire for self-gain. According to this satiric writer, these employees were not victims of a new capitalist economic structure but on the contrary were wily, enterprising rogues who exploited their position. Swift brilliantly articulates this perspective in the satirical masterpiece *Directions to Servants*, published posthumously in 1745. Within the piece, Swift mercilessly ridicules this group, exposing the justifications and excuses they use to vindicate their behaviour as fallacious and bogus. These servants, Swift maintains, assume the facade of the simple retainer only to disguise their truly sly and cunning characters.

In contrast to such conventional portrayals of servants, the novel had the scope to introduce a radically original servant character. This was because the novel as a newly emerging genre had the freedom and capacity to experiment with conventions in the creation of a new genre. While other more traditional genres were restricted by established conventions which dictated the mode of composition, the novel was unfettered by literary precedents. As such novelists could pick and combine aspects from different genres, “cannibal(ising) other literary modes” and in effect creating an “anarchic genre.”[28]

Furthermore, during the course of the century traditional literary forms, namely drama, were subject to a rigorous form of censorship. Indeed, due to concerns over the perceived immorality and subversive political content of many plays performed in theatres, the ruling authorities were eager to sanitize the London stage. Such anxieties were heightened by the immense popularity of controversial works of political theatre. These plays which included *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728) by John Gay vocally criticised the current Walpole administration, condemning the government for its venality, greed and corruption. The prime minister – who in such works was personally subjected to an array of withering satirical attacks - was in consequence desperate to curb the freedom of the stage which he feared was encouraging "anti-government sentiment at a time of increasing political instability."[29]

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[27] Liz Bellamy, *Commerce, Morality and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 5.
[28] Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 1.

Using a scandalous manuscript entitled *The Golden Rump* as a pretext to incite outrage amongst the ruling authorities, Walpole successfully secured the passage of The 1737 Licensing Act on 21 June. By the terms of this act, there were only two patent theatres in London licensed to perform theatrical works while, more importantly, new plays were subject to a strict mode of censorship. As a consequence of these "draconian provisions"[30] all innovative and creative impulses were effectively quelled. As David Thomas explains, "cautious managers...were inclined to reject work from new and untried writers in preference to tried and tested work which had been written prior to the Licensing Act."[31] As such the patent houses "favoured safe and popular titles from the past that would give no offence and require no new licence."[32] With this stringent system of checks and consequent lack of incentive to invest in new pieces, the English stage was essentially "muzzle(d)...for the next 200 years."[33]

While such measures ensured that the freedom of the stage was effectively curtailed, there were fears that this policy of censorship would extend to other forms of literature. Expressing such worries, Lord Chesterfield made an impassioned speech in protest against the passage of the Licensing Act. Reflecting on the terms of the legislation, he questioned that "Though it seems designed only as a restraint on the licentiousness of the stage, I fear, it looks farther, and tends to a restraint on the liberty of the press..."[34] Such reservations however were ultimately unfounded, and the restrictive measures of the act were solely applied to works of drama. Thus while creativity and originality on the London stage was hindered, other literary genres - in particular the novel – had the opportunity to flourish.

Indeed it was the very innovative and experimental nature of the novel that proved a source of such debate and uncertainty. In an attempt to classify the new genre, the novel was often defined by contemporary critics and writers in opposition to the Romance genre. This rejection of Romance conventions is visible in many ways. For instance, while the Romance tradition had focused on highborn protagonists in unfamiliar landscapes and included elements of the supernatural and fantastical, the novel rejected these tenets. Instead this genre was determined to explore the ordinary, everyday lives of its fictional protagonists in highly realised, specific social environments. Eschewing the ornate, stylised language favoured by the Romance, the novel used a vernacular, ordinary idiom. In addition to this, novels were dictated by the rules of probability with their plots centring upon occurrences which could hypothetically happen to anyone. In this respect these works embraced the theory of verisimilitude and carefully cultivated the appearance of truth in their attempt to depict a convincing portrayal of reality.

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[29] David Thomas, 'The 1737 Licensing Act and its Impact' in *The Oxford Handbook of The Georgian Theatre*, *1737-1832* ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 91-106 (p. 94).

[30] Thomas, 'The 1737 Licensing Act', p. 103.

[31] Thomas, 'The 1737 Licensing Act', p. 99.

[32] Thomas, 'The 1737 Licensing Act', p. 101.

[33] Thomas, 'The 1737 Licensing Act', p. 96.

[34] Quoted in Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 195.

Due to its innovative nature however, this species of literature was perceived as a generally low genre, lacking any artistic merit or respectable credentials. In consequence, any barely literate hack it was claimed could write a novel (and it was feared many often did). While the genre was criticised for these perceived formal failures, it was also attacked due to its supposed immoral values. Indeed, the ethical content of these texts was held to be highly questionable, and often the form was berated for its alleged illicit and depraved morality. While informed, educated critics could perhaps notice these shortcomings, it was feared that the vast majority of novel readers lacked this faculty. This was because the genre's popular appeal was primarily directed towards an expanding female middle class audience, who had ample leisure time at their command to voraciously consume these works. As Samuel Johnson famously declared in *The Rambler Number 4* essay (1750),

> These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life. They are the entertainments of minds unfurnished with ideas and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles and therefore easily following the current of fancy; not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account.[35]

Thus it was commonly held that this new genre was a dangerous and threatening force, containing a subversive potential.

One of the principle causes of concern however was that of characterisation. In accordance with Romance principles, protagonists should be high-born, noble personages of impeccable moral worth. Heroes in these works were thus idealised, faultless characters who never engaged in substandard conduct. Conversely, villains in these pieces were portrayed in an unceasingly negative manner and possessed no redeeming traits or qualities. The novel however challenged this mode of characterisation by depicting flawed protagonists who often deviated from the “proper” code of conduct, yet nevertheless were depicted as worthy heroes.

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[35] Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler: Volume the First* (London: J Payne & J Bouquet, 1752), p. 29.

In addition to this ambiguous form of characterisation, the status of protagonists was often decidedly middle class or plebeian. As Terry Eagleton has observed, the novel “is not the first literary form in which the common people stage an appearance. But it is the first to treat them with unwavering seriousness.”[36] In accordance with Classical conventions, when characters of a low social standing were treated of, it was often in a comic or humorous manner. The novel however discards this rule and while lower class characters are still comic figures, they are not limited to this role. Thus as a result of these literary principles, the novel could depict lower class characters, including servants, in a radically new way.

The radical implications of this new literary theory are possibly most evident in Samuel Richardson’s novel *Pamela*. Published in 1740, this novel quickly became one of the most popular publications of the eighteenth century, going through five editions in its first year. The story focuses upon the trials and tribulations of a fifteen-year old servant girl who is subjected to the amorous advances of her wealthy master and would be seducer. Pamela however through a combination of passive resistance and supplications manages to rebuff these overtures. This is despite the many stratagems and schemes which the ardent Mr B. has enacted in order to persuade, trick and force the lowly maidservant to succumb to his demands. Finally however, on perceiving Pamela’s true merit and worth, Mr B. realises that he is in love with the heroine and marries the deserving servant girl.

With this novel Richardson created a highly original servant character. Chaste, beautiful, virtuous and pious, Pamela had all the characteristics associated with a high-born heroine, deviating only in her low-born lineage. Capitalising on the novel genre, Richardson thus used its flexible and protean form to create an unprecedented servant protagonist who is nothing like her literary forbears. Pamela has none of the comic traits by which earlier literary servants are characterised nor has she any elements of a lowly, immoral ethical code. This servant character instead is an articulate, literate paragon of virtue who composes a series of letters to her parents wherein she details her perilous situation. These letters attest to the young servant’s steely resolve to resist Mr B’s (albeit immoral) demands and, in effect contain an element of disobedience and insubordination. By rejecting Mr B.’s lucrative offers to become his mistress, the maidservant successfully protects her chastity and in effect lives a moral life in accordance with religious dictates. In this respect, Pamela privileges moral and ethical concerns above the practical factors which traditionally influenced and swayed servant behaviour.

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[36] Eagleton, *The English Novel*, p. 8.

On its publication, this novel proved a sensation. Speaking of its significance, Albert J. Rivero has referred to the text as a "cultural event"[37] and indeed the impact which this story had on eighteenth-century society is difficult to overstate. As *The Gentleman's Magazine* famously remarked, it was "*judged in Town as great a Sign of Want of Curiosity not to have read* Pamela, *as not to have seen the* French *and* Italian *Dancers*."[38] The text captured the public imagination and functioned as a talking-point, generating much debate and discussion, as well as controversy.[39] This was primarily due to the ideological implications of Richardson's unique plot. By advocating the marriage of an upper-class gentleman to his servant, the text was perceived as challenging the hierarchical nature of the social structure. While some readers were content to acknowledge Pamela's impeccable conduct and viewed her social ascension as a just reward for her merit, others found the concept of this cross-class marriage highly unsettling.

Another issue which plagued the novel however was that of the heroine's veracity. Adopting an epistolary narrative style, the plot and incidents of the story are revealed largely through the perspective of the servant girl protagonist. Due to this partial perspective, the novel left itself open to questions, with a lot of readers doubting the accuracy of Pamela's narrative and questioning her motives. Many of Pamela's stated reasons for remaining in her perilous position instead of fleeing from the immoral propositions of her master (she is determined for instance to complete an embroidered waistcoat prior to her departure), appeared highly implausible and feeble to some readers. Consequently, suspicions surrounding Pamela's true character were widespread and in spite of Richardson's vindication of her pure and chaste intentions, scepticism of this servant girl abounded. Indeed, it was this ambiguity which Henry Fielding capitalised upon in *Shamela* (1741), his immensely popular parody of Richardson's novel, which is discussed in chapter one.

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[37] Albert J. Rivero, 'Introduction' in Samuel Richardson, *Pamela in Her Exalted Position* ed. Albert J. Rivero (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. xxxi-lxxxi (p. xxxiv).

[38] Quoted in Albert J. Rivero, 'Introduction', p. xxxiv.

[39] See Volumes I to VI of *The Pamela Controversy: Criticisms and Adaptations of Samuel Richardson's Pamela 1740-1750*, ed. Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001).

This thesis explores how this issue of servant veracity is explored by novelists after *Pamela*. It will be suggested that this debate, although it may have begun with *Pamela* by no means ended there. In this respect, the thesis views Richardson's novel as a springboard for the discussion of this topic, and maintains that this issue of servant veracity is an enduring topic of debate throughout the century. Richardson however by all accounts presents an astonishing servant girl and furthermore an extraordinary master figure. Indeed in his willingness to play cat-and-mouse with the object of his desire, Mr B.'s behaviour is atypical to say the least and as Bridget Hill remarks, "does stretch (the) credulity"[40] of the reader. In consequence, the story is generally compared to a Cinderella tale due to its improbable, fairytale like conclusion. In this respect Pamela remains the exception to the rule so to speak, an exceptional literary servant. Thus while other novelists discuss this issue, they do not imitate or model their fictional servants on Richardson's outstanding servant figure.

Rather this thesis argues, each novelist has a unique perspective on this issue and uses the novel form to express this viewpoint. As an inherently flexible genre, the novel has the ability to accommodate these varying perspectives and as such can allow for a diverse variety of servant representations. Speaking of the portrayal of Pamela, Jenny Davidson posits that "Richardson is virtually alone among polite eighteenth-century authors in his sympathy for good servants."[41] This thesis however challenges this claim and argues that although Richardson is perhaps the most obvious and outspoken in his pity for servants, he is certainly not alone. Furthermore, this thesis maintains that not only are the novelists under consideration sympathetic to the plight of good servants, but that these writers evince compassion for bad attendants too.

Indeed according to this reasoning, Davidson appears to suggest that Pamela is the only "good servant" represented in eighteenth-century literature. Davidson's argument however overlooks the representation of servants in a variety of works, including Gothic Romance novels. This form emerged in response to complaints that the novel had become overly concerned with issues of realism. As a result, it was claimed that imaginative and creative concerns had been rendered of secondary importance. In consequence, Horace Walpole wrote *The Castle of Otranto*, published in 1764. Generally recognised as the first Gothic Romance novel, this text set the precedent for the Gothic Romance genre and consequently spurred a number of imitations and adaptations. Speaking of his literary plan, in the preface to the second edition Walpole enlarges on his representation of servants and the function they fulfil in his novel, to which he had briefly alluded in the original preface. He states that

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[40] Hill, *Servants*, p. 209.

[41] Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness*, p. 44.

> The simplicity of their behaviour, almost tending to excite smiles, which at first seems not consonant to the serious cast of the work, appeared to me not only improper, but was marked designedly in that manner. My rule was nature. However grave, important, or even melancholy, the sensations of princes and heroes may be, they do not stamp the same affections on their domestics; at least the latter do not, or should not be made to express their passions in the same dignified tone.[42]

In this respect, Walpole contends that what he offers is a realistic and authentic representation of these characters. In support of his case he claims his allegiance to "that great master of nature, Shakespeare," declaring that this "was the model (he) copied"[43] and maintains that in effect his portrayals are founded in human nature.

Elaborating on his theory, Walpole states how these servants also fulfil another function: to act as a contrast to their superiors and heighten the impact of their masters' heroic sentiments. For this reason, these servant characters are commonly depicted as amusing, endearing and garrulous retainers who fulfil comic roles throughout the story. Furthermore, they are depicted as genuinely and sincerely attached to their masters, with the master-servant bond founded upon terms of affection and devotion. These figures would become prominent stock-characters in the Gothic Romance, a genre which retained its popularity until the end of the century. Popularised by such novelists as Ann Radcliffe these servant characters were idealised, sentimentalised images of the perfect retainer, functioning as the archetypal "good servant." So common in fact would this servant figure become that in *Waverley* (1814), Sir Walter Scott mockingly highlights the prevalence of these literary attendants in the Gothic Romance genre, drawing attention to "the jocularity of (the) clownish but faithful valet, or the garrulous narrative of the heroine's fille-de-chambre."[44]

In this respect, these servants functioned as stereotyped, standard characters with a number of set characteristics and traits. Their role however was not to reflect reality but ultimately to fulfil a conservative ideological purpose. With their inherent simplicity and willingness to remain in their lowly social stations, these characters were a testament to the fixed hierarchal nature of society which maintained that one's position in society was fixed from birth. Furthermore, through their unwavering devotion and loyalty, these characters offered a sense of comfort to an increasingly exasperated readership. As Janet Todd observes, the middle-classes were during this period infuriated by the unruly behaviour of their menials and these fantasised servant figures offered an "escapist image"[45] for such disgruntled employers.

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[42] Horace Walpole, 'The Castle of Otranto' in *Tales of Mystery & The Supernatural: The Castle of Otranto, Vathek and Nightmare Abbey* ed. David Stuart Davies (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Edition, 2009), p. 8.

[43] Walpole, 'The Castle of Otranto', p. 8.

[44] Quoted in Angela Wright, *Gothic Fiction: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 28.

However while these stereotypes were embraced by some writers, other novelists rejected them. Indeed, while Charlotte Smith pays homage to the Gothic Romance form in *The Old Manor House* (1793), she interrogates and essentially rejects these caricatures. Although some of her previous works embrace similar stereotypes, in the aforementioned novel Smith complicates this image, depicting servants that have a much more troubled and complicated relationship with truth than these idealised, simplistic and fundamentally unrealistic retainers. Likewise, Godwin works within the confines of the Gothic genre yet he too portrays a radically different servant character than that presented in *The Castle of Otranto*.

Speaking of the general literary response to troublesome servants in the eighteenth century, Janet Todd argues that a dual approach was adopted by writers. She suggests that

> Some writers abused their menials who refused fidelity, portraying them as a gang of rogues and as parasites on their betters. Other writers carefully idealized servants: authors of manuals hoped that real-life domestics would copy their exalted models, while novelists wrote of devoted maids and men to provide escape and fantasy for harassed and intimidated employers.[46]

While this is true and these images perhaps dominated the literary landscape, this thesis argues that the response to the problem was more complex than Todd would allow. Although some novelists did capitalise on this fantasy image, other authors were willing to experiment with this standard figure and hence portray a different perspective on the issue of problematic servants.

Expanding on this issue, this thesis suggests that all of the novelists discussed are concerned with the vexed issue of servants and their relationship with truth. All these writers share a common view that this relationship is extremely complicated and difficult yet each author articulates a different perspective on the issue. As such, there is no consensus on the situation; these works propose no general solution to the difficulties faced by servants and their problematic relationship with veracity. What these novels do offer however is a perceptive and insightful exploration of this issue, thereby providing a more nuanced depiction of the difficulties encountered by servants in eighteenth-century England.

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[45] Todd, 'Posture and Imposture', p. 25.
[46] Todd, 'Posture and Imposture', p. 27.

In light of this, the first chapter in this thesis examines the representation of servants in the works of Henry Fielding. Surveying a range of Fielding's novels, the chapter suggests that Fielding's attitude toward servants is more sympathetic than is commonly recognised by contemporary criticism. By exploring his representation of the complex master-servant dynamic, the chapter will explore how Fielding recognises that servants must lie, cheat and conceal their true feelings in order to fulfil their professional duties effectively. In this respect, the chapter argues that Fielding ultimately sees deceitful servants as products of their environment and realises that their conduct is conditioned by social demands.

The next chapter examines the portrayal of servants in a range of novels by Tobias Smollett. It explores how Smollett uses an idealised, romanticised version of the feudal retainer to comment on the depraved nature of contemporary society. It argues that Smollett depicts these servants as pointedly removed from economic concerns and it is for this reason only that they are enabled to speak honestly and truthfully. Ultimately however, the chapter suggests that Smollett depicts these truth-telling servants as fundamentally unsuitable to and impractical in the social environment in which they are placed.

The following chapter focuses on Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1793) and shows how Smith subverts the traditional Gothic Romance servant character, replacing this with a more complex servant incarnation. While she depicts some of these characters as liars and deceivers, the chapter suggests that Smith examines the extenuating circumstances motivating their behaviour, thereby providing a more sympathetic perspective on their plight. Furthermore by drawing parallels between the deceitful behaviour of these characters and that of the hero of the novel, the chapter argues that Smith offers a more qualified, tempered critique of these characters than is generally recognised.

The fourth chapter examines *Caleb Williams* (1794) by William Godwin. The chapter will explore how Godwin views the fundamental nature of the master-servant relationship as inspiring deception and equivocation. However the chapter argues that Godwin challenges customary opinions regarding the power structure of the master-servant relationship which viewed the rich and powerful as guarantors of truth. As such, the chapter suggests that

Godwin rejects the traditional hierarchy of truth which deemed servants as prone to deceit, suggesting instead that masters are more liable to succumb to this vice.

The final chapter will examine the relationship between servants and children as portrayed in the works of Maria Edgeworth. Exploring this relationship, the chapter will argue how Edgeworth views servants as posing a threat to the rational and intellectual development of children. In this respect it will focus on the stories these retainers tell and how the inaccurate, fundamentally deceitful nature of these tales lead vulnerable children astray. However the chapter will argue that Edgeworth ultimately sees these servants as amenable to reform and argues that once these servants receive a limited education, their deceitful habits can be eradicated.

CHAPTER ONE

Liars of Necessity: Henry Fielding's Fictional Servants

Throughout his works, Henry Fielding wrote extensively upon the vice of affectation, which he maintained was motivated by either vanity or hypocrisy. Indeed in his preface to *Joseph Andrews* (1742), the author is unequivocal in his attack on the figure of the hypocrite, an individual whose behaviour is "nearly allied to deceit."[1] The hypocrite, Fielding proclaims is, an individual who feigns to possess qualities, virtues or merits they in fact have no claim to and is in effect a liar. Throughout the eighteenth century, affectation was one of the primary accusations levelled at servants. A common cause of complaint, it was held that servants assumed a false demeanour, affecting to be something they were not and as such imposed grievously upon society. Unlike many of his contemporaries however, Fielding does not associate this vice primarily with servants. Instead he identifies this issue as a widespread social problem, one which affects all classes and parts of society, master and servant alike.

It is this balanced, temperate aspect of the author's representation which this chapter will explore. In this respect, the chapter will examine Fielding's representation of servants in an array of his fictional works including *Shamela* (1741), *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *Tom Jones* (1749) and *Amelia* (1751). It will argue that Fielding's attitude toward servants as evidenced in his fictional works is more sympathetic than has been recognised by contemporary criticism. The chapter suggests that Fielding recognises the highly compromised position in which this group are placed and acknowledges that quite often servants must lie, equivocate and deceive in order to placate the demands of their masters. In this respect, the chapter will suggest that throughout his fictional works Fielding offers a perceptive and nuanced perspective on the deceitful servant and recognises that veracity is quite often a privilege reserved for the upper classes.

Fielding's sympathetic portrayal of servants in his fictional texts is however quite often at variance with his attitude as expressed in his non-fictional works. Evidence of his hostile attitude can be deemed from the pamphlet *A Plan of the Universal Register Office* published in 1751. Written to publicize his newest business venture, the text advertised the founding of The Universal Register

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[1] Henry Fielding, *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews* ed. Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 7.

Office located in London. Here the author explains the basis upon which the enterprise was established and expresses his hope that the venture will prove of real benefit to society. Intending to "bring the World as it were together into one Place"[2] the aim of the business was to create a space of shared information where for a fee a person could quickly access information relevant to his needs. It was through this business enterprise that the co-founder hoped to establish a viable, profitable organisation which would primarily return a healthy profit while simultaneously contributing to the good of society.

Within the plan Fielding provides a description of the services provided by this establishment, drawing attention to its function as a letting agent, curiosity shop and employment agency. He specifically emphasises the latter role of the office, especially in regards to the vetting of servants who wish to register at the centre. To this effect he assures the public that when a servant registers they are subjected to a rigorous interview, through which is ascertained "the Name, Place of Abode, Qualification, Age, married or single, whether had the Small Pox, what Place lived in last, and how long; with every Particular of their Characters, and by whom to be given."[3] Describing this intensive interrogation process, Fielding seeks to assure the public "that the utmost Care will be taken to prevent any Imposition; and that none will be registered in this Office who give the least suspicious Account of themselves." Echoing contemporary social fears regarding the reliability of servants, the author expresses particular anxiety about the issue of character references and the possibility that they can be forged or manipulated. To combat this threat he asks all gentlemen "who turn away Servants for any gross Fault, to put themselves to the Expence of a Penny-post Letter to the Office, and we faithfully promise that no such Servant shall be registered there."[4]

This apprehension surrounding the characters of servants is once again illustrated in an advertisement for the Universal Register Office inserted at the end of his treatise, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers*, published in the same year he co-founded the Register Office. Complaining of the "insolence" of servants, Fielding laments the fact that dismissed employees have no difficulty in finding another place "for many Persons are weak enough to take Servants without any Character." Furthermore he acknowledges the "ingenious Method in this Town of obtaining a false Character from one who personates the former Master or Mistress."[5]

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[2] Henry Fielding, 'A Plan of the Universal Register Office,' in *The Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding: The Covent Garden Journal and A Plan of the Universal Register Office* ed. Bertrand A. Goldgar (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 6.
[3] Fielding, 'A Plan of the Universal Register Office', p. 7.
[4] Fielding, 'A Plan of the Universal Register Office', p. 8.

From the above quotations, it is evident that Fielding was somewhat anxious regarding servants' tendency for truth-telling, indeed he appears to anticipate being imposed upon by this group. As a result, he advocates an intimidating, invasive interviewing technique in order to sift through the information provided by these applicants and ensure that they are in fact telling the truth. However, this chapter suggests that while Fielding was suspicious of this group, he was not as hostile towards servants as this tract may perhaps suggest. Rather, as The Universal Register Office was primarily a business venture, it is possible that Fielding adopted this hostile attitude in order to placate the fears of would-be customers and encourage upper class patrons to use his service. Indeed with rival offices appearing, most notably The Public Register Office founded by Philip D'Halluin, competition for clients became more intense. As such, it is possible that Fielding was simply pandering to his customers in a bid to ensure a lucrative financial return.

Indeed other critics have commented on this seeming discrepancy in Fielding's outlook, suggesting that the attitude expressed in his moral tracts differs from that in his fictional works. On examination of *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers*, Malvin R. Zirker for instance identifies on the part of Fielding an uncharacteristic harshness of attitude in comparison with his fictional writings. He finds it difficult to reconcile

> the social criticism of fashionable life and the apparent exaltation of the unfashionable hero characteristic of the novels with the thorough going, aristocratic, institutionalized, conventional social attitudes expressed in Fielding's pamphlets on the poor.[6]

Fielding's view however is not as conventional as it may appear. Although he views the lower classes as a nuisance, he also recognises that the problems they face stem from the top of the social scale and filter downwards. It is in this way that

> the Nobleman will emulate the Grandeur of a Prince; and the Gentleman will aspire to the proper State of the Nobleman; the Tradesman steps from behind his Counter into the vacant

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[5] Henry Fielding, 'An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers' in *The Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding: An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers and Related Writings* ed. Malvin R. Zirker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 173.

[6] Malvin R. Zirker, *Fielding's Social Pamphlets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 30.

> Place of the Gentleman. Nor doth the Confusion end here: It reaches the very Dregs of the People…[7]

While the lower classes are involved in the issue, it is evident they are not responsible for it. Instead Fielding implies that while this problem of affectation is manifested amongst the lower classes, it does not originate amongst this group. Conversely, Fielding indicates that it is those at the top of the hierarchy who must shoulder the brunt of the blame and are thereby held accountable for this problem.

This dichotomy appears to endure throughout Fielding's social tracts but on a close, detailed reading of his texts, for instance *An Enquiry into the Late Increase in Robbers* (1751) we can discern a more sympathetic image of the author. Indeed, a commonly held image of Fielding as magistrate is that of a stern, authoritarian figure "favouring the rich and great while bullying the lower classes."[8] However as is well established, he was also a keen social observer and as such recognised that the failings of the establishment often contributed to the difficulties faced by the poor. In regards to the gin problem which was rife in the mid eighteenth century for example, Fielding acknowledged the role played by the government in this crisis, which encouraged the distillation of alcohol to provide tax revenue. Indeed, commenting on the *Covent Garden Journal*, Ronald Paulson sees the moral columns written by Fielding as counter-balancing the harsh proposals advocated in his social tracts. In this respect, Paulson argues that Fielding recognised "that the laws controlling the poor advocated in those pamphlets did not tell the whole story - that the poor are in fact the victims of society."[9]

Thus, while he was an authoritarian patrician, concerned to maintain the current nature of the social hierarchy, Fielding was also willing to recognise that the upper classes were often culpable for many social problems. Indeed, while "the necessity and logic of the class structure itself are never questioned by him"[10] Fielding nevertheless concedes that the ruling classes are sometimes responsible for the very social problems they condemn. Although careful to retain his class allegiances, Fielding was also a consummate pragmatist who was willing to examine the reasons and underlying causes which contributed to social problems and come to a balanced, informed conclusion on these issues.

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[7] Fielding, 'An Enquiry', p. 77

[8] Martin C. Battestin, *Henry Fielding A Life* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 529.

[9] Ronald Paulson, *The Life of Henry Fielding: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 306.

[10] Homai J. Shroff, *The Eighteenth-Century Novel: The Idea of the Gentleman* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), p. 26.

When this logical approach is applied to Fielding's representation of the master-servant relationship it is possible to gain a new insight into his attitude toward the serving class. Throughout Fielding's works this chapter argues, we can see the author's preoccupation with this issue and his recognition that masters are frequently responsible for the falsehoods practiced by these domestic employees. Thus, through an exploration of the highly compromised position in which these servants are placed, Fielding provides a more compassionate and insightful view on the plight of the deceitful servant.

Indeed, in the eighteenth century it was the responsibility of the servant to skilfully screen their feelings and opinions from masters. As J. Jean Hecht remarks "the servant was…expected to know his place and under all circumstances to maintain a deferential manner, whatever his private thoughts."[11] Eliza Haywood, writer of the highly successful conduct manual *A Present for a Servant Maid* (1743) also commented on the required behaviour of the serving class, noting that timidity and humility is "an Indication of your Respect for those you serve."[12] Thus it was deemed appropriate for servants to acquiesce with the thoughts and opinions of their masters, carefully concealing their own viewpoints. Conversely, if a servant freely voiced their opinions it was considered as a sign of impertinence and disrespect for those they served.

As such, there was an array of confusing and often contradictory instructions issued to the serving class. On the one hand, servants were required to be honest, trustworthy retainers yet in practice this standard of behaviour was often impossible to implement. This quandary is encapsulated by Robert Cleaver's advice which he administered to servants, wherein he counsels them "to be faithful and trusty" to their employers, while also telling them to "answer discreetly"[13] any questions. The central fact is that these two dictates are irreconcilable. Indeed servants cannot answer honestly and truthfully to their master's queries as to do so would involve voicing their own opinion, and this was expressly forbidden. Although this advice was issued in 1598, this dichotomy was still present in the eighteenth century, as is evidenced throughout Fielding's works.

Indeed, the complexity of the servant position was recognised and commented upon by a number of writers in the eighteenth century. James Townley, author of the controversial farcical play *High Life Below Stairs* (1759) for instance commented on this issue.[14] Perhaps in a bid to make amends for the offence formerly caused to this group, in the following year Townley published the pamphlet *An Apology for the Servants* (1760). Written under the pseudonym Oliver Grey, the author adopts the guise of a sixty-three year old servant who undertakes an eloquent defence of his brethren. Acknowledging that many servants have failings, he is nevertheless keen to highlight that masters too have flaws and that quite often "the behaviour of (servants), which has been censured with great vehemence, owes its rise, among other things, to the injudicious conduct of (masters)."[15] Furthermore, the author discusses the sufferings endured by servants including in addition to bodily labour and mental abuse, the "absurd messages, the long-winded complements he is to carry every day and the confounded lies he is obliged to tell."[16] Indeed, lying and deception are here indicated as requirements of the position, with honesty apparently surplus to requirements.

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[11] Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class*, p. 73.

[12] Eliza Haywood, *A Present for a Servant Maid* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1744), p. 8.

[13] Richardson, *Household Servants*, p. 129.

[14] When first performed in the Drury Lane theatre on 31 October, servants took offence at Townley's derogatory representation of their brethren. Feelings soon became heated, with the discontent resulting in the

Fielding likewise draws attention to this issue in his journalistic works. In an issue of the *True Patriot* in 1746 he assumes the voice of a servant and comments ironically on the issue of the double moral standard which exists for servants and masters. He ponders how

> If we lose our Characters, we shall lose our Places, and never after be received into any other Family. Herein our Situation differs from that of our Betters; against whom no Profligacy is any Objection. And if by Treachery they happen to be discarded in one Place, (for that is the only Crime they can be guilty of), they are nevertheless received with open Arms in another. How many Men of Fashion do we know, whose Characters would prevent any Person from taking them into his Family as Footmen, who are well received, caressed and promoted by the Great as Gentlemen.[17]

Although the piece is written in a comic tone, Fielding acknowledges the serious undertones of the situation. While recognising the double-standards which are in operation he is likewise keen to ridicule the upper classes by identifying their substandard mode of conduct and censuring it accordingly.

It is in this way that Fielding reassesses the situation of the eighteenth-century servant, indicating that their position is perhaps more complex and unfair than was generally recognised. This issue is a

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Footman's riots, an event which gave the manager David Garrick an excuse to revoke the customary privileges (essentially reduced admission fee) allowed to servants within the theatre.

[15] Oliver Grey, *An Apology for the Servants* (London: J Newbery, 1760), p. 3.

[16] Richardson, *Household Servants*, p. 20.

[17] Henry Fielding, *The True Patriot: And a History of Our Own Times* ed. Miriam Austin Locke (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1964), p. 225.

reoccurring theme throughout Fielding's work and is consistently treated in a humorous yet sympathetic manner by the author. Indeed as Bruce Robbins observes, "there is hardly anything Fielding mocks with greater regularity in his comic works than a double moral standard for master and man."[18] Bearing this in mind, it is possible to reconsider *Shamela* in a new light and modify our perceptions of this intriguing, scheming servant girl.

As is well established, Fielding was extremely vocal is his condemnation of Richardson's widely successful novel *Pamela*. The reasons for this criticism were numerous and manifold, with Fielding attacking Richardson's espoused morality and fictional techniques. As a classicist, Fielding was greatly influenced by the ancient Greek and Roman works which he had studied in his youth at Eton. As such, he maintained that literature should to a certain extent be developed in accordance with established literary rules, obeying classical demands of balance and decorum. Richardson however rejected these traditional dictates, pioneering a new style of writing which Fielding perceived as ill-advised. Indeed as Clive T. Probyn observes,

> What really bothered Fielding about *Pamela* was that it was subversive. It overthrew classical literary decorum in making a low, ungrammatical female its heroine... *Shamela* shows what a revolutionary book *Pamela* could seem. Richardson's novel affronted the old Etonian in Fielding, and he registered the reaction of the Establishment.[19]

By flouting conventional, reputable literary dictates Fielding held that Richardson's new modern techniques such as "writing to the moment" violated ancient precedents and ultimately held his rival's method of literary production to be substandard.

Indeed, according to conventional literary rules, literature should communicate to its audience an objective and unprejudiced truth. Fielding held that by presenting his story through the first-person perspective of the heroine however, Richardson offered only a skewed and biased representation of truth. Filtered through Pamela's consciousness, the story is necessarily biased and prejudiced, containing, in effect, a wholly inaccurate and untrustworthy version of events. The novel in this respect lacks the distance and perspective which are required to provide a truthful account, "since truth for Fielding is a result of rational, objective, comparative judgement."[20] In consequence the reader, encouraged to identify and sympathise with the heroine is too emotionally involved in the narrative and is therefore vulnerable to be fooled by this inherently dishonest narrative. Ridiculing such fictional techniques, Fielding purports to portray the "true" version of events in *Shamela*. In this story, he reveals that Pamela was not the honest, virtuous and chaste maiden as Richardson would have readers believe, but rather a scheming, wily equivocator who spins a grossly inaccurate and untruthful story. To this effect Fielding reveals the "real" Pamela; a scheming harlot who is in cahoots with her bawdy mother in order to trick the credulous Squire Booby into marriage.

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[18] Robbins, *The Servant's Hand*, p. 12.
[19] Clive T Probyn, *English Fiction of the Eighteenth-Century 1700-1789* (New York: Longman, 1987), p. 83.
[20] Eagleton, *The English Novel*, p. 55.

While ridiculing the narrative techniques used by Richardson, Fielding also objected to the plot of Pamela. In accordance with Fielding's aesthetic theory, the novel should document and mirror a version of reality which readers could readily identify with. While fundamental and enduring universal truths should be conveyed, the norms and customs of society should also be reflected. This adherence to reality actually garnered Fielding some criticism. As Lennard J. Davis states "Fielding was charged with copying too directly from life without the intervening grace of invention." Despite his immense success as a novelist, Fielding was criticised for observing too minutely "what he (had) seen and known"[21] and was thus accused of lacking artistic imagination. A close surveyor of contemporary society, Fielding built upon these observations, faithfully abiding by them in his narratives.

Bearing this in mind, Fielding found the premise of Richardson's novel highly improbable. The prospect of a young, innocent servant girl successfully guarding her chastity against the rapacious approaches of the ominous Mr B. was, for Fielding, too improbable to gain credibility. As Jim Kjelland observes, "waiting maids simply did not marry men of standing such as Mr B-, and Mr B would not very likely have thrown away his social position and his lineage to protect a girl's virtue, which in all frankness (during that time period) was his to take and not Pamela's to withhold."[22] In the highly dangerous and treacherous environment in which Pamela was positioned, the possibility of protecting her chastity in the manner which she claims was, for the satirist, in reality implausible.

Thus, Fielding reasoned that Richardson offended not only against literary decorum but also overstepped the boundary of probability, straying into the fantastical. As a pragmatic individual, Fielding appreciated the difficult position in which servants were placed and realised that Pamela's story failed to consider the realities of eighteenth-century servant life. Indeed, the heroine is ascribed an integrity, a dignity of conduct which was simply not accessible to a Georgian servant girl. Thus,

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[21] Davis, *Factual Fictions*, p. 208-209.

[22] Jim Kjelland, 'The Eighteenth-Century Novel: Defining and Redefining Realism', *The Delta*, Volume 3, Issue 1 (2008), 32-44 (p.35).

Fielding mercilessly ridicules the pretensions of Pamela, and exposes her as a deceitful maid who narrates an incredible narrative of falsehoods; a fine fabler of extraordinary tales. Indeed as Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor observe, *Shamela* was “the first and cleverest of all the Antipamelist works, and in most respects, their defining source.”[23] These critics highlight the fact that Fielding was far from alone in his fervent suspicion of Pamela, with the novel inspiring a spate of other publications which also mocked and ridiculed Richardson’s servant protagonist. Thus while Fielding’s was arguably the most successful retort issued to *Pamela*, it was by no means the only one.

Thus, while Fielding’s response to *Pamela* is undoubtedly hostile, this chapter argues that it is not reflective of his attitude towards servants in general. *Shamela* is a very pointed attack on Richardson’s technical narrative methods and, as Fielding would have it, somewhat fabulous plot. Fielding’s suspicion of the heroine is founded not on the belief that all servants are inherently liars but rather on the basis that Pamela’s particular narrative is simply incredible and far-fetched. While it is not inconceivable for a young servant girl to desire to protect her chastity, it is however highly improbable that she should succeed in this determination given Mr B.’s resolve.[24] Faced with the inexorable schemes of her master, the odds of retaining her virtue, Fielding emphasised, were simply not in Pamela’s favour.

Fielding’s next publication *Joseph Andrews* (1742) also began as a parody of *Pamela* but soon into the composition process the author changed direction, instead creating the “comic-epic poem in prose.” Speaking on the theory of character development used within the novel, the writer states “I describe not Men, but Manners; not an Individual, but a Species.”[25] Here it is implied that the characters depicted in the work are not individuals but character types. This technique accords with Fielding’s general aesthetic approach to the novel genre. Indeed, the author proposed that writers should discuss general truths instead of confining themselves to specific and irrelevant details. Sean Shesgreen attests to the popularity of this literary theory, observing that “minute description was contrary to the century’s regard for the principle of decorum, to its emphasis on generality and la belle nature."[26] Fielding further expands on this theory, explaining that in "particular Characters we mean not to lash Individuals, but all of the like sort; so in our general Descriptions, we mean not Universals, but would be understood with many Exceptions…" (165). So while discussing types, Fielding likewise admits that there are exceptions and variations within these generalized groups. As such all upper class ladies are not the same and so likewise we can assume, all servants are not similar.

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[23] Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, ‘Introduction’ in *The Pamela Controversy, Volume 1*, ed. Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), p. xxxviii.

[24] Fielding’s belief in the unshakeable resolve of a young servant girl to risk her life in defence of her virtue is evidenced by his participation in the Elizabeth Canning case, discussed later in the chapter.

[25] Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, p. 164. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

This point is demonstrated on consideration of the vast array of different servant characters depicted in his novels. When examining these portrayals, it becomes evident that there are a variety of distinct, contrasting characters presented. Thus it is impossible to define servants as one coherent, unified type; instead there are a multitude of different serving class characters each with their own distinct traits and characteristics. This chapter however, maintains that beneath these varying representations, many of these literary servants- be they heroes of the novel or grotesque comic caricatures - have a complicated and vexed relationship with the truth.

Speaking of the representation of servants in *Joseph Andrews*, Ronald Paulson suggests that Fielding's depictions may have been inspired by his experience in the theatre. Before turning his attention to prose fiction, Fielding had established his reputation as a successful playwright until the Licensing Act of 1737 made it increasingly difficult for dramatists to have their works performed on stage. Reflecting on Fielding's literary servants, Paulson proposes that

> The experience of unruly servants at the theatre may have influenced his response to that wily servant Pamela and to the servants he represents in *Joseph Andrews*. There was the stable audience in the pit and boxes, the masters; and in the galleries their servants... Noisy and inattentive at the best of times, in the 1730s they were often riotous, sometimes locked out and battering at the doors. This was the experience...that Fielding carried away from his last season... These illiterates who were criticizing his plays had no business being at a play, and their rioting was also a contributing force to the passage of the Licensing Act itself.[27]

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[26] Sean Shesgreen, *Literary Portraits in the Novels of Henry Fielding* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1972), p. 130.

[27] Ronald Paulson, 'Emulative Consumption and Literacy: The Harlot, Moll Flanders, and Mrs Slipslop' in *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* ed. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Rutledge, 1995), pp. 383-400 (p.396).

According to Paulson's perspective, Fielding seems to have a personal vendetta against these troublesome servants. In this respect, the critic appears to reason that Fielding's representation of servants in *Joseph Andrews* is tinctured by his bitter experiences as a playwright in the volatile environment of the 1730s. In effect, Paulson therefore implies that Fielding's portrayal of servants in this novel is overtly negative and motivated by hostile feelings of ill-will.

The idea that servants played a significant part in the passage of the Licensing Act however appears to over-estimate the extent of their influence while overlooking other crucial factors which led Walpole to propose the legislation. Furthermore, Paulson's account of Fielding's attitude toward the Licensing Act has been reassessed and challenged by other critics. Tom Lockwood for instance argues that while Fielding did turn his attention toward other literary genres at this period, "He certainly did not have to."[28] In this respect, Fielding was not obliged to shun his successful career as a playwright due to the passage of this legislation, but rather he embraced the act as an opportunity to pursue other avenues of income. In consequence, instead of begrudgingly accepting the terms of the act, Fielding (probably bribed by Walpole to submit quietly to the terms of the act) happily focused on alternative professional and literary pursuits. Moreover, Lockwood suggests that by the time the act was passed Fielding was desirous to leave a profession "that offered really very little of substance or dignity"[29] and willingly turned to different modes of employment.

Following from Lockwood's argument, this chapter rejects Paulson's view and suggests that Fielding's representation of servants in his novels is not motivated by malice or ill-temper arising from the passage of the Licensing Act. Although Fielding's experience as a playwright did inform his representation of servants in his works of prose fiction, the influence was more benign than Paulson would suggest. For instance servants in his novels often embrace theatrical conventions such as asides and echoes and fulfil essentially comic roles. However while there are similarities, there are also major variations between Fielding's theatrical representation of servants and the portrayal of these characters in his novels.

One difference is evident in the realm of truth-telling. In Fielding's popular play *The Intriguing Chambermaid* first performed in the Drury Lane theatre in 1733, the principle protagonist is an enterprising and resourceful chambermaid. This attendant is sincerely attached to her impoverished yet charming master, Valentine, and acts as an accomplice in his attempts to woo the beautiful Charlotte. Charlotte's guardian however has forbidden the match, and so it falls to the ingenious Lettice to employ a variety of stratagems and schemes in order to circumvent these prohibitions and facilitate the courtship. In this respect, Lettice is admired for her dexterous use of double-dealing and intrigue and proves to be a skilled liar, adept in the arts of deceit.

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[28] Thomas Lockwood, 'Fielding and the Licensing Act', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Volume 50, Number 2 (Autumn 1987), 379-393 (p. 382).

[29] Lockwood, 'Fielding and the Licensing Act', p. 383.

In Fielding's novels however we are often confronted with a radically different kind of servant character. Frequently, these servants are not talented or proficient equivocators. On the contrary, these attendants often struggle to lie in a convincing or persuasive manner. Whereas Lettice is depicted as an expert liar, in Fielding's novels members of this group are often behindhand in these practices, clumsily attempting to master the techniques of concealment and deception. Interestingly however, when servants from either genre do commit falsehoods, it is more often than not at the direct bequest or in the service of their employers.

Indeed, it is by drawing attention to the motives underlying servant deception that we can achieve a new insight into Fielding's attitude toward this group. Throughout his works, the author emphasised that quite often an individual's behaviour can be misinterpreted and give a false impression of their moral disposition. Alternatively, if we examine the motives which inspire actions, Fielding suggests it is possible to ascertain a more thorough and precise view of an individual's true character. Thus while servants are liars, by examining the extenuating circumstances and reasons motivating their deceit, we can come to a more nuanced and sympathetic view of their behaviour.

Elaborating on this theory of human nature, Fielding acknowledged that actions are ultimately unreliable and unpredictable, reflecting that "the passions, like the managers of a playhouse, often force men upon parts without consulting their judgement, and sometimes without any regard to their talents" (148). Thus actions can be misleading and so Fielding probes deeper into human nature, focusing on motives for behaviour. Describing the author's approach to character, one critic observes that

> Fielding learns how misleading not only words but even actions and consequences can be, he finds it increasingly difficult to judge actions except in terms of motives. He rejects the satirist's simple but commonsensical acceptance of effect as the chief criterion of virtue in

> favour of the belief that an action can be neither good nor evil in itself, but only as its motive is charitable or self-seeking.[30]

By shifting the focus away from actions, and concentrating instead on motivation, Fielding is enabled to provide a new perspective on the compromised and difficult position of the eighteenth-century servant.

Bearing this in mind, it is possible to reassess the representation of servants in Fielding's first novel *Joseph Andrews*. This novel follows the eponymous young hero, his sweetheart Fanny Goodwill and the eccentric Parson Abraham Adams on their journey home. The novel charts the various escapades and comic mishaps which this party encounter on their travels, and describes the multitude of characters they meet along the journey. In this respect, the novel acknowledges Fielding's debt to the classical modes of composition, with the journey plot reflective of the author's view of experience and social interaction as key elements of everyday reality. Numerous complications and incidents occur throughout the narrative including attempted seductions, robberies and multiple cases of mistaken identity. Toward the end of the novel there is the introduction of the child-swop motif, and it is discovered that Joseph was stolen from his real parents as a baby. As a result, it is revealed that the hero is not a lowly born plebeian but is in fact the son of the worthy and respectable Wilson.

Indeed from the beginning of the novel there is an indication that Joseph is not the average footman. Describing the hero's physical appearance, the narrator remarks that

> He was of the highest Degree of middle Stature. His Limbs were put together with great Elegance and no less strength. His Legs and Thighs were formed in the exactest Proportion. His Shoulders were broad and brawny, but yet his Arms hung so easily, that he had all the Symptoms of Strength without the least clumsiness. His Hair was of a nut-brown Colour, and was displayed in wanton Ringlets down his Back. His Forehead was high, his Eyes dark, and as full of Sweetness as of Fire. His Nose a little inclined to the Roman. His Teeth white and even. His Lips full, red, and soft. (33)

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[30] Ronald Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 147.

Here the protagonist is depicted in terms of a demi-God, or in the likeness of a Renaissance portrait. Imbued with physical traits which are usually associated with upper-class characters, it is implied that Joseph is possibly of more genteel lineage than that of the typical servant.

Yet, despite his hero status and impeccable moral standards which are demonstrated throughout the novel, even Joseph has a somewhat vexed relationship with the truth. This is illustrated initially when his employer, the lustful Lady Booby makes sexual advances towards him. Loyal and true to his sweetheart Fanny, Joseph attempts to resist his mistress's endeavours without causing offence. Thus it is here, when faced with sexual harassment, that he is forced to feign ignorance of Lady Booby's innuendos and suggestions of an improper sexual relationship. Indeed at one stage he explicitly states "I don't understand you madam" (25). This statement however is soon contradicted when he confides in a letter to his sister that "if it had not been so great a Lady, I should have thought she had had a mind to me" (26). Here it is clearly revealed that Joseph is aware of his mistress's intentions, yet in order to protect his virtue and position, he is forced to feign complete ignorance of her demands. Indeed, he cannot reject Lady Booby outright as this would offend and insult her, which in his line of employment is unacceptable. Thus the servant must undertake more subtle tactics of evasion in order to escape reprimand.

Later in the novel it is established that Joseph's knowledge of falsehood is in fact directly linked to his position as a servant. This is revealed when Parson Adams fails to recognise that a "generous" Squire who has promised his assistance to the distressed travellers has no intention to provide any such aid. Explaining the situation to the baffled Adams, Joseph informs his companion that he is well acquainted with this mode of behaviour. He relates that

> I have heard the Gentlemen of our Cloth in London tell many such Stories of their Masters. But when the Boy brought the Message back of his not being at home, I presently knew what would follow; for whenever a Man of Fashion doth not care to fulfil his Promises, the Custom is, to order his Servants that he will never be at home to the Person so promised. In London they call it denying him. I have my self denied Sir Thomas above a hundred times… (154)

Here Joseph's aptitude for telling falsehoods is connected to his role as footman. An ability to lie is in this respect illustrated as a required skill of his job; a talent which is apparently put to much use, above a hundred times. Without this ability, it is implied that Joseph would be unable to fulfil his duties and thus be an inept servant.

This practice and many other forms of social etiquette were at this period coming under criticism. As Jenny Davidson observes, "Many dissenters objected to... apparently innocent conventions, singling out in addition the answer commonly made by a servant to an unwanted visitor that the master or mistress is 'not at home.'"[31] Due to the belief that these "polite" forms of social exchange were in fact eroding the moral fabric of society, there was an increasing resistance to and critique of these customs. As servants were commonly attacked and denigrated as liars by the upper class, by highlighting this practice of denying, Fielding subtly mocks the double standards of the ruling class. Indeed by habitually obliging these employees to practice deceit, the author indicates that masters are quite often culpable for encouraging the very behaviours they condemn.

Within the novel, the servant heroine Fanny also demonstrates an ability to tell falsehoods. This is explored when she unexpectedly meets with Parson Adams on her way to find Joseph. Informed that there is an understanding between the two youngsters, Adams inquires of her about the romantic nature of their relationship. To this questioning she evasively replies "what is Mr Joseph to me? I am sure I never had any thing to say to him, but as one Fellow-Servant might to another" (125). To this, Adams confronts the maid with her deceit, accusing her of either telling lies or being "false to a very worthy man" (125). The narrator however informs us of the reality of the situation, revealing "the truth of a passion she endeavoured to conceal" (125). Thus it is revealed that even the virtuous and chaste Fanny is also a liar.

Consideration of the position of the eighteenth-century servant however places Fanny's predicament in a different light. As a young, vulnerable female in the employment market, Fanny was wholly reliant on her reputation. Indeed, Fielding makes this abundantly clear in his numerous advertisements for the Universal Register Office. Any suspicions of her character could therefore jeopardize Fanny's possibility of finding a place and ultimately threaten her livelihood. As Paula Humfrey observes it was "women who successfully defended their reputations for virtue and its concomitant quality, chastity, were the ones most likely to get places in service."[32] Although Fanny is in a conventionally respectable relationship with Joseph, her fear of becoming tainted with a disreputable character leads her to distance herself from the relationship. By denying any involvement in a dalliance of a romantic or sexual nature, Fanny thus attempts to safeguard her reputation and ensure her employment prospects as an eighteenth-century servant. The heroine's canny use of deception is therefore illustrated as prudent and wise, a necessary skill in this employment economy.

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[31] Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness*, p. 10.

[32] Paula Humfrey, 'Introduction' in *The Experience of Domestic Service for Women in Early Modern London* ed. Paula Humfrey (London: Ashgate, 2011), p. 30.

Both Joseph and Fanny are idealised versions of the domestic retainer, characterised by their loyalty, humility and virtue. In this respect they act as a contrast to the usual reprobates who are depicted as eighteenth-century servants. By exploring these two servant characters and dissecting their behaviours however it is revealed how both hero and heroine unwittingly have recourse to partial truths and deception. While on first observation they apparently have an uncomplicated relationship with the truth, on closer examination their connection with falsehood and equivocation becomes evident. By linking the motive behind their falsehoods to their duties however, Fielding indicates the extent to which these servants are vulnerable products of their environment and in effect liars of necessity.

In opposition to these idealised characters, Fielding introduces the heavily flawed Mrs Slipslop. One of the novel's comic figures, this servant has an extremely complex, difficult relationship with the truth. The following grotesque, unflattering manner in which the narrator describes Slipslop is indicative of her many moral and personal shortcomings. The reader is informed that

> She was not at this time remarkably handsome; being very short, and rather too corpulent in Body, and somewhat red, with the Addition of Pimples in her Face. Her Nose was likewise rather too large, and her Eyes too little; nor did she resemble a Cow so much in her Breath, as in two brown Globes which she carried before her; one of her Legs was also a little shorter than the other, which occasioned her to limp as she walked. (27)

As Sean Shesgreen suggests, Slipslop's likeness to a cow is a symbol which implies her to be a "coarse or degraded woman." Furthermore he continues, that her "pimpled face, with its small eyes, are outward signs of her gross, animal lusts and her circumscribed powers of perception."[33]

Indeed Fielding's characterisation of Slipslop appears overtly hostile with her grotesque figure an evident source of ridicule. In this respect there is clearly an element of misogyny in Fielding's depiction, with the author placing a scathing emphasis on the maidservant's female anatomy. In addition to this, throughout the text Slipslop is revealed as a deluded and foolish character, often involved in mean and selfish behaviours. In this respect she has few of the moral qualities attributed to the hero and heroine of the novel. However despite her obvious failings, this chapter maintains that Fielding expresses some sympathy for the plight of this serving woman by emphasising the difficulties of her position.

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[33] Shesgreen, *Literary Portraits*, p. 98.

As Lady Booby's waiting woman, it is Slipslop's principle obligation to keep her mistress happy and content. Apart from fulfilling such tasks as dressing her employer, a major requirement of her occupation is to agree with her superior's point of view and acquiesce with her opinions. This expectation is illustrated when Lady Booby calls Joseph a "wild young fellow" which prompts her maid to enthusiastically support this accusation. "That he is… and a wicked one too. To my knowledge he games, drinks, swears and fights eternally: besides he is horribly indicted to Wenching" (30). Here it is evident that these attacks on Joseph are both unwarranted and untrue and are partly motivated by Slipslop's injured pride, as the young man has previously rejected her advances. Nevertheless it is also possible that Slipslop's diplomatic use of the truth is also employed in order to sooth and placate the feelings of her mistress.

Another instance of this practice arises when Lady Booby is pondering on the tyranny of custom and the barriers to true love which confine the upper classes. While yearning for Joseph, Lady Booby nevertheless reasons that her sense of dignity and self-respect dictate that she should give up all hopes of a relationship with the footman. Praising the good qualities of her employee, his mistress laments that

> if he had a thousand more good Qualities, it must render a Woman of Fashion contemptible even to be suspected of thinking of him, yes I should despise myself for such a Thought. To this Mrs Slipslop replies 'To be sure, Ma'am.' 'And why to be sure?' reply'd the Lady, 'thou art always one's Echo.' (258)

Highlighted by this witty and informative dialogue is the difficult and compromised position of the maid. While attempting to comfort and console her mistress, the servant's efforts unfortunately prove futile and ultimately invoke the wrath of her employer. On having received this rebuke we are informed that Slipslop prudently waits for her cue before venturing her opinion again. Believing she has grasped the tenor of her employer's mood, the maidservant attempts once more to placate her mistress. "'Marry come up!' said Slipslop, who now well knew which Party to take, 'if I was a Woman of your Ladyship's Fortune and Quality, I would be a slave to no body.'" The maid however gets it wrong yet again, and after this ill-calculated response she is admonished once more, being told that "Thou art always ready to answer, before thou hast heard one" (259).

This comic incident, while entertaining also has serious undertones. The complexity of a servant's position is here evident, illuminating in effect their precarious relationship with truth. Lady Booby does not require a truthful opinion from her employee; instead all she desires is someone to agree with her views and soothe her conscience. As such, Slipslop is required to listen intently to her mistress and carefully mould her answers to correspond with Lady Booby's expectations. As a result Slipslop is obliged to continuously backtrack and tailor her words to suit the whims of her mistress. The truth of the matter is that although Slipslop does lie and contradict herself, this is as a direct result of her compromised position as a servant.

One critic identifies Fielding's real point of humour as "the tendency in individuals to give rein to their own desires and passions at the expense of those rules and conventions which have been created to facilitate and improve the social converse of mankind."[34] It is interesting however that a major source of comedy in relation to Fielding's fictional servants involves their desperate attempt to grapple and come to terms with these social prescripts. Although there are incidents in which servants forego conventional rules of decorum and insult the ruling class (as does Honour in *Tom Jones* when she insults Mrs Western, telling her bluntly she is not as attractive as her niece), often the humour operates in the other way. Servants in this respect, are frequently attempting to abide by the established norms of social conventions, often failing and in effect, providing a source of laughter.

The intricate dynamic of this relationship is again illustrated when Lady Booby asks Slipslop her opinion of Pamela. Having just been introduced to the aforementioned character, the lady of the house has never before discussed this topic with her maid and so Slipslop is unsure of the right answer to make. As to whether she should compliment or insult the young lady she is uncertain and attempts to bide her time in her response.

> Madam?' said Slipslop, not yet sufficiently understanding what Answer she was to make. 'I ask you;' answer'd the Lady, 'what you think of the Dowdy, my Niece I think I am to call her?' Slipslop wanting no further Hint, began to pull her to pieces, and so miserably defaced her, that it would have been impossible for any one to have known the Person. (257-258)

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[34] Ioan Williams, 'Introduction', in *The Criticism of Henry Fielding* ed. Ioan Williams (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. xx.

Once again we see Slipslop employing a prudent approach in her interactions with her mistress. Unsure of what slant to take on the situation, she wisely waits for Lady Booby's promptings and tailors her response accordingly. As such she is careful to monitor and conceal her own opinions and in effect intentionally misrepresents her own thoughts and opinions.

The tenor of this relationship culminates in the scene wherein Lady Booby reprimands her servant once again, this time for her "freedoms." This takes place when the lady of the house is longing for Joseph and in a volatile mood. Inadvertently, Slipslop once more causes offence and is promptly admonished by her mistress who impatiently states "I am astonished at the Liberty you give your Tongue" (259). Having examined this mistress-servant relationship, the irony of this statement is difficult to miss. If anything, Fielding has demonstrated Slipslop's consciously controlled and deliberate use of language when conversing with her mistress. Although malapropisms do surface, resulting in confused meanings and illogical statements, these occur as a result of the serving lady's misguided, semi-education. They are unconscious slips which have resulted from her lack of understanding, not her attempt to assert her dominance. It is only through these slips however, that Slipslop is inadvertently enabled to voice her own opinion; an opinion which is often confused, incoherent and nonsensical. In this respect, Fielding once more demonstrates that a servant's access to truth is extremely limited and permitted only when it is stumbled upon by accident.

Speaking of Slipslop's pretensions to education, Judith Frank suggests that Fielding views the maidservant's literacy as threatening and explicitly associates this with a wayward and promiscuous sexuality.[35] This chapter however challenges Frank's argument and suggests that Fielding represents Slipslop as a more benign and pitiful figure. Indeed if Slipslop is a sexual predator as Frank suggests, then she is an extremely ineffective one at that. This is attested to by the fact that her promiscuous behaviour has amounted to one "slip" committed in her earlier life and since then it is implied she has, albeit unwillingly, abstained from sexual relations. Furthermore, her pretensions to education are revealed as just that: pretensions which manifest themselves in malapropisms and nonsensical statements. Fielding does not see the maidservant as representative of "social rebelliousness"[36]; on the contrary he depicts her as desperately struggling to master these social conventions and conform to social expectations.

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[35] Judith Frank, *Common Ground: Eighteenth-Century English Satiric Fiction and the Poor* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997). See Chapter 1, '"What you Seek is Nowhere" The Comic Novel and Lower-Class Literacy', pp. 30-62. Paula McDowell has convincingly challenged Frank's thesis, arguing that we do not in fact know if Slipslop is literate and that the maid's learning has more probably been garnered from conversations which she has overheard in London. For further discussion see Paula McDowell, 'Why Fanny Can't Read: *Joseph Andrews* and the (Ir)relevance of Literacy' in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture* ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 167-190.

Within *Joseph Andrews*, the author explores the issues surrounding servants and their perceived ambiguous relationship with truth. While many of the incidents discussed are minor happenings in the novel, this chapter maintains that within them Fielding displays a degree of compassion for servant characters. Considering an array of servants, be it exemplary heroes or unflattering caricatures, both types demonstrate a compromised relationship with truth. Irrespective of the moral tenure of these servant characters, they all consistently have a problematic connection with truth-telling and veracity. It is thus that Fielding highlights the fact that servants, by virtue of their occupation, are to some extent required to be liars and deceivers.

Servants also play an important role in Fielding's fictional masterpiece *Tom Jones*. Published in 1749, this novel received wide critical acclaim and within this novel Fielding further developed his theory of human nature and behaviour. When abandoned as a baby, Tom is taken in by the charitable Squire Allworthy and lives in the idyllic surroundings of Paradise Hall, alongside Allworthy's sister Miss Bridget and her son Blifil. With a kindly, benevolent disposition, Tom is a worthy hero however his actions are sometimes ill-advised. In this respect he is a mixed character and while he has an abundance of good qualities, he is also liable to deviate from the realm of acceptable behaviour. However under the guidance of the beautiful heroine Sophia Western, Tom eventually mends his ways and is rewarded with a life of domestic bliss.

Mrs Deborah Wilkins is the first servant character we are introduced to in *Tom Jones*. A long serving member of Mr Allworthy's domestic staff, this character is depicted as shrewdly calculating and it is revealed that she has a cunning streak. However, this trait is not always evident as is demonstrated when she is informed by her master that he has discovered a foundling in his bed. On receiving this information, Wilkins unwisely launches into a torrent of abuse, directed at both the child and his mother. However, on perceiving Mr Allworthy's evident affection for the child, the housekeeper soon changes her approach. Indeed,

> Such was the discernment of Mrs Wilkins, and such the respect she bore her master, under whom she enjoyed a most excellent place, that her scruples gave way to his peremptory

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[36] Frank, *Common Ground*, p. 54.

> commands; and she took the child under her arms without any apparent disgust at the illegality of its birth; and declaring it was a sweet little infant, walked off with it to her own chamber.[37]

On recognising that her feelings are contrary to those of her master, Wilkins engages in a diplomatic manoeuvre and redirects her behaviour. As a good servant it is her obligation to not only obey the commands issued by her master but fulfil them with a good grace and willing disposition. As such, the housekeeper must attempt to conceal her true opinion of the situation and carefully disguise her feelings of aversion for the foundling.

Fielding enforces the notion that this serving-woman is a “liar of necessity” when it is revealed that the maidservant Jenny Jones is the mother of the abandoned child. Carelessly, Mrs Wilkins has failed to discover the attitude of her mistress to the situation and indiscreetly voices her own opinion first. Indeed we are informed that “this well-bred woman seldom opened her lips, either to her master or his sister, till she had first sounded their inclinations, with which her sentiments were always strictly consonant” (50). Launching forth a bitter tirade against corrupted, loose women however, Mrs Wilkins is suddenly forced into a compromising situation when her mistress unexpectedly defends Jenny. Indeed Miss Bridget sympathizes with the plight of the young woman and condemns men who debauch vulnerable women. Quickly realising she has steered a wrong course, with “wonderful celerity” (50) Wilkins reformulates her opinion to ensure it accords with that of her employer. Commending Jenny’s strength of character, the housekeeper proclaims she “cannot help admiring the girl’s spirit” (50) and thus dexterously reconciles her viewpoint with that of her superior.

This need to reformulate one’s opinion in accordance with the perspective of their employer is illustrated as endemic to the nature of servitude. Indeed, this is demonstrated when Mrs Wilkins once again employs her diplomatic skills in dealing with her mistress. Having committed a blunder when her master first informed her of the discovery of the foundling, the housekeeper wisely adopts a different tactic when handling her mistress. To this effect, when Miss Bridget is first informed of the discovery of the orphan, the housekeeper refrains from commenting on the situation until she has gauged the opinion of her employer. Thus the narrator reflects how

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[37] Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* ed. John Bender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 36. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

> When her master was departed, Mrs Deborah stood silent, expecting her cue from Miss Bridget; for as to what had passed before her master, the prudent housekeeper by no means relied upon it, as she had often known the sentiments of the lady in her brother's absence to differ greatly from those which she had expressed in his presence. (39)

Here it is implied that Miss Bridget's relationship with her brother is a variation of the servant-master relationship. The Lady of the house is apparently accustomed to concealing the truth of her opinions, outwardly agreeing with her brother while secretly expressing a contradictory viewpoint behind his back. Affectation and pretence, Fielding so indicates are techniques which are utilized by the upper classes as well as the lower. Thus it is not only servants who employ these methods but surprisingly they are tools utilised by the master class too.

In this respect, Fielding gestures towards the hierarchy of truth, implying that truth-telling is a province primarily reserved for the powerful. While servants must conceal their own opinions, so too Fielding implies, must all subordinates in unequal power relationships. Within the domestic hierarchy Miss Bridget is in an inferior position to her brother and hence must acquiesce with his opinion, even if it is contrary to her own. Thus all relationships containing an unequal power dynamic, Fielding implies, will involve some element of equivocation or concealment.

When this logic is applied to the master-servant relationship, it reveals some rather surprising insights. Indeed, John Richetti observes that "A character's subordination in a master-servant relationship seems, in every comic novel from the period that I can think of, an ineradicable sign of comic inferiority."[38] While this is true to a certain extent, this chapter argues that Fielding's perspective on the issue is more insightful than Richetti would allow. Beneath the comic undertones, Fielding's recognition of this issue gestures towards a more nuanced and perceptive understanding of the master-servant relationship. Indeed the author appears to acknowledge that servants are not only required to lie but that this obligation comprises the very essence of the master-servant dynamic.

Although Fielding acknowledges this aspect to the master-servant relationship he does not condemn this institution or advocate its reform. Instead, he voices a certain amount of sympathy for the position of servants while nevertheless accepting the inequality which is inherent in the master-servant system. Whereas other authors such as Charlotte Smith and William Godwin will later in the century campaign for the reformation and eventual destruction of this relationship, Fielding has no such objective. As a conservative member of the upper classes, the author is concerned to maintain, strengthen and protect these traditional relationships, not fundamentally alter them. Instead, Fielding's intention is simply to provide a more compassionate perspective on the position of the eighteenth-century servant.

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[38] John Richetti, 'Representing an Under Class: Servants and Proletarians in Fielding and Smollett' in *The New Eighteenth-Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature* ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 80- 95 (p. 85).

Within *Tom Jones*, Fielding is keen to distinguish that there are different kinds and degrees of deceit, with some characters more liable to censure than others. This point is demonstrated through the character of Blifil, Tom's half brother and the principle villain of the novel. Blifil is characterised as a manipulative, sneaking scoundrel who employs an array of devious tricks in order to achieve his aims. Portraying situations and events in a manner to suit his own agenda, he intentionally misleads and dupes people and is in effect a thoroughly malevolent individual. Furthermore, Blifil's ends are depicted as entirely self-serving and as such there are no extenuating circumstances to alleviate the extent of his guilt. The intention motivating his deceit is explicitly and consistently malicious, with his primary goal to cause hurt and pain to innocent victims. In this respect, Fielding demonstrates how Blifil's use of deceit is quite different to that of many servants in the novel. Indeed, while the villain uses falsehood to cause trouble, servants generally employ deceit in a bid to avoid difficulties and escape reprimand.

Honour is another prominent servant character in *Tom Jones*. Maid to the heroine Sophia, this character is depicted as a vain, generally good natured girl with a penchant for gossiping. Her one major flaw however is a lack of prudence or self-control which constantly leads her into trouble. Indeed, this absence of foresight is illustrated when she launches upon a verbal attack directed at Molly Seagrim, a young woman who is believed to be with child by Tom. In conversation with her mistress Honour observes that

> I dares to swear the wench was as willing as he; for she was always a forward kind of body. And when wenches are so coming, young men are not so much to be blamed neither; for to be sure they do no more than what is natural…. And nobody can deny but that Mr Jones is one of the most handsomest young men… (170)

With this, the servant also condemns Tom's behaviour for demeaning himself with such a girl as Molly when in her opinion, he can do much better. This ill-timed rant and apparently harmless prattle however is completely miscalculated to the mood of her mistress. As such, Sophia sharply rebukes her maid and orders her to “stop thy torrent of impertinence” (170).

Honour’s tendency to garrulity and her aptitude for voicing unsuitable opinions is again illustrated when she comments on the illegitimacy of Tom’s birth. Recklessly the maid declares that

> as for Mr Jones, thof Squire Allworthy hath made a gentleman of him, he was not so good as myself by birth: for thof I am a poor body, I am an honest person’s child, and my father and mother were married, which is more than some people can say, as high as they hold their heads…. I am a Christian as well as he, and nobody can say that I am base born, my grandfather was a clergyman… (178)

This speech yet again proves offensive to the feelings of Sophia who once more rebukes her servant, fuming

> I wonder; says she, ‘at your assurance in daring to talk thus of one of my father’s friends… And with regard to the young gentleman’s birth, those who can say nothing more to his advantage may as well be silent on that head, as I desire you will be for the future. (178)

By freely voicing her opinions, Honour oversteps the bounds of propriety and is rewarded with a stinging reprimand from her mistress. Thus Honour is literally silenced by Sophia, forbidden to voice her perspective or speak her mind.

Another trait associated with the servant class in *Tom Jones* is that of keeping secrets. Throughout the eighteenth century, masters were repeatedly warned of the dangers arising from making servants privy to their secrets. By admitting servants into their confidence, it was feared that employers emboldened these subordinates by bestowing upon them an unwarranted power. In effect, the tenor of the master-servant relationship would be destabilised and ultimately reversed, with servants possessing precious knowledge which could quite possibly destroy their master’s reputation.[39] Indeed this issue comes to the fore in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* when the young hero gains knowledge of his master's much coveted secret and the situation results in tragedy.

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[39] Speaking of this dynamic, Lawrence Stone observes how servants were quite often bribed to keep their employers’ sexual indiscretions quiet “But this rarely worked for long. The servant either turned to blackmail and demanded more and more money in return for his or her silence, or else betrayed the secret to the (spouse) in expectation of even greater reward.” See Lawrence Stone, *Broken Lives: Separation and Divorce in England 1660-1857* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 27.

Fielding however voices no such qualms or concerns regarding a servant's access to his or her master's or mistress's secrets and treats the topic in a largely comic manner. This issue arises when Honour unintentionally exposes Tom's behaviour in relation to Sophia's muff. Having accidentally encountered Tom while he is in a pensive mood and doting on her mistress's muff, Honour is prohibited by the hero from mentioning the incident to her employer. Inadvertently however, when in conversation with her mistress Honour mentions the event and is forced to divulge the facts of the situation. It must be noted however, that Honour voices her unwillingness to relate the matter to her mistress for fear of offending her. Sophia nevertheless demands to be informed of the facts and then promptly orders her maid to keep the incident secret again. "I- if you will not mention this any more to me - nor anybody else, I will not betray you - I mean I will not be angry; but I am afraid of your tongue. Why, my girl will you give it such liberties?" (179). In this informative scene, Fielding indicates another dimension to the servant problem. The real fear about servants he subtly implies is not related to their tendency to tell lies but on the contrary is founded upon their propensity to reveal the truth.

It is in this incident that we see the virtuous heroine requesting a "selective truth" of her maid. Indeed, as is demonstrated when Honour speaks badly of Tom's actions, Sophia is reluctant to listen to information which contradicts her own inclinations. However, when the maid accidentally informs her of the welcome news that the hero cares for her, Sophia is reconciled to her servant, overjoyed and apologetic for her previous behaviour. "'Indeed, Honour,' says Sophia, 'I believe you have a real affection for me; I was provoked the other day when I gave your warning; but if you have a desire to stay with me, you shall'" (180). Again Fielding hints at the difficulty of the serving class's position, indicating that sometimes this group must relate partial, tailored or censored versions of the truth to suit the desires of their employers.

During the course of the text, Sophia and Tom begin a relationship which is forced to end when Sophia's father, Squire Western opposes the match. In compliance with the Squire's demands, Tom sends a letter to his lover pleading with her to forget him. On receiving the epistle Sophia is distraught and seeks solace and comfort from her attendant. However completely misreading the situation once again, Honour unwisely attacks the young man calling Tom a “poor beggarly bastardly fellow” (277). On hearing this, Sophia harshly rebukes her maid, ordering her to “hold (her) blasphemous tongue” (277). Once more Honour has illustrated her inability to censure her opinion or curtail it in order to correspond with the desires of her mistress. Likewise, she is unable to accurately gauge the feelings of her mistress or anticipate her demands and in effect is depicted as a clumsy, ill-qualified maid.

Speaking of the master-servant rapport, Jenny Davidson argues that due to the nature of this relationship, servants are “more opaque” and in effect, it is more difficult for employers to read or understand the characters of their employees. She continues that “In the case of servants, observing that they are largely unreadable to their masters does not necessarily imply sympathy for the servants’ point of view.”[40] It could be suggested, however, that if servants are incomprehensible to their employers, servants find it equally difficult to decipher the characters of their superiors. Indeed, throughout his works, Fielding recognises this and demonstrates how servants repeatedly misread the feelings of their employers and desperately struggle to decode their desires.

In the novel, it is implied that Honour’s actions are partially motivated by self-interest. This is revealed when Sophia proposes an escape plan to flee from her tyrannical father and intended forced marriage to the despicable Blifil. Fearful and somewhat hesitant to accompany her mistress, the maidservant shrewdly weighs up the practicalities of the venture, rationally considering the possible advantages and disadvantages. Amongst these factors, Honour considers the possible financial rewards, the excitement of London and her love for Sophia. In opposition to these considerations, she rationally takes into account the possible financial hardship and the potential dangers involved in the enterprise. Although this psychological insight into Honour’s mind appears to condemn her, it is possible that Fielding actually sympathises with the uncertainty of her position. Furthermore, while it is evident that Sophia is undoubtedly one of the “best of ladies” she is certainly not selfless. Indeed she is unhesitant in asking Honour to jeopardize her livelihood and security in order to serve her interests. In pondering her own interests, Fielding implies that this maid-servant is not a villainous, despicable wretch but simply a pragmatic product of her environment.

Speaking of Honour’s behaviour, Ronald Paulson suggests that by considering her later actions we can gain a clearer insight into the nature of the maidservant’s character. Thus the critic reasons that “it is only later when she goes completely over to Lady Bellaston that her earlier action can be used as an aid in judging Sophia's ironically named maid."[41] Paulson thus provides a negative interpretation of this character and supports this by highlighting the irony inherent in her name. This chapter however, disagrees with Paulson's perspective and suggests that Fielding had a more subtle intention in his choice of name for this servant. Indeed although her appellation has ironic connotations, the author's purpose is not simply to demonstrate that this maid is devoid of this quality. Rather, it is possible that Fielding's intention is to imply that "honour" is a virtue denied to this character in consequence of her compromised position as servant.

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[40] Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness*, p. 10.

Whereas Fielding treats of his fictional servants in an occasionally sympathetic manner, he illustrates how masters and even heroes, often lack this compassionate streak in their interactions with the serving class. This issue is broached when having been dismissed from her position, a distraught Honour informs Tom of her sad predicament. Instead of sympathising with the young girl, the hero furiously cries "d__n your place!" (708). In response the unemployed attendant makes a rather astute observation on the position of servants, replying that

> Ay to be sure; cries she, 'servants may be d__n'd. It signifies nothing what becomes of them, though they are turned away and ruined ever so much. To be sure they are not flesh and blood like other people. No, to be sure, it signifies nothing what becomes of them.' (709)

Although Honour's concern for her own well being appears selfish, her comments raise an interesting point. Indeed if servants do not consider their own interests, then who will? Honour, it appears has fulfilled her function and as such is now surplus to requirements. Used and to a certain extent abused by her employers, she is illustrated as an expendable and replaceable entity. In this respect, while Honour's behaviour may be far from heroic, it is unfortunately practical and as Fielding illustrates understandable.

The final servant character in *Tom Jones* which this chapter considers is Jenny Jones. A semi-educated servant, at the beginning of the story it is revealed that this character is the mother of the orphaned Tom. Jenny confirms these rumours "by freely confessing the whole fact with which she was charged" (43). As such the falsehood of Tom's parentage is established at the start of the novel, only to be exposed at the conclusion. Indeed Jenny lies unequivocally, referring to the foundling as "my poor helpless child…my infant" (47). Intentionally deceiving Allworthy and the rest of society, Jenny appears to be a seasoned liar and initially conforms to the image of the duplicitous servant.

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[41] Paulson, *Satire and the Novel*, p. 148.

It is only on closer examination of the story that this image of Jenny is altered. Alongside the revelation that she did not give birth to Tom, it is also discovered that the hero's real mother is Miss Bridget. Fearful of the social consequences which would result if her indiscretion was exposed, Miss Bridget bribed the servant to own the child. When Jenny is confronted by Allworthy with her deceit she retorts "so far what I confessed… was true, that these hands conveyed the infant to your bed; conveyed it thither at the command of its mother; at her commands I afterwards owned it…" (831-832). Here it is illustrated that this servant's deceit is attributed directly to her mistress. Although it must be admitted that self-interest is a contributing factor, the original concept of the falsehood lies with her employer. Indeed, it is Miss Bridget who initiates this scheme and persuades her servant to comply with the deceitful stratagem. Thus on consideration of these facts, while Jenny's conduct is not vindicated, it is evident that her deceitful behaviour is more complex than it first appears.

Interestingly, Jenny was chosen by Miss Bridget to act as her confidante precisely owing to her qualities of reliability and trustworthiness. This is revealed when Jenny relates how her mistress

> began to catechise me on the subject of secrecy, to which I gave her such satisfactory answers, that at last, having locked the door of her room, she took me into her closet, and then locking that door likewise, she said she should convince me of the vast reliance she had on my integrity by communicating a secret in which her honour, and consequently her life, was concerned. (832)

Here Fielding again emphasises the complexity of the servant relationship with truth. Jenny it is established is an honest person and as such Miss Bridget felt she could depend on her to keep her secret. In this respect as an honest employee, Jenny is identified by her mistress as the perfect candidate to effectively carry out her deceitful strategy. It is through his illustration of this incident that Fielding draws attention to a central paradox of the servant condition; that truthful servants are particularly useful in perpetrating falsehoods and maintaining deceits.

Commenting on the development of Jenny's character throughout the novel, C. J. Rawson argues that her character changes substantially during the course of the text. In this respect he observes that "it is perhaps a small sign of Fielding's sense of the quirky unpredictability of human nature that Jenny Jones later becomes Mrs. Waters, a woman of fairly easy virtue, and of a glowing uncomplicated generosity."[42] This chapter however maintains that the essentials of Jenny's personality remain largely static and unchanged throughout the narrative. Despite receiving financial compensation for her actions, her willingness to face social exclusion and condemnation for a misdemeanour she did not commit is indicative of her good natured disposition. Furthermore, by sacrificing her reputation as a chaste female, she relinquishes the possibility of being employed as a servant in any reputable household. Devoid of a respectable character, the harsh truth is that Jenny has little alternative other than to become a woman of "easy virtue"; on the contrary it would be surprising if she did not.

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[42] C.J. Rawson, *Profiles in Literature: Henry Fielding* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 86.

Indeed, if denied a good character testimonial, the harsh reality was that there were very few alternative employment opportunities available to the vast majority of women. In consequence of this, dismissed or unemployed female servants often turned to prostitution. As Patty Seleski observes, "The fear, that London women knew the town too well, that they alternated between service and prostitution... was a constant source of anxiety to employers."[43] While this fear centred on London it was not limited to this vicinity, and the perceived link between service and prostitution was a cause of widespread social anxiety throughout the century. Fielding as a magistrate in a crowded London suburb and as a canny social observer would have been well appraised of this prevalent social problem. Thus through the character of Jenny, the author subtly gestures towards this issue and acknowledges that the disgraced maidservant's loose virtue is anything but unpredictable.

Thus in both *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, Fielding develops his theory of human nature, demonstrating how his characters remain fundamentally unchanged throughout. While minor changes may occur, for instance an individual may become wiser or more prudent; the essential essence of their character remains unaltered. A truly significant aspect to Fielding's works however, is that he applies this same theory to all the characters in his novels, including both masters and servants. In consequence, the figure of the servant becomes more complex in comparison with previous literary portrayals. By developing his servant characters in this way, the author is enabled to take into consideration external social factors which influence and impact upon the behaviour of these attendants. It is in this way that Fielding is enabled to shed new light upon the eighteenth-century servant's problematic relationship with truth and provide a more sympathetic insight into their predicament.

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[43] Patty Seleski, 'Women, Work and Cultural Change in Eighteenth-and Early Nineteenth-Century London' in *Popular Culture in England 1500-1850* ed. Tim Harris (London: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 143-167 (p. 154).

The final novel which this chapter will consider is *Amelia*. Published in 1751, this text failed to prove as successful as Fielding's previous works of fiction and in comparison was a commercial disappointment. The story revolves around Captain Booth and his virtuous and beautiful wife Amelia. Having married against her mother's wishes, Amelia is ostracised from her family and the couple move to London where they endure numerous financial hardships and difficulties. While here Booth is falsely imprisoned in Newgate and is seduced by the alluring Miss Matthews. Meanwhile the heroine is hounded by the importunities of the villainous Noble Lord yet successfully manages to evade his rapacious advances. On discovering her husband's indiscretion however, Amelia promptly forgives him and the novel concludes with the family's happy emigration to the countryside.

Throughout the novel, it is revealed that both Amelia and Booth are incapable of detecting falsehood or penetrating behind appearances. As a result both the hero and heroine are constantly duped and imposed upon by manipulators and fraudsters with often disastrous results. By placing the novel in the treacherous London metropolis, Fielding uses this setting to demonstrate how an acquaintance with and knowledge of falsehood are required to survive in this dangerous and precarious environment. However, Fielding emphasises that while Booth is unable to detect imposition, he is nevertheless capable of perpetrating deceits. Indeed, during the narrative the hero is not only involved in an array of intrigues but furthermore attempts to recruit his servant, Little Betty as his accomplice.

It is for this reason that in *Amelia* it is once more important for servants to be familiar with the techniques and methods of lying. This is illustrated when Booth receives a letter from his ex-lover Miss Matthews and attempts to hide it. Plagued by guilt and shame, the patriarch of the household is struggling to keep his illicit affair concealed from his devoted wife. After she has delivered the letter, the housemaid returns to request an answer to it, to which her master responds

> What letter,' cries Booth, 'the child is mad, you gave me no letter.' - 'Yes, indeed I did sir,' said the poor girl. 'Why then, as sure as fate,' cries Booth, 'I threw it into the fire in my reverie, why, child, why did you not tell me it was a letter?'[44]

Here we see how Betty's failure to grasp her employer's meaning almost leads Booth into trouble. Her inability to read the hints issued by her master and take her cue accordingly furthermore proves a potential threat to the household's domestic peace. In this informative scene, Fielding again indicates that servants must be adept in the arts of deceit in order to fulfil their roles effectively. Indeed, these employees, he highlights must be flexible in regards to honesty and capable of realising when equivocation is required.

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[44] Henry Fielding, *Amelia* ed. David Blewett (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 165. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

This issue is further explored when Booth's anxiety to conceal his affair further escalates and results in his decision to intercept Amelia's letters. Fearful that his wife will be sent a letter containing confirmation of his sordid misdeeds, Booth embarks upon this defence strategy in order to protect himself from exposure. In consequence he "order(s) the maid to deliver him any letter directed to Amelia, at the same time strictly charging her not to acquaint her mistress with her having received any such orders" (173-174). Her inability to do this effectively however is again illustrated when in accordance with her master's orders Little Betty delivers a card which is intended for Amelia to Booth. After this,

> Booth having read the card, on his return into the room, chid the girl for calling him, saying, 'if you can read, child, you must see it was directed to your mistress.' To this the girl answered pertly enough, 'I am sure, sir, you ordered me to bring every letter first to you.' (174)

Yet again, Betty's complete ignorance of deceit and her incapacity to perpetrate this skill effectively makes her utterly useless as a servant. Incapable of grasping the fundamental elements involved in deception, the maidservant's naivety in effect proves to be a liability.

This point is further emphasised in a direct narrative commentary upon the character of Betty, wherein the narrator reflects that

> A servant of any acuteness would have formed strange conjectures from such an injunction; but this poor girl was of perfect simplicity; so great indeed was her simplicity, that had not Amelia been void of all suspicion of her husband, the maid would have soon after betrayed her master. (174)

Indeed, Little Betty proves to be a hindrance rather than a help. Simply put, she is too innocent and honest to make an efficient servant. Unversed in the arts of deceit, she cannot fulfil her obligations effectively or carry out her master's demands successfully. In consequence, an effective servant, Fielding implies must have a flexible approach when dealing with the truth. Betty however lacks this skill and furthermore, seems incapable of mastering it.

In this novel, Fielding’s approach to characterization shifts and his perspective on human nature becomes more sinister. In describing this method of character depiction, John S. Coolidge observes that

> Our knowledge of a person’s character is always provisional, pending further discovery. A new word or act may bring a new revelation, causing a shift in our interpretation and evaluation of a person’s character…. He may reveal, under new conditions and in new human relationships, aspects of his character which had existed only in hidden potentiality; or his character may undergo a real change.[45]

When applied to Betty, this statement becomes particularly relevant. Indeed having previously struggled to grasp the concept of deceit, toward the conclusion of the novel Betty’s character appears to change drastically when she steals from her employers. Considering her earlier behaviour this act seems radically out of character and inconsistent with the maid’s established disposition. It is only on a closer examination of the environment in which she is situated however that her behaviour becomes explicable. Indeed it is under the guidance and tutelage provided by her master that Betty has finally conquered the arts of deceit and has put them into practice. In this respect, it is ironic that Booth, the prime initiator of this behaviour is the character who is most vehement in his condemnation of the servant girl.

This chapter has thus argued that while Fielding was sympathetic toward the plight of servants, he nevertheless recognised that they did have a somewhat complex and vexed relationship with the truth. The very nature of the master-servant relationship, he implies, requires that servants must equivocate and lie and that essentially deceit is incumbent upon servants’ subordinate status. Bearing this in mind, the author’s involvement in the notorious Elizabeth Canning affair seems surprising. This case involved the mysterious disappearance of the aforementioned Canning, a young servant girl who disappeared on 1 January 1753 and suddenly reappeared almost a month later in a dishevelled and emaciated condition. Accounting for her absence, Canning claimed she had been kidnapped by a gypsy named Mary Squires and her accomplice Susannah Wells, who attempted to recruit her into prostitution. On refusing to comply with their demands, the plaintiff claimed she was then stripped and imprisoned in a loft for twenty eight days until she finally made her escape through a window.

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[45] John S. Coolidge, ‘Fielding and “Conservation of Character”’, *Modern Philology*, Volume 57, Number 4 (May 1960), 245-259 (p. 250).

Furthermore, she protested that during her captivity her sustenance only amounted to a jug of water, a quatern loaf of bread and a minced pie and maintained that it was solely upon these scanty provisions that she survived for almost a month.

This case proved one of the most controversial topics of the eighteenth century, with public opinion sharply divided between those who believed the young girl's narrative and those who argued that her story was a fabricated pack of lies. Kristina Straub for instance, claims the affair "was a whodunit for London's readers."[46] In consequence, a paper war ensued, with the publication of approximately forty pamphlets and leaflets pertaining to the case stimulating discussion of the controversy. Canning's supporters - the aptly named "Canningites" - maintained that the plaintiff was an innocent and trustworthy youth who had been viciously and barbarously treated by Wells and her coterie. Their opponents however, referred to as "Egyptians", tarred Canning as a liar and claimed that she had concocted this far-fetched and improbable story in order to conceal the fact that she was with child. Indeed they argued that an illegitimate pregnancy was the real cause of Canning's absence, and that the servant had composed the elaborate fable concerning Wells in order to falsely account for her whereabouts and cover up her sexual indiscretion.

Fielding was involved in this case in his capacity as a magistrate and interviewed both Canning and some of the other witnesses involved in the affair, including one Virtue Hall. This young woman who was an employee of Mary Wells initially supported Canning's version of events but later claimed that Fielding had pressured and coerced her into collaborating Canning's testimony. Indeed Hall asserted that "when I was at Mr Fielding's I at first spoke the truth, but was told it was not the truth. I was terrified and threatened to be sent to Newgate, and prosecuted as a felon, unless I should speak the truth."[47] Under duress and apparently bullied by Fielding, Hall allegedly doctored her evidence in order to make it tally with that provided by Canning. In consequence of Hall's claims, Fielding was left vulnerable to allegations of professional misconduct and in defence of his own conduct and the character of the plaintiff he published *A Clear State of the Case of Elizabeth Canning* (1753). Within this pamphlet, the magistrate vindicates his behaviour and unequivocally proclaims his unreserved faith in Canning's "strange, unaccountable, and scarce credible story."[48]

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[46] Kristina Straub, 'Heteroanxiety and the Case of Elizabeth Canning', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Volume 30, Number 3 (1997), 296-304 (p. 296).

[47] John Treherne, *The Canning Enigma* (London: Cape, 1989), p. 44.

[48] Henry Fielding, *A Clear State of the Case of Elizabeth Canning* (London: A Millar, 1753) p. 13.

In the pamphlet, while meticulously detailing the facts of the case, Fielding explicitly admits that Canning's story is "improbable."[49] Despite this however, he founds his belief in the servant's testimony on a number of grounds. Indeed he claims that Canning is simply not "witty enough to invent such a story" being a "child in years, and yet more so in understanding."[50] In this respect, the plaintiff apparently lacks the intelligence or imagination required to invent such a fabulous and incredible fable. More importantly however, Fielding also justifies his confidence in the truth of the account based on Canning's impeccable reputation. Summarising her character, the magistrate asserts that Canning is reputed "to support the character of a virtuous, modest, sober, well-disposed girl; and this character most enforced by those who know her best, and *particularly by those with whom she hath lived in service*"[51] (my italics). Recalling the policies used by the Universal Register Office, Fielding again emphasises the importance of character testimonials provided by employers in establishing an accurate reading of a servant's disposition. Thus, relying on both the integrity of her master's word and judgement, the magistrate reasons that Canning's version of events is a true and accurate account.

At first glance, Fielding's belief in the far-fetched and incredible story told by this servant appears extraordinary when compared with his previous attitude espoused toward this group. As Lance Bertelsen observes, the magistrate's response appears "remarkable" given "Fielding's habitual suspicion"[52] of the serving class. However, based on a close examination of Fielding's treatment of servants throughout his works, this chapter argues that Fielding's defence of Canning is consistent with his views towards servants in general. Indeed as this chapter has argued, Fielding emphatically maintained that masters were the most reliable source for providing accurate information about the moral disposition and behaviour of their employees. To challenge Canning's version of events would therefore involve calling into doubt the word of her employers. In consequence Canning, armed with a glowing reference from her employers must, Fielding reasons, be "a poor, honest, innocent, simple girl."[53]

In conclusion, this chapter suggests that Fielding reassesses the plight of the eighteenth-century servant and offers a more perceptive insight into their complex relationship with truth-telling.

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[49] Fielding, *Clear State of the Case*, p. 15.

[50] Fielding, *Clear State of the Case*, p. 23.

[51] Fielding, *Clear State of the Case*, p. 22.

[52] Lance Bertelsen, *Henry Fielding At Work: Magistrate, Businessman, Writer* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 105.

[53] Fielding, *Clear State of the Case*, p. 59.

Through a consideration of the master-servant relationship, the author exposes the intricate and complex nature of this connection, suggesting in consequence that quite often servants are denied the luxury of speaking the truth. Masters however, due to their independence are Fielding reasons, at liberty to speak the truth and hence their word can generally be relied upon. Thus by indicating how the essential nature of the social hierarchy is culpable for the deceitful conduct of servants, the author alleviates the extent of condemnation placed on the lower classes. This sympathetic assessment of the situation however does not amount to an advocacy of social change and Fielding categorically refuses to challenge the social hierarchy. Rather, by treating the issue in a comic manner Fielding is enabled to explore the nature of the master-servant relationship and offer a more insightful portrayal of the serving class.

CHAPTER TWO

Out of This World: Honest Servants in the Novels of Tobias Smollett

In the *Continuation of the Complete History of England* (1765), Tobias Smollett provides a somewhat unfavourable assessment of British culture during of the rule of George II (1683-1760). Reflecting on the reign of the former monarch, Smollett fumes that within society "The tide of luxury still flowed with an impetuous current, bearing down all mounds of temperance and decorum; while fraud and profligacy struck out new channels...and...new arts of deception were invented in order to ensnare and ruin the unwary."[1] This choleric statement is generally reflective of the author's scathing attitude toward luxury which he perceived as having a devastating impact on the moral fabric of contemporary society. This vice, Smollett raged, was infecting English culture and in effect transforming a booming, productive populace into a slovenly, effeminate society. While no class in society escaped reprimand, servants were often identified as a group which were particularly liable to succumb to the lure and temptation of luxury. As such, they were commonly viewed as embracing this dangerously materialistic ethos, prioritising mercenary concerns of high wages and advantageous remuneration over more traditional considerations of family loyalty and attachment.

In light of this issue, this chapter will examine Smollett's depiction of servants in his major novels, and will suggest how the author challenges and interrogates commonly held attitudes towards this group. It will argue that Smollett inverts a popular view of servants, which held them to be treacherous, grasping reprobates and instead depicts these characters as loyal retainers emotionally attached to their masters. As such, these characters stem the tide of social change, and are ultimately portrayed as idealised figures withstanding the economic forces which were generally perceived as encroaching upon the master-servant relationship. However, it is only due to their removal from these economic considerations, the chapter argues, that these servants can act in an honest and candid manner. Ultimately however, Smollett concedes that these characters are out of place and wholly unsuitable to their social environment.

Unlike Fielding, Smollett rarely commented on the topic of servants outside of his fictional works. For this reason, the chapter will focus on the publication of his three most popular novels, namely

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[1] Quoted in John Richetti, *The English Novel in History 1700-1780* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.167.

The Adventures of Roderick Random (1749), *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). In Smollett's early novels these characters are largely characterised in a similar manner with set characteristics and behaviours, functioning in essence as archetypal set-pieces. In this respect their role is largely to act as foils, highlighting the hypocrisy and double standards of the upper classes. In his final publication however, Smollett introduces a more complex view of servants which, the chapter argues, is possibly suggestive of an increasingly sympathetic and nuanced perspective on their difficult social position.

Throughout Smollett's career, his literary style was a subject of much debate and controversy. While drawing heavily on the picaresque tradition, he also infused his novels with "low" elements, making use of bawdy jokes and inserting grotesque depictions into his works. It was these elements which garnered much criticism, with many of his contemporaries feeling such techniques were unsuitable in the realm of literary endeavour. Entering the novel debate however, Smollett defended his artistic entitlement as a writer to include such controversial elements in his works. Indeed in *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753) Smollett explicitly addresses this issue, highlighting the double-standards of readers who find entertainment in Swift's expletives "yet in a production of these days, unstamped with such venerable names, will stop their noses, with all the signs of loathing and abhorrence, at the bare mention of a china chamberpot."[2] Furthermore, while claiming stylistic affinity with reputable writers, the author argued that these "impolite" literary aspects, although perhaps distasteful to a learned reader, were nevertheless parts of everyday reality and therefore must unflinchingly be included in the novel. In the novelist's bid to depict a realistic, accurate portrayal of everyday life Smollett argued, disconcerting and unsettling aspects of real life must be faced.

In light of this view, Smollett was adamant that all classes in society should be represented in his texts. Discussing his aesthetic theory in the preface to *Roderick Random*, Smollett declares that the lower realms of society must be depicted, and identifies the lower classes as "those parts of life, where the humours and passions are undisguised by affectation, ceremony, or education; and the whimsical peculiarities of disposition appear as nature has implanted them."[3] It is here, Smollett argues, amidst the lowest levels of society that people are natural and unaffected.

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[2] Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (London: Harrison & Co, 1782), p. 9.

[3] Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. Paul-Gabriel Boucè (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. xxxv. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

Conversely therefore he subtly implies that it is amongst the upper classes where deceit and affectation are rampant. It is this idea which Smollett explores in relation to the master-servant relationships presented in his early novels, portraying masters as scheming tricksters and servants as honest truth-tellers.

This controversy surrounding Smollett's literary style is evident in the contemporary reviews of his works. Writing in 1771, the *Monthly Review* complained that

> Some modern wits appear to have entertained a notion that there is but one kind of *indecency* in writing; and that, provided they exhibit nothing of a lascivious nature, they may freely paint, with their pencils dipt in the most odious materials that can possibly be raked together for the most filthy and disgustful colouring.[4]

However, the more progressively inclined *Critical Review* (where Smollett coincidentally served as editor from 1756 until 1763), voiced a more favourable response to Smollett's literary efforts and praised his style and subsequent dedication to reality. Countering their rival's criticism of *Humphry Clinker*, the publication declared that

> Instead of visionary scenes and persons, the usual subjects of romance, we are frequently presented with many uncommon anecdotes and curious exhibitions of real life, described in such a manner as to afford a 'pleasure even superior to what arises from the portraits of fancy'. We are everywhere entertained with the narration or description of something interesting and extraordinary, calculated at once to amuse the imagination, and release the understanding from prejudice.[5]

The *Critical Review* in this respect commended Smollett's determination to portray events and situations in a lively, dynamic and vivacious manner. Furthermore the review based its appraisal on Smollett's ability to "release the understanding from prejudice," altering the readers' preconceptions and, it is implied, enabling us to see common events from a new perspective.

Indeed it was principally through his innovation with form that Smollett was enabled to play with readers' expectations and portray situations from new aspects. At a structural level Smollett took his inspiration for his early novels from the picaresque tradition. Heavily influenced by writers such as Alain-Rene LeSage, Smollett's heroes, like many picaros, find themselves in the midst of a chaotic and violent world; where order and subordination have been replaced by selfish desires for financial accumulation and social mobility. While minor technical adjustments have been made to the plan (Smollett disagreed for instance with the ease with which Gil Blas changed from a position of "distress to happiness" (xxxiv)), the most significant change is evident in the social class of the hero. The picaro, who as Donald Bruce remarks, is "most of the time a none- too honest manservant"[6] is replaced in Smollett's universe by a genteel born young man.

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[4] Quoted in Paul-Gabriel Boucè, *The Novels of Tobias Smollett*, trans. by Antonia White (London: Longman, 1976), p.259.

[5] Quoted in Boucè*, The Novels of Tobias Smollett*, p. 259.

By substituting the gentleman hero into the position usually occupied by a servant, Smollett subverts the picaresque form which as Ronald Paulson observes "destroys one of the most important characteristics of the picaresque, the service of masters."[7] It is this social inversion however which can be seen as Smollett's strongest criticism of a world in utter turmoil. The basic hierarchical structure of society has been turned topsy-turvy and this Smollett argues, is reflective of the anarchic nature of modern Britain. Through his experimentation with these picaresque conventions, the author thus voices his condemnation of the burgeoning capitalist economic system which was undermining the traditional, hierarchical structure of society.

Indeed this newly emerging social structure was a subject upon which Smollett voiced grave concern. Like many of his contemporaries, he identified luxury as a corrosive element which was subverting the proper order of society. As Susan L. Jacobsen notes, Smollett "feared that economic self-interest on every level threatened not just a traditional patriarchal, land-based social structure, but also the political and economic future of Britain."[8] With commercialism intruding upon the traditional bonds which held society together, Smollett was apprehensive that the fundamental nature of the social hierarchy was in jeopardy. While previously birth and lineage had secured one's privileged position in society, in this credit economy low-born, vulgar upstarts could it was perceived, claim a position of respectability if they accumulated enough money. Economic endeavour could therefore change an individual's social position, with social mobility therefore in theory, available to all.

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[6] Donald Bruce*, Radical Doctor Smollett* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1964), p. 165.

[7] Paulson, *Satire and the Novel*, p. 168.

[8] Susan L. Jacobsen, '"The Tinsel of the Times": Smollett's Argument against Conspicuous Consumption in *Humphry Clinker*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Volume 9, Number 1 (October 1996), 71-88 (p. 72).

Smollett however vehemently rejected this egalitarian ideal, maintaining that birth was one of the major defining characteristics of identity. Without a respectable family heritage one could never become a true gentleman; it was simply impossible. This ideology is reflective of Smollett's defensive attitude toward his own personal predicament. Born into an ancient, well established family, he nevertheless lacked the necessary financial means to support his position as a leisured gentleman and was thus obliged to work in order to support himself. As Ian Campbell Ross notes "The importance Smollett attached to the distinction of being a gentleman by birth finds repeated expression throughout his life."[9] Mindful of his lack of wealth, Smollett fervently defined birth as a prerequisite for gentlemanly status and thus, despite a lack of fortune or material resources, he could always maintain his claim to a genteel rank. His status was thus fixed, secure and fundamentally immovable.

This defensive attitude towards one's natural social position is prevalent throughout Smollett's works and is especially evident in his treatment of servants. These characters act as anchors throughout his works and constantly reaffirm the hero's superior position in a fluctuating society. Indeed, these characters not only appreciate their lowly status in society but moreover embrace their subordinate position. Moreover, throughout his novels servants are also pointedly indifferent to material concerns and financial issues. In this respect, their characterisation contradicts the dominantly held social view which identified servants as a group particularly susceptible to the tantalising allure of the luxury economy. In his novels Smollett shows a very different side to the story.

Smollett's firm belief in the fixed hierarchical nature of society is illustrated in *Roderick Random*. This story revolves around the eponymous hero, a young orphan of good education and family background who, due to the vindictive spirit of his grandfather has been forced into the world without financial support. The novel follows the escapades of this young man and his shifting fortunes through prosperity and adversity in a volatile and chaotic social environment. Due to this, Roderick is obliged to live off his wits and the novel charts the various stratagems employed by the protagonist in order to amass a fortune and live the life of a gentleman. Toward the end of the novel however, Roderick fortuitously becomes reacquainted with his long-lost father, inherits a fortune and the novel concludes with his happy marriage to the virtuous heroine Narcissa.

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[9] Ian Campbell Ross, 'Tobias Smollett: Gentleman by Birth, Education and Profession', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Volume 5, Number 2 (Autumn 1982), 179-189 (p. 180).

Throughout his many adventures Roderick is accompanied by his loyal friend and devoted servant Hugh Strap. Through his portrayal of this relationship, Smollett portrays this master-servant dynamic as an ideal of pre-industrial feudal relations. Despite encroaching economic conditions, the relationship between Strap and Roderick is preserved and withstands these modern attacks due to Strap's unfailing devotion to his master. Indeed Strap like Roderick bases his notion of identity on family and lineage, and views one's social position as fixed from birth. Thus wealth and education do not impact upon Strap's worldview and in consequence, he has no desire to ascend the social ladder or better his station in life.

Carol Stewart draws attention to this point, observing that in *Roderick Random* "The hero's status as a gentleman is confirmed by the unwavering, and disinterested loyalty and deference of his servant, Hugh Strap – this despite the fact that Strap very often supports him financially, as Roderick bitterly reflects."[10] Robert P. Irvine also makes a similar remark upon the steadying effect of Strap's loyalty, noting that

> The only way in which Roderick's status is consistently confirmed in the bulk of the novel is in the perception of him by his servant Strap…. Strap maintains a loyalty towards Roderick from 'a voluntary, disinterested inclination' even in their childhood; Roderick's gentility means that when they meet as adults, this loyalty turns into a master-servant relationship without either actually mentioning this.[11]

While the servant's loyalty and devotion act as a constant, stabilising force throughout the text so too does his fixed permanent character. Indeed throughout the narrative, Strap is characterised by his imperviousness to external influencing factors, all of which fail to significantly impact upon his behaviour or mentality. In this respect, his character acts as a testament to the natural, unalterable nature of the social hierarchy.

Strap's conservative view of the social structure is evident when we are first introduced to him while he is working as a barber and accidentally becomes reacquainted with his old friend Roderick. On hearing that Roderick is travelling to London to find his fortune, Strap decides he would "bear (Roderick) company, carry(ing) (his) baggage as well as his own, all the way" (33) and it is in this manner that the master-servant relationship is established. From here on, Strap acts in the capacity of a willing subordinate, taking instructions and obeying commands from his master. Despite the fact that Strap is an old “school-fellow” (32) of Roderick, the former does not believe this education has altered his position. As he explains to Roderick

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[10] Carol Stewart, *The Eighteenth-Century Novel and the Secularization of Ethics* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 75.

[11] Robert P Irvine, *Enlightenment and Romance: Gender and Agency in Smollett and Scott* (Bern: Peter Lang Publishers, 2000), p. 44.

> To be sure, Mr. Random, you are born a gentleman, and have a great deal of learning – and indeed look like a gentleman, for as to person you may hold up your head with the best of them. – On the other hand, I am a poor, but honest cobbler’s son – my mother was as industrious a woman as ever broke bread, ‘till such time as she took to drinking, which you very well know…. Now for myself I am a poor journeyman barber, tolerably well made, and understand some Latin, and have a smattering of Greek… (95)

Despite his education, Strap describes himself as “simple” (95) and indeed throughout the novel this simplicity is illustrated in various events.

One such incident occurs when both he and Roderick are staying at an inn and an old, peculiar looking man suddenly enters the room, crying out “where is Ralph?”(61). While both of the travellers are shocked, Strap’s reaction is more extreme and he interprets the incident as a supernatural phenomenon. We are informed that “As for the old man, (Strap) took it to be the spirit of somebody murdered long ago in this place, which had power granted it to torment the assassin in the shape of a raven, and that Ralpho was the name of the said murderer” (61). Afterwards of course, a rational explanation is provided to the episode when it is revealed that the old man is actually the deranged father of the innkeeper. Thus Strap’s misunderstanding becomes a source of comedy and mirth.

This scene is important in two ways. Firstly Strap’s belief in the supernatural functions as a sign of his lower class mentality. Servants as members of the lower regions of society were characterised by their credulity and tendency to believe in fantastical occurrences. Supposedly lacking a rational capacity, servants it was perceived could not decipher issues in a logical manner and thus constantly had recourse to supernatural explanations for natural events.[12] Secondly however, the incident highlights the fact that despite Strap’s classical education, his learning has had no visible impact on his behaviour or mentality, and as such he retains a “native simplicity.” Thus while some reformers suggested that education could possibly aid the development of lower class intellect, Smollett directly discountenances this possibility. Indeed, even academic instruction holds no power over Strap’s indelible simplicity.

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[12] The credulity of servants, and their association with supernatural beliefs became an increasing issue of concern as the century progressed. It was deemed that servants had a detrimental impact on the psychological development of younger upper class children who through their close contact with these employees could be adversely influenced by this irrational, illogical mentality. See chapter 5.

While education has had no effect on Strap, Roderick’s education on the other hand, makes him wholly unsuitable to the position of servant. This is revealed when having exhausted all other possibilities to make his fortune Roderick is reduced to entering service as a footman where he meets the heroine Narcissa. Initially the hero passes as a servant however, when asked to hazard a guess at the translation of a certain poem which has baffled the attempts of both his mistresses, his true identity is revealed. Recalling the event, Roderick explains that “I was too vain to let slip this opportunity of displaying my talents, therefore, without hesitation, read and explained the whole of that which had disconcerted them, to the utter astonishment of both” (223). It is this flawless, erudite translation which arouses his employers’ suspicion and hereafter Roderick is treated with some reserve.

Thus while the lowly Strap’s attempts at education prove futile, Roderick as a gentleman by birth can comprehend these complex ideas and therefore excel in the realm of intellectual endeavour. As Robert P. Irvine remarks

> Roderick’s education fulfils the role of the aristocratic aura that in, for example, Aphra Behn shines through any disguise to confirm gentility as independent of the trappings of status, as a reality transcendent of contingent social fact. Indeed, his becoming a servant in this generic sense thus *confirms* his status position as only his relationship with Strap does elsewhere.[13]

In this sense, gentility cannot be disguised, just as simplicity cannot be rectified. As such, both of these traits function as inherent markers of identity which reaffirm the natural hierarchical nature of society.

While these qualities function to reinforce conventional notions of the fixed hierarchy, this structure is nevertheless coming under pressure from external economic factors. Indeed this is illustrated through the reversal of the traditional master-servant dynamic whereby Strap is for the majority of the novel more financially affluent than Roderick. In consequence, it falls upon the servant to fiscally provide for his master, and it is in this way that Smollett illustrates the truly shambolic state of contemporary Britain. While this is undoubtedly true and the author is clearly angered by this state of affairs, it is possible that Smollett also uses this issue to once more emphasise the natural order of the social hierarchy. Indeed as Irvine suggests, Strap's willingness to relinquish his funds in order to aid his master can be viewed as a defence of the traditional patriarchal relationship in the face of economic changes.[14]

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[13] Irvine, *Enlightenment and Romance*, p. 82.

This is indicated when Roderick has gambled away all his money and is discovered by his servant in a disconsolate state. Strap is distressed to see his master in such a predicament and willingly tenders to him his leather purse crying "I know what you think: but I scorn your thoughts. – There's all I have in the world, take it, and I'll perhaps get more for you before that be done – if not, I'll beg for you, steal for you, go through the wide world with you, and starve with you…."(72-73). Roderick attempts to return the money to his servant but Strap refuses, stating that "it was more reasonable and decent that he should depend upon (Roderick) who was a gentleman, than that (Roderick) should be controuled by him"(73). In this respect, Strap's actions reinforce the patriarchal nature of the master-servant relationship. For Strap, financial considerations do not influence or impact upon the essential nature of this relationship or affect the tenor of the connection. As such, Strap's affluence does not alter his status in society; he is still subordinate to his insolvent employer.

This assault upon the ancient bond between master and servant by corruptive economic forces is also explored by Smollett in his next novel *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*. In this text, the principle servant character Tom Pipes again functions as an anchor to the maintenance of the patriarchal relationship. This novel tells the story of the handsome hero Peregrine – a privileged, wealthy and spoilt young man. The novel follows him from his youth as a petulant child, through to his immature adolescence, finally ending with his advantageous marriage to the beautiful and virtuous Emilia. Following the same lively, rambunctious style as *Roderick Random*, Smollett depicts the brutally vicious nature of eighteenth-century society and condemns it accordingly.

The major difference between Smollett's two eponymous heroes is that for the vast majority of the book Peregrine is wealthy. Even so, due to his outrageous financial extravagance, toward the end of the novel Peregrine has been imprisoned for debt. The ever loyal Pipes predictably offers his master the money to extricate himself from his current predicament but Peregrine flatly refuses the proposal. Furthermore, realising he can no longer afford to pay his servant's wages, Peregrine dismisses the disconsolate Pipes from his service. On receiving this sentence, we are informed that

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[14] Irvine, *Enlightenment and Romance*, p. 49.

> Pipes looked blank at this unexpected intimation, to which he replied, that he wanted neither pay nor provision, but only to be employed as a tender….And Pipes was so mortified at this refusal, that, twisting the notes together, he threw them into the fire without hesitation, crying, 'Damn the money!'[15]

It is here again that Smollett illustrates an idealised vision of the master-servant relationship placed within the contemporary realities of eighteenth-century Britain. As Ian Campbell Ross suggests "not only does (Pipes) teach the hero by example, but in his rejection of financial rewards and his willing assumption of a subordinate social position at all times, he acts out the social values the author suggests appropriate to his rank in an ordered, hierarchical society."[16] Genuinely and sincerely attached to his master, Pipes is indifferent to monetary concerns, indeed he is somewhat scornful towards the concept of financial remuneration.

Despite both Strap's and Pipes' immunity to social practicalities, Smollett does nevertheless suggest that the changing nature of society is threatening the traditional master-servant bond. What is interesting however is that while servants act as a buffer to these forces, their masters are liable to succumb to their alluring influence. Throughout *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle* for instance we see how both heroes are influenced by current social values associated with fashionable society. In this way the author challenges the contemporary view of servants, laying the onus for the crumbling patriarchal relationship firmly on the shoulders of the upper classes. Indeed while servants attempt to sustain this relationship, Smollett demonstrates how masters constantly rebuff and undermine the efforts of their attendants.

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[15] Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* ed. James L Clifford, 2nd edn, rev. by Paul Gabriel Boucè (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 683-684. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

[16] Ian Campbell-Ross, '"With Dignity and Importance": Peregrine Pickle as Country Gentleman' in *Smollett: Author of the First Distinction* ed. Alan Bold (London: Vision, 1982), pp. 158-168 (p.165).

This issue is explored in both novels. Throughout the two texts we see how Roderick and Peregrine are ruled by an overwhelming sense of pride and vanity, qualities which make them keen to conform to the fashionable practices of polite society. One such custom commonly adhered to by the bon-ton was the employment of well-groomed, sophisticated domestics. This practice arose due to the fact that in the eighteenth-century servants in addition to their practical role also fulfilled a significant symbolic function. A servant was commonly viewed as a reflection of their employer's social status and so it was deemed desirable to have mannerly, well-dressed servants in one's employment. As J. Jean Hecht remarks employers "fully appreciated the importance of the livery suit as part of the equipment of display… (and were) conscious of the prestige derived from being served by men and women who dressed like members of the upper classes."[17] A well dressed, sophisticated retainer could heighten the prestige of one's standing in the eyes of society. As a result, in eighteenth-century England there was a high demand for stylish, well-presented servants whose primary qualification was an attractive deportment.

Smollett's critique of this practice is illustrated in *Roderick Random*, when the hero is experiencing a rare moment of financial affluence. Accepted into high society, Roderick soon becomes embarrassed of Strap's acquaintance and desires to part company. Subsequently, Strap is offered a position as a *valet de chambre* which Roderick eagerly encourages him to accept. While the servant protests his genuine and everlasting attachment to his master, Roderick is relieved to be parted from his attendant and explains his feelings:

> In spite of all the obligations I owed this poor honest fellow, ingratitude is so natural to the heart of man, that I began to be tired of his acquaintance; and now, that I had contracted other friendships which appeared more creditable, I was even ashamed to see a journeyman barber enquiring after me with the familiarity of a companion. – I therefore, on pretence of consulting his welfare, insisted upon his accepting the proposal, which he at last determined to embrace, with great reluctance… (108)

Despite this however, as John Barrell observes "Strap accompanies him everywhere as his humble valet, and does his best to keep him supplied with funds – and this in spite of Roderick's attempt to drop his acquaintance as an embarrassment."[18] Indeed, regardless of his appalling treatment, Strap continues in his unalterable loyalty and fidelity to his master; his attachment (unlike Roderick's) is revealed as unconditional.

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[17] Quoted in Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p. 55.

This desire for attractive servants is also illustrated in *Peregrine Pickle* when the young hero is preparing to make his grand tour of Europe. By this time Pipes has served as a devoted servant to Peregrine for many years but despite this fidelity, he is quickly replaced with a more fashionable attendant. We are told that

> A Swiss valet de chambre, who had already made the tour of Europe, was hired for the care of Peregrine's own person; and Pipes being ignorant of the French language, as well as otherwise unfit for the office of a fashionable attendant, it was resolved that he should remain in garrison; and his place was immediately supplied by a Parisian lacquey engaged at London for that purpose. (165)

Irrespective of Pipes' loyalty and dedication to his master, Peregrine is embarrassed by his rustic ways and lower class status. In this way, the desire for polished manners and superficial behaviour are Smollett demonstrates, jeopardizing the nature of the master-servant bond. Society and in particular the upper classes, are increasingly prioritising appearance over substance, artificiality over true merit, and it is this warped value system which is threatening the social order. Indeed this failing was particularly associated with the vice of luxury, with critics viewing "Persons who succumb to its temptations (as) victims of artificial wants."[19] Blinded by the sheen of exterior facades, these masters are neglecting the true worth of their loyal, uncouth attendants.

Thus, Smollett provides an alternative perspective to the servant predicament in eighteenth-century society. He shows the practicalities of modern demands and illustrates that the institution of service is coming under increasing pressure; pressure which quite often comes from above, not below. It is the masters who are illustrated as initiating these changes through their prioritisation of new values, not servants. Furthermore, these employers are also depicted as ungrateful and selfish, failing to appreciate or justly value their servants as the patriarchal system requires. Thus it is the upper classes that are deemed partially, if not largely responsible for the shifting nature of the master-servant relationship.

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[18] John Barrell, *English Literature in History 1730-1780: An Equal Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), p. 193.

[19] John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 80.

While Smollett therefore challenges the typical view of servants which held them as grasping, money-oriented pariahs, he also questions their reputations as liars. Indeed both Strap and Pipes are characterised throughout the narratives by their honesty and integrity. In both novels we see these characters speak their mind freely and openly despite the threats and menaces of their masters. In contrast to Fielding's servants, Pipes and Strap constantly refuse to modify their behaviour or conceal their true opinions. While Fielding's domestics are mindful of their masters' expectations and carefully attempt to mould their responses and conduct in order to satisfy their employers' demands, Smollett's servants simply refuse to imitate any such behaviour.

This stubbornness could be viewed as a sign of their inherent simplicity: these domestics simply lack the calculation and sagacity which Fielding's servants are forced to adopt. However, while their behaviour may be caused by their "natural simplicity" it is also possible that it arises from their detachment from the practicalities of economic survival. Indeed as suggested above, Smollett emphasises at length how both Strap and Pipes are disinterested in financial issues. Thus being immune to these modern concerns of fiscal accumulation, these servant characters are not obliged to flatter their employers, and therefore can escape service with their integrity intact. Fielding's servants on the other hand, who are concerned with the everyday necessity of placating and pleasing their employers, are accorded no such liberty.

This honesty is primarily manifested in comic terms and functions as a source of comic relief. Typically for instance, the tendency of these servants to speak their mind without reserve often proves a source of irritation to their masters. This is demonstrated in *Roderick Random* when the hero returns home after a night of gambling and has sustained substantial financial losses. Recounting the night's events, Strap enters into conversation with Roderick and grossly underestimates the amount of money his master has lost. This ill-calculated conjecture irks Roderick's conscience, provoking him to issue a stinging rebuke to his servant. As Roderick explains he "was mortified at this piece of simplicity, which I imagined, at that time, was all affected by way of reprimand for my folly; and asked with some heat, if he thought I had spent the evening in a cellar with chairmen and bunters…"(283). This freedom of speech and unrestrained behaviour thus has comic yet practical implications for the master- servant relationship.

Sometimes however this stubbornness has more serious consequences. This element is demonstrated when Pipes becomes embroiled in an argument with a soldier from the French army and refuses to concede his point. The disagreement occurs when Pipes is socialising with a group of soldiers and the conversation turns to political matters. Having insulted the King of France and drinking “to the perdition of Lewis and all his adherents” (278), Pipes is ordered by a soldier to recant his controversial and offensive remarks. Pipes however refuses to comply and Peregrine is promptly informed of the incident. Outraged at the impolite conduct of his servant, Peregrine “reprimanded him sharply for his unmannerly behaviour and insisted upon his asking pardon of those he had injured, upon the spot” (278-279).

Despite this order however, Pipes stubbornly holds his ground and refuses to obey his master’s instructions. We are informed that “no consideration was efficacious enough to produce such a concession; to this command he was both deaf and dumb, and the repeated threats of his master had no more effect than if they had been addressed to a marble statue” (278-279). Pipes is enabled to adhere in this obstinate behaviour due to his disregard of the economic realities of survival. In this respect he is in a privileged position which enables him to voice his opinion, mindless of the threats issued by Peregrine and materially unaffected by the subsequent term of unemployment which follows.

It is in this manner that Smollett yet again illustrates the corrosive effects which the commercial nature of modern society is exercising upon the master-servant bond. Economic practicalities have resulted in a society where citizens are obliged to flatter and complement those above them in order to survive and prosper in this consumer based culture. Smollett remarked upon this parasitical aspect of contemporary society in his satirical poem *Advice* published in 1746, observing that

> Too coy to flatter, and too proud to serve,
>
> Thine be the joyless dignity to starve.[20]

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[20] Quoted in Bruce, *Radical Doctor Smollett*, p. 104.

In this respect, Smollett acknowledges that there is a direct link between deceit and this new capitalist economy: this new system necessitates that one embraces a cringing, flattering, servile behaviour in order to survive and prosper in this environment. Conversely however, the servants represented in Smollett's first two novels are unaffected by these concerns and hence are untainted with these deceitful, squirming behaviours.

Ultimately however, these servant characters are romanticised visions of an ideal attendant. Indeed in the eighteenth century, social commentators mourned the passing of the "golden age" of service whereby servants were emotionally attached to their masters and disinterested in issues of financial remuneration. In his early novels, Smollett offers a version of this perfect, devoted retainer yet does so to highlight how unrealistic these characters are in contemporary Britain. While they undoubtedly provide a source of comfort for an audience exasperated with the plagues of servant-keeping, these figures are however fantasies, pointedly detached from their economic and social environment.

This fantasy element is also reflected in the form of the novels. For the majority of the text the novels follow a picaresque style plot, consisting of various incidents and episodes which highlight the barbarity and cruelty of contemporary society. At the end however, a romance style ending is annexed to the story which seems wholly unsuitable to the narrative preceding it. As Michael Rosenblum suggests "Romance is the language of yesterday which can be made to tell the truth about today only by demonstrating how contemporary reality will not conform to the patterns of romance."[21] While this romance conclusion appears ultimately unconvincing, this however is the point. Indeed, Smollett intentionally uses this idealised ending as an indictment upon contemporary society, to highlight how out of place this romanticised conclusion truly is.

It is this same technique which Smollett applies to the depiction of his servant characters. Like the romance endings, Strap and Pipes also appear wholly misplaced. They are anomalies, eccentric characters that are at variance with the world around them. They act as "stock characters" that serve an ideological rather than realistic function. Their purpose in the texts, apart from providing entertainment, is to illustrate an idealised version of a rapidly changing relationship. In this respect, it is possible to view Smollett's depiction of servants as deeply conservative. As Damian

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[21] Michael Rosenblum, 'Smollett and the Old Conventions' in *Modern Essays on Eighteenth- Century Literature*, ed. Leopold Damrosch (New York; Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 310-323 (p.320).

Grant observes it should “be obvious to any reader, [that] there is no question of a relationship between Roderick and Strap, whose persistent devotion to the hero, and unhesitating self-sacrifice in his interest, are a simple reflex of his being.”[22] Indeed, both Pipes and Strap appear to be motivated by an inherent, natural devotion to their masters which confirms their lower class status and reinforces the patriarchal nature of the master-servant system.

While this is true and Smollett does endorse the master-servant relationship, he also however realises that there are failings involved in this relationship and is keen to highlight these shortcomings. Thus, this chapter argues that Smollett used servants not only to confirm the hierarchy but also to highlight how the upper classes were abusing this system. Commenting on the dynamic between Roderick and Strap, Grant continues that

> The relationship is a mechanical convenience, not a psychological necessity; on these terms we should not be surprised that Roderick feels in no way bound to his self-appointed servant. Strap is restricted to the cold latitude of comedy, his orbit is out on the circumference, where he is immune... to any complication of feeling. Smollett was amused to record that Strap had become ‘a favourite among the ladies everywhere’ but he would not have understood [one’s] indignation at the treatment meted out to him at the end of the novel.[23]

This chapter argues however that Strap is much more than a plot device. This servant is not simply a comic figure but instead he is used by Smollett to highlight the ingratitude of the upper classes. It is Roderick who for the majority of the novel views the relationship as a “mechanical convenience” not Smollett. Indeed as the author states in his preface, Roderick is a hero containing only “modest merit” (xxxv) and his treatment of Strap is certainly indicative of this. The reader should not only feel surprised but moreover indignant at Roderick’s careless, inconsiderate attitude which is jeopardising the fundamental structure of the patriarchal system. It is this abuse of the master-servant relationship as practiced by the upper classes which this chapter argues, serves as Smollett’s vehement indictment upon the degenerate nature of society.

By the time we come to Smollett’s final novel *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) however, the situation appears more complex and there is a marked difference in Smollett’s representation of servants. These employees can no longer ignore the economic realities which dominate society, and they too are shaped by these forces, with their behaviour modified accordingly. As such these characters are incorporated into their social environment and hence no longer serve as literary archetypes. In this respect, Smollett's servants are now more akin to Fielding's fictional domestics, subject to the pressures exerted by external factors and in effect responsive to their social milieu.

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[22] Damian Grant, *Tobias Smollett: A Study in Style* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), p. 129.

[23] Grant, *Tobias Smollett*, p. 130.

Published posthumously in 1771, *Humphry Clinker* tells the story of the Bramble family and their eventful journey through England and Scotland. The travelling party is comprised of the irritable Matthew Bramble, his man-hungry sister Tabitha, his naïve niece Lydia, her snobbish brother Jery and Tabitha's maid-servant Winifred Jenkins. Interestingly it is not until a third of the way through the novel that the eponymous hero joins the travelling party in the capacity of Bramble's servant. The main plot revolves around Bramble's search for health and rejuvenation and encapsulates a number of subplots including Lydia's love-affair with an "unsuitable" young man (who turns out to be the very suitable Dennison) and Tabitha's search for a husband. Full of comic incidents and humorous mishaps, this epistolary novel provides, through the letters of Bramble in particular, an array of scathing remarks on the corrupt nature of eighteenth-century Britain, condemning it as a society dominated by venality and greed.

Stylistically, this work differs dramatically from the two novels discussed previously. Whereas *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle* were largely inspired by the picaresque tradition, *Humphry Clinker* adopts a new, experimental narrative method. In this text Smollett adopts the basic epistolary narrative made popular by Richardson and complicates it, by providing an array of perspectives on the same events. The novel is thus comprised of letters from five of the principle characters and often these letters refute, undermine and contradict the viewpoints offered by other characters. In this respect there is a jostling sense captured by the narrative, with an array of partial perspectives vying for predominance.

It is striking however that Humphry in his capacity as the eponymous hero does not contribute any letters to the novel. This could partly be for the basic reason that Humphry is uneducated and hence is illiterate, as were many eighteenth-century servants. However it is possible that Smollett had a more significant reason for silencing the hero which is reflective of this character's overall role in the novel. As Betty A. Schellenberg suggests, Humphry's absence as a narrator "points to the fact that...he in fact holds the family together by his self-sacrificing sociability."[24] Throughout the text as numerous critics have observed, Humphry has an ameliorative, restorative influence on the characters in the novel, especially Bramble. Humphry as such functions as a source of unification and reconciliation, a comforting foil to the vicious and individualistic elements which prevail throughout society.

In this way Humphry fulfils a similar role to the one played by Strap and Pipes. Despite his initially chaotic introduction into the family, throughout the narrative he acts as a stabilising force upon the travelling party. Like the other servant characters, he too is characterised by his devotion and genuine attachment to his master and in this way is representative of the traditional patriarchal relationship. Furthermore it is through this character that Smollett once more highlights the hypocrisy and double standards of the upper classes and holds them responsible for the disintegration of the master-servant relationship.

During the course of the novel the contentious "servant issue" is directly referred to. This subject is broached by Tabitha multiple times in her letters wherein she voices numerous complaints about the behaviour of the servants at Brambleton Hall. In her instructions issued to the housekeeper of the residence, Tabitha constantly advises her employee to be wary and "have a watchfull eye over the maids."[25] In addition to this she desires that the housekeeper will "clap a pad-luck on the wind-seller, and let none of the men have excess to the strong bear" (6), and warns her "that hussy, Mary Jones, loves to be rumping with the men" (6). Here Tabitha draws attention to some of the major problems associated with servants. Dishonesty, drunkenness and promiscuity were all popular criticisms levelled at servants throughout the century. Smollett however, soon offers a more nuanced and sympathetic portrayal of servants, suggesting that the situation is more complex than Tabitha would allow.

As is the case in his earlier novels, in *Humphry Clinker* Smollett's most vocal attacks are upon the burgeoning capitalist nature of English society. While this system had many critics, there were also many commentators who enthusiastically extolled its benefits. Bernard de Mandeville, a controversial political economist of the era, was one such enthusiastic proponent of this flourishing economic system. Despite his optimism however, he recognised the practical considerations of living in this kind of thriving consumerist society and observed that

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[24] Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Conversational Circle: Re-reading the English Novel 1740-1775* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), p. 114.

[25] Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, ed. Lewis M Knapp, rev. by Paul-Gabriel Boucè (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 6. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

> Would you have a frugal and honest Society, the best policy is to preserve Men in their Native Simplicity... remove and keep from them everything that might raise their Desires, or improve their Understanding…. Where trade is considerable Fraud will intrude. To be at once well-bred and sincere, is no less than a Contradiction; and therefore whilst Man advances in Knowledge, and his Manners are polish'd, we must expect to see at the same time his Desires enlarg'd, his Appetite refin'd, and his Vices encreas'd.[26]

This quote echoes Smollett's concerns about the nature of modern society. Deceit, imposition and hypocrisy are all consequences of this new economic system in which everyone is out to trump the person ahead of them. Hence it is implied that every member of this society will become tainted with these vices, because deceit as it is understood is a precondition of progress; a consequence of modernisation. As such deceit and hypocrisy are vices embedded into the commercialist economy, making it impossible for anyone to escape contamination.

Indeed a major cause of concern surrounding this system was not only its perceived immoral effects but also its impact upon the lower classes. Many social commentators firmly believed that luxury should be restricted to the upper classes, a privilege reserved solely for the elite and wealthy. In the eighteenth century however it was feared that this extravagant desire for opulence was reaching down to the lowest dregs of society and encompassing all members of the social spectrum. Servants in particular were widely held as one of the groups most susceptible to this vice. Exposed by their superiors to these luxuries on a daily basis, these employees it was alleged were envious of this lifestyle and hence desirous to emulate it.

This passion for luxury was also perceived to be having an adverse effect on the rural economy. One commentator, George Blewitt in 1725 surmised this situation, observing that

> The Dearness of Labour of all sorts, the Largeness of Wages and other Perquisites of Servants, their Idleness and Insolence are all the effects of Luxury; of which... though the

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[26] Quoted in W. Austin Flanders, *Structures of Experience: History, Society and Personal Life in the Eighteenth-Century British Novel* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), p. 227.

> Example arise among Idle Persons, yet the Imitation is run into all Degrees, even of those Men by whose Industry the Nation subsists. To this we owe the Scarcity of Servants where they are *really* wanted; and from hence arises the prodigious loss to the Publick, that Draught of Lusty and able-bodied men from Husbandry or Country Business, to add to the magnificence of Equipages: *A Sort of idle and rioting vermin, by which (we are told) the Kingdom is almost devoured, and which are everywhere become a public nuisance.*[27]

This desire for luxury Blewitt fears is draining the rural economy of strong young men who are required to fulfil the physically demanding tasks which husbandry entails. Instead these men are deserting these respectable occupations, fleeing to the cities in search of riches.

It is striking that although this criticism was issued almost fifty years prior to the publication of *Humphry Clinker*, Smollett voices a very similar critique in his novel. This matter arises in a letter written by Bramble to his friend Dr Lewis wherein the former embarks on a tirade against the laziness and indolence of domestic servants. Complaining of the mass immigration to towns and cities he grumbles that

> The tide of luxury has swept all the inhabitants from the open country – The poorest 'squire, as well as the richest peer, must have his house in town, and make a figure with an extraordinary number of domestics. The plough-boys, cow-herds, and lower-hinds, are debauched and seduced by the appearance and discourse of those coxcombs in livery, when they make their summer excursions. They desert their dirt and drudgery, and swarm to London, in hopes of getting into service, where they can live luxuriously and wear fine clothes, without being obliged to work; for idleness is natural to man –. (87)

According to Bramble the contaminating force of luxury has spread from the towns to the countryside and infected the whole of society. Rural youngsters are influenced by the allure of riches and idleness and soon, having been "plough-boys" and "cow-herds" are disappointed in their expectations of amassing wealth in the city and ultimately end their lives as "thieves and sharpers" (87). Here, through the voice of Bramble the potentially catastrophic impact which these economic forces have on the behaviour of young, impressionable men is illustrated. This wayward desire, Bramble suggests ultimately culminates in criminality, with these parasitic servants stealing and pilfering goods to satisfy their wants.

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[27] Quoted in John Sekora, *Luxury*, p. 80.

Despite the anxiety and spleen voiced in this quote however, Smollett does represent another aspect to this issue. This topic arises again further on in the story in connection to Mrs Baynard, the wife of Bramble's long time friend. On the course of his journey, Bramble visits the estate of his old companion and is horrified by what he sees. Instead of a thriving, industrious landscape, Baynard's land is a space of vulgarity and ostentatious display. Under the direction of his wife, the landowner has modified his land, which is now a place of artificial cultivation and contributes nothing productive to society. These modifications it is revealed are a direct result of Mrs Baynard's attempt to compete with her neighbours, all of which

> have at this time the same number of horses, carriages, and servants in and out of livery; the same variety of dress; the same quantity of plate and china; the like ornaments in furniture; and in their entertainments they endeavour to exceed one another in the variety, delicacy, and expence of their dishes. (294)

Mrs Baynard's demand for extravagance and her tendency toward the accumulation of unnecessary goods is illustrated in the extensive list of materialistic and luxury items recorded above, one of which are "servants in and out of livery" (294). From this perspective – placed in the list between carriages and clothing – servants are viewed merely as yet another materialistic appendage.

On Mrs Baynard's sudden death, her husband calls on his old friend to help him set the estate to rights. One of the first tasks Bramble undertakes is to rectify his friend's domestic expenditure through decreasing the large retinue of servants which he currently employs. Bramble makes his opinion of these employees very clear, describing them as a

> Legion of super-numerary domestics, who had preyed so long upon the vitals of my friend: a parcel of idle drones, so intolerably insolent, that they even treated their own master with the most contemptuous neglect. They had been generally hired by his wife, according to the recommendation of her woman, and these were the only patrons to whom they paid the least deference. I had therefore uncommon satisfaction in clearing the house of those vermin. The woman of the deceased, and a chambermaid, a valet de

> chambre, a butler, a French cook, a master gardener, two footmen, and a coachman, I paid off, and turned off immediately, paying to each a month's wages in lieu of warning. Those whom I retained, consisted of a female cook, who had been assistant to the Frenchman, a house maid, an old lacquey, a postilion, and under-gardener. Thus I removed at once a huge mountain of expence and care from the shoulders of my friend... (342)

In this way, according to Judith Frank, servants in this novel are seen to perform an entirely symbolic, non-productive function, and she suggests that "It is for that reason that *Humphry Clinker* despises servants even more than most fiction of its time: functioning as mere signs, servants are the very antithesis of labour in this novel."[28]

While this is true to a certain extent, this chapter challenges Frank's notion that the novel "despises" this group. Instead it suggests that Smollett is keen to show how the situation of servants is more complex than this. Indeed as the character of Mrs Baynard demonstrates, one's affluence in this society is measured by their ability to employ a retinue of servants to do nothing. According to this logic, a person displays their affluence by employing staff who fulfil no productive function. Idleness as such, was in demand. Thus while servants may be lazy, this indolence is as a result of a direct order; as such these servants are simply following their employers' ridiculous demands.

On a more comical level however, servants' desire for luxury and financial accumulation also results in the shady procedures practiced by enterprising attendants. This is illustrated in particular through the issue of vails. A long established custom, vails were tips given to servants by guests visiting their master and acted as a surplus to compensate for their low wages. In the eighteenth century however, this tradition came under attack and there were calls to abolish the practice. When in Bath, Winifred remarks on the corrupting effect which this system has upon the master-servant relationship. Staying in rented accommodation, she explains to her correspondent how the servants are using these means to extort more money from Bramble. She states that

> They won't suffer the 'squire and mistress to stay any longer; because they have been already above three weeks in the house; and they look for a couple of ginneys apiece at

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[28] Frank, *Common Ground,* p. 119.

> our going away; and this is a perquisite they expect every month in the season; being as how no family has a right to stay longer than four weeks in the same lodgings; and so the cuck swears, she will pin the dish-clout to mistress's tail; and the house-maid vows, she'll put cowitch in master's bed, if so be he don't discamp without furder ado-. (70-71)

While the behaviour of Strap and Pipes was uncontaminated by economic realities, in *Humphry Clinker* Smollett illustrates the extent to which this economic system is encroaching upon the traditional master-servant bond. As Scarlet Bowen explains, "The servants thus use the argument for their customary perquisites to justify not only their monthly vails or tips, but also to expedite the turnover of guests so that they maximize their profits in a season."[29] Consumed by financial desires, accumulation is the central governing principle in this employment relationship, resulting in the servants' use of shrewd tactics in an attempt to capitalize upon their position.

This situation is highlighted again in *Humphry Clinker* when Winifred once more remarks on the debauched state of servant behaviour in Bath. Writing to her fellow servant Mary Jones, Winifred notes how the cook's buckets

> were foaming full of our best bear, and her lap was stuffed with a cold tongue, part of a buttock of beef, half a turkey, and a swinging lump of butter, and the matter of ten mould kandles, that had scarce ever been lit. The cuck brazened it out, and said it was her rite to rummage the pantry; and she was ready for to go to the mare… (71)

Startled by this behaviour, Winifred seems scandalized at the extent to which the cook is taking advantage of the situation. Indeed it is evident that Smollett is unhesitating in his criticism of the wily servants who capitalise upon this system and abuse the trust of their employers. These servants in accordance with modern economic trends are exploiting these traditional customs, manipulating and misusing them to serve their own purposes. As Winifred reflects she "don't blame them for making the most of their market, in the way of vails and parquisites" (71), yet even in her servant capacity she is taken aback by the scale of the abuse.

Indeed throughout the novel, the majority of servants are well versed in these issues and are keenly aware of their customary rights and entitlements. Smollett too shows an acute awareness of these issues and explores how they are impacting upon the master-servant relationship. While vails were tips or gratuities, perquisites were usually items of old clothing and cast-off belongings which a master no longer had use for. Winifred again calls attention to the tensions these items are liable to provoke. Writing about a fellow servant employed by Bramble, Winifred informs her correspondent that

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[29] Scarlet Bowen*, The Politics of Custom in Eighteenth-Century British Fiction* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 115.

> John Thomas is in good health, but sulky. The squire gave away an ould coat to a poor man; and John says as how tis robbing him of his parquisites. – I told him, by his agreement he was to receive no vails; but he says as how there's a difference betwixt vails and parquisites; and so there is for sartain. (7)

When compared to Strap and Pipes, we see a marked difference in the representation of these servant characters. No longer simplistic and naïve, servants in *Humphry Clinker* are savvy and business-like; attuned to the realities of survival in a capitalist society. These attendants are au-fait with the practices of their profession and harness them to their own advantage.

Closely connected with this issue of luxury was the problem of emulation. Another form of affectation, emulation involved mimicking or copying the habits and customs of higher social classes. While it was generally lamented as a widespread social problem, it was feared that servants in particular were vulnerable to this practice and had a tendency to emulate the behaviour of their employers. As such, this problem was often bemoaned in pamphlets, ethical tracts, sermons and conduct guides. In 1786, one such conduct book entitled *Domestic Happiness, Promoted* clearly stated this concern, lamenting that "young women in service aspire to dress too much like their mistresses, which gives them a wrong turn."[30] Remarking on this issue Bridget Hill rightly observes that "mistresses were concerned that their servants were developing tastes considered unsuitable to their station."[31]

No character demonstrates the impact that this social phenomenon has on the behaviour and conduct of servants better than Winifred. As Tabitha's personal servant, she is constantly in her mistress's presence and the effects of this interaction have left evident marks on the servant's personality. In his letter quoted below, Jery remarks upon this influence, musing how

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[30] Quoted in Chloe Wigston Smith, '"Callico Madams": Servants, Consumption, and the Calico Crisis', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Volume 31, Number 2 (Spring 2007), 29-55 (p. 46).
[31] Hill, *Servants*, p. 70.

> Nature intended Jenkins for something very different from the character of her mistress; yet custom and habit have effected a wonderful resemblance betwixt them in many particulars. Win, to be sure, is much younger and more agreeable in her person; she is likewise tender-hearted and benevolent, qualities for which her mistress is by no means remarkable, no more than she is for being of a timorous disposition, and much subject to fits of the mother, which are the infirmities of Win's constitution: but then she seems to have adopted Mrs Tabby's manner with her cast clothes. – She dresses and endeavours to look like her mistress, although her own looks are much more engaging.- She enters into her scheme of oeconomy, learns her phrases, repeats her remarks, imitates her stile in scolding the inferior servants, and, finally, subscribes implicitly to her system of devotion – .(208)

Here, Jery illustrates at length the effect which Tabitha has had upon her servant. Not only her appearance but also Winifred's behaviour is directly attributable to Tabitha's influence. Every aspect of the maid's behaviour seems therefore to be externally derived. While she retains some of her natural qualities, for instance her benevolent disposition, it is evident that much of her personality is swayed by the behaviour of her mistress.

This influence is demonstrated by the parallel behaviour traits shared by both servant and mistress. Indeed, throughout the novel both characters are depicted as vain, frivolous and vulnerable to flattery. It is in their fickle behaviour towards the opposite sex however that this similarity becomes strikingly evident. Tabitha, throughout the narrative is preoccupied with her quest to find a suitable husband. After numerous mishaps she eventually meets and enters into an engagement with the somewhat peculiar, yet well-intentioned Captain Lismahago. A week before the wedding however, Tabitha becomes acquainted with the newly widowed Baynard and, seeing him as a more attractive option begins to make advances towards him. Bramble is uncomfortably aware of the situation and perceives that his sister has

> attached herself to Lismahago for no other reason but that she despaired of making a more agreeable conquest. – At present, if I am not much mistaken in my observation, she would gladly convert the widowhood of Baynard to her own advantage. – Since he arrived, she has behaved very coldly to the captain, and strove to fasten on the other's heart, with the hooks of over-strained civility. (343-344)

Fickle and capricious, Tabitha it appears is willing to jeopardize her situation in a bid to make a more advantageous match.

Winifred also exhibits this unsteady nature in the matter of love. Having made a conquest of Humphry, whose feelings she apparently reciprocates, she soon abandons this humble attendant in favour of Dutton, a sophisticated French valet. As Jery explains

> Though Humphry had (a) double hank upon her inclinations, and exerted all his power to maintain the conquest he had made, he found it impossible to guard it on the side of vanity, where poor Win was as frail as any female in the kingdom. In short, my rascal Dutton professed himself her admirer, and, by dint of his outlandish qualifications, threw his rival Clinker out of the saddle of her heart. (208)

As R.D.S Jack observes “It is no coincidence that Win, who has largely modelled herself on Tabitha, can also be misled by appearance in matters of the heart.”[32] To this extent, Winifred acts as a double of Tabitha, copying and mimicking all her failings. However although Winifred looks ridiculous, Smollett is keen to emphasise that so too does Tabitha. In this way Smollett comically highlights how the servant imitates the mistress, copying her bad example.

John Valdimir Price also sees Winifred’s role in the novel as illustrating the essential nature of emulation which governs eighteenth-century Britain. Drawing attention to the maid-servant’s pride at having “already made very creditable correxions” (43) in Bath, Valdimir Price observes that Winifred’s actions are illustrative of society as a whole, suggesting that

> by making the proper social ‘connections’ (Winifred) has learned to ‘correct’ her former shortcomings as a servant. The implication is… fairly clear: if on one level servants are ‘improving’ themselves only in order to learn how to be yet more useful to their masters and mistresses, how different are their efforts from those in society whose behaviour imitates, still another sphere of social betterment?[33]

Here Price identifies Winifred’s conduct as indicative of the world in which she lives. Copying and aping the manners of her social betters in a comic style, her behaviour serves to illustrate how this “culture of imitation” is the underlying principle governing contemporary society. Price continues that Win’s letters reveal a perspective “on the microcosmic society in which she operates and the macrocosmic society from which she and her fellow travellers are drawn.”[34] As such, Price suggests how Winifred’s *behaviour* is simply symptomatic of the environment in which she is placed and indicative of the broader problems enveloping eighteenth-century society in general.

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[32] R.D.S Jack, ‘Appearance and Reality in *Humphry Clinker*’ in *Smollett: Author of the First Distinction* ed. Alan Bold (London: Vision, 1982), pp. 209- 229 (p. 214).

[33] John Valdimir Price, *Tobias Smollett*: *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1973), p. 14.

Another striking parallel is drawn between the writing styles of Tabitha and Winifred. Throughout the novel both characters contribute letters expressing their opinions and accounts of events. It is through the inclusion of Winifred’s letters that Smollett brings “into active participation the role of servants in a way hitherto unknown in the English novel.”[35] During this period, servant literacy was a contentious subject and was often viewed as posing a threat to the social order. Commenting on this phenomenon, Carolyn Steedman explains how it was a common practice for masters to keep letters which their servants had written to them, using these as a source of entertainment and ridicule. As Steedman observes, “Recording the malapropisms, rusticisms, and uncertain spelling of domestics was one of the many categories of degrading story that could be told about them, for the purposes of amusement and for the policing of many barriers of personhood in civil society.”[36] By ridiculing their servants’ literary pretensions, these employers attempted to keep their servants in their lowly position, mocking their feeble attempts to challenge social divisions.

Kathleen Alves suggests that Smollett too shares this concern and

> considers the literate servant, who can blur distinctions between ranks, as an unfavourable product of the increasingly commercially saturated culture of eighteenth-century Britain. The servant who can read and write is an emerging phenomenon of modernity, an actively political subject that must be suppressed to conserve distinction and social order.[37]

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[34] Price, *Tobias Smollett*, p. 15.

[35] Price, *Tobias Smollett*, p. 51.

[36] Steedman, *Labours Lost*, p. 211.

[37] Kathleen Alves, ‘The Transgressive Literacy of the Comic Maidservant in Tobias Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker* ’, *Academic Quarter*, Volume 3 (Fall 2011), 281-289 (p. 281).

This chapter agrees with this view and acknowledges that Smollett, despite his comic treatment of the issue, was somewhat anxious about this subject. However the chapter suggests that his fear is founded not upon the capacity of servants but conversely upon the incompetence of the upper classes. Indeed Smollett is at pains to emphasise that Winifred does not possess any potential to become a "scribbling servant" like Pamela, and instead portrays her talents as an indictment upon the shambolic state of the upper classes.

While her letters undoubtedly contribute a source of comic value to the novel, Smollett's main intention is to emphasise how Winifred's letters mirror those written by her mistress. Full of puns, double-entendres, misspellings and innuendos, Winifred's letters are often difficult to interpret and comprehend. One ironic example of this confused writing occurs when the maid reproaches her correspondent for her bad spelling, explaining that

> it made me suet to disseyffer your last scrabble, which was delivered by the hind at Bath – O, voman! Voman! If thou had'st but the least consumption of what pleasure we scullers have, when we can cunster the crabbidst buck off hand, and spell the ethnitch vords without lucking at the primmer. (109)

Smollett's ironic intent here is evident, with Winifred's literary pretensions duly mocked and ridiculed. Words are spelt phonetically and incorrect words are used which bear no connection to the intended word, resulting in a complex web of confusion and ambiguity. Thus her criticisms of her correspondent's inadequate literary standards appear hypocritical to say the least.

Yet it is striking that Tabitha's letters also reveal her shortcomings as a scholar. In writing again to the housekeeper at Brambleton-Hall, Tabitha informs her employee of the family's future plans and issues directions to be followed while they are away. She explains that "We are going on a long gurney to the north, whereby I desire you will redouble your care and circumflexion…. I hope there will be twenty stun of cheese ready for market by the time I get huom, and as much owl spun…"(156). In this passage, the similarities between Winifred's and Tabitha's writing styles are evident, with both mistress and servant misspelling and incorrectly using numerous words.

Commenting on Winifred's language, Alves highlights how Winifred's malapropism's draw attention to the body, and this, she argues is one of the major differences in style between Winifred and the other letter writers in the novel. Alves suggests that

> The disruptive power of Win's language ties up with lower-class sexual bodies. In this way, Smollett's representation of the maid's discourse can be characterized as carnivalesque juxtaposed with Win's fellow letter writers' general adherence to the language of sensibility. The maid's pen scribbles unsavoury words that call attention to the body, marking her language as a violation of social acceptability.[38]

Winifred's language does indeed call attention to social taboos and suggest impolite connotations; although so does the language used by her mistress. Tabitha's letters frequently contain sexual innuendos, betraying her latent sexual frustrations while also drawing attention to indecorous bodily functions. Such unseemly slips of the pen for instance include "accunt" (156) and "beshits" (156).

In order to emphasise the difference between upper and lower class literacy, Alves continues that "the author *must* depict the lower class writer's language to be erroneous and distasteful to insist on the importance of *difference* in the face of major cultural change that working-class literacy poses."[39] Instead of highlighting this difference however, Smollett pointedly compares the literary styles of Tabitha and Winifred to underline their similarities. In this manner he intentionally collapses the difference between mistress and servant, ironically highlighting not Winifred's literary capacity but conversely Tabitha's scholarly ineptness. It is thus in this way that Smollett deflects criticism away from servants, focusing instead on the ineptitude of their superiors.

Through this technique, Smollett approaches the unsettling issue of social change in a comic way. The problem with society he suggests is not that the lower classes are becoming more capable but actually that the upper classes are becoming more defective. In this way he acknowledges the sweeping changes occurring throughout society yet he attempts to stem the tide by holding the upper classes mainly responsible. Thus, while servants were commonly pinpointed as a specifically troublesome group and culpable for the perpetuation of many social ills, Smollett is at pains in *Humphry Clinker* to qualify and reassess this condemnation.

It is through the character of Humphry however that Smollett issues his most vehement satirical attack on the failings of the upper classes. When he is first introduced in the novel, the eponymous hero is half starved and in a deplorable condition. As Jery describes him,

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[38] Alves, 'Transgressive Literacy of the Comic Maidservant', p. 282.
[39] Alves, 'Transgressive Literacy of the Comic Maidservant', p. 282.

> He seemed to be about twenty years of age, of a middling size, with bandy legs, stooping shoulders, high forehead, sandy locks, pinking eyes, flat nose, and long chin – but his complexion was of a sickly yellow: his looks denoted famine; and the rags he wore, could hardly conceal what decency requires to be covered…(81)

Having fallen ill, Humphry has been dismissed by his employer and left destitute. Finding this character abandoned by the roadside, the Bramble party take pity on him, and despite some reservations on Tabitha's part, welcome Humphry into the family in the role of postilion. The fact however that Humphry has been discarded by his former employer serves as a stinging indictment upon the nature of this commercialist economy. According to traditional etiquette, an employer was in theory expected to provide for their employee in times of illness; however in this new capitalist economy self-gain and financial margins have usurped these customary practices. As such when he is initially introduced, Humphry is depicted as an innocent victim of this vicious and callous system.

Yet despite this, Humphry remains untainted by the world around him. Having been subjected to this cruel treatment the hero does not imitate or adopt these behaviours but on the contrary rejects them. In this way he acts as a foil to highlight the depravity of the social milieu in which he is placed. His inexplicable immunity to the corrosive effects of the environment in which he lives is manifested in his idiosyncratic personality. Simplistic and naïve, Humphry's ignorance of the world and its social conventions has left him as "innocent as the babe unborn" (91). Like Strap and Pipes, Humphry is utterly out of place in this world, an eccentric deviation from the norm.

It is this inherent simplicity which culminates in Humphry's honesty, one of his most notable character traits. Honest, unrestrained and unsophisticated, Humphry acts without caution or foresight and speaks his mind without considering the consequences. It is in this manner that he too, like Strap and Pipes, contrasts with Fielding's fictional servants who must attempt to monitor and regulate their behaviour. By ironically highlighting the disastrous consequences of this honesty, Smollett once again critiques the depraved nature of eighteenth-century society.

Throughout the novel Humphry's honesty is not only manifested through his words but also in his actions. Lacking calculation, his behaviour is ruled by his heart and not his head. As such, he often acts spontaneously and ill-advisedly in situations, provoking the ire of Bramble. This tendency is illustrated in a comic scene wherein Bramble goes swimming, is shocked by the coldness of the seawater and screams as he plunges into its depths. Humphry, mistaking his master's yelps for a call of distress, immediately effects a rescue. As Bramble recalls, his servant advanced towards him "with all the wildness of terror in his aspect… (and) all of a sudden, he seized me by one ear, and dragged me bellowing with pain upon the dry beach, to the astonishment of all the people, men, women, and children there assembled" (184). Mortified and embarrassed by this event, Bramble "struck (Humphry) down" (184) and only afterwards reflects upon the unjust nature of his actions.

This humorous incident, while entertaining, also indicates the extent to which an honest servant is out of place in this society. While nostalgic yearnings were voiced throughout the period, lamenting the absence of honest, trustworthy menials, Smollett highlights the impracticality of this idealised image. Indeed, as Mandeville noted, honesty entails simplicity and a simplistic servant is simply a nuisance and a cause of irritation even to a kind-hearted, benevolent master such as Bramble. In consequence, an honest individual it appears is in practical terms, a highly inadequate servant.

Indeed when later reflecting on the situation, Bramble admits that his servant's "intention was laudable" (184) yet his exasperation is still evident. Summing up the incident in the account which he sends to Dr Lewis he concedes "that folly is often more provoking than knavery, aye and more mischievous too; and whether a man had not better choose a sensible rogue, than an honest simpleton for his servant, is no matter of doubt..." (184). While Bramble's statement should be viewed with a certain amount of reservation given his perturbed emotional state, there is beneath the humorous connotations a serious element evident in his statement.

While this honesty results in complications for the master-servant relationship, it also highlights how unsuitable and utterly incompatible Humphry is with the world around him. This satirical intent is made evident when the hero is arrested and imprisoned for a crime which he did not commit. At the trial, Humphry is asked to testify his innocence and we are informed that "upon his examination, (he) answered with such hesitation and reserve, as persuaded most of the people, who crowded the place, that he was really a knave…" (147). Recalling the trial, Jery informs his correspondent that

> My uncle, provoked at the unconnected and dubious answers of Clinker, who seemed in danger of falling a sacrifice to his own simplicity, exclaimed, 'In the name of God, if you

> are innocent, say so.' 'No, (cried he) God forbid, that I should call myself innocent, while my conscience is burthened with sin.' 'What then, you did commit this robbery?' resumed his master. 'No, sure, (said he) blessed be the Lord, I'm free of that guilt.' (147)

It is Humphry's extreme simplicity and adherence to the literal truth which cause him difficulty. As a result of this haphazard account of himself, Humphry is suspected of deceit and imposition. Bramble tells us that "the justice himself put a very unfavourable construction upon some of his answers, which, he said, savoured of the ambiguity and equivocation of an older offender…" (146). In this world of scepticism and suspicion, an honest servant is a mysterious and unintelligible entity and as such is vulnerable to misinterpretation.

Throughout the novel, while Humphry's actions do appear out of place and unconventional, there is no question of his servant status. At various points the other characters in the novel do comically speculate on the state of his mental health but for the most part, they attribute his eccentric behaviour to his plebeian origins. It is thus somewhat surprising when, towards the conclusion of the novel, he is revealed as Bramble's natural son. Indeed while Fielding provided hints during his narrative about the true lineage of Joseph Andrews, Smollett offers no such indications as to his hero's illustrious ancestry. Well, no clues which arouse the suspicions of any member of the Bramble family, all of whom are entirely duped by Humphry's dishevelled physical appearance.

The only character however, to have any inclination of Humphry's true identity is Winifred. Initially, on seeing his bare posterior for instance, the maid remarks that Humphry has "a skin as fair as alabaster" (81). Alabaster skin as was evidenced in *Joseph Andrews* was a traditional sign of upper class or genteel lineage, and it is this physical trait which provides an indication to Humphry's true heritage. Furthermore, Winifred later informs her correspondent that Humphry is "qualified to be a clerk to a parish" (109), a recommendation that none of the other letter writers would second. Finally, commenting on his virtuous conduct she astutely observes that "the proudest nose may be bro't to the grindstone, by sickness and misfortunes" (107). Thus it is Winifred, the lower-class servant girl who can appreciate the true quality of Humphry and see beyond the superficial appearances which successfully fool her masters.

Remarking on Winifred's role in the novel, Ronald Paulson suggests that "Winifred Jenkins, representing the servant's point of view, is all eager acceptance, to the extent that appearances dupe her fearfully.”[40] This chapter however challenges this view, suggesting that Winifred is at times more insightful and perceptive than her social superiors. While she is at times misled by appearances Smollett however is keen to emphasise that she is no more likely to be duped than her upper class employers. Thus in this way Smollett once more collapses the traditional dichotomy which distinguishes masters from servants, and instead blurs these lines.

The discovery of Humphry’s parentage functions as yet another point of satire while simultaneously providing a more insightful perspective on the servant problem. Bramble, it is revealed had in his youth an ill-advised dalliance with Humphry’s mother, the barmaid Dolly Twyford. Having committed this indiscretion Bramble promptly parted ways with his lover and consequently is never informed of the birth of his son. The revelation of this careless and reckless behaviour serves to highlight the hypocrisy of Bramble’s behaviour and undermine the moral superiority he has assumed throughout the novel. Indeed, in the opening letter of the novel, Bramble grumbles at his unfortunate position in having been encumbered with the care of his niece and nephew, asking “what business have people to get children to plague their neighbours?”(5). This hypocrisy is further underscored when he confesses “with great good-humour, that betwixt the age of twenty and forty, he had been obliged to provide for nine bastards, sworn to him by women whom he never saw” (28). However, the veracity and accuracy of this statement comes into question when we consider his reckless behaviour in regards to Dolly.

In this way, Smollett challenges popular assumptions concerning servants. The perceived promiscuity of these domestic employees was a popular cause of complaint in the eighteenth century. While loose behaviour amongst any class was criticised, it was deemed that this particular kind of immoral conduct was particularly rampant amongst the servant class. As Alves observes, in the eighteenth century “Social commentators wrote frequently on the problem of servant promiscuity, seeing the proliferation of illegitimate children and venereal disease tied specifically to the ungovernable sexuality of servant women.”[41] While Smollett gestures towards this debate, he however subverts the issue by drawing attention to the role played by the upper classes in this matter. In this way, by redirecting a portion of the blame onto the upper classes, the author once again qualifies and tempers his criticism of servants.

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[40] Paulson, *Satire and the Novel*, p. 202.

[41] Alves, ‘Transgressive Literacy of the Comic Maidservant’, p. 282.

A veiled reference to this issue of servant sexuality is mentioned in connection to Lydia's illicit love affair with her apparently inappropriate suitor Wilson. While the relationship and consequently any correspondence between the two lovers has been strictly forbidden by both Bramble and Jery, Wilson nevertheless attempts to carry on the intrigue by bribing a servant. As Bramble informs us "Wilson bribed the maid to deliver a letter into (Lydia's) own hand; but it seems Jery had already acquired so much credit with the maid, *(by what means he best knows*) that she carried the letter to him, and so the whole plot was discovered"(my italics) (12). Here Bramble's meaning is somewhat ambiguous but he is apparently referring to either financial corruption or, more likely (considering Wilson has already bribed the maid), sexual corruption.

Indeed this interpretation is given credence by other examples in the text. One such incident occurs near the beginning of the novel when Jery responds to a question from his friend Phillips concerning a relationship he has had with a young woman. It emerges that Miss Blackerby the young woman in question is now pregnant and is holding Jery responsible for her condition. However, Jery flatly states his innocence protesting that "far from having any amorous intercourse with the object in question, I never had the least acquaintance with her person" (28). While Jery may not be responsible for Miss Blackerby's predicament, it is evident however that he is no stranger to this kind of dalliance, assuring Phillips that he has "disclosed all my other connexions of that nature" (27) to his friend. Jery it appears has form when it comes to this kind of sexual indiscretion and therefore we can conjecture that his corruption of a maidservant is not altogether implausible.

It is possible therefore to see in Smollett's final novel a more nuanced and insightful perspective on the servant issue. While Bramble indignantly complains about the injustice of being burdened with other people's children, he nonetheless refers to his nephew's promiscuous behaviour (remarkably similar to his own) in a light-hearted, flippant manner. It is in this way that Smollett indicates the extent to which members of the upper classes are not only complicit in but very often responsible for the behaviours they condemn. For every criticism levelled at servants, Smollett highlights there is a counter-argument directed at their masters which is just as persuasive.

While keen to highlight and ridicule the flaws of society which surrounded him, Smollett was eager to identify not just the symptoms but the causes of these social ills. As Lance Bertelsen notes, Smollett was interested in the way society worked and viewed "life as a great web in which every person or activity is inextricably linked with another…"[42] It is in this way that Smollett demonstrates how an individual is part of a larger social network, and as such, how one's behaviour and actions are influenced and dictated by the society in which they live. In his early fictional works Smollett suggested that servants could withstand and reject these pressures, ultimately conquering these corrupting economic forces. As such these characters are generally isolated from a rather negative and scathing portrait of society. By his final novel however, Smollett accepted the prevailing realities of the economic environment and recognised the impact these factors were exerting upon the behaviour and conduct of all members of society. This shift is reflected in the more benign tenor of the text, with Robert Barnard identifying "some slight mellowing"[43] in the author's satirical outlook when compared with his previous publications.

Indeed, over the twenty-three years which elapsed between the publication of Smollett's first novel and *Humphry Clinker*, the writer's tone appears to have altered significantly. While his earlier works were noted for their scathing, biting critique of society, by the end of his career, despite his persistent censure of Georgian society, this ferocious streak had somewhat abated and softened. This more gentle approach culminates in his last novel, with Sir Walter Scott classifying this narrative as "the most pleasing of (Smollett's) compositions."[44] Often this shift is attributed to old age: by the time Smollett wrote *Humphry Clinker* he was a middle-aged man in declining health who, it is possible, was more tolerant of and sympathetic toward human failings than was his energetic and youthful counterpart. Older and wiser, Smollett could reflect on society and, while still reproaching humanity for its flaws, could do so in a more kindly manner. There is also the possibility however, that the calm and tranquil rural environment of Leghorn in Italy where the author composed his final novel was conducive to an increasingly contented mindset. Situated in "a romantic and salutary abode"[45] Smollett was removed from the stress associated with a consumerist society. From this vantage point, the satirist was perhaps persuaded to reflect upon the folly of British commercial culture in a more affable and good-humoured manner.

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[42] Lance Bertelsen, 'The Smollettian View of Life', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Volume 11, Number 2 (Winter 1978), 115-127 (p.119).

[43] Robert Barnard, *A Short History of English Literature* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 79.

[44] Walter Scott, *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Walter Scott, Volume III: Biographical and Critical Notices of Eminent Novelists* (Boston: Wells & Lilly, 1829), p. 113.

[45] Scott, *Biographical and Critical Notices*, p. 113.

Irrespective of this change in tone however, all of Smollett's principle servant characters - Strap, Pipes and Humphry are treated in a similar manner by the author and remain somewhat at odds with their surrounding environment. They do not fit in with the rest of the narrative; they are aberrations, eccentric deviations which are markedly out of place in this society. In this respect they contrast to Smollett's principle female servant character, the frivolous, vain yet well intentioned Winifred who "never seems anything less than a real flesh-and-blood young girl, with a servant cheekiness and sensuality that are immediately attractive."[46]

Yet, it is this disparity which Smollett is emphatic to highlight. Strap, Pipes and Humphry are romanticised, idealised figures who are markedly detached from the realities which surround them. Thus, they are in a privileged position whereby they are indifferent to the financial practicalities and mundane concerns which plague the lives of real servants. It is this very unconcern which enables them to break through the social taboos which regulate the master-servant relationship and behave in a blunt and candid manner. Permitted a luxury which real servants are flatly denied, these honest, frank servants are, Smollett concludes, simply out of this world.

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[46] Price, *Tobias Smollett*, p. 9.

CHAPTER THREE

Tricks of The Trade: Deceitful Servants in Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House*

On the breakdown of her twenty-two year marriage to her spendthrift, philandering husband, Charlotte Smith launched into a successful literary career which spanned over two decades. One of the most prolific professional writers of the late eighteenth century, Smith made no attempt to conceal the fact that she was obliged to write novels in order to provide financially for her large family consisting of eight children. Indeed, Smith often publicised this point, emphasising how she was compelled to undertake these literary endeavours and regularly lamented her life of toil and labour. As such, Smith was keenly aware that necessity oftentimes trumps other concerns and that in order to ensure economic survival, one must perhaps compromise their behaviour and adapt to their environment.

Over the last decade Smith has received much scholarly attention, with major publications by Stuart Curran and Loraine Fletcher contributing to a renewed appreciation of Smith's works.[1] Much research however has concentrated on Smith's poetry, principally upon the extremely popular collection *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784) and its subsequent contribution to the revival of the sonnet form. Furthermore other works have focused on her position as a professional female writer in a somewhat male dominated publishing environment. Smith's most famous novel *The Old Manor House*, published in 1793, has also gained much attention but criticism has been largely focused on political analogies of this text.

This chapter however is concerned with Smith's representation of servants in *The Old Manor House* and argues that her portrayal of servants in this novel is much more nuanced than has been recognised by contemporary criticism. It will suggest how in this novel Smith subverts the traditional servant character which was popularised by Gothic Romance writers such as Ann Radcliffe and replaces this with a more sinister servant figure. The chapter will challenge recent criticism, suggesting that Smith qualifies her criticism of these servants by pointedly comparing their deceitful conduct with that of Orlando, the flawed hero of the novel and thereby alleviates the extent of condemnation placed on these employees. In this way, the chapter argues that Smith, by considering the extenuating circumstances to which these subordinates are subjected, reassesses their plight, providing a more sympathetic view of these attendants. In this respect, Smith's attitude is reminiscent of Fielding's treatment of servants, with both authors acknowledging the difficulty of the servant predicament. Now however the issue is handled with more intensity and the comic, humorous overtones which were present in Fielding's portrayal are duly removed.

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[1] See *The Poems of Charlotte Smith* ed. Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) and Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2008).

When considering Smith's novels it is important to take into consideration the cultural milieu in which they were created. With the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, public opinion was divided between those who supported the Revolutionaries and those who opposed them. While the former welcomed the overthrow of what they perceived as a tyrannical and corrupt monarchical system and championed its replacement with a more egalitarian style of government, their opponents vehemently opposed such changes. Despite one's political allegiances however, it was widely believed on both sides of the political spectrum that the fundamental structure of society was changing. While proponents of the new system embraced the possibility of such a transformation, those opposing the revolution feared such changes and lamented the destruction of the *ancien regime*.

In this context, the figure of the servant became much more ambivalent. In literary portrayals, the servant took on political connotations and could be depicted as loyal supporters of the natural hierarchical order of society or adversely employed as representatives of the lower orders who challenged this. It is here that we can see a major shift away from Fielding and Smollett's comic retainers, towards a more ambivalent servant representation. In the heightened political atmosphere of the 1790s, wayward servant characters thus became more dangerous and threatening, refusing to fulfil the function of comic relief traditionally accorded to them.

The portrayal of servants within the novel genre as such became more heated and contested, serving an overtly ideological function. In this respect for instance, the Gothic Romance genre capitalised upon the figure of the servant to promote a deeply conservative ideology. Servants in these texts are often garrulous, simplistic and loyal, devoted to their masters and contented in their station as servants. To this extent these characters are indicative of the traditional social structure, with one's birth and lineage determining their unalterable position in the social hierarchy.

This character trope was popularised by Ann Radcliffe and reappears in many of her novels including *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Radcliffe's most infamous incarnation of this character however appears in *The Italian* (1797). As Maggie Kilgour observes

> Paulo is an extreme version of this ideal, a servant who wants to die for his master. Like other of Radcliffe's servants he is extremely oral, being both tediously loquacious and perpetually hungry. In their attention to material needs, the servants are seen as all appetite; the master-servant relationship is analogous to the rule of body and matter by mind, as they require the aristocrats to restrain them.... Like most other servants, Paulo has absolutely no self-control; he is constantly erupting, bursting out of bonds, including those of imposed silence which he finds the most oppressive constraint of all. He provides a comic version of revolutionary energy...He is raw nature which must be shaped and ordered by aristocratic art, both for his own and for social good.[2]

In this respect, the function of these characters was to provide a sense of comfort and reassurance to a readership fearful of change. These servants, while they undoubtedly serve a comic role, are more importantly depicted as anchors to and willing participants in the patriarchal relationship. Requiring the guiding and steadying hand of the upper classes, these faithful retainers thus serve as a testament to the legitimacy of the traditional hierarchical order, validating and securing this system.

While this character type is widely acknowledged to have been popularised by Radcliffe, Smith actually made use of this stereotype prior to Radcliffe's first publication. Indeed Smith utilised the figure of the talkative and loyal servant character in her early works including her first publication *Emmeline* (1788). This story centres on the heroine Emmeline Mowbray, a young, beautiful orphan who has been raised in a desolate castle by the housekeeper "Mrs Carey (who) was to her in place of the mother she had never known; and the old steward, (who) she was accustomed to call father."[3] Largely following the plot of the courtship novel, the story follows the heroine's trials as a beautiful and chaste young woman who must avoid the snares of scheming would-be suitors. Throughout the course of the narrative however, Emmeline's birth is shrouded in obscurity and as a result she is denied her rightful inheritance.

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[2] Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of The Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 181.

[3] Charlotte Smith, *Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle*, ed. Loraine Fletcher (Toronto: Broadview, 2003), p. 46. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

Towards the end of the novel however the stigma surrounding Emmeline's birth is removed when it is revealed that Lord Mowbray was in fact married to Miss Stavordale, Emmeline's mother. This information is provided by Le Limosin, Lord Mowbray's former servant. This character, down on his luck and struggling to financially provide for his daughter Madelon, fortuitously becomes acquainted with Emmeline's travelling party when they journey through France. Ignorant of the import of his story to the party and of Emmeline's connection to his beloved late master, Le Limonsin recounts how "it's almost nineteen years since my master-my poor master, died in my arms; if he had lived, for he was quite a young man, I should have spent my life with him" (332). When he produces a watch bearing the Mowbray crest which his master bequeathed to him however, the truth of Emmeline's identity comes to light and she is restored to her rightful inheritance of the Mowbray estate.

The characterisation of Le Limosin is fairly typical of servants in the Gothic Romance genre. Not only does he fulfil a traditional role in restoring the heroine to her rightful social position, but his behaviour is manifested in an excessively corporeal manner. This is illustrated when Emmeline's friend Lord Westhaven offers to employ both Le Limosin and his daughter, taking them into his service. On hearing this intelligence we are informed that "the poor fellow grew almost frantic. He would have thrown himself at the feet of his benefactor had he not been prevented; then flew back to fetch his Madelon, that she might join in prayers and benedictions" for their new patron (335). Likewise when he is informed that Emmeline is in fact the daughter of his revered late master it is stated that Le Limosin "threw himself on his knees in a transport of joy and acknowledgement"(349).

In this respect, Le Limosin shares a number of traits with Radcliffe's Paulo, and is characterised by his excessive gratitude and his demonstrative physicality. Like Paulo, Le Limosin too struggles to contain his emotions and curb his enthusiastic responses to events. Millefleur, another servant in the novel also conforms to these behaviours. Employed by Delamere, a would-be suitor of Emmeline's, Millefleur acts as a comic, cowardly figure but is also notable for his intense physical response to situations. This is demonstrated when Delamere flies into a rage at his employee and on calming down "called the poor fellow to him, who was not yet recovered from his former terrifying menaces; and who approached, trembling" (258). Likewise having received instructions from Davenant, we are informed that "Millefleur, frightened to death at the looks and voice of his master, dared not disobey" (259).

In her early works, Smith thus subscribed to this somewhat conservative method of servant characterisation. Her early servant characters as a result remain largely within their conventional literary spheres, performing traditional and established roles. Speaking of Smith's representation of servants in her novels, Loraine Fletcher argues that "as in so much of eighteenth-century writing, Smith's working class characters remain comic, like Millefleur, insolent, like the footmen at the Montrevilles' house, or dependents loveable for their cringing compliance, like Le Limosin." She concludes with the observation that "Smith finds it hard to write a narrative about servants."[4]

This chapter agrees with Fletcher's observations to a certain extent and acknowledges that these remarks are largely accurate in regards to Smith's early fiction. However it suggests that Fletcher fails to take into account the complexity of servant representation in *The Old Manor House*. In this novel there is a radical shift in the depiction of these subordinates who are no longer loyal, devoted retainers but instead discontented, scheming plotters. However, while some of these attendants are overtly malevolent figures, other servants in the novel are more akin to traditional literary figures that, while they engage in deceit are nevertheless depicted as more likeable, endearing characters. As such there is a range of servant characters depicted in Smith's works, with some ascribed traditional characteristics while others refuse to fit this mould. In order to account for the change in representation of servants in *The Old Manor House*, it is important to understand Smith's nuanced and somewhat temperate perspective on the Revolution.

Indeed, discussions of the Revolution generally identify two principle texts as epitomising the opposite and extreme views on the debate. These are Edmund Burke's conservative and overtly sentimentalised account of the uprising in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) and Thomas Paine's spirited defence of democratic ideals as espoused in parts one (March 1791) and two (February 1792) of *Rights of Man*. While these two texts polarised the Revolution debate however, there were a wide range of perspectives which quite often fell between the two camps. As A.A. Markley observes, while there was widespread support for the Revolution, not all those in favour of reform shared the same agenda or priorities. Thus while the term Jacobin was attached to those who embraced reform, this label could be quite imprecise and vague, encompassing a broad spectrum of ideals and perspectives.[5]

Charlotte Smith was an active participant in this debate, celebrating the outbreak of the revolution as the overthrow of a degenerate and corrupt ruling system. While she embraced these changes however she should not be classified as a radical, and instead she supported a more moderate Girondin point of view. In this respect, Smith did not embrace the democratic ideals which viewed all citizens as equal but instead endorsed a hierarchical social structure which was founded upon the principles of a meritocracy. This system rejected the claims of power, wealth or birth as qualifications to rule, prioritising in their stead qualities such as virtue and merit. This more flexible social structure, while it embraced change and innovation, still maintained an essentially ordered, tiered ruling structure.

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[4] Loraine Fletcher, 'Introduction' in *Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle* by Charlotte Smith, ed. Loraine Fletcher (New York: Broadview Publishers, 2003), p. 22.

[5] See A.A. Markley, *Conversion and Reform in the British Novel in the 1790s: A Revolution of Opinions* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2009), p. 2-3.

This ideology is best demonstrated in Smith's most controversial novel, *Desmond*, published in 1792. This novel centres upon the eponymous hero and his love for the unhappily married Geraldine. Betrothed to the cruel and abusive Mr Verney, Geraldine's life is one of misery and suffering yet despite this neither she nor Desmond transgress the bounds of propriety, maintaining a platonic relationship until the fortuitous death of the repentant Mr Verney at the conclusion of the novel. The text is set against the backdrop of the French Revolution and Smith's pro-Revolution stance is evident throughout. Indeed it was this blatant and as it was perceived, somewhat indecorous commentary on political issues which earned Smith much criticism and encouraged her to adopt a more allegorical style of political commentary in her next novel *The Old Manor House*.

In a footnote to *Desmond*, Smith includes a translation of a famous quote by Voltaire, which states that

> Those who say that all men are equal, say that which is perfectly true; if they mean that all men have an equal right to personal and mental liberty; to their respective properties; and to the protection of the laws: but they would be as certainly wrong in believing that men ought to be equal in trusts, in employments, since nature has not made them equal in their talents.[6]

According to this reasoning, all people are and should be subject to the same rights and laws yet this does not imply that they are entitled to occupy the same stations in society. One's merit, talents and qualities should determine what place they fulfil and the social order will thus be regulated accordingly.

It is this ideology which is embedded consistently throughout Smith's works, including *The Old Manor House.* With this in mind, it is possible to reassess the portrayal of servants in this novel and challenge previous criticism which has argued that within the novel "the lower servants are not represented in a sympathetic light."[7] Although Smith is far from democratic, she nevertheless appreciates that while one's place is defined by one's merits, those occupying lower positions should not be made to feel inferior or subservient. In this respect, social superiors should not tyrannise those below them in the social hierarchy or demean them due to their lowly stations. Instead, there should be mutual assistance and co-operation with those in authority working to lessen the burden on those below them.

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[6] Quoted in Charlotte Smith, *Desmond*, ed. Antje Blank and Janet Todd (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1997), p. 108.

Indeed it is through her depiction of servant characters in *The Old Manor House* that Smith comments on the outdated and archaic nature of eighteenth-century society. Taking the setting of Rayland Hall as an allegory of the current state of Britain, Smith suggests how an antiquated and tyrannical mode of government forces those who are disempowered to sacrifice their integrity in order to survive in this corrupt and illegitimate regime. Servants in this respect, while they lie and cheat, are ultimately depicted as products of their environment who are given little alternative other than to engage in these underhand behaviours.

The Old Manor House tells the story of Orlando Somerive, the dashing young hero of the novel and the favoured kinsman of Mrs Rayland, the dogmatic and frail mistress of Rayland Hall. As the younger son of the Somerive family and great-cousin to Grace Rayland, Orlando courts and pays homage to his elderly relation in a bid to secure inheritance of the estate. The novel centres on the illicit relationship between Orlando and the quasi-servant girl Monimia who is the niece of the tyrannical housekeeper Mrs Lennard. Charting the clandestine love affair between the hero and heroine, the narrative also follows the intrigues and schemes of life within the manor house, conducted by an array of sneaking servants. Indeed the novel is full of intrigues, deceptions, evasions and double-dealings which Smith represents as part of everyday survival at Rayland Hall.

This need for negotiation and diplomacy is also echoed on a formal level through the structure of the novel. Indeed, Smith's willingness to experiment with conventions is evident from the beginning of her career as a professional writer. Jennie Batchelor for instance identifies the author as "an astute manipulator of literary and cultural conventions" and "an ambitious literary theorist."[8] In her early novels Smith mainly focused her attack on the realms of literary decorum. In this respect while she largely abided by formal conventions, she pushed the boundaries of acceptable moral content in regards to her plots, representing wayward or

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[7] Fletcher, *Critical Biography*, p. 171.

[8] Jennie Batchelor, *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship 1750-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 70-71.

“fallen” women who were not subjected to the usual punishments met out to erring characters. Lady Adelina in *Emmeline* is one such character. An upper-class woman trapped in an unhappy marriage, Adelina engages in an adulterous affair which results in the birth of her illegitimate daughter. While traditionally such behaviour would have been punishable by death, Lady Adelina, due to the fortuitous decease of her husband is able to marry her seducer and is thus rewarded with a life of domestic bliss and contentment. In this respect, while seeming to conform to generic expectations, Smith is also enabled to subtly challenge and critique accepted social mores.

In *The Old Manor House* however, Smith demonstrates her ability to experiment with the formal elements of the novel genre. The title for instance gestures toward the Gothic Romance, leading readers to expect a straight-forward, conventional narrative. Indeed as Judith Phillips Stanton observes “The fact that *The Old Manor House* promises to be Gothic and is not is its most obvious subversion of the reader’s expectations.”[9] However, while the title may be the most obvious way in which the novel misleads readers and challenges Gothic Romance conventions, it is certainly not the most significant.

Smith’s major formal changes are particularly evident in the setting of the novel, whereby the author refuses to displace the story into the foreign, distant past. Speaking of both Smith’s and William Godwin’s innovative use of the Gothic form, Anjte Blank observes how both authors

> eschewed the use of the supernatural, as they did the genre’s conventional preoccupation with archaic settings. Their concern avowedly being an investigation of contemporaneous socio-political structures, these novels are not imbued with tokens of pastness or foreignness; unlike the mainstream Gothic they avoid all devices of spatial and temporal displacement.[10]

Indeed the latter section of the novel takes place against the backdrop of the American Revolution and in this respect *The Old Manor House* is the author’s only historical novel. While the novel is thus set in the past, it is a past within recent memory and it is in this way that Smith is enabled to subtly draw links to the French Revolution, reminding her readers “that a republic based on the revolutionary ideals of equality and liberty had been successfully established."[11]

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[9] Judith Phillips Stanton, ‘Introduction’ in *The Old Manor House* by Charlotte Smith, ed. Anne Henry Ehrenpreis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. xiii.

[10] Anjte Blank, ‘Things as They Were: The Gothic of Real Life in Charlotte Smith’s *The Emigrants* and *The Banished Man*’, *Women’s Writing*, Volume 16 (2009), 78-93 (p. 82).

While these changes have been recognised and explored by literary criticism, another fundamental modification made to the Gothic Romance genre is evident in Smith's representation of servants. It is through reversing the reader's expectations of these characters that Smith is enabled to articulate her condemnation of a corrupt ruling regime and promote her pro-reformation ideology. By replacing the loyal, honest, truthful retainer with a scheming, conniving, manipulative servant, Smith challenges the validity and appropriateness of the feudal ruling system. Indeed, by illustrating how these servants are obliged and coerced into adopting these deceptive practices, Smith implies that there are extenuating circumstances which must be considered when assessing the conduct of these servants.

Grace Rayland as the matriarch of Rayland Hall is the embodiment of the outdated governing system which rules the household. A decrepit, fragile woman, she comes from a long line of aristocratic predecessors who ruled the Hall before her and she subsequently glories in her patrician lineage. Reflecting upon the past exploits of her illustrious grandfather, Rayland lives in the past and is unable to identify with the world around her. She is a relic from a bygone age, unwilling to accept that the fundamental structure of society is changing and looking upon those beneath her, particularly the middle class, with contempt. In order to defend herself from this encroaching modernity, she isolates herself within the Hall and we are told that

> while she talked much of modern immorality and dissipation, she knew very little of modern manners, seldom seeing any of those people who are what is called people of the world; and forming her ideas of what was passing in it, only from newspapers and the Lady's Magazine; or some such publication, which excited only wonder and disgust – while her recollection came to her relief, and carried her back to those days she herself remembered – and with still greater pleasure to the relations her father had given of what passed in his. The freedom of modern life suited so ill with the solemnity of respect that was shown towards her in her youth, that she shrunk from the uneasiness it gave her, and made around her a world of her own… [12]

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[11] Antje Blank and Janet Todd, 'Introduction' in *Desmond* by Charlotte Smith (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1997), p. xxi.

[12] Charlotte Smith, *The Old Manor House* ed. Anne Henry Ehrenprenis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 250. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

Fearful of this changing world, Rayland imposes a feudal style regime upon her domestic domain. Isolated within her domestic space, this matriarch is dangerously detached from the real world and reluctant to acknowledge the rapid social changes which are taking place.

This intolerance towards the changing nature of society is most evident in Rayland’s attitude toward rank. Cherishing ideals of birth and lineage, she is contemptuous of those who have, as she claims, sacrificed their claim to gentility by marrying below their station. This accounts for her disdainful treatment of Orlando’s father and his family. Mr Somerive is Rayland’s cousin, but as his father had married a lower class woman, the bloodline has according to Rayland’s reasoning been contaminated. Priding herself on her “thorough-bred” lineage, Rayland thus generally scorns her association with this branch of the family who are however her only surviving relations and so natural heirs at law to the estate on Rayland’s demise.

While the Somerives are subjected to Rayland’s haughty attitude, none experience this contemptible treatment more so than the servants employed at the Hall. During the course of the novel these domestics are exposed to ridicule, humiliation and mortification at the hands of Rayland. Forced to appear to acquiesce with her ridiculous and outmoded notions, these servants must employ a policy of “lip-service” in order to survive her tyrannical reign. Unable to genuinely ascribe to her anachronistic ideals, these employees lie, cheat and deceive in order to bide their time.

This aspect of the mistress-servant relationship is illustrated in Rayland’s treatment of Robin Snelcraft, the coachman at the Hall. He is a “favourite servant” (53), having served Rayland for many years and amassed a great fortune during that time. As such, Snelcraft’s ambitions and desires for his two daughters have escalated in proportion to his wealth and he plans to establish them both in advantageous and respectable marriages. When Rayland happens to see the eldest daughter at church however, she chastises her servant for permitting his daughter to dress in what she deems an inappropriate manner. Rayland’s haughty and disdainful manner forces Snelcraft into a diplomatic manoeuvre, whereby he must appease his mistress while concealing the truth of his own desires for his daughter’s social ascent. As such, he turns to flattery in order to defuse the situation, explaining that

> my wife I believe thought, that seeing how by your goodness and my long and faithful service we are well to pass, for our condition and circumstances and such like, there would not be no offence whatsumdever in dressing our poor girls, being we have but

> two, a little dessent and neat, just to shew that one is no beggar after having served in such a good family so many years. (55)

Having desires which exceed his rightful expectations as a servant, Snelcraft it is implied by Rayland has forgotten his place. In order to escape further ridicule and scolding at the hands of his mistress, the coachman must conceal and deny his desires and appear to conform to the stereotype of the humble, grateful servant.

While Snelcraft adopts these diplomatic procedures in order to escape the wrath of Rayland so too does Pattenson the butler. Indeed, so adept is he in his skills of concealment that "Though he was a perfect Turk in morals, and though in his advanced life he rather indulged than corrected this propensity to libertinism, he had hitherto contrived to escape his lady's wrath" (53). Having fulfilled the role of butler within the Hall for the past twenty-five years, so talented is he in the art of deception that Rayland never suspects his true character. Despite numerous attempts by his domestic enemies to expose his behaviour, Pattenson's humble facade is so convincing that he escapes detection and continues to dupe his mistress.

The most domineering servant character throughout the novel however, is Mrs Lennard. Having served her mistress for many years, Lennard is well accustomed to the haughty and contemptuous behaviour with which she is treated. Originating from a middle-class background, we are told that "Mrs Rayland, whose pride was gratified in having about her the victim of unsuccessful trade, for which she had always a most profound contempt, received Mrs Lennard as her own servant" (10). In employing Lennard, Rayland obviously takes delight in denigrating her employee and we are told that "the mean pliability of (Lennard's) spirit made her submit to all the contemptuous and unworthy treatment, which the paltry pride of Mrs Rayland had pleasure in inflicting…"(10). As her housekeeper and companion, it is Lennard who experiences the most mortifying extent of Rayland's sneering and derisive attitude.

Throughout the narrative however, Lennard is depicted as the most cunning of all the servants. Self-effacing and diffident when in the company of her mistress, secretly the housekeeper harbours a scheme to court Rayland's favour in order to be rewarded with a substantial legacy. Her plan is therefore to keep her employer

> as much as possible at a distance from the rest of the world; above all from that part of it who might interfere with her present and future views; which certainly were to

> make herself amends for the former injustice of fortune by securing to her own use a considerable portion of the great wealth possessed by Mrs. Rayland. (11)

Indeed Lennard's primary goal is self-preservation and she skilfully employs her talents in order to achieve this aim. Younger than her employer she nevertheless, "artfully added to her age, whenever she had occasion to speak of it" in order to further entice Rayland into a sense of security (11). Equivocations, partial disclosures and concealments are Lennard's weapons of choice which she uses to guarantee her position within the household.

Lennard's need to employ these diplomatic manoeuvres is demonstrated early in the novel when Rayland attacks the housekeeper for having christened her niece by the "unsuitable" appellation of Monimia, duly insisting that the child be renamed. Having been reprimanded by her employer, Lennard is thus required to extricate herself from the situation and pacify Rayland. As such she adopts a persona of cringing humility and backtracks, avowing her willingness to change Monimia's name. In response to Rayland's demands we are informed that

> Mrs Lennard of course consented, excusing herself for the romantic impropriety of which her lady accused her, by saying, that she understood Monimia signified an orphan, a person left alone and deserted; and therefore had given it to a child who was an orphan from her birth – but that, as it was displeasing, she should at least never be called so. (13)

From this carefully worded response, it appears that Lennard is somewhat piqued at this reprimand. Indeed instead of simply acquiescing to Rayland's orders, the housekeeper firstly explains and somewhat vindicates her choice of the name. After this brief attempt to justify herself however, she swiftly agrees to obey her mistress's demands and feigns complicity to her instructions.

In this respect, there are clear parallels with Fielding's depiction of servant characters. In his novels however while servants equivocate in response to their masters' reprimands, there is no element of spleen or choler in their behaviour; the issue is handled in a relatively comic and light-hearted manner and the situation defused accordingly. Smith's treatment of this issue on the other hand is much more ominous and there is a sense of hostility simmering beneath the surface of this mistress-servant relationship. Snelcraft, Pattenson and Lennard it is evident, all resent Rayland's treatment and they tolerate it only for mean and somewhat sinister purposes. Indeed there is the distinct feeling that there is a power-battle taking place in the Hall, with the servants vying for authority.

This sense of insurgence is demonstrated at the annual tenants' Ball. Each year this event is hosted by Rayland for her tenants and both Lennard and Pattenson play major roles in the proceedings. In accordance with tradition, we are informed that

> Mrs Lennard and Mr Pattenson, who had long presided at them, loved the gaiety of the scene, and the consequence they had in it, as they were considered as the master and mistress of the feast; for, though Mrs Rayland once used to go down to honour it with her presence for ten minutes, she had now left off that custom, from age and infirmity; and her servants, to whom it was attended with some trouble and loss of time, had persuaded her that she was always ill after such an exertion. (181-182)

This scene is indicative of the covert atmosphere of rebellion which is present within Rayland Hall. While the incident may seem unimportant as it is only briefly mentioned by Smith, it nevertheless subtly gestures towards insubordination or at least Lennard's desire, if not attempt, to usurp her mistress's position.

While these servants are scheming, conniving reprobates however, there is the possibility that Smith is more sympathetic to their plight than it first appears. If we consider the novel for instance in light of her other publications we can glean evidence of a more nuanced attitude towards this group. Although it is perhaps not possible to champion the behaviour practiced by these domestics, it is also not possible, this chapter argues, to condemn it unconditionally.

When considered for instance in comparison with *Desmond*, Smith's most explicit pro-Revolution novel, it is possible to perceive a more empathetic treatment of servant characters. In this text, the hero defends his support for the uprising to The Count, an aristocratic adherent of the counter-Revolutionary movement. Speaking of the master-servant relationship, Desmond uses this as an analogy to explain his views of a fair and adequate governing system. Taking the figure of the footman he reasons that

> I hope and believe my footman feels himself to be my fellow-man; but I have not, therefore, any apprehension that instead of waiting behind my chair he will sit down in the next. – He was born poor- but he is not angry that I am rich – so long as my riches are a benefit and not an oppression to him.... If, however, instead of paying him for his services, I were to say to him... you are my property... my servant...as he is probably the most athletic of the two...so far from being compelled to stand on such

> terms behind my chair [he would discover] he was well able to either place himself in the next, or to turn me out of mine.[13]

Rayland, while she apparently recompenses her servants generously for their service nevertheless abuses her position of privilege in other ways. The haughty, arrogant attitude she adopts when interacting with her servants, it is evident, puts tension and strain on the relationship. These domestics while they tolerate this treatment also deeply resent it. In the atmosphere of Rayland Hall this dissatisfaction gathers and festers, culminating in the servants' discontent with their station and desires for revenge.

Rayland's dangerously outdated ideology is also manifested in her treatment of the other servants, including Monimia. Blinded by her aristocratic prejudices, Rayland is oblivious to the outstanding merit possessed by this character. As such, she subjects the heroine to the same regulations which govern the behaviour of the other servants. This is illustrated for instance by Rayland's attitude toward the lowly position occupied by Monimia in the household. Indeed Rayland

> told her visitors, that she had taken the orphan niece of her old servant Lennard, not with any view of making her a gentlewoman, but to bring her up to get her bread honestly; and therefore she had directed her to be dressed, not in gauzes and flounces, like the flirting girls she saw so tawdry at church, but in a plain stuff, not flaring without a cap, which she thought monstrously indecent for a female at any age, but in a plain cap, and a clean white apron, that she might never be encouraged to vanity by any kind of finery that did not become her situation. (14)

Dressed in the most simple and modest style of clothing available, Monimia is "dressed like a parish girl, or in a way very little superior" (14). In accordance with her feudalistic beliefs, Rayland makes it clear that the young girl should not be encouraged to aspire to a position beyond that to which she is fated.

It is interesting however that Rayland does not believe Monimia's station to be solely determined by her birth. Speaking to Snelcraft, Rayland argues that the young orphan actually "comes of parents that many people would call genteel; and yet you see ... it has pleased Providence to make her a dependent and a servant" (55). One's station in society according to this reasoning is thus determined by a combination of birth and fate. Indeed it appears that Monimia being of "genteel" parentage is perhaps entitled to occupy a higher station than that of a servant yet Providence has dictated otherwise. It is clear however that while she may have been worthy of a somewhat higher social position, in Rayland's eyes this certainly does not amount to the young orphan becoming mistress of Rayland Hall.

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[13] Smith, *Desmond*, p. 108.

Indeed one of Rayland's major failings is her inability to perceive merit amongst the lower classes or value it accordingly. In accordance with her feudal beliefs, Rayland views servants as destined to fulfil their lowly station. Their place in society is therefore fixed and inflexible, and while "genteel" unfortunates such as Monimia may descend to this position, the possibility of leaving it is inconceivable. While servants such as Pattenson and Snelcraft may amass fortunes during their time in service and purchase land and farms, they can never escape their fundamentally lower class origins. Their caste is fixed, and a servant's aspiration or attempt to considerably alter their class position is duly ridiculed by Rayland.

Rayland's inability to acknowledge Monimia's merit is most evident in her determination to rechristen the girl. Lennard as discussed above is reprimanded for the somewhat romantic sounding name that she bestowed upon her niece and is ordered to change it. Rayland due to her feudalistic beliefs does not think Monimia a suitable name for the young girl and rebukes her housekeeper for her foolish fancy. We are informed that

> Her name – Monimia – was an incessant occasion of reproach – 'Why,' said Mrs. Rayland, 'why would you, Lennard, give the child such a name? As the girl will have nothing, why put such romantic notions in her head, as may perhaps prevent her getting her bread honestly? – Monimia! – I protest I don't love even to repeat the name; it puts me so in mind of a very hateful play, which I remember shocked me so when I was a mere girl, that I have always detested the name. Monimia! – 'tis so very unlike a Christian's name, that, if the child is much about me, I must insist upon having her called Mary.' (13)

Feeling that the name is unsuitable to the child's humble position, Rayland proceeds to rechristen the child with an "appropriate" name which becomes her station as a lowly dependent in the household. Blinded by her prejudice once again, Rayland fails to see that Monimia's name is actually perfectly suited to her character and acts as a reliable indication of her legitimate social position.

The "hateful play" which Rayland refers to is *The Orphan* written by Thomas Otway. First performed in 1680, this popular play tells the tragic story of two highborn brothers, Castalio and Polydore who are both in love with the orphaned Monimia. The ensuing plot follows this ill-fated love-triangle, involving intrigues, a clandestine marriage and rape. In the end all three principle characters die, with the death of the two brothers severing the male line of inheritance. As the orphan girl Monimia is the main catalyst for the tragic downfall of the ancient family, it is clear why Rayland would be somewhat anxious about the name and its implications. By drawing attention to the play however, Smith cleverly subverts Rayland's fears by making her heroine responsible not for the demise of the Rayland family but adversely for its restitution and survival.

The practice of renaming servants was a popular custom in the eighteenth century, and continued into the Edwardian era. As Pamela Horn notes "one girl from Griston in Norfolk remembered that her grandmother always christened her housemaid 'Emma' irrespective of the girl's real name."[14] Similarly, Christian Miller recalls how "all our footmen were called John, irrespective of what name the parson had bestowed on them at baptism. My father announced firmly that he couldn't be bothered to learn a new name every time the footman changed."[15] It is significant however that despite her injunctions, Rayland's orders are not adhered to and throughout the story the heroine is referred to by her rightful name.

For those willing to acknowledge them however there are clear signs of Monimia's virtue and merit signalled throughout the narrative. As with traditional depictions of heroines, Monimia's physical appearance is the most striking indication of her true merit. Indeed, despite the plain clothes in which she is dressed

> nothing could conceal or diminish her beauty. Her dark stuff gown gave new lustre to her lovely complexion; and her thick muslin cap could not confine her luxuriant dark hair. Her shape was symmetry itself, and her motions so graceful, that it was impossible to behold her even attached to her humble employment at the wheel, without acknowledging that no art could give what nature had bestowed upon her. (15)

It is thus in this way that Monimia's merit and her credentials are revealed. Despite being dressed in simple, frugal attire, her worth simply cannot be concealed or hidden. Orlando too recognises his lover's entitlement to progress to a higher sphere of life, identifying in her physical appearance a “form and face that he thought would do honour to the highest rank of society” (26).

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[14] Quoted in Agnes Spier, *Servants and Sermons: The Background to the Rev C.H.G Craufurd's Sermon on his Second Marriage* (Belbroughton: Foxglove, 1989), p. 12.

[15] Quoted in Cissie Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (New York: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 102.

In this way, Smith once again hints that her novel will conform to typical romance conventions only to subtly subvert them. Indeed while these physical attributes would traditionally signal one’s aristocratic birth and upper class heritage, Smith employs this trope as an indication of her heroine’s merit. As A.A. Markley observes, “Monimia’s history is never fully explained, and, as an orphan of unknown birth, she holds a place of no significance whatsoever in the social hierarchy of the small community surrounding the manor.”[16] Yet despite this, it is evident that Monimia is in fact the rightful heiress to the estate and the legitimate mistress of Rayland Hall. It is thus in this way that Smith advocates her progressive ideology, hinting that virtue and merit are not class bound qualities but are present in all ranks of society.

While Monimia’s natural qualities signal her future potential, in order for her to effectively fulfil her role it is necessary that she gains a thorough and rational education. Indeed although Orlando recognises Monimia’s virtues he also fears that “she seemed to be condemned to perpetual servitude, and he feared to perpetual ignorance” due to Rayland’s prejudice against lower class education (26). As such Orlando initiates a series of clandestine meetings in order to instruct his lover and develop her rational faculties. It is through this educational programme that Orlando aims to free Monimia from her supernatural fears, strengthening her intellectual capacity and thereby qualifying her to assume her legitimate role as mistress of the Hall.

Speaking of eighteenth-century literary heroines, K.G. Hall observes that often these characters were allowed to ascend the social ladder due to their extraordinary qualities and traits. Considering Pamela and other socially mobile protagonists, Hall argues how it was

> on the basis of individual excellence (that) women could justifiably be incorporated into a higher class than that of their origin. It must be stressed here that the conception of social mobility found in these works was one of uplifting the outstanding individual as a favour or reward, and did not imply any concession to the working or middle classes as a right.[17]

It is this message which Smith promotes throughout *The Old Manor House*. Monimia’s kindness, virtue and generosity qualify her for her prominent position as mistress of the

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[16] Markley, *Conversion and Reform*, p. 76.

[17] K.G. Hall, *The Exalted Heroine and the Triumph of Order: Class, Women and Religion in the English Novel, 1740-1800* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1993), p. 139.

Rayland estate. It is these inherent, natural qualities which despite her servant status prove Monimia's eligibility for social ascent and for the position of privilege which she comes to occupy.

Smith's nuanced attitude towards servants is also evident in her treatment of other servant characters. Indeed, while she qualifies her condemnation of the deceitful machinations practiced by the upper servants, Smith also highlights the fact that not all dishonest servants are motivated by malevolent and sinister desires. The young servant girl Betty Richards for instance engages in deceptive practices yet these transgressions are of a more playful and harmless nature. In this respect, Betty is a very different kind of servant whose transgressions involve minor deviations from socially acceptable behaviour. Indeed while Betty does lie and engage in falsehoods, her deceits Smith is keen to emphasise, are those of a more trivial cast and lack the sinister intent which underlies the intrigues practiced by the upper servants.

Betty's mischievous relationship with truth-telling is clearly demonstrated in regards to her love of dress and finery. When the novel opens Betty is a new recruit within the Hall and has been trained as a parish servant. Parish servants in the eighteenth century were generally poor or orphaned children who were taught the necessary skills required for domestic service by parish authorities. It was generally hoped that these girls would be trained into humble, submissive servants who appreciated their position and would act as an anchor to the master-servant relationship. Misled by Betty's humble appearance, Lennard believes that this young girl will fulfil this role and passively submit to the strict rules of the household. The housekeeper is mistaken however and Betty is soon revealed as a lively, flirtatious girl who is eager to make the most of her attractive appearance. In accordance with Rayland's strict sumptuary laws which operate within the Hall however, Betty is limited in the types and styles of clothing she is permitted to wear. Meanwhile the womanising butler Pattenson, in an attempt to woo Betty plies her with an array of fineries and trinkets. These items, we are informed

> were given under the strictest injunctions of secrecy, which was tolerably well observed towards the rest of the house; and the finery, which at first consisted only of beads and ribbands was reserved for Sunday afternoons, and put on at a friend's cottage near a distant church. (51)

Betty's determination to wear attractive clothing and her ensuing willingness to disobey Rayland's injunctions is again demonstrated when she and Monimia embark on an errand to a nearby town. Excited by the prospect of her trip out, Betty is determined to make a good impression and present her person in the most advantageous light. As such, she enters her companion's room "dressed in all the finery she dared shew at home, while she reserved her most splendid ornaments to put on at the park-stile, and to be restored to her pocket at the same place on their return" (82).

Numerous other incidents, similar to this, occur throughout the narrative. Betty slyly and ingenuously thwarts Rayland's strict regulations, employing creative means to avoid detection and escape reprimand. Betty's deviations however are those associated with a typical servant girl, and hence in some respects her misdemeanours are anticipated. Despite her deceptions and falsehoods, it is evident there is no malevolent or sinister intent underlying her actions. This becomes increasingly clear when Betty's behaviour is contrasted with that of her fellow colleagues. Indeed by comparison, Betty emerges as a far more endearing character, with her adolescent pranks contrasting starkly to the malevolent machinations of the upper servants.

Smith in this respect is eager to differentiate between the conventional deceptive practices conducted by servants and those of a more sinister and threatening intent. Not all deception Smith highlights is as serious or as dangerous as that practiced by the upper servants. Betty we feel is never condemned for her behaviour and there is the sense that Smith is actually quite tolerant of her failings. This is reinforced towards the end of the novel when it is revealed that having left service, Betty is now a kept mistress. Yet this information is revealed to the reader without any overt moralising or censure passed by the narrator. Indeed as Loraine Fletcher observes, "Betty's sense of fun, stylish language and generosity make her a less embarrassing working-class character than we often find in the eighteenth-century novel – or the nineteenth."[18]

In fact it is striking that throughout the novel Betty is imbued with a sense of dignity and integrity which the other servants lack. Despite this however, throughout the course of the novel Orlando issues numerous warnings to Monimia, advising her to shun Betty's acquaintance. Fearing that Monimia will confide in Betty and reveal to her the secrets of their clandestine relationship, Orlando instructs his lover to avoid the maid's company. Indeed he reasons that

> the love of gossiping, the love of finery, the love of nice morsels which the butler had it in his power to give, or even the love of shewing she was entrusted with a secret,

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[18] Fletcher, *Critical Biography*, p. 171.

> were any of them sufficient to overset all the fidelity which this girl (the under house-maid) might either feel or profess to feel for Monimia. (42)

In another caution issued to his lover, Orlando repeats his injunctions reflecting that "This Betty Richards – I am afraid she is a bad girl; I am sure she is an artful one; and there is an alliance of some sort or other between her and the old butler: you will never trust her, Monimia" (63). Orlando however completely misjudges Betty and grossly underrates her integrity. It seems that he in fact judges Betty by his own low moral standards.

Indeed throughout the novel while the servants at Rayland Hall engage in diplomatic manoeuvres, so too do the hero and heroine. Smith emphatically draws attention to Orlando's questionable behaviour throughout, demonstrating how within the confines of the Hall even he stoops to engage in despicable, underhanded actions. Yet as Stanton rightly observes, "Orlando's increasing cageyness is far from admirable, even if it is essential in such a corrupt world."[19] Indeed there is no sense that Orlando's behaviour is in any way championed or esteemed throughout the narrative; there is no virtuous justification of his dishonourable conduct or attempt to alleviate his shame. On the contrary, throughout the novel Smith makes no attempt to conceal the fact that her hero's behaviour is primarily motivated by his desire to inherit the Hall. Aware that if his relationship with Monimia is revealed it will seriously jeopardise his chances of succeeding to the estate, Orlando employs an array of methods to conceal it from Rayland's knowledge. Indeed, Orlando's behaviour is in fact, disconcertingly similar to that of the servants.

It is through highlighting this parallel that Smith passes her most poignant critique of the social structure and deconstructs the typical hero character with which her readers would have been familiar. In *The Old Manor House* heroes and heroines simply do not conform to the impeccable standards of conduct upheld by the chivalrous Romance heroes of the past. No matter how much Orlando may desire to emulate these principles, he fails. This is because like the servants within the household, he too has his own mercenary agenda to pursue, rendering moral and ethical concerns secondary. As Jacqueline M. Labbe observes,

> Mrs Rayland may not recognize it, but it was clear to Smith's readership that those around her venerate Mrs Rayland for her wealth and not the glory of her name, and

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[19] Stanton, 'Introduction', p. xxii.

> this includes the Somerive family, romantically attached to the notion of regaining their financial standing through Orlando's wooing of Mrs Rayland.[20]

Not only his motives but also the methods which Orlando employs to achieve his aims are disturbingly similar to the sneaky and devious tactics used by the servants at the Hall. Thus in an unexpected twist, the conduct of the hero is quite literally put on a par with that of the servants in the novel.

Indeed, throughout the course of the text Orlando's behaviour consistently fails to meet the faultless standard which we would expect from a hero. Despite his pretensions to hero-status, envisioning himself as knight-errant and Monimia as the "nymph of the enchanted tower," during the novel his conduct is exposed as selfish, mean and scheming (325). As Ina Ferris comments,

> possessed of the requisite characteristics of a proper hero – intelligence, sensibility, loyalty, and so on – Orlando at the same time evidences more dissonant qualities: his aristocratic pride (never eradicated), his manipulation of Monimia, his ready recourse to flattery, especially with Mrs Rayland and Mrs Lennard. Perhaps most striking is his characteristic recoil from an openness of language and action, that is, from the 'candour' normally requisite in novelistic protagonists of the period.[21]

Ferris continues by noting how "avoiding, concealing, deceiving – these are actions rarely associated with heroes of novels"[22], yet behaviours which Orlando consistently engages in throughout the narrative.

Speaking of Smith's protagonists, Loraine Fletcher observes that "In (Smith's) novels the rich, the religious and the elderly police the young and talented, so her heroes and heroines often cannot claim honesty among their virtues, because they need to deceive to preserve themselves."[23] While agreeing with this perspective, the chapter takes Fletcher's argument further by arguing that Smith pointedly compares the deceptive practices embraced by both master and servant in a bid to reassess the plight of deceitful servants. Indeed, by ascribing similar behaviours to both employer and employee, Smith collapses the traditional literary convention whereby servants are depicted in opposition to their masters. As Bruce Robbins observes, usually domestics acted as "a pointed 'doubling' of the protagonist, for example as foil or parody."[24] Smith however undermines this convention by demonstrating how in *The Old Manor House* masters and servants engage in the same kind of behaviours and moreover are motivated by the same desires. In this respect, by deconstructing these established literary rules, Smith is enabled to provide a new perspective on the position of servants and alleviate the extent of the condemnation apportioned to this group.

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[20] Jacqueline M. Labbe 'Metaphoricity and the Romance of Property in *The Old Manor House*', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Volume 34, Number 2 (Spring 2001), 216-231 (p.221).

[21] Ina Ferris, 'Introduction' in *The Old Manor House* by Charlotte Smith ed. Ina Ferris (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), pp. x-xxii (p. xvi).

[22] Ferris, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

[23] Fletcher, *Critical Biography*, p. 122.

Throughout the narrative, Orlando proves himself to be an exceptionally talented and skilled liar. This issue is addressed in his interactions with an array of characters including Rayland, Lennard and Mr Somerive. Indeed, during the course of the story most of these characters come to suspect that Orlando is involved in a clandestine relationship with Monimia, yet from all these suspicions and accusations Orlando dexterously extricates himself. When Lennard directly confronts him about the relationship, Orlando attempts to defuse the situation, gallantly replying that "I really do not love to contradict ladies, my dear Mrs Lennard! so you must have your own way, however your suspicions may wrong me" (255). Orlando again attempts to quell Lennard's suspicions when he has joined the army and is taking his leave of the inhabitants of the Hall. Saying his farewell to the housekeeper he declares that his "absence may satisfy you as to those suspicions, that I know not why you entertained of me" (341). Of course Lennard's suspicions have not wronged Orlando, on the contrary her accusations are accurate and justified.

Orlando's willingness to deceive in order to conceal his relationship is also evident in his many conversations with Rayland. One such incident occurs when Rayland has been informed by Pattenson that her young protégé is involved in a dalliance and Betty is suspected as the guilty party. As such Rayland confronts Orlando, asking if he has any improper attachment within the Hall. Somewhat taken aback, the hero realises that everything "seemed to depend on the presence of mind which he was at this moment able to exert" (224). In consequence he assumes a calm demeanour and firmly replies that

> I know not, Madam, what information you have received; but this I know, and do most solemnly assure you, that I have no unworthy connection, no improper attachment... and when you discover that I deceive you, I am content to relinquish your favour for ever. (224)

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[24] Robbins, *The Servant's Hand*, p. 6.

Orlando then attempts to sooth his conscience by reasoning that his connection with the virtuous and lovely Monimia is far from improper. While he attempts to vindicate his deceptive behaviour in this manner, arguing that "technically" he did not commit a falsehood, it is clear to see that this excuse is simply invalid. Despite the clauses or justifications for his behaviour Orlando is a liar - and a seasoned one at that.

The hero is also willing to deceive those closest to him, including his father. The cause of this equivocation arises when the wealthy Sir John Belgrave accosts Monimia and on seeing his lover in the company of another man, the jealous Orlando somewhat rashly rebukes his rival. In consequence a duel is arranged and Mr Somerive, having been informed of the disagreement, suspects that the lovely Monimia is the source of the argument. Mr Somerive's speculations are accurate but on questioning his son he too is met with evasions and falsehoods. Instead of responding to his father's enquiry, "Orlando, without denying or assenting to the truth of this accusation" subtly redirects the conversation and evades a reply (103). Furthermore when Mr Somerive persists in his queries, Orlando gaily replies that "if I am to be shot by Sir John Belgrave, my attachments are of little consequence; it will therefore be time enough to talk of that when I find myself alive after our meeting" (104).

Despite his father's pleas and supplications, Orlando perseveres in his deceitful behaviour, refusing to give a candid or honest answer to his father's questioning. Later in the novel Mr Somerive again voices his suspicions, quizzing his son about his connection with Monimia however, their conversation is sidetracked and Orlando is enabled to avoid providing a response. Reflecting on their conversation, Orlando consoles himself with the fact "that his father, when his interrogatories seemed most hardly to press him to declare how and where he met Monimia, had been diverted to other discourse; that he had therefore, not been reduced...to tell him a falsehood" (155). This time it is through chance and not diplomatic manoeuvres that Orlando is fortuitously exempted from telling the truth.

It is ironic however that despite his clear engagement in these deceptive practices, Orlando is in denial as to the extent of his dastardly conduct. Not only does he attempt to vindicate his actions and thereby ease his conscience, but he seems genuinely deluded as to the truth of his own character. Indeed throughout the text there are various references to his reluctance to utter falsehoods and his inability to successfully perpetuate deceits. We are informed for instance that Orlando "had never been guilty of a falsehood" (150) and was "a poor dissembler" (492). Furthermore it is stated that the hero is possessed of an "open, unguarded temper, incapable of dissimulation, and despising it wherever it appeared" (290). In light of the above examples, it is tempting to believe that Smith is being somewhat facetious in the treatment of her hero who she repeatedly depicts as a proficient and talented liar.

Orlando however is not content to commit falsehoods but also initiates the other inhabitants of the Hall into the arts of deceit, including Monimia. Indeed their entire relationship is founded upon a secret alliance in which he eagerly encourages her to engage. Despite the heroine's initial reservations, through his importunity and manipulative methods, Orlando eventually secures her agreement. At the beginning of the text it is observed that "Monimia was a poor dissembler, and had never in her life been guilty of a falsehood. She was as little capable of disguising as of denying the truth..." (17). With Orlando's guidance and tutelage however, Monimia soon becomes adept in these deceitful and ignoble practices.

During the narrative Orlando does however express a sense of remorse about his behaviour and in this respect he differs from the servants. He is frequently subject to pangs of remorse and contrition, at one stage reflecting how

> With the most candid and ingenuous temper he had lived some time in a course of deception – he had taught it to the innocent, unsuspecting Monimia, and had sullied the native candour and integrity of her character. The sophistry by which he had formerly prevailed upon her to consent to their clandestine meetings, now seemed mean and contemptible; but perhaps, in thinking thus, Orlando was too much like other transgressors, who repent because they can sin no more. (257)

It is with a touch of irony however, that Smith reveals Orlando's "true" sense of repentance, which appears completely shallow and meaningless. Penitent once the damage is done, the hero it appears simply affects remorse while awaiting his next opportunity for subterfuge, which soon presents itself.

Orlando's most sordid and despicable behaviour however is evidenced in his treatment of Betty. It is here that he demonstrates not only his prowess in the skills of subterfuge and misdirection but also his ruthless and calculating spirit. This occurs when Betty is mistakenly suspected of being romantically involved with Orlando and in consequence is subjected to an array of vicious rumours and speculation. The hero instead of rectifying the situation however is only too happy to let the innocent maid be falsely accused. Moreover, he shrewdly reflects that in order to save Monimia and "turn all suspicion from her, he would very willingly have been suspected of a penchant for Betty, and have encouraged her flippant forwardness; but that, as it awakened the envy and jealousy of Pattenson, (and) was likely to put him upon the watch" he decides against this strategy (111). Solely concerned with his own welfare and that of his beloved Monimia, Orlando proves that he is disposed to employ any devious, despicable methods that may be required to protect his interests. Although he may not actively encourage these suspicions, through his calculated silence he does nothing to quell or divert these misdirected rumours and is complicit in the destruction of Betty's character.

Indeed, due to her flirtatious demeanour and questionable reputation, it is generally assumed by the inhabitants of the Hall that the maid is the culprit and involved in this guilty liaison. Lamenting her pitiable situation and protesting her innocence, Betty confides in Monimia and voices concerns regarding the security of her place. The maidservant explains that

> It signifies to every body, I think, Miss, especially to us poor servants, who may lose our characters. You see that I'm blamed about it already…. But it's very hard to be brought into such a quandary as this, when one's quite as 'twere as innoncent as can be. (107)

Effectively unmoved by this confidence, Monimia makes no attempt to rectify the misunderstanding and is content to let Betty take the blame for her misdemeanours. Indeed it appears that despite her natural antipathy to lying, dissimulation and deceit, the heroine has sufficiently learnt the tricks of the trade required for survival at the Hall.

This shrewd, calculating behaviour is not only reminiscent of the other servants but also signals a marked shift from Monimia's earlier expressions of servant solidarity. Explaining to Orlando why she would never confide in Betty, Monimia affirms that if their relationship were discovered

> It would entirely ruin (Betty), and occasion the loss of her place and her character, if Betty were supposed to know anything about it; therefore...she never shall: for whatever misery it may be my fate to suffer myself, I shall not so much mind, as I should being the cause of ruining and injuring another person, especially a friendless girl, who has always been as kind to me as her situation allowed her to be. (43)

This noble and high-minded speech contrasts sharply with Monimia's later actions and her readiness to sacrifice this "friendless girl" in order to guarantee her own safety. Again it is clear that the heroine, like the hero, adapts to the environment of the Hall, instead of rising above it.

The incident culminates in the dismissal of Betty. Lennard, suspecting that Monimia is in fact Orlando's lover, also shifts the blame onto the house-maid in order to deflect suspicion away from her niece. On leaving the Hall Betty confronts Orlando, rebuking him for his unjust behaviour while implying that she is well aware of his sordid secret.

> What! I warrant you don't know that Madam have sent me down my ways, with orders to go out of her house directly, and all upon your account…. Knowing my own innocence, I bears it all; for I be clear of the charge, as you know very well: I wish every body could say as much; but I know what I know. (225)

Reproached by his victim, Orlando maintains his innocent façade and refuses to admit his guilt, diplomatically stating that "if I have done you any injury, I am very sorry for it" (226) and gives the young girl a guinea by way of compensation. Betty, perfectly informed of the situation and aware that she has been made the scape-goat for Orlando's misdeeds, still "scorn(s) to betray" (226) him and leaves the Hall with her dignity intact.

Orlando however far from feeling any sense of regret at this turn of events, is elated in his triumph and delighted at having so fortuitously escaped detection. Coincidentally it emerges that Betty was in fact planning to leave the Hall as the mistress of Orlando's older brother Philip, and in consequence, Orlando is spared any pangs of regret. Overjoyed, he wishes to

> communicate to Monimia the joy he felt in finding that the suspicions excited by so many awkward circumstances, had by some means or other fallen upon this servant; and apparently without doing her any injury, which would have considerably lessened his satisfaction. (226)

Indeed Orlando reasons that the incident had "ended in nothing but the dismissing a servant" and hence the situation is, in his eyes anyway, successfully resolved (228). Here we see Orlando's behaviour not only on a par with that of the servants but actually, in this particular case, surpassing it. Indeed in a somewhat unorthodox turn of events, Smith illustrates the servant girl as taking the moral high ground, leaving the hero unceremoniously knocked from his pedestal.

This comparison between Orlando and the servants at the Hall is furthered when Orlando discovers a group of smugglers using the manor house as a warehouse to store their contraband goods, and becomes enmeshed with them. This incident occurs when Orlando, engaged in one of his many clandestine meetings with his lover, accidentally comes upon the criminal gang and questions them as to their connection with the household. Jonas Wilkins, the principle smuggler promptly informs Orlando that

> The truth of the matter then is this – The butler of this here house, Master Pattenson, is engaged a little matter in our business; and when we gets a cargo, he stows it in Madam's cellars, which lays along-side the house, and he have the means to open that door there in the wall, under that there old fig-tree, which nobody knows nothing about. So here we brings our goods till such time as we can carry it safely up the country, and we comes on dark nights to take it away. (129)

Orlando is thus apprised of valuable information which, we can assume, would automatically result in the butler's dismissal from the Hall. Likewise, one would perhaps think that Orlando on having gained this knowledge is morally obliged to inform Rayland of the illegal activities occurring in her household. However, Orlando it is clear is unable to expose Wilkins and his coterie for fear of their revealing his secret in return. Hence the hero is in effect forced into a pact with Jonas, observing "it would have been well if we had kept one another's secrets" (129). And indeed by the conclusion of the conversation both men have reached an agreement by establishing a signal whereby they will each notify the other of their presence within the Hall.

James Holt McGavran comments on this incident, suggesting that Smith uses it to illustrate Orlando's complicity in illicit activities by virtue of his secret relationship with Monimia. McGavran argues that Smith intentionally draws comparisons between the hero and criminal characters in order to emphasise Orlando's ambiguous behaviour. Speaking of the smuggling episode, McGavran suggests that

> Orlando, Smith clearly shows us, is as complicit with the smugglers as with the poachers. He no sooner realises how he is poaching on Monimia's affections … than, after leaving Monimia's tower room, his feet are ensnared in a trap and he wrestles to the floor an unknown assailant who turns out to be Jonas Wilkins, a notorious local smuggler; the men are briefly locked in a struggle that clearly emphasizes their kinship under the skin. Then, while Orlando plies him with wine, male bonding of a sort that Orlando rarely experiences… flourishes briefly as Wilkins good-naturedly explains

> Pattenson's relationship to himself and the other smugglers. Orlando himself fails to see or further the connection.[25]

Indeed McGavran observes that "only a few pages earlier (Orlando) had been taken for a poacher and stopped by two of Mrs Rayland's servants as he left the park"[26] making yet another parallel.

While Smith is keen to show how low Orlando has stooped and to emphasise the extent of his somewhat criminal behaviour, this chapter argues that the incident serves another purpose. Through the episode, Smith not only highlights Orlando's links with the criminals but also his connection to the servants who facilitate these illegal activities. Orlando despite his shock and "astonishment that he found both Snelfcraft the coachman and Pattenson so deeply engaged among the smugglers, and deriving very considerable sums from the shelter they afforded them, and the participation of their illicit gains" is unable to expose their deeds (131). He is in a double-bind and in this vulnerable position a reciprocal relationship is established between the hero and the criminal servants of the Hall. Orlando is as such confined to the "thief's code of honour" with Rayland's deceitful domestics, with each party agreeing to keep the other's sordid secrets.

Orlando's deceitful behaviour is also manifested in his attempts to corrupt other servants. This disreputable behaviour is illustrated when Orlando is required to travel to London in order to secure his commission in the army. With Lennard's suspicions aroused about their relationship, Orlando is desperate to secure one last meeting with Monimia before he departs from the Hall. In order to thwart the housekeeper's vigilant watch, Orlando discloses the secret of his affair to the under keeper Jacob and recruits his assistance. In consequence

> Jacob entered into his situation with an appearance of intelligence and interest with which Orlando was well satisfied. They agreed upon a plan for the evening – by which Orlando hoped to procure an interview with Monimia, instead of merely seeing her at the window; and elated with this hope, he forgot the hazard and impropriety of the means he had used to obtain it. (242-243)

Unable to effect this meeting by his own endeavours, Jacob involves the new housemaid in the scheme explaining how he was "forced to get one of the maids to help" (247). As such

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[25] James Holt McGavran, 'Smuggling, Poaching and the Revulsion against Kinship in *The Old Manor House*', *Women's Writing*, Volume 16 (2009), 20-38 (p. 30).

[26] Holt McGavran, 'Smuggling, Poaching and the Revulsion against Kinship', p. 30.

Orlando's desire is satisfied and with the help of the servants he is enabled to arrange one last forbidden meeting with his lover.

Of course, bribing and enticing servants into these behaviours appears as a common practice in many eighteenth-century novels, and Orlando's behaviour is reminiscent of Jery's conduct in *Humphry Clinker* wherein he bribes a servant to deliver his sister's letter to him. Although he is not implicated in any sexual misdemeanours, Orlando nevertheless shows his willingness to involve servants in disreputable and questionable schemes. Indeed later in the novel Orlando cannot help "somewhat admiring the talent for intrigue" which another servant possesses (459). When all these factors are considered, it makes it somewhat difficult to categorically condemn the devious, underhanded, manipulative schemes which the servants undertake. And indeed if we do denounce these domestics, Smith is adamant that we must also censure Orlando.

Thus throughout the novel Smith subtly encourages the reader to reassess the position of deceitful servants by drawing parallels between the behaviour of these employees and that of the hero. While both groups are to some extent obliged to lie in order to conceal their desires and obscure their own agendas, their behaviour nevertheless remains dishonourable and mean. Both the servants and Orlando are evidently motivated by similar fiscal concerns, with both keen to capitalise on their positions in a bid to secure a maximum financial return. While Orlando is determined to secure the inheritance of the estate, Rayland's employees are likewise resolved to obtain a lucrative pension and legacy from their mistress. The only difference however is that while Orlando is viewed as the legitimate heir to the estate and hence his behaviour is somewhat accounted for, the servants are conversely depicted as grasping, avaricious schemers.

The question therefore must be asked as to why these servants desire to amass fortunes which in effect surpass their rightful expectations? The chapter argues that this explanation can be found in the harsh, degrading and humiliating treatment to which they are subjected by Rayland. It is due to the contemptuous, haughty attitude adopted by their mistress that these servants become discontented and dissatisfied with their position. The disdainful Rayland, instead of lightening the yoke of servitude, adversely increases its burden. Arrogant, dogmatic and tyrannical, Rayland does not inspire loyalty but instead encourages disobedience and insubordination. Due to this treatment, the servants not only resent their mistress but also yearn to advance through the social echelons in order to attain some semblance of respect, a respect which they are denied by Rayland.

Commenting on the nature of the French Revolution, in 1793 Arthur Young posed the question as to who was actually responsible for the excessive nature of the atrocities that were committed. He wondered if it was "the people" or "their oppressors who had kept them so long in a state of bondage?" Young blames the latter, explaining that "He who chooses to be served by slaves, and by ill-treated slaves, must know that he holds both his property and life by a tenure far different from those who prefer the service of well treated freemen..."[27] This chapter suggests that this ideology is present throughout *The Old Manor House* and is especially evident in Smith's treatment of her servant characters. Viewed from this perspective, it is possible to reassess the portrayal of domestics in the novel and suggest that Smith was somewhat more sympathetic toward their plight than is generally recognised.

It is this ideology which also helps to explain the somewhat unconventional conclusion of the novel. In accordance with the reader's expectations, Orlando and Monimia marry and eventually inherit the estate. However this ending is only achieved after a series of legal wrangling and strife which has prevented Orlando from assuming his proper position. This distress is caused by Mrs Roker, formerly Lennard who, following her mistress's death is persuaded by her new husband to conceal Rayland's genuine will. Firmly under the influence of her odious new husband, Mrs Roker suppresses the document and instead circulates an older version of the deed, through which she gains a sizeable legacy. The estate is, in accordance with the terms of this will, bequeathed to the clergy and subsequently falls into disarray. Furthermore Mrs Roker, in an act of poetic justice, is subjected to an array of cruel treatment at the hands of her nasty, brutish husband.

Suspecting however that the old housekeeper is concealing the genuine will, Orlando writes to Mrs Roker proposing an alliance. By the terms of this treaty he promises

> That if ever he recovered the estate, and by her means, he would not only enter into any agreement she should dictate to secure to her all she now possessed, but would, if she had given all up to her husband, settle upon her for life a sum that should make her more rich and independent than she had been before she gave herself to Mr Roker; and that she should inhabit her own apartments at the Hall, or any house on the estate which she might choose. (460)

On these terms, Mrs Roker finally agrees, placing her trust in Orlando's assurances that she should be well provided for, and beseeching him "not to injure me if it should be in your power; but to make me amends for what I thus lose for your sake and the sake of justice – as in your letter you faithfully promise" (524).

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[27] Quoted in Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution 1789-1820* (London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 222.

Thus Mrs Roker directs the hero to a secret compartment concealed within the walls of Rayland Hall where the genuine will is hidden. As Jacqueline M. Labbe observes Orlando's "re-entry into Rayland Hall and final triumph rest on the directions freely given him by Mrs Lennard."[28] As such, Orlando in accordance with his promise conducts Mrs Roker back to the Hall

> where he put her in possession of the apartments she had formerly occupied; and employed her to superintend, as she was still active and alert, the workmen whom he directed to repair and re-furnish the house, and the servants whom he hired to prepare it for the reception of its lovely mistress. (530)

It is in this manner that the former housekeeper is reinstated within the household, utilising her skills and knowledge in order to rebuild the house for the future generations who will inhabit it.

However, this unorthodox element of the story proved somewhat controversial on the novel's publication. Indeed it proved to be one of the most vexed and contested aspects of the story. Disturbed by the apparent lack of morality espoused throughout the narrative, one reviewer attacks the novel's confusing ethical message, fuming that

> To draw characters where the follies, the passions, and the vices of mankind are finally productive of calamity is proper painting; because, from the ill success and punishment of imprudence and criminality, an excellent moral is deduced. But is this the colouring of Mrs Smith's pictures? No such thing. On the contrary we find, that while youthful thoughtlessness and intemperance are crowned with success, ingratitude and the most complicated villainy remain unpunished.[29]

Recognising the impropriety of Orlando's behaviour, the reviewer also apparently questions the author's decision to incorporate Mrs Roker back into the Hall. Indeed while some critics have argued that the housekeeper has been adequately punished by her cruel husband and therefore worthy of redemption, others have suggested that Monimia's misplaced compassion for her kinswoman accounts for this unsuitable leniency.

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[28] Labbe, 'Metaphoricity and the Romance of Property', p. 226.

[29] Quoted in Florence May Anna Hilbish, *Charlotte Smith: Poet and Novelist (1749-1806)* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia University Press, 1941), p. 154.

However, these perspectives overlook a crucial point. Mrs Roker's reincorporation into the Hall is guaranteed by the arrangement she entered into with Orlando. It is only through her voluntary assistance that Orlando is enabled to claim his rightful place as heir to the estate. As such, Smith suggests that the newly reformed society which is established within the Hall can only be achieved through mutual co-operation and compromise between master and servant.[30] It is only with the support of the servants that the house can be repaired and governed properly. As opposed to Rayland's regime which was imposed and forced upon these subordinates, Orlando's legitimate rule must be thoroughly accepted and embraced by the servants.

Indeed Stanton identifies this incident as "one of the least satisfying acts of (Orlando's) generous sensibility...we miss the satisfaction of seeing (Mrs Roker) punished, and are left in an ambiguous world where evil can prevail, even if it does not always rule."[31] This chapter however disagrees with Stanton's perspective, arguing that in fact there is nothing particularly generous about Orlando's actions. He proposes a contract, an alliance which is mutually beneficial to both parties and re-establishes a reciprocal master-servant relationship. While Smith does not suggest that Lennard or the other servants are the legitimate rulers of the household, she does however require that they be willing participants in this new system. While under the old regime wrongs had been committed by both Orlando and the servants, with this new pact a cease-fire to hostilities is enacted and the house can be put to rights.

It is in this way that Smith provides an alternative perspective to the sneaking, scheming, cunning servants who populate *The Old Manor House*. While on first glance her fictional servants appear liable for their deceitful behaviour, on closer examination it is evident that the situation is more complex. Appreciating the difficult position in which these servants are placed, Smith offers a more insightful view of their trying position, thereby qualifying the extent of the blame apportioned to this group. Although she does not condone their behaviour, she nevertheless offers a glimpse into the extenuating circumstances which contribute to their conduct. Indeed under Rayland's rule, deception and concealment, Smith concedes, are simply "tricks of the trade" and skills which must be mastered by both hero and servant alike.

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[30] In her dissertation, Jennifer Lawrence makes a similar argument, suggesting how with Lennard's reincorporation into the household a new system of "tolerance and equality is established." See Jennifer Lawrence, 'The Third Person in the Room: Servants and the Construction of Identity in the Eighteenth-Century Gothic Novel' (Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2008), p. 188.

[31] Stanton, 'Introduction', p. xix.

CHAPTER FOUR

Turning The Tables: Challenging the Hierarchy of Truth in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*

In his essay 'Of Servants' contained in *The Enquirer* (1797), William Godwin states how servants "will instruct us in the practice of cunning and the arts of deceit. They will teach us to exhibit a studied countenance to those who preside over us…. They will accustom us to the spectacle of falsehood and imposture."[1] Likewise Maggie Kilgour speaks of the "deep distrust"[2] Godwin has towards this group, echoing Locke's reservations about these employees. Even Mary Shelley when recalling her father's deathbed remembers how "I sat up several nights with him – and Mrs Godwin was with him when I was not – as he had a great horror of being left to servants."[3]

This chapter argues that while Godwin was suspicious of servants, he nevertheless recognised their behaviour originated from the essentially flawed and corrupt nature of the master-servant relationship. Through an examination of his most famous novel *Things as They Are or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), the chapter will argue that Godwin challenges the traditional view of the deceitful servant by illustrating how the unequal power distribution at the centre of the master-servant relationship inspires hypocrisy, falsehood and deceit. Thus, the chapter suggests that Godwin subverts the traditional hierarchy of truth, arguing that masters are more liable than their servants to succumb to deceitful practices. In this respect, Godwin offers a radically different perspective on the situation than the other writers examined in this thesis. Indeed while Fielding recognised that the master-servant relationship inspired deceit, he identified servants as the culprits. Godwin however offers an alternative - and much more unsettling - perspective.

In his early fiction, Godwin subtly articulates this critique of the hierarchical social structure. Prior to the publication of his first novel, Godwin had gained some experience of fictional writing, having produced three short works of fiction early in his literary career. All three of these texts were published in 1784 and met with a modest reception from critics. In later years, Godwin would refer to these early compositions in an off-handed manner as somewhat trivial pieces. They are important however when considering his development as an author and demonstrate his familiarity with a range of literary forms. As Marilyn Butler and Mark Philp remark, "Though quite different formally, these three clever, self-conscious early novels share an interest in narrative technique and a dislike of the upper orders."[4]

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[1] William Godwin, *The Enquirer, Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature in a Series of Essays* (London: GG & J Robinson, 1797), p. 201-202.

[2] Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, p. 62.

[3] Quoted in Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 385.

In each of these texts servants appear briefly and are depicted in a mostly conventional manner. In *Damon and Delia* for instance, Godwin tells the story of two young lovers who are faced with a variety of obstacles and objections to their relationship. In the end however, love triumphs and the virtuous couple are rewarded with a marriage of contentment. The story opens with a depiction of the beautiful heroine voicing her nonchalant attitude towards her string of admirers, in none of whom she is remotely interested. Her maid Mrs Bridget however foresees that it is simply a matter of time before Delia falls in love; indeed there is the intimation that this event is inevitable. The narrator reflects that

> When her mistress received the mention of each with gay indifference, Mrs Bridget would close the dialogue, and with a sagacious look, and a shake of her head, would tell the lovely Delia, that the longer it was before her time came, the more surely and the more deeply she would be caught at last. And to say truth, the wisest philosopher might have joined in the verdict of the sage Bridget. [5]

Here Godwin makes use of the role of the ladies waiting-maid as confidante, privy to the romantic secrets of her mistress. Well versed in the behaviours of young women, Bridget is more knowledgeable than her mistress in these affairs and predicts the love plot which is about to unfold. Drawing attention to the conventional role of the servant maid, Godwin teasingly highlights the traditional function of this literary character.

In *Italian Letters: The History of the Count de St. Julian*, servants again appear in a minor role. The plot of this tale revolves around St Julian, a virtuous young aristocrat and his ill-advised friendship with the devious Rinaldo. When his father dies, Rinaldo writes to his companion informing him of the melancholy scene he experienced on arrival at his paternal home. We are told how

> The old steward, and the grey-headed lacqueys endeavoured to assume a look of complacency, but their recent grief appeared through their unpractised hypocrisy.

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[4] Mark Philp and Marilyn Butler, 'Introduction' in *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, *Volume I: Memoirs* ed. Mark Philp (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992), p. 26.

[5] William Godwin, 'Damon and Delia: A Tale' in *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin, Volume II: Early Novels* ed. Pamela Clemit (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992), p. 8.

> ‘Health to our young master! Long life,’ cried they, with a broken and tremulous accent, ‘to the marquis of Pescara!’ You will ready believe, that I made haste to free them from their restraint, and to assure them that the more they lamented my ever honoured father, the more they would endear themselves to me. Their looks thanked me, they clasped their hands with delight, and were silent.[6]

Here Godwin makes reference to another servant stereotype; that of the loyal, faithful retainer. Obviously devastated by the death of their much loved master, these servants attempt to hide their heartbreak but, untutored in the arts of deceit, they cannot conceal their true feelings. Long-serving and devoted, these domestics are representative of another popular, standard literary trope.

In the third of these works, *Imogen*, Godwin utilises the Pastoral Romance form, claiming in the preface that the piece is actually a translation of an ancient manuscript which was recently recovered. The plot centres upon the eponymous heroine Imogen and her lover Edwin. Based in a simple, primitive society, the story depicts the blossoming courtship of the virtuous young couple which is hastily destroyed when the evil necromancer Roderic kidnaps Imogen. Having designs upon the chaste heroine, Roderic attempts to seduce her by offering her a lifestyle of luxury, abundance and ease. Imogen however refutes each of Roderic’s sophisticated arguments, championing instead her desire for a hardworking life, the rewards of which are happiness and contentment. In this text servants are illustrated as simply tools of their corrupt master. Obeying Roderic’s dictates, these domestics implicitly and unreservedly follow his orders. For instance, when Edwin arrives to rescue Imogen from the enchanted castle he demands to see the master of the house. The servant “who had received the instructions of his lord”[7] lies to the hero, telling him that the house has no master and is solely run by ladies. This falsehood we are informed “was related with fluency, plausibility, and gravity; and it was accompanied with a manner seemingly artless and humane, which it was scarcely possible for one unhackneyed in the stratagems of deceit to distrust and contradict.”[8] Here Godwin indicates that these employees are the mouthpieces of their masters, uttering untruths and deceiving on command.

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[6] William Godwin, ‘Italian Letters: The History of the Count de St Julian’ in *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin, Volume II: Early Novels* ed. Pamela Clemit, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992), p. 83.

[7] William Godwin, ‘Imogen: A Pastoral Romance’ in *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin, Volume II: Early Novels* ed. Pamela Clemit (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992), p. 260.

[8] Godwin, ‘Imogen’, p. 260.

Pamela Clemit argues that in *Imogen*, Godwin's engagement with Jacobin concerns is already evident. She observes that

> Already he is experimenting with fiction to discuss theoretical issues in an artistically resourceful and satisfying way. In reworking the genre of pastoral romance, he seeks to liberate the reader from a range of customary expectations, anticipating his bolder analysis of hierarchical structures in *Caleb Williams*.[9]

The persecution of innocence and the abuse of power is the central theme around which the story revolves. Roderic is emblematic of the tyrannical, unjust ruler who uses his usurped authority to oppress and terrorise the rest of society. Indeed, this central concern is a subject which Jacobin writers later in the century capitalised upon and extensively examined in their fiction.

This critique of the hierarchy is particularly evident in the confrontation between Imogen and Roderic's servants. Attempting to persuade the heroine to acquiesce to the demands of their master, they inform her "we are not used to dispute the orders of our master. We would oblige you if it were in our power."[10] In response to this statement, Imogen makes an impassioned speech in which she disdainfully states her rejection of such arguments.

> Your master! and your lord!' replied Imogen, with a tone of displeasure, 'I understand not these words. The Gods have made all their rational creatures equal. If they have made one strong and another weak, it is for the purpose of mutual benevolence and assistance, and not for that of despotism and oppression.[11]

Here, Imogen's logical and eloquent repudiation of the master-servant connection forestalls Godwin's criticism of this system which will become more prevalent in the following decade. By suggesting that this relationship is illegitimate and unnatural, the text lays the foundations for the author's more intense and concentrated attack which is explored in his most popular novel.

While it can be argued that both *Imogen* and *Caleb Williams* deal with the same topic, both do so in very different ways. While the former adopts an allegorical, romanticised exploration of the issue, *Caleb Williams* treats the matter in a more realistic manner. Thus Godwin achieves his critique through focusing on the dynamics involved in the master-servant relationship as it operates in contemporary society. As such, Godwin's wide reaching and general attack on the nature of current society is distilled into an intensely concentrated examination of this single relationship. It is through the exploration of this master-servant dynamic that Godwin can emphasise the destructive nature of eighteenth-century society and advocate the need for its reform.

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[9] Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brocken Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 34.
[10] Godwin, 'Imogen', p. 212.
[11] Godwin, 'Imogen', p. 212.

Indeed, by the 1790s Godwin's critique of this relationship became more pointed. Over the previous decade, Godwin had further developed his radical ideas and in consequence, his attack on the hierarchical nature of society was more heated. In *Political Justice*, published on 14 February 1793, Godwin set forth his radical vision of an anarchist society, premised upon utilitarian principles. In this extensive work he systematically critiqued the institutions upon which modern society was founded, exposing them as corrupt and inimical to progress and happiness. The fundamental structure of contemporary society was, Godwin argued, artificial and illegitimate. Thus in order for society to prosper and for mankind to achieve their potential and progress beyond their current state, this social structure needed to be destroyed.

As a radical manifesto, *Political Justice* was deemed a highly subversive and threatening text. In the increasingly reactionary political environment of 1793, the publication was viewed with suspicion by the authorities who were hostile to any writings appertaining to apparently revolutionary ideals. Godwin draws attention to this unfortunate timing in the preface, lamenting how "it is the fortune of the present work to appear before a public that is panic struck, and impressed with the most dreadful apprehensions of such doctrines as are here delivered."[12] However due to the price of the book, it was deemed to be too expensive for the lower classes to purchase and hence beyond the reach of the vast majority of the populace. In light of this consideration, Godwin and his publishers escaped government prosecution and the text was largely confined to an elite readership.

While the price of the publication limited its circulation, the radical nature of Godwin's ideology also served to curb its appeal and undermine its validity as a practical policy to be implicated into society. Offering a rational, logical exposition on the nature of society, Godwin however sometimes pushed his logic too far and was too extreme in his thinking. His unfaltering optimism in the "perfectibility of man" for instance, while inspiring also proved somewhat intimidating and appeared beyond the reach of mere mortals. As William Hazlitt would later observe, Godwin “raised the standard of morality above the reach of humanity, and by directing virtue to the most airy and romantic heights, made her path dangerous, solitary, and impracticable.”[13]

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[12] William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (Dublin: Luke White, 1793), p. xii.

While some of the philosopher’s ideas were somewhat extreme, he was however keen to demonstrate how other elements of his creed could be practically implemented into society. For instance, Godwin believed that sincerity should be preserved in all aspects of social interaction. As such, individuals should not conceal their opinions or viewpoints but instead should freely, frankly and candidly communicate their ideas in the social arena without fear of rebuke or censure. While this idea appertained to such contentious issues as political and social ideologies, Godwin was also adamant that this policy should be applied to practical, everyday life. Individuals therefore who perhaps currently disguise their dislike of certain people under the sheen of politeness, should, Godwin suggested, discard this “bastard prudence”[14] in favour of a more blunt and direct communication with their acquaintance. Moreover, it was the duty of mankind to communicate such “unpleasant truth(s)”[15] to their neighbours, in order to alert these individuals to their flaws and enable them to rectify such personal deficiencies.

In consequence of this more candid social discourse, Godwin maintained that some common social practices would be eradicated, in particular the custom of servants denying their masters. In an appendix entitled ‘Of the Mode Of Excluding Visitors’ included in *Political Justice*, the author specifically addresses this issue, highlighting the sense of shame and humiliation servants suffer when engaged in this practice. Godwin elaborates on the fact that servants, before they become proficient in this practice “must have discarded the ingenuous frankness by means of which the thoughts find easy commerce with the tongue” until they finally master this “degenerate lesson.”[16] Thus, he acknowledges that in order to fulfil this duty servants must be trained and tutored in the arts of deceit by their social superiors. Like Fielding therefore, Godwin is not only critical of this social practice but moreover evinces sympathy for attendants who are obliged to participate in this custom. And, akin to his literary predecessor, Godwin also acknowledges that servants are not naturally inclined to engage in deceitful behaviours but on the contrary are obliged to study and perfect the “mysteries of hypocrisy.”[17]

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[13] William Hazlitt, ‘William Godwin’, in *Lives of the Great Romantics III: Godwin, Wollstonecraft & Mary Shelley by their Contemporaries, Volume 1*, ed. Pamela Clemit (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), p. 50.
[14] Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 219.
[15] Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 222.
[16] Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 246.

Unlike Fielding however, Godwin does not simply highlight the hypocrisy of this practice but he also advocates a solution: sincerity. If employers ceased pandering to the dictates of polite etiquette and refused to wear “the same indiscriminate smile, the same appearance of cordiality and complacence”[18] to all their acquaintance, then they would no longer be plagued with the importune visits of unwanted visitors. Masters should discard this pretence, and instead candidly communicate their preference for the company of certain people while signifying their aversion to that of others. While distinguished friends would capitalise on this preference and pay visits to like-minded people, unwanted acquaintances would willingly avoid the company of those who wished to be rid of their company. Hence by adopting an attitude of candour in their social relations, masters would free their servants from the obligation to deny their being at home.

In order for this standard of sincerity and other similar principles to be embraced by society, Godwin proposed that mankind should be educated. Indeed, education was the cornerstone and basis of Godwin’s anarchist philosophy. Without education, the philosopher argued that society would be unable to progress and hence a regenerated social order could not emerge. Thus, the author advocates a policy of universal education which would ensure that every member of society- including servants- would be able to comprehend the basic utilitarian principles upon which this new society would be founded. This idea is articulated in the infamous fire scene in which a chambermaid and the Archbishop of Cambray are trapped in a burning room and only one can be saved from the fire. In accordance with Godwin’s utilitarian cast of mind, the person who would be of greater benefit and contribute more to the good of society should be saved. Being possessed of “higher faculties” it is evident that “the illustrious Archbishop of Cambray was of more worth than his chambermaid...”[19] Godwin continues, explaining that the chambermaid could be the rescuer’s wife or mother yet this consideration, in accordance with the dictates of universal justice, should have no bearing on the decision. This particular scene was a cause of popular outrage, with the public aghast at Godwin’s seemingly cold and callous approach to the subject. As Marilyn Butler observes “So much play was made of this that in the third edition Fènelon's valet was consigned to the flames instead of his chamber-maid, but as far as the popular impression went the damage was done."[20]

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[17] Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. 246.
[18] Godwin, Political Justice, p. 248.
[19] Quoted in C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries, Volume 1* (London: Henry S King & Co, 1876), p. 108.

Godwin continues his argument, suggesting that

> supposing I had been myself the chambermaid, I ought to have chosen to die rather than that Fènelon should have died. The life of Fènelon was really preferable to that of the chambermaid. But *understanding is the faculty that perceives the truth* of this and similar propositions, and justice is the principle that regulates my conduct accordingly[21] (my italics).

Here Godwin proposes that Fènelon should be saved, but this is not because his privileged social position as a master automatically entitles him to be placed above that of the chambermaid. Rather, it is the distinguished nature of Fènelon's character, his merits, qualities and virtues which establish him as worthy to be saved. Furthermore the passage suggests that the chambermaid should recognise this fact and accept her duty; but in order to do this she must understand and appreciate these basic utilitarian principles. Thus, although the author does not explicitly state that this servant should be educated, by following the logic of his argument it is subtly implied. In effect therefore, Godwin appears to advocate the premise that once a servant is educated he or she will recognise their social obligation and act accordingly.

The contentious issue of servant education, which had plagued social commentators throughout the eighteenth century, is here portrayed as unproblematic, with educated domestics fitting seamlessly into Godwin's anarchist vision. According to this reasoning, education will not disrupt or unsettle the social structure but conversely enable society to function in a more just and fair manner. Thus in Godwin's idealised anarchist utopia, educated servants help to reinforce and aid the smooth running of society.

Towards the end of the century, even conservative writers were beginning to view lower class education in a more positive light. As Alan Richardson observes "reformist writers and activists – from conservatives wishing to shore up the status quo to 'Jacobins' wishing to overturn it – saw education as a, if not the, key locus for promoting social stability or engineering social revolution."[22] Thus, while Godwin envisioned educated servants as supporters of his anarchist social system, conservative writers such as Hannah More viewed these educated domestics as key players in the maintenance of the hierarchical social structure.

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[20] Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 41.

[21] Quoted in Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, p. 108.

[22] Quoted in Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 11.

This ideology was also incorporated into the anti-Jacobin novels of the 1790s. These novels were written as a response to the Jacobin novels produced by Godwin, Bage and Holcroft and advocated the maintenance of the current social order. Within these texts, the depiction of servants is often quite formulaic. Typically an incident occurs whereby an innocent attendant accidentally overhears their master discussing the ideals of the new philosophy and in consequence becomes an adherent of this dangerous ideology. Things rarely end well for the servant however, and they are usually subjected to drastic punishments for their wayward behaviour including imprisonment or death. This theme is utilised for instance by Hannah More in *The History of Mr Fantom: The New Fashioned Philosopher and his Man William* (1797) wherein the tragic servant meets his grisly end, lamenting his exposure to such pernicious principles which he "learnt of (his) master."[23]

As M.O Grenby observes, this is the standard theme throughout these novels, with "Similar episodes appear(ing) frequently... servants always being corrupted, by the carelessly disseminated 'flossophy' of their betters."[24] Grenby further explains that

> These servants were ensnared by new philosophy, we are often made aware, because they were poor and had nothing to lose by adopting the new system, because they were ignorant, their critical faculties not sufficiently sophisticated to expose the sophistry of new philosophy and because they were fanciful enough to imagine that the chimerical ideals that new philosophy offered could ever actually exist.[25]

If however these servants had gained a limited and curtailed education founded in religious tracts and solid conservative ideals, it is inferred that they would not have been vulnerable to the insidious principles carelessly propounded by their masters. Instead, these conservative texts implied, these employees would have recognised and appreciated their rightful position in the social hierarchy and furthermore would be content to stay there.

Godwin's first novel *Things as They Are or Caleb Williams* however complicates his treatment of servant education as premised in *Political Justice*. In this work, educated servants are not successfully incorporated into the social structure and instead they pose a challenge to it. This is due to the fact that *Political Justice* projects a future, utilitarian society where citizens are prepared, and hence disposed, to embrace change. Education in this social context has primed the populace to accept Godwin's utilitarian ideology, with its incumbent commitment to the principles of sincerity and honesty. In the world of *Caleb Williams* however the situation is different: society has not been slowly inured to accept such utilitarian ideals. Hence, the issue of servant education proves much more complex and ambiguous, with Caleb attempting to come to terms with "things as they are."

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[23] Hannah More, *The History of Mr Fantom, The New Fashioned Philosopher and his Man William* (London: J. Marshall, 1797) p. 23.

[24] M. O Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 99.

[25] Grenby*, The Anti-Jacobin Novel*, p. 106.

Indeed in order for any new structure or system of society to emerge, Godwin was adamant that change needed to come about slowly and gradually. Any hasty, impetuous implementation of new ideas was not the way to secure a lasting, secure alteration to the social structure. Instead, the reform of society must begin with debate and discussion, with stimulated exchanges between educated men of "study and reflection."[26] Godwin's unflinching adherence to this principle of gradualism permeates throughout his ideology, earning him a reputation amongst his contemporaries as an "armchair radical."[27] Disavowing any kind of violence or sudden revolutionary fervour, the philosopher was emphatic in his calls for a moderate, temperate approach to social change. Thus, while his ideology may have contained radical elements, the methods which Godwin advocated to achieve his aims were decidedly moderate. This tone of caution is evident not only in his philosophical manifesto, but is also palpable throughout Godwin's first novel, *Caleb Williams*.

From reading his extensive diaries which he meticulously maintained for forty-eight years, we know that Godwin was widely read in the novel genre and familiar with the works of Richardson, Fielding and Smollett. Speaking on the composition of *Caleb Williams*, Godwin states

> I read other authors, that I might see what they had done, or more properly, that I might forcibly hold my mind and occupy my thoughts in a particular train, I and my predecessors travelling in some sense to the same goal, at the same time that I struck out a path of my own, without ultimately heeding the direction they pursued.[28]

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[26] Godwin, *Political Justice*, p. xii.

[27] Bowen, *The Politics of Custom*, p. 136.

[28] William Godwin, 'Preface to the "Standard Novels" edition of Fleetwood (1832)' in *Caleb Williams*, p. 351.

The influence of these authors is evident in his early works discussed above. The epistolary narrative popularised by Richardson was used to great effect in *Italian Letters* while hints of Fielding's presence are apparent in *Damon and Delia*. Throughout his literary career, Godwin would continue to use elements from a variety of authors, choosing and combining different features in the creation of his own original and innovative style.

In *Caleb Williams*, Godwin draws largely upon the Gothic Romance genre. Similar to Smith, Godwin innovated and experimented with the conventions associated with this genre. As A.A. Markley suggests "*Caleb Williams* owes much of its success to Godwin's creative amalgamation of a wide variety of popular Gothic conventions."[29] While acknowledging these parallels however, it is clear that the novel deviates from the traditional Gothic mode in many ways. For instance, there is a marked lack of supernatural elements and a striking absence of a romantic love interest, which were elements commonly associated with the Gothic genre. Furthermore, the typical omniscient third-person narrator is in *Caleb Williams* replaced with a highly subjective first-person account.

One of the most significant ways in which Godwin subverts this genre however is through his representation of servants. Similar to Smith, Godwin also rejected the dominant method of servant representation associated with the Gothic Romance form. Indeed, in *Caleb Williams*, these domestic employees no longer provide a source of comic relief or exhibit a frustrating yet entertaining garrulity. In their place, Godwin introduces a new type of literary servant who is educated, eloquent and articulate. Combined with his intelligence however, Caleb also retains a certain naivety, a trait which is the hallmark of Walpole's Gothic servant.

The plot of *Caleb Williams* involves the eponymous protagonist, an intelligent and ingenuous young man who, following the recent death of his father is taken into employment by the generous and benevolent Ferdinando Falkland. Caleb, it is revealed, has received an education which is somewhat superior to his humble expectations and as a result secures the enviable position as Falkland's secretary. Initially Caleb is grateful for this opportunity and content in his place. Before long however he is mystified by his employer's strange, erratic behaviour which manifests itself in bouts of aggression and melancholy. Baffled by this apparently unaccountable conduct, Caleb is informed by Mr Collins, a fellow servant, of Falkland's tragic history.

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[29] Markley, *Conversion and Reform*, p. 59.

During the course of this narrative, it emerges that in his youth Falkland was involved in a feud with his boorish country neighbour Barnabus Tyrrel. Despite Falkland's numerous attempts to heal the rift, his jealous and envious rival persisted in his abusive behaviour until one day Tyrrel is found murdered. While suspicion initially falls on Falkland, the Hawkinses, two disgruntled tenants of Tyrrel, are eventually convicted of the murder and duly executed. Caleb however has difficulty in accepting this version of events and through a combination of spying, prying and underhanded methods finally forces Falkland to admit that he committed the murder. After this confession however, the master-servant relationship quickly deteriorates and Falkland becomes a tyrant, tormenting and harassing his servant.

It is Caleb's insatiable curiosity which has led to this fraught situation; indeed he is obsessed with the story and determined to discover the truth behind the affair. In this respect, Caleb differs from the other servants discussed in this thesis who often come under pressure from their masters to lie and tell falsehoods. While the behaviour of these servants is often exonerated due to their compromised position, Godwin demonstrates that it is Caleb's desire for truth which proves so destructive. It is his unceasing search for the truth which has such a catastrophic impact on the master-servant relationship and breeds distrust and misunderstanding.

It is soon evident that Caleb's curiosity is directly attributable to his education. Speaking of his childhood he reflects that "I was taught the rudiments of no science, except reading, writing and arithmetic. But I had an inquisitive mind, and neglected no means of information from conversation or books. My improvement was greater than my condition in life afforded room to expect" (3). Indeed this appetite for self-improvement is further emphasised when he reflects how "In my early life my mind had been almost wholly engrossed by reading and reflection" (5). In consequence of this education, the spark of curiosity has been kindled within Caleb and becomes his ruling passion.

Furthermore, Caleb's curiosity also manifests itself in a disregard for conventional boundaries and regulations. This is illustrated when Caleb, despite Falkland's numerous threats and warnings, perseveres in his snooping and inquisitive behaviours. Having been subjected to his servant's meddling antics, Falkland harshly rebukes him in the following manner,

> Base, artful wretch that you are! Learn to be more respectful! Are my passions to be wound and unwound by an insolent domestic? Do you think I will be an instrument to

> be played on at your pleasure…. Begone, and fear lest you be made to pay for the temerity you have already committed. (114-115)

Despite the vehemence of this warning, Caleb is only temporarily awed into submission and is soon engaged in his espionage activities once again. It is the inquiring bent of his mind, which has been nurtured and fostered through education which results in this blatant disregard for traditional boundaries.

While the novel focuses on the actions of the inquisitive young attendant, it is evident that Godwin in no way condones or valorises the behaviour of the eponymous protagonist. Indeed as Ian Ousby observes, Caleb's prying behaviour amounts to an aggressive violation of the customary bonds upon which the master-servant relationship depends. Servants by the terms of this relationship owed their masters respect and loyalty, and hence Caleb's spying antics are construed as an attack on the traditional "social fabric."[30] Despite criticising the fundamental structure of this relationship and campaigning for its eventual destruction, Godwin unequivocally rejects Caleb's attempts to rashly demolish this system. In many ways the servant's prying tactics and hurried actions worryingly "resemble that rash revolutionism which the author criticised in his fellow radicals."[31] Instead, Godwin adopts a more pragmatic, moderate approach to the situation, accepting "that such institutions were here to stay at least for the foreseeable future" and suggesting "ways by which they might be made more liberal and humane."[32] As such, the master-servant relationship should be adjusted and modified slowly over time, not hastily destroyed.

While Caleb, stimulated by his ceaseless curiosity, may be willing to trammel upon the traditional dictates of the master-servant relationship in the pursuit of knowledge, other attendants in the novel are less fervent in their devotion to the truth. Indeed Collins, as Falkland's agent is also educated and, as Caleb informs us, is "a man of no vulgar order" with "uncommonly judicious" insights and reflections on certain issues (94). Yet despite this education, he does not evince the same enthusiastic curiosity displayed by Caleb and is much more ambivalent in regards to the discovery of truth. Toward the end of the novel he ruminates on this issue, asking if he were to be convinced of Falkland's guilt "what benefit would arise from that? I must part will all my interior consolation, and all my external connections. And for what?" (287). Here, Collins states that the revelation of truth must have some practical or useful benefits, highlighting that if these are not to be gained, people will be reluctant to listen to or accept such facts. As such, he cautiously draws attention to the implications arising from curiosity, pointing out that they may be complicated and perhaps disappointing. These are reasoned and sage considerations however, which the youthful and fervent Caleb overlooks.

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[30] Ian Ousby, '"My Servant Caleb": Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and the Political Trials of the 1790s', *UT Quarterly*, Volume 44, Number 1 (Fall 1974), 47-55 (p. 50).
[31] Ousby, 'My Servant Caleb', p. 54.
[32] Ousby, 'My Servant Caleb', p. 54.

Godwin also discusses the issue of servants and their connection with curiosity or, more precisely lack thereof, in his next novel *Travels of St Leon* (1799). This tells the story of the eponymous protagonist who receives the secrets of the philosopher's stone from a mysterious stranger. Once in possession of this knowledge however, St Leon is obliged to keep the secret hidden from his family which subsequently breeds suspicion and misunderstanding within the domestic abode. While he excludes his family however, he is willing to take Hector, his faithful Negro servant into his confidence and reveal to him the secrets of his chemical experiments. Reflecting on this decision, St Leon states how he

> found [Hector] sufficiently adapted for my purpose, his innocence and implicit obedience to whomsoever he served, rendering me sufficiently secure that he would anticipate nothing, that he would conjecture nothing, that he would rest in what he saw, that I might almost exhibit my whole process under his eye, without once awakening the busy fiend of curiosity...[33]

As such, it is Hector's very lack of curiosity or inquisitiveness which apparently qualifies him as a suitable confidante, privy to his master's clandestine activities. Yet, instead of guaranteeing St Leon's security, Hector's innocence and lack of intelligence actually exposes the protagonist to the fury and enmity of the populace. Indeed in his simplicity, Hector inadvertently reveals his master's coveted secret to his lover, who in turn publicises it to an outraged and hostile public. While St Leon instructs Hector to flee from the aggression of impending mob, the guilt-stricken servant refuses to obey and incidentally sacrifices his life in an attempt to atone for the unintentional disclosure of his master's secret.

Throughout the novel, Hector is primarily characterised by his innocence, loyalty and devotion to his master. In this respect, he is akin to the servant characters typically associated with Gothic Romance novels. Indeed, Godwin emphatically draws attention to the "infantine innocence of his understanding" while also noting his "unapprehensive and invincible simplicity."[34] Yet it is clear that while he is critical of Caleb's indomitable curiosity, Godwin in no way praises Hector's intellectual deficiencies. Indeed as the tragic outcome shows, a lack of understanding does not necessarily guarantee the safety of master or servant. Instead, this simplicity only leads St Leon to place a misguided confidence in his employee's ignorance, resulting in tragedy. Thus while a servant's overactive curiosity is deemed undesirable, so too Godwin implies, is an attendant's extreme intellectual simplicity.

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[33] William Godwin, *Standard Novels, Volume V: Travels of St. Leon* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), p. 259.

It is not only Caleb's curiosity however, but the way in which this curiosity is manifested which proves so damaging to the master-servant relationship. Indeed it is his prying tactics and underhanded, manipulative methods which have forced a confession from Falkland. As such, the master is, not surprisingly, suspicious and resentful of his servant. Caleb however cannot understand Falkland's reserve and laments his master's lack of faith in him. Assured of his own good intentions and his admiration of and sympathy for Falkland, he asserts that "I will never become an informer. I will never injure my master; and therefore he will not be my enemy" (134). Yet what Caleb fails to realise is that he never effectively communicates this to his master; his sneaking actions and deeds consistently undermine his protestations of attachment and admiration. Thus in this respect, Caleb blatantly lacks the self-awareness and self-consciousness which for instance, Smith's servants have learnt to master.

It is this suspicion, doubt and paranoia which finally result in Falkland's decision to brand Caleb a liar. Caleb's careless, thoughtless behaviour has eventually proved too much to tolerate and Falkland enters upon a defence strategy in order to protect against the threat of his employee exposing his closely guarded secret. As such "all he can do is continually undermine Caleb's reputation so as to prevent him from attaining a position in the community such that his word might be believed."[35] Thus provoked, Falkland enters into a plan of attack whereby he systematically undermines and destroys his servant's character through a combination of phony accusations and false evidence.

Due to the unequal nature of the master-servant relationship, Caleb is left in a vulnerable position while Falkland is empowered to use all the tools at his disposal to discredit his servant. The most effective and convenient way by which he can achieve this is through the utter destruction of Caleb's public character. And so through aspersions, carefully timed responses and a calculated portrayal of events, Falkland gains control of Caleb's reputation and vindictively undertakes to destroy it. Through tightly controlling and monitoring his own behaviour, Falkland is thus enabled to carefully tailor the image of Caleb to his own desires and effectively gain control of his servant's character.

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[34] Godwin, *St. Leon*, p. 261.

[35] Mark Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice* (London: Duckworth, 1986), p. 113.

In this respect, we have a reversal of the master-servant situation as Fielding and other social commentators had perceived it earlier in the century. While Fielding addressed the issue of servant imposition and attempted to protect masters from their servants' tricks, Godwin views the situation from another perspective. It must be emphasised however that Fielding based his recommendations on dominant social assumptions that labelled servants as unreliable, slippery creatures, prone to self-misrepresentation. *Caleb Williams* however depicts a very different, unique situation. Indeed, Caleb is a radically innovative, original servant character who differs drastically from the popular servant image upon which Fielding founded his recommendations. Furthermore, the concept of a master having secretly committed a murder is a highly unorthodox plot device which necessarily results in a series of unusual and atypical events. In this respect, the story we are presented with in the novel is a highly unusual and unfamiliar affair, which overturns the stereotypical master-servant relationship.

Nevertheless, through utilising this unconventional plot device, Godwin is enabled to portray the master-servant situation from a new and innovative perspective. In this respect he reverses the central premise which held that masters were the most reliable source to provide accurate information about their servants. While Fielding implicitly trusted the integrity of masters due to their position of independence and autonomy, Godwin on the other hand voices no such optimism. This is because Godwin, unlike Fielding does not repose faith or confidence in the hierarchical social structure, and instead identifies this as an essentially corrupt and fraudulent system.

Through this unconventional representation, Godwin thereby challenges the prevailing social attitude toward the master-servant relationship. Instead, he shows how the upper classes can be motivated by spleen and malevolence in their representations of their employees. This possibility was broached by Antoine Blanchard, who wrote an eighteenth-century domestic confessional guide handbook. In this text "Employers were asked whether they had ruined their servants' reputations or slandered them out of vindictiveness in order to hinder their chances of future employment."[36] In *Caleb Williams* Godwin demonstrates the consequences of this situation, depicting how Falkland's paranoia has prompted him to capitalise upon his position of power and provide a maliciously false representation of Caleb's character.

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[36] Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France: The Uses of Loyalty* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 263.

It is thus through his depiction of Falkland's resentment that Godwin offers a devastating blow to the traditional assumptions upon which the master-servant relationship was based. For it was generally believed that a gentleman, in possession of his own lands, financially independent and possessed of a solid education could be implicitly relied upon to tell the truth. Conversely "there was wide agreement that the servant's word was not his bond, and that the reason for this distinction between masters and servants was the latter's dependence and compromised integrity of action."[37] Falkland, possessed of all these virtues, appears to fulfil this criterion however his conduct falls devastatingly short of the standard.

This is partly due as Godwin suggests to Falkland's chivalric notions of honour. In accordance with this code, a gentleman's behaviour should always be regulated by the claims of justice, virtue and respect. One's reputation is in effect the pride of their existence and if this is in anyway tarnished by a tincture of disrepute it is a fate worse than death. As Falkland regretfully confides to Caleb "I was the fool of fame" (132). Unwilling to sacrifice his public image and having committed the disgraceful act of murder, Falkland lies and denies the charge, thereby protecting his reputation. It is sadly ironic that the chivalric code, which was supposed to defend against the perpetration of shameful behaviour, actually prompts the very actions it is supposed to prevent.

As such, the popular notion that one could trust a gentleman and that by virtue of his status his word could be relied upon is thrown into disrepute. While it was commonly believed that a servant's protestations "could not, obviously, be taken at face value, for they would say anything to secure advantageous employment,"[38] Godwin recognised that the reverse may also be true, and that gentlemen could go to extreme lengths to cover up their misdemeanours. The upper classes, Godwin demonstrates, had too much to lose, and it was this fear which could act as a major impetus towards the perpetration of falsehoods. Viewed in this light, the hierarchical system promotes deceit and falsehood, instead of protecting against this vice. As Stephen Shapin observes, by the end of the century there was a growing scepticism toward the traditional hierarchy of truth, and an awareness "that the possession of great power and responsibility might compromise integrity, and that places of power were places where truth could thrive only with the greatest difficulty.”[39]

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[37] Stephen Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 92.
[38] Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, p. 92.

In this way Godwin launches his attack upon the traditional hierarchy of truth by illustrating that it is those in power who are liable to succumb to falsehoods in order to protect their privileged position. Thus he changes the grounds of the argument, demonstrating a somewhat unsettling, disconcerting aspect to the situation. It is interesting that in this respect, Godwin also challenges the ideology of the French Revolutionaries who drafted the first French constitution in 1789. Indeed, the French authorities argued that servants’ subordination made them “ineligible for political rights: because they were agents of the will of another”[40] and hence servants as a distinct group were excluded from all political rights. As Susan Maslan explains “The fear that those who worked for others lacked the autonomy necessary to qualify them for political rights and therefore must be excluded from membership in the new political order”[41] was a prevalent fear for the legislators.

Instead, Godwin highlights how it is the fundamental nature of the hierarchical system which helps Falkland to reassert his control over Caleb, through attacking his character. Needing to discredit Caleb as a viable witness, it is all too convenient for Falkland to take advantage of his own influential position and use this to crush Caleb. Coupled with this, Falkland also relies upon and exploits his own highly-regarded reputation in order to destroy that of Caleb. By monitoring his own behaviour to ensure that it appears in the most advantageous light, Falkland uses a combination of smoke and mirror tactics in order to undermine and ultimately destroy Caleb’s reputation.

This tactic is first illustrated when Falkland encounters Caleb and Forester deep in conversation. Having instructed his servant to keep his distance from his kinsman, Falkland is deeply troubled when he happens upon them in an apparently secretive, confidential meeting. Suspicious as to what Caleb may have confided to Forester, Falkland receives his brother’s innocent version of events with a calculated silence. As we are informed

> his silence was partly the direct consequence of a mind watchful, inquisitive and doubting; and partly perhaps was adopted for the sake of the effect it was qualified to

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[39] Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, p. 100.

[40] Susan Maslan, ‘”Gotta Serve Somebody”: Service; Autonomy; Society’, *Comparative Literature Studies*, Volume 46, Number 1 (2009), 45-75 (p.45).

[41] Maslan, ‘Gotta Serve Somebody’, p. 46.

> produce, Mr Falkland not being unwilling to encourage a prejudice against the character of a person who might one day become the adversary of his own. (147)

Already ruminating upon his servant's downfall, Falkland takes advantage of an opportune moment to cast the first indications of doubt upon his employee's behaviour.

This technique is again demonstrated during the court scene wherein Caleb is accused by Falkland of being a thief. Concocting a plausible tale, Falkland tells how he found his servant beside a broken chest which contained many valuable items including money and jewels. He proclaims that these items have subsequently gone missing and, despite his initial reluctance, regretfully believes Caleb to be the thief. The story is of course completely fabricated and Caleb has in reality stolen no such goods. However, the narrative is all too believable given the dominant attitudes towards servant veracity in the eighteenth century. Indeed as Amanda Vickery observes "Theft by servants, theft from lodgings and shoplifting were all new capital offences"[42] during this period, reflecting the prevailing attitude of suspicion surrounding servants.

It is the specific nature of the crime which also adds to the abhorrence with which Caleb is treated by society. In accordance with eighteenth-century ideology, if a servant stole from his master, this crime was viewed as petty treason. This was due to the fact that the structure upon which the domestic household was modelled was an imitation of that regulating society in general. As such the domestic environment was viewed as a mini-state, with the master as King and the rest of the family as subordinates. To commit any offence against one's sovereign was treason; therefore to steal from one's employer was deemed petty treason. This general attitude is illustrated later in the novel by a remark made by a traveller who reflects that he "could forgive (Caleb) all his other robberies, but that he should have been so hardened as to break the house of his own master at last, that is too bad" (228).

While society at large may be predisposed to give credit to Falkland's account due to his reputation, his style of delivery and detailed fabrication of particulars also adds to the apparent veracity of his tale. Throughout the court case he provides in-depth descriptions of Caleb's supposed behaviour which, according to Falkland's account involved "a good deal of faltering" (160). Furthermore, he protests that his servant was "rather silent and reserved" (160) in the aftermath of the alleged incident. These actions of course suggest that something underhand or undesired had taken place and conjure ideas of evasion and guilt. Having carefully calculated his choice of words and fully aware of the implications these words carry, Falkland proves himself to be a talented narrator and capable of producing his desired effect upon his audience.

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[42] Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 33.

Not only has Falkland a credible story but he also has a witness to support his tale. This is Robert, another servant who did in fact see Caleb leaving the scene of the crime in a flustered state. Caleb relates how Robert found him

> standing there with every mark of perturbation and fright, that [Robert] was so struck with my appearance that he could not help stopping to notice it, that he had spoken to me two or three times before he could obtain an answer, and that all he could get from me at last, was that I was the most miserable creature alive. (162)

The reader knows that prior to this scene Falkland has accosted Caleb and this is the reason for his servant's dazed and confused behaviour. Despite the truth of the situation, Robert's account of the incident works to further support Falkland's twisted version of events. For while this testimony relates to the event in question, it is intentionally misapplied by Falkland in order to portray events in accordance with his own desires.

Robert supports this testimony, recalling how the following day Falkland had called him to his room and there

> showed him a chest standing in the apartment with its locks and fastenings broken, and ordered him to observe and remember what he saw…. He entertained no doubt that the fastenings were broken and wrenched by the application of a chisel or such like instrument with the intention of forcibly opening the chest. (162)

It is this culmination of circumstantial evidence as carefully orchestrated by Falkland which again adds to the suspicion surrounding Caleb's character. While not wholly conclusive, this evidence does seem to provide a strong indication of the defendant's guilt and makes a convincing argument in his accuser's favour.

While Robert unconsciously helps to verify his master's twisted interpretation of events, other servants willingly participate in Falkland's deceitful stratagem. In his quest to destroy Caleb's reputation, Falkland recruits the merciless and unscrupulous Jones to help perpetuate his fallacious version of incidents. This character is a former thief turned thief-taker and proves instrumental in furthering Falkland's agenda, being employed specifically "for the purpose of blasting (Caleb's) reputation" (283). To this effect, later in the novel he will follow Caleb around the country spreading the story of his supposed treachery toward his master and hence preventing the servant from "acquiring a character of integrity" (283). Jones moreover is actuated in his pursuit not only by desires of financial remuneration but more importantly by a personal animosity and hostility toward his victim. Having been expelled from a band of thieves of which he was a member on account of his ill-treatment of Caleb, Jones in consequence harbours feelings of resentment toward the servant. As such, he has no regard for the veracity or fallacy of the tale he relates, being "careless whether the supposition were true or false" (251). Thus, unlike Thomas who is unwillingly duped into corroborating Falkland's erroneous testimony or Collins who is reluctant to hear the truth, Jones is simply unconcerned with issues of veracity. Indifferent to such matters, Jones is readily used as a tool by Falkland and is content to spread a distorted, untrue portrayal of Caleb's character.

While using servants to aid his policy of defamation, Falkland also supports his case through his own studied reactions. As part of his scheme to frame Caleb for this fictional robbery, Falkland has arranged to have the contested items placed in his servant's box. When Forester proposes that this box should be sent for and examined, Falkland, it is revealed "treated this suggestion slightly" (162). Furthermore when the box is obtained and the items are found in it we are informed that "no person's astonishment appeared to be greater than that of Mr Falkland" (162). Again through a deliberate and crafty control of his deportment, Falkland is enabled to feign a surprised reaction when in fact he is not in the least startled by this revelation.

Finally, Falkland perfects this carefully cultivated persona by demonstrating an apparently magnanimous attitude toward his vagrant servant. Having condemned Caleb as guilty, Forester recommends he should be brought to justice and sent to prison to await trial, however Falkland objects to this proposal, stating

> I have through my whole life interfered to protect, not overbear the sufferer, and I must do so now. I feel not the smallest resentment of his impotent attacks upon my character; I smile at their malice; and they make no diminution in my benevolence to their author. Let him say what he pleases; he cannot hurt me. It was proper that he should be brought to public shame, that other people might not be deceived by him as we have been. But there is no necessity for proceeding any farther; and I must insist upon it that he be permitted to depart wherever he pleases. (168)

Considering the extent of the alleged crime and Caleb's apparent ill treatment of Falkland, this benevolent behaviour appears somewhat incredible. In this magnanimous moment there is no sign of Falkland's resentment or vindictive spirit, and he portrays himself yet again as a gentleman of breeding, compassion and kindness. Drawing attention to his praiseworthy conduct and emphasising his generous nature, Falkland's speech is once again deliberately styled in such a way as to reflect well upon his own character.

Through Falkland's method of systematic and malicious misrepresentation, Godwin illustrates how convenient it is for the upper classes to shape the reputation of those beneath them. Completely in control of the situation, Falkland carefully moulds his own public image, sculpting his persona to give the impression that he is honourable, sympathetic and honest. Unable to regulate Caleb's conduct in any other way, Falkland chooses to rely upon his own impeccable public reputation and together with a convoluted and inaccurate portrayal of events, duly forms the public perception of his domestic employee.

It is in this way that Falkland engages in the demeaning and degrading behaviours which are usually associated with the servant class. Lying, deceiving and misleading, Falkland's actions are reminiscent of those practiced by Smith's upper servants. Indeed, through cautiously monitoring and controlling his conduct, Falkland acts in a calculated and carefully premeditated manner. The difference is however that Falkland's deceptive methods reach a new level of sophistication which surpasses that exhibited by Smith's servants. Indeed, Falkland's talent for deception is unrivalled by any of the servants previously examined in this thesis.

During the course of the trial however, Caleb does himself no favours. While his intellectual abilities have been developed through education, in practical terms Caleb is ignorant as to the way in which the world operates. As a result he has an unrealistic optimism in the power of truth and believes that an honest, sincere recital of events is bound to quash Falkland's fictional version. But what he fails to realise is that truth on its own is sometimes insufficient and incapable of persuasion. On the contrary, falsehood and deceit if they are consistent, plausible and conveyed in the proper manner can, Godwin illustrates, gain credence over truth.

Musing on his relative ignorance of worldly affairs, Caleb states that prior to entering Falkland's service "I had no intercourse with the world and its passions; and, though I was not totally unacquainted with them as they appear in books, this proved to be of little service to me when I came to witness them myself" (103). Sheltered from the nature of everyday reality, Caleb's naivety in practical matters is accompanied by his highly developed intellect. This odd combination of worldly innocence and rational faculties manifests itself in the somewhat strange, eccentric behaviour which so unfits Caleb for his role as servant. More significantly however, it is this innocence which leaves him vulnerable to Falkland's schemes and incapable of making a credible defence of his own character.

This naivety is illustrated during the court scene when Falkland makes his false accusations against Caleb and the latter is left astounded and outraged at the trumped up charges. Caught unawares, Caleb manages to recollect himself and attempts a defence stating "I am innocent. It is in vain that circumstances are accumulated against me:… I appeal to my heart; I appeal to my looks; I appeal to every sentiment my tongue ever uttered" (163). Believing in his ability to convince his peers of his innocence, he proclaims that "I will never believe that a man conscious of his innocence, cannot make other men perceive that he has that thought" (165). Despite his sincerity, these artless statements are completely ineffective when compared with the mass of evidence which Falkland has collected in order to support his case. Assured of his own innocence, Caleb foolishly decides to abide by the truth, convinced that this will ultimately prove victorious.

In addition to this naivety, Caleb's manner of expression is also somewhat dubious and unsurprisingly provokes suspicion. Whereas Falkland's account is fluent and plausible, Caleb's relation of events appears laced with equivocations and evasions. When asked to account for how the contested items came to be found with his belongings, Caleb evasively responds that "There are certain parts of my story that I have not told. If they were told, they would not contribute to my disadvantage, and they would make the present accusation appear astonishing. But I cannot, as yet at least, prevail upon myself to tell them" (164). Admitting that there are holes and gaps in his story, Caleb nevertheless asks that his word be depended upon. Again, he fails to see that he has provided no information or convincing reason why people should overlook the accumulating evidence which is gathering against him.

The significant issue here is that Caleb's optimism in the power of truth proves to be ultimately ineffective when challenged by the narrative suaveness of Falkland. As Kelvin Everest and Gavin Edwards comment, it is not the recital of facts which strikes conviction into the listener but the manner of delivery. Indeed, both critics observe that in the novel "the communication of truth is always effectively a matter of rhetoric, and that successful communication rests not on the objective truth of a proposition, but on the execution of a rhetoric that works on its audience with the desired effect."[43] Factual truth is in itself ineffective and in order to be persuasive, a story must be told in such a way as to affect the audience. Thus language, style, tone – all of these elements are crucial in the delivery of truth and it is this factor which Caleb overlooks.

Caleb's simplicity is also manifested in his inability to see how situations appear to anyone but himself. Too naïve and ignorant, he cannot perceive how situations may be misrepresented or miscommunicated to other people. This is demonstrated when, having been made privy to Falkland's secret, Caleb decides he can no longer tolerate being subjected to his master's vigilance and flees. Informed by Falkland that he will never be permitted to leave his service, Caleb in consequence undertakes his escape in the dead of the night and "stole down quietly" (151) from his bedroom, exiting the dwelling through the back garden door. Leaving his position suddenly, in a secretive manner and without giving notice, Caleb cannot fathom how these actions could easily be interpreted as the marks of a guilty man.

This blindness is further illustrated when Caleb determines to semi-confide in Forester about the difficulties of his position. Prior to his decision to flee Falkland's service, Caleb hints to Forester that all is not well with his master and insinuates that he wishes to leave his employment without providing any information as to why. Forester is, as one would suspect, duly troubled by this shady account and accosts Caleb thus,

> Young man, I am afraid you are ignorant of the nature of the tale you have been telling me. There is mystery in it; there is something you cannot prevail upon yourself to disclose. Mystery always implies somewhere or other an uncommon portion of wrong; what am I to think of you? Are you aware of the prejudice you are voluntarily creating against yourself…? (145)

Of course Caleb is unaware as to the extent to which he is damaging his own credibility. He admits that he can see why his confidante may have his suspicions but despite this he carries on regardless with his "half confidence" (144). With this partial disclosure and incomplete revelation, Caleb unwillingly encourages the doubt and suspicion which will come to plague his existence.

In this respect Caleb is very unlike other servants examined in the previous chapters. While the majority of these domestic employees exhibit a hyper-awareness of appearances and maintain a tight control over their conduct, Caleb is the reverse. He is blatantly unaware of how his actions may be misconstrued and illustrates a somewhat nonchalant attitude toward this need to monitor his behaviour. As C.R Kropf observes "Williams is a character in the wrong novel, one used to living in the world as it should be and now floundering about in the world as it is."[44] Oblivious to the practicalities of modern society, Caleb appears as an oddity and dangerously out of touch with the demands facing servants in eighteenth-century England. As such, Caleb is somewhat akin to Smollett's fictional servants, whose honesty likewise marks them as eccentric deviations from society. While these servants are similar in this respect however, the reasons for their honesty are completely different. Indeed Smollett's servants evince a simplicity which partly accounts for their truth-telling tendencies whereas it is Caleb's developed intellect which inspires his determined, unwavering search for truth.

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[43] Kelvin Everest and Gavin Edwards,' William Godwin's "*Caleb Williams*": Truth and Things as They Are' in *1789: Reading Writing Revolution, Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature July 1981* ed. Francis Barker et al., (Essex: University of Essex, 1982), pp. 129-146 (p. 135).

Caleb also differs from typical servants in his professed aversion to the arts of deceit and in his unwillingness to enter into subterfuge. Prior to the court scene, Forester offers some well-intentioned advice which Caleb declines to take advantage of. Indeed Forester counsels him to

> Make the best story you can for yourself; true, if truth, as I hope, will serve your purpose; but, if not, the most plausible and ingenious you can invent. This is an exertion which self-defence requires from every man in cases where, as it always happens when a man is put upon his trial, he has the whole world against him… (158)

Contrary to this advice however, Caleb refuses to create a plausible tale and is as such condemned by his peers. Indeed throughout the novel there is the impression that Caleb is somewhat contemptuous and disdainful toward any form of deceit. This scorn is demonstrated towards the end of the novel when he asserts that

> There was one expedient against which I was absolutely determined, disguise. I had experienced so many mortifications and such intolerable restraint when I had formerly had recourse to it… Life was not worth purchasing at so high a price! (284)

This attitude recalls Roderick's embarrassment in *Roderick Random* when he is reduced to wearing livery. For Roderick as a gentleman, the thoughts of having to assume a servant's disguise is understandably troubling. Such high flown notions on Caleb's part however are strangely out of place in a servant character. It appears that Caleb has lost the run of himself so to speak, mindless of the practicalities and demands of his position.

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[44] C. R Kropf, '*Caleb Williams* and the Attack on Romance', *Studies in the Novel*, Volume 8, Number 1 (Spring 1976), 81- 87 (p. 85).

It is through a combination of these factors that Falkland can thus carry out his brutal policy of defamation. Through carefully controlling his own public persona and abusing his gentlemanly status, Falkland can easily exploit his position of power and use this to his advantage. Crafting a well-planned and credible version of events, he is enabled to discredit and undermine his servant's word and convincingly brand him as a liar. Caleb however helps him in this task, making it easy for his master to project a false image of his character. Thus through his innocence, lack of self-awareness and unwillingness to adapt to the demands of his position, Caleb makes it all too convenient for Falkland to carry out a successful attack.

The novel concludes with the final confrontation between master and servant. Until this point, Caleb has refrained from exposing Falkland's secret. Finally however, Caleb is pushed beyond endurance and prompted by spite and malice, calls Falkland to account in a public trial for his past misdemeanours. Previously Caleb had attempted to soothe his conscience, reasoning that he was inspired by logical utilitarian principles of "equity and justice" to embark upon this action (296). However, once he sees his former master, Caleb realises that his decision has been motivated by spleen and anger, and in a moment of clarity he instantly regrets his decision to confront Falkland. Nevertheless, by this stage he has gone beyond the point of return and reluctantly perseveres in his determination, reflecting that Falkland "would compel me to accuse, that he might enter upon his justification" (298).

Hence by the time he faces his opponent Caleb is a broken man. There is nothing he hopes to gain from this confrontation, indeed there is nothing he can gain. Caleb has already condemned himself as "a murderer, a cool, deliberate, unfeeling murderer" (301). While previously his desires to protect Falkland had resulted in equivocal and half-concealed answers, now no such desire exists. Similarly, he makes no attempt to justify his behaviour, reflecting that he has "no character... to vindicate" (303). All motive is gone, there is nothing that Caleb can achieve or lose. As such Caleb is enabled to "confess every sentiment of (his) heart" (298) and launches into a sincere and moving account of his actions. This story, unlike the version he previously told, proves convincing and prompts a reconciliation between master and servant. So affected is Falkland by his former adversary's narrative that he confesses to his horrendous crime and subsequently forfeits his much coveted reputation.

This conclusion to the story however, was not the original ending envisaged by Godwin. Initially, the author wrote a much more dismal conclusion, in which during the final confrontation between master and servant, Caleb's testimony is ultimately defeated by Falkland's eloquent version of events. In consequence, Caleb never gains credence for his story and is condemned to a miserable fate, hounded by the invincible Jones and, it is implied, slowly poisoned, resulting in his disordered mental state. The reason behind Godwin's choosing to change the conclusion of his novel in such a drastic manner has never been conclusively discovered, and indeed critical opinion on the suitability of either ending is divided. For instance D. Gilbert Dumas favours the original ending, arguing that the published ending "at once violates the progressive logic of the novel"[45] insofar as it displays to some extent, the triumph of truth. Meanwhile Mitzi Myers suggests that the published version is far more appropriate to the tenor of the novel as it conveys Godwin's recognition of the "psychological complexity"[46] of the human psyche.

Regardless of the aptness of either ending, as Myers rightly observes, "Caleb's reassessment of both his own innocence and Falkland's guilt marks the crucial difference between the two denouncements."[47] While in the printed version Caleb experiences an epiphany when faced with Falkland and recognises his culpability for the tragic events in which he is involved, in the original ending the servant experiences no such moment of enlightenment. As such, he views himself as a martyr and innocent victim of Falkland's unrelenting tyranny and his sense of indignation and resentment are conveyed in his testimony which was delivered "with a rapidity, perturbation and vehemence" (307). Angry and resentful, Caleb's accusations are communicated in a manner which does not entice Falkland to admit his guilt and accept his punishment.

While Caleb still maintains and testifies to Falkland's guilt of the murder of Tyrell in the published version, he communicates his sentiments in a different way. It is his recognition of guilt combined with his manner of expression which affects such a different outcome. As Falkland admits, while he could have resisted a "malicious accusation," it is the tenor of Caleb's "manly story" which prompts him to confess his heinous crimes (301). Now, having attained a moment of clarity, Caleb can finally see how his actions and behaviour were perceived in a hostile manner by Falkland. Thus, understanding this crucial point, Caleb is enabled to adequately communicate his true sentiments to Falkland and convince him of his genuinely benign intention. Finally, Caleb has mastered the arts of story-telling and avoids repeating “a half-told and mangled tale” (303).

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[45] D. Gilbert Dumas, 'Things as They Were: The Original Ending of *Caleb Williams*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Volume 6, Number 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer 1966), 575-597 (p. 587).

[46] Mitzi Myers, 'Godwin's Changing Conception of *Caleb Williams*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Volume 12, Number 4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn 1972), 591-628 (p. 623).

[47] Myers, 'Godwin's Changing Conception', p. 623.

On its publication, *Caleb Williams* proved extremely popular. Indeed Elizabeth Inchbald, a one time friend of Godwin, enthused “it is my opinion that the ladies, milliners, mantua-makers, and boarding-school girls will love to tremble over it, and that men of taste and judgment will admire the superior talents, the incessant energy of mind you have evinced.”[48] Indeed in later years, when reflecting upon his literary achievements, Godwin would unashamedly repeat what he believed “the voice of the public (had) universally pronounced, that (*Caleb Williams*) has not yet been surpassed as an interesting specimen of fictitious history.”[49]

Despite these accolades, more conservative readers were abhorred by what they perceived as the author’s assault on the British social system. Responding to one such attack issued in the *British Critic*, Godwin retorts that

> [Your correspondent] presupposes that my book was written to ‘throw an odium upon the laws of my country.’ But this is a mistake into which no attentive and clearsighted reader could possibly fall. The object is of much greater magnitude. It is to expose the evils which arise out of the present system of civilized society; and... to lead the enquiring reader to examine whether they are...irredeemable;... to disengage the minds of men from presupposition, and to launch them upon the sea of moral and political enquiry.[50]

It was through his exploration of the dynamics involved in a highly unusual and unorthodox master-servant relationship that Godwin was enabled to affect this enquiry. As such, he enabled the reader to perceive this relationship in a new light, encouraging them to reassess the pitiful condition of servants to which custom had previously rendered them “callous.”[51]

Indeed Godwin’s enduring interest in the nature of the master-servant relationship is evident in his subsequent writings. In *The Enquirer*, a collection of essays published in 1797, the author explores this relationship, subjecting it to examination and investigation. On first glimpse, Godwin’s depiction of servants in this publication appears as a somewhat conventional attack on the deceitful nature of this group. Cautioning of their harmful effect on children, Godwin fears that vulnerable youngsters are liable to be corrupted by the bad influence of these domestic employees. As Andrew O'Malley observes, "Despite his progressive opposition to servitude and his outrage at the injustices suffered by the poor, even such a radical writer as William Godwin expressed his concerns over the malignant effects servants had on children in no uncertain terms..."[52] It is such fears which Maria Edgeworth fervently articulates throughout her works and which will be examined in the following chapter.

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[48] Quoted in Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, p. 134.
[49] Philp and Butler, ‘Introduction’, p. 62.
[50] Philp and Butler, ‘Introduction’, p. 28-29.
[51] Godwin, *The Enquirer*, p. 207.

While it appears that Godwin simply rehearses these fears, he however redirects his argument, issuing a stinging attack on the fundamentally unjust nature of the master-servant relationship. This system, Godwin laments, consigns one party to endless servile drudgery, while the other lives a life of ease and affluence. As such, the relationship constitutes a "radical defect in the present system of human intercourse."[53] Furthermore, Godwin suggests that society has become numb to the blatant injustice of this system due to custom; people are so familiar with the master-servant relationship that they fail to recognise its obvious flaws. Godwin concludes his critique by likening the position of the servant to that of a slave, although he does concede that "the slavery of an English servant has its mitigations, and is...preferable to that of a West-Indian Negro."[54]

In this way, Godwin's attack on the fundamental master-servant relationship was much more radical and extreme than that of his contemporary Charlotte Smith. Although both writers took issue with the system, Smith nevertheless believed that the relationship was fundamentally sound and, if founded on the principles of merit, would result in the effective functioning of society. For Smith, this relationship was legitimate and only required reform to perfect it. For Godwin however, this system had no redeeming features and was inherently flawed. Yet despite this objection to the institution, the philosopher did not in any way canvass for the hasty destruction of the relationship. Rather, he wanted to alert the public to the injustices inbuilt in the system while nevertheless endorsing "a cautious and pragmatic acquiescence"[55] to the institution for the foreseeable future.

Thus by subjecting this system to such intense scrutiny in his writings, Godwin was enabled to expose the flaws in the institution and encourage the public to reassess certain prejudices surrounding this relationship. As such, he disputes the notion that the master-servant relationship was conducive to a just, functioning social system and instead highlights how it breeds hypocrisy and deception. However he takes his critique further, challenging the conventional view which identified servants as the deceitful and dishonest party in this relationship. Instead, he suggests that it is the upper classes, those in positions of power and authority who are not only willing to lie to protect their interests but also have the means to perpetrate these falsehoods convincingly. In effect, Godwin “turns the tables” illuminating some unsettling truths concerning this relationship and encouraging society to readjust their complacent attitudes toward this institution accordingly.

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[52] O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 40-41.
[53] Godwin, *The Enquirer*, p. 209-210.
[54] Godwin, *The Enquirer*, p. 211.
[55] Ousby, 'My Servant Caleb', p. 54.

CHAPTER FIVE

Beware the Servants: Deceitful Servants in the Works of Maria Edgeworth

By the late eighteenth century, it was generally accepted that a thorough, comprehensive education was of the utmost importance to the development of a child's rational faculties. Both Maria Edgeworth and her father Richard Lovell shared this concern and demonstrated throughout their works how a child's intellectual and moral capacity was shaped by the education they received in early life. Adequate instruction was crucial in order to form these youngsters into capable, responsible adults who would thereby be capable of fulfilling the duties incumbent upon their relative social positions. Conversely however, if these children lacked or were denied this education, they would forfeit their position of privilege with potentially disastrous social results.

This chapter will examine Edgeworth's attitude toward servants in light of this issue, arguing that the author identifies servants as a major impediment to the successful implication of this educational programme. It will be suggested that Edgeworth voices concerns over the behaviour practiced by these retainers, in particular their tendency to deceit and penchant for telling far-fetched, fantastical tales. These inaccurate stories warp children's understanding, leaving them incapable of fulfilling their allotted social roles as adults. The chapter argues, however, that Edgeworth, despite this anxiety was nevertheless optimistic about the future behaviour of servants, believing that with a suitable education and proper guidance these employees could be conditioned into honest and trustworthy retainers. It is through this method, that Edgeworth promotes a reformed vision of the patriarchal master-servant relationship, based on mutual respect and obligation.

Contrary to other scholarly approaches, this chapter will examine a wide range of Edgeworth's writings – including her pedagogical works, tales for children and adult fiction. It will argue that throughout her canon of works, this concern surrounding deceitful servants is present and consistently voiced; a common theme connecting her publications. However, it will be suggested that there is a shift between the treatment of this issue in her children's works and those directed at an adult audience. In this way, the chapter will show that the danger posed by servants is in her children's works largely averted or rectified, whereas her novels illustrate the aftermath of servant contamination on the young adult.

Anxiety surrounding the potentially disastrous consequences of servant interaction with children was however a widespread issue throughout the eighteenth century.[1] While concerns abounded in regards to the conduct of the serving class in general, the issue of servant-child contact was a specific cause of apprehension for middle and upper class employers. The principle fear was that servants, as members of the lower classes were marked by their vulgar, coarse and irrational habits - habits which they would transmit to impressionable middle-class and genteel youngsters. This fear had however long existed; indeed it was articulated in the late seventeenth century by the philosopher John Locke in his treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). In this work, Locke contends that when an individual is born, their mind is a "tabula rasa" or akin to "white paper."[2] In accordance with this theory, the human mind has no innate or pre-programmed ideas and therefore an individual's intellectual and moral development is determined by their environmental surroundings. This theory not only placed an increased emphasis on the significance of a sound education, but it also stressed the importance of keeping harmful and insidious influences – such as servants – away from children.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Locke's ideas had gained currency and the topic of education was garnering an increasing amount of consideration from an array of moralists and educationalists. Jean Jacques Rousseau also contributed to this debate, setting forth in *Emile; or, On Education* (1762) his idealised vision of education as supervised by an enlightened, benevolent tutor. In their bid to provide the most effectual scheme for the instruction of youngsters, many educationalists advocated the importance of a child-centred pedagogical programme overseen by a capable and rational maternal figure. In this respect, the mother figure was largely responsible for their child's development, ensuring that the youngster is surrounded by wholesome, nurturing influences and sheltered from any undesirable or injurious elements. As Susan C Greenfield has observed, "motherhood was idealized with exceptional fervour by the century's end and commonly represented as a full-time occupation."[3] With this new focus on the female's active role within the domestic sphere, the onus for the preservation and well-being of the child increasingly became defined as one, if not the, principle concerns of motherhood.

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[1] Exploring this issue, Celestina Wroth for instance refers to the "almost paranoiac fear of contact between children and servants" during this era. For further discussion see Celestina Wroth, '"To Root The Old Woman out of Our Minds": Women Educationists and Plebeian Culture in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Volume 30, Number 2, (Spring 2006), 48-73.

[2] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London: J and R Tonson, 1779), p.319.

[3] Susan C Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters: Novels and the Politics of Family Romance Frances Burney to Jane Austen* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), p. 14.

As such, the presence of the mother figure was popularly perceived as an indispensible necessity within the domestic environment. This ideology was reinforced by a variety of pedagogical treatises and works of fiction, all of which were "preoccupied with motherhood."[4] The importance of this figure was also recognised by Maria Edgeworth, who throughout her works draws attention to the crucial role which the mother instructor fulfils while consequently highlighting the problems which arise from her dereliction of duty. Failure to adequately supervise and chaperone children could, Edgeworth acknowledges, have disastrous consequences for which parents must be held responsible. Thus while the influence of servants can have a devastating impact on children's development, ultimately negligent or careless parental figures are deemed accountable for this dire state of affairs. If parents were not remiss in their duty, Edgeworth implies, servants could not insinuate themselves into the company of children and retain the position of influence which they currently occupy.

Contributing to the ongoing educational debates, in their 1798 treatise *Practical Education*, Maria and her father set forth their extensive plan for the instruction of children. This publication was well received and generally praised for the significant contribution it made to the burgeoning genre of pedagogical literature.[5] The book was meticulous and detailed, discussing in depth a range of subjects including books, toys, temper and acquaintance, all calculated to guide the discerning parent in their pedagogical tasks. Although co-authored by father and daughter, both Maria and Richard Lovell wrote different sections, with the latter penning chapters on subjects such as geography and classical literature to name a few. In this respect, while the work was a team effort, the authors were clear to indicate their own personal contribution and acknowledge the work done by their co-author.

In a chapter specifically addressing the issue of servant interaction with children written by Maria, the author details the list of faults and problems which can ensue from servant contact with youngsters. In order to combat these difficulties, Edgeworth advocates a policy of segregation and separation, insisting on minimal interaction between servant and child. Despite this recommendation being criticised as impractical by some contemporaries, the text nevertheless proved extremely popular, going through many editions including the publication of a French translation. Indeed while in Paris in 1802, Maria proudly boasts to her aunt Ruxton of meeting Madame Campan "mistress of the first boarding-school here, who educated

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[4] Toni Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture, 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 14.

[5] Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 199.

Madame Louis Buonaparte, and who professes to keep her pupils entirely separate from servants, according to 'Practical Education,' and who paid us many compliments."[6]

One of the main reasons why Edgeworth advocated this policy is due to the fact that she deemed servants to be harbourers of equivocation and falsehood. Warning of this tendency to deceit, Edgeworth explicitly advises that

> servants must have no communication with children, if you wish to teach them the habit of speaking the truth. The education, and custom, and situation of servants, are at present such, that it is morally impossible to depend upon their veracity in their intercourse with children.[7]

Here Edgeworth highlights a variety of social circumstances which prompt servants to engage in deceit. According to this logic therefore, this group is by no means naturally inclined to engage in these behaviours, instead it is hinted that this conduct is owing to a combination of external influencing factors. Indeed in this respect, Edgeworth rehearses the attitude propounded by Fielding toward this group; both authors seem to recognise that servants are not born deceitful but, on the contrary, are conditioned into adopting these habits.

It is noteworthy that in her attitude toward truth, Edgeworth appears to be much more tolerant and lax toward falsehood than her predecessor. While Fielding was scathing in his attack on hypocrisy and critical of common forms of social etiquette, Edgeworth passes no such censure. Indeed, in relation to the popular practice of denying masters which servants performed, Edgeworth flippantly observes that

> No fraud is committed by a gentleman's saying that he is not at home, because no deception is intended; the words are silly, but they mean, and are understood to mean, nothing more than that the person in question does not choose to see the visitors who knock at his door.[8]

Here Edgeworth dismisses any concerns regarding this practice and unlike Fielding and Godwin, conveniently overlooks the compromised position in which servants are placed. Instead, Edgeworth is willing to countenance minor deviations from truth-telling in the course of social intercourse and good manners which require that “white-lies” be told to unwanted guests.

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[6] Maria Edgeworth, *The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth Volume 1*, ed. Augustus J.C Hare (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1895), p. 111.

[7] Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education Volume 1* (London: J Johnson, 1798), p. 196.

[8] Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, p. 193.

Speaking on the nature of deceit, Edgeworth remarks that “All who are governed by any species of fear are disposed to equivocation.”[9] In this respect she gives examples of Irish labourers and slaves, who due to the nature of their oppression, lie, cheat and employ delay tactics in order to avoid giving a straight-forward answer. Edgeworth continues that

> Oppression and terror necessarily produce meanness and deceit in all climates, and in all ages....Where individuals are oppressed, or where they believe that they are oppressed, they combine against their oppressors, and oppose cunning and falsehood to power and force; they think themselves released from the compact of truth with their masters...[10]

Edgeworth’s perspective here is somewhat reminiscent of Smith’s attitude toward servants as voiced in *The Old Manor House*. Edgeworth however is not speaking of servants and in fact she refuses to see these domestic employees as victims of repression. Rather, according to the author, servants’ deceitful conduct arises primarily from their lack of education and their underdeveloped intellects.

It is in this way that Edgeworth’s attitude is at variance with the other authors discussed in this thesis. Indeed while both Smith and Godwin were contemporaries of Edgeworth, the latter’s perspective on servant deceit differs drastically from that of her fellow writers. According to Edgeworth, the current social hierarchy in no way hinders or discourages servants from truth-telling. The master-servant dynamic in Edgeworth’s works does not foster resentment or antipathy; neither is it inimical to the cause of truth or honesty. On the contrary, when the master-servant relationship is effectively established, Edgeworth believes that it can actually aid and promote honest behaviour.

Where servants lacked this education and guidance however, Edgeworth viewed them as a viable threat to children. This is because children, Edgeworth emphasised, learnt through example and copied the behaviour of those by whom they were surrounded. Thus it followed that if they were exposed to the company of servants then children would emulate their behaviour, picking up their bad habits and vices. Furthermore, servants’ deceit was also manifested in indirect methods, in particular through the recital of fabulous stories and fantastical tales which filled the heads of children with nonsense and distracted them from the path of rational education. Both these direct and indirect forms of deception, Edgeworth demonstrates, are harmful to children and detrimental to their intellectual and moral development.

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[9] Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, p. 208.
[10] Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, p. 213.

As previously observed, the issue of servant-child interaction was a widespread cause of anxiety and Edgeworth was by no means alone in her concern surrounding the injurious influence servants could exert upon impressionable young children. By the end of the eighteenth century, Locke's notorious attacks were reiterated by a coterie of anxious educationalists who feared the impact of servants' insidious behaviour upon impressionable young children. As Richard A. Barney observes, "Locke sternly warns against leaving children vulnerable to the 'Folly and Perverseness of Servants' who, as members of 'the meaner sort of People,' always pose the danger of 'infecting' children with the 'contagion' of ego-boosting flattery."[11] Edgeworth's contemporary, the feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft for instance also echoed such concerns, cautioning of the damage these employees could cause to vulnerable youngsters.

In this respect, Edgeworth not only echoes the concerns voiced by Locke and Wollstonecraft, but also seems to support Richard Lovell's sentiments toward this troublesome group. Speaking of her father's reservations towards servants, she recalls that

> Some of the unhappy failures of apparently careful and strict education in the heirs of great families were, he had reason to know, attributable to the influence early obtained over them by servants. Even unintentionally, and where there is no wickedness, only pure folly, they have been found to do irreparable mischief.[12]

Such fears are palpable throughout the fictional and pedagogical works of Maria Edgeworth. Evidently sharing Richard Lovell's concerns, Maria used her literary works as a realm to explore and share these anxieties and warn of the ever pressing danger of servants' influence upon children.

As is well established, Edgeworth's fictional pieces often work in tandem with her pedagogical texts, to complement and reinforce her ideology. As Richard Lovell proclaimed in the preface to *Ennui*, his daughter's principle motivation for writing was to further "the progress of education from the cradle to the grave."[13] In this respect like Godwin, Edgeworth also capitalised on fiction as a convenient and popular method to convey her ideas to an increasingly literate society. The precepts she advocates in *Practical Education* for instance are exemplified in the stories contained in *The Parents Assistant* (1796) and *Moral Tales* (1801). As such, there is an acknowledged link between her non-fictional and fictional works, and this consistency is apparent in the treatment of servants evidenced in both genres.

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[11] Richard A. Barney, *Plots of Enlightenment: Education and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (California: Standford University Press, 1999), p. 139.

[12] Maria Edgeworth, *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Volume 2* (London: Richard Bentley, 1844), p. 461.

In light of this, the chapter will firstly explore a selection of Edgeworth's works for children, including *The Good French Governess* (1801), *The Birthday Present* (1796), *The Basket Woman* (1800) and *The False Key* (1796). After this, it will consider a variety of her texts directed at an adult audience including *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *Ennui* (1809) and *Harrington* (1817). All of these works display anxiety in relation to servants; in *Leonora* (1806) and *Patronage* (1814) however, Edgeworth offers a more optimistic view of servant conduct, somewhat alleviating the extent of criticism which she formerly heaped upon this group.

The anxiety expressed in *Practical Education* regarding servants' tendency to deceit is clearly illustrated in *The Good French Governess* (1801). This story is contained in the first volume of Edgeworth's *Moral Tales* collection, originally published in 1801, and is directed at an adolescent readership. The tale revolves around the Harcourt family and their transformation under the benevolent and enlightened tutelage of Madame de Rosier. The major problem which Madame de Rosier faces in her attempt to enforce her new educational programme comes in the form of Grace, the long serving and troublesome maid. Having formerly been a favourite in the family and jealous of the new power and respect which her adversary has quickly gained, Grace sets to work in a variety of ways to undermine and interrupt the governess's educational programme.

Prior to the arrival of this enlightened teacher, Grace we are informed had responsibility for teaching the younger children Herbert and Favoretta. Lacking a suitable education herself however, the maid is incapable of instructing her charges in an adequate manner, and "seemed to think, that she could catch the knack of educating children, as she had surreptitiously learnt, from a fashionable hair-dresser, the art of dressing hair."[14] This insufficiency is demonstrated by Herbert's struggle with literacy. Finding it difficult to read due to the inadequate guidance provided by Grace, the young boy is behind in his lessons. Grace, instead of encouraging her pupil, berates him with abuse, informing him that “he was so ‘thick headed at his book,’ that (Grace)… affirmed, that he never would learn to read like any other young gentleman” (5). This treatment only confounds Herbert’s illiteracy and instils in him an aversion to book-learning.

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[13] Richard Lovell Edgeworth, 'Preface to Tales of Fashionable Life' in *Castle Rackrent and Ennui*, ed. Marilyn Butler (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 141.

[14] Maria Edgeworth, 'The Good French Governess' in *Moral Tales in Three Volumes Volume 3* (London: R. Hunter, 1821), pp. 1-143 (p. 67). Further references to this text will be given in parenthesis after the quotation.

Grace is also illustrated as prone to uttering falsehoods, a habit with which she has infected the youngest child Favoretta. Through their close contact and communication, Grace has lured this young girl into an alliance through flattery and bribery and hence compromised the child’s moral standards. The narrator informs us that “Favoretta, young as she was, had already learned from this cunning waiting-maid habits of deceit, which could not be suddenly changed” (95). Young and impressionable and lacking suitable supervision, Favoretta has fallen into the clutches of this devious servant and succumbed to her bad example.

Grace’s deceit is also manifested in more devious and sinister ways. As she is jealous of Madame de Rosier’s privileged position in the household, Grace embarks on a plan to cause a rift between Mrs Harcourt and the governess. To this effect, she maliciously misrepresents situations, slyly implying that de Rosier is attempting to alienate the children’s affections from their mother. In this attempt she is partially successful and through her distorted representation of events Grace almost affects a quarrel between her mistress and her rival. Indeed, throughout Grace is represented as an insidious force, breeding discontent and disharmony into the domestic environment through her lies and falsehoods.

It is this penchant for deceit which finally results in the maid servant’s dismissal. Contrary to her mistress’s instructions, when Grace is left in charge of Favoretta for the evening, she wakes the young girl and invites her to spend the evening at a tea-party. Despite the youngster’s reservations, she is tempted by the lure of cakes and festivities and agrees to partake in the gathering. When her mother returns home unexpectedly however, Favoretta is fearful of being discovered and hides in the closet. Unwittingly she makes some noises which arouse the suspicion of the family and, after initially claiming the noise is due to a mouse Grace is finally forced to confess the truth. When they attempt to recall the child however, it is discovered that she is gone out upon the leads which were “at this place, narrow, and very dangerous” (87).

Grace’s deceitful behaviour, the arts of which she has also taught to her young charge has in this scenario a potentially catastrophic result. Through her devious conduct the life of the young child is quite literally put in a perilous situation, with potentially fatal consequences. However, Grace's underhanded behaviour is fortuitously revealed before she can cause any more trouble and she is promptly dismissed from Mrs Harcourt's service. Furthermore, Madame de Rosier manages to affect a reform in young Favoretta's behaviour "by making her feel, in the first place, the inconveniences and the disgrace of not being trusted" (95-96). Through her carefully planned tactics and teaching methods, the governess effectively eradicates Grace's bad influence and cures Favoretta of this vice.

Indeed the intelligent, informed and genteel Madame de Rosier proves the saviour of the Harcourt family. With a thorough education and good upbringing, this woman fulfils the role of the enlightened governess, a figure which would become increasingly visible in nineteenth-century fiction. Engaging in the ongoing debate regarding these employees, Edgeworth visibly identifies this group as erstwhile members of respectable society who play an important role in the moral and intellectual development of their charges. She is clear to state however that a governess is more a member of the family than an employee, and rejects the quasi-servant position they will come to embody in later years.

Carol Strauss Sotiropoulous suggests that although this tale is in theory meant to rehearse the clear warning issued about servants in *Practical Education*, the narrative form actually complicates and destabilises this straight-forward message. She argues that while we are meant to censure Grace's behaviour and celebrate her eventual removal from the household it is difficult to do this due to the vulnerable, human side we are shown to her character. By "enabling readers to experience the emotional centre of the one character who consistently behaves incorrectly"[15] Edgeworth, Sotiropoulous maintains, actually enables us to sympathise with Grace making it impossible for the reader to unreservedly condemn her. In this respect, there appears to be a clash of interests between the pedagogical form and moral tale, with the author's didactic message somewhat obscured and hard to embrace unconditionally.

Through the character of Grace, Edgeworth rehearses a catalogue of popular criticisms levelled at servants in a bid to encourage readers to support her firm handed determination. Feigning attachment to her mistress and using her position of privilege to manipulate her employer, Grace clearly exerts an unwholesome influence over the Harcourt family. Her underhanded and devious behaviour, Edgeworth emphasises, is a threat to the future development of the children with whom she is in contact. However, while Favoretta is temporarily contaminated with these vices, luckily the long-term effects have been diverted thanks to the sage direction provided by Madame de Rosier.

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[15] Carol Strauss Sotiropoulos, 'Where Words Fail: Rational Education Unravels in Maria Edgeworth's *The Good French Governess*', *Children's Literature in Education*, Volume 32, Number 4 (December 2001), 305-321 (p.319).

This issue of harmful servants is also explored in another of Edgeworth's stories for children, *The Birthday Present* (1796). In the preface the author makes her intention perfectly clear, stating that the story warns of "the dangers which may arise in education from a bad servant."[16] Aimed at a slightly younger audience than *The Good French Governess*, it tells the story of Rosamund, a well-intentioned but misguided young girl, who gives a beautiful basket to her spoilt and selfish cousin Bell as a birthday gift. While the gift is intended as a surprise, Nancy, Bell's maid, lets the young girl have a sneaky peak at the present. Bell, despite her promises to be gentle, grabs the delicate basket and breaks it. Fearful of being scolded by her mistress, Nancy promptly instructs Bell "*to look as if nothing was the matter*" (127) and attempts to conceal the broken gift.

Soon the basket is discovered and the truth emerges, after Nancy has attempted to place the blame on a poor, innocent and destitute child. Again while disaster has been averted, the negative impact which a deceitful servant can have upon an impressionable child is apparent. It is emphasised that Nancy is in fact culpable for many of the character flaws inherent in her young charge, as it is she "who *educated* her" (127). Fearful of not making her point strongly enough, in an authorial aside Edgeworth plainly reiterates her message, hoping that the story will cause "both children and parents (to) pause for a moment to reflect. The habits of tyranny, meanness, and falsehood, which children acquire from living with bad servants, are scarcely ever conquered in the whole course of their future lives" (129).

Thus, Bell's devious and peevish behaviour is directly attributable to Nancy's harmful influence. Indeed, Edgeworth is at pains to emphasise her point and highlight the fact that the maid servant is quite literally infecting her young charge, tutoring her in the arts of deceit and falsehood. The extent of Nancy's shameless and despicable behaviour is exemplified by her willingness to blame a young pauper girl for her own misdemeanour and it is evident that Bell is encouraged to adopt these wily methods. In this respect, Edgeworth once more capitalises on the trope of the deceitful maid who taints the unsuspecting child with this vice.

While it is obvious that these servant figures pose a threat to the young child, it is also clear that the ineffectual supervision offered by maternal figures is also partially to blame for the current state of affairs. The mothers who are represented in these texts are ultimately portrayed as negligent in their duty and preoccupied with other frivolous tasks. Echoing the criticisms of Rousseau who lambasted mothers for "despising" their obligations and instead devoting "themselves gaily to the pleasures of the town"[17], Edgeworth is likewise critical of ineffective parenting. Following this logic, it is therefore evident that while Edgeworth is vocal in her critique of servants, she nevertheless recognises that their unruly influence is only so great due to the slipshod parenting techniques of their social superiors.

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[16] Maria Edgeworth, 'The Birthday Present' in *The Parent's Assistant or Stories For Children* (London: George Rutledge & Sons, 1891), pp. 123-134 (p. 3).

In another of her children's stories, *The Basket Woman* (1800) Edgeworth explores a different incarnation of the deceitful servant, that of the devious and scheming footman. This particular story revolves around Anne and Paul, two orphan children who are adopted by an impoverished old woman who selflessly labours at her spinning wheel to maintain the two children. In a bid to help their adopted grandmother, the children decide to earn some money so they too can contribute financially to their upkeep, thereby removing some of the burden from their benefactress. To this extent, Paul employs an ingenious trick to prevent passing-by carriages from rolling down the hill outside their house and is rewarded with halfpence from each traveller for his toil. Accidentally however, one kind gentleman rewards him with a guinea. The children, once they realize the man's mistake determine to track him down and return their undeserved payment.

Having arrived at the inn where the gentleman and his family are resting, the children are unwittingly duped out of the guinea by a scheming, cunning servant who pretends to be employed by the gentleman in question. Promising to return the money to his "master" the servant instead orders a sumptuous supper consisting of claret and larks upon which he gorges himself. As Andrew O'Malley observes "The servant here acts as a virtual catalogue of what the middle classes viewed as the perennial plebeian vices: he steals; he is dishonest; he puts on airs and emulates his betters; he squanders his ill-gotten wealth on luxury and drink."[18] In this respect, Edgeworth again voices popular fears surrounding servants and capitalizes on the stereotype of the mischievous domestic employee in support of her case.

While Edgeworth does have recourse to a number of deceitful servant stereotypes in the majority of her works for children, she is willing however to suggest that a reformation is possible. A glimpse of this optimism is most clearly evident in *The False Key* (1796). In this story, Edgeworth proposes that although the vast majority of servants are rogues and crooks, this state of affairs is not inevitable and can be avoided. The story suggests that young children who are given correct guidance and education by a benevolent, enlightened master can be formed into loyal servants, averse to uttering falsehoods or practicing deceits.

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[17] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile; or, On Education,* trans. Barbara Foxley (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1921), p. 14.

[18] O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 46.

A moral tale for adolescents, *The False Key* revolves around Franklin, a young boy who has been under the tutelage of "Mr Spencer, a very benevolent and sensible man (who) undertook the education of several young children."[19] Due to this enlightened master, Franklin has become an intelligent and efficient servant, deeply attached and devoted to his master. When he is thirteen years of age, Mr Spencer decides that Franklin should leave his employ and the young boy joins Mrs Churchill's household. Soon however trouble ensues, and Franklin realises that the majority of his colleagues are seasoned tricksters and gamblers, alcoholics and swindlers.

Franklin however having received a solid moral education is unwilling to lie or utter falsehoods and remains aloof from the schemes of his fellow servants. This garners him much ill-will yet despite this he retains his integrity, stoutly affirming that "I shall not tell a lie, either for myself or any body else, let you call me what names you will" (167). His ethical superiority is demonstrated when he thwarts a plan to rob his mistress's house, a scheme incidentally concocted between the unfaithful butler Corkscrew and a criminal gang. In order to demonstrate her gratitude to her servant, Mrs Churchill rewards him with "an annuity for…life" (190) and tickets for a play he desires to attend. Edgeworth also employs a similar plot device in another of her children's works *Lame Jervas* (1804), wherein the young hero prevents his master's property from being stolen and is handsomely rewarded with an annuity and also given the opportunity to better his social position through education.

The False Key demonstrates Edgeworth's more positive attitude toward servants. The author implies that although this group are in general a bunch of tricksters and cheats, if they receive a proper education when young they can be conditioned into obedient, loyal servants. Apart from this example however, it must be acknowledged that in her works for children, the predominant servant figure is that of the scheming servant disrupting and contaminating their master's children with their deceitful antics.

This cautionary approach towards servants and the threat they pose to children is also echoed throughout Edgeworth's fiction for adults; the theme and manner of the complaints in her novels are largely consistent with the anxieties voiced in her children's tales. In her adult fiction however, her warnings are issued with more urgency. While the damage servants could do was by and large averted and rectified in her works for children, the same optimism is not realised in her novels. In these works, servants not only offer a potential threat but the reader is now shown the long-term impact and damage these employees can cause when the danger is not prevented in time.

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[19] Maria Edgeworth, 'The False Key' in *The Parent's Assistant; or, Stories For Children Volume 1* (London: J Johnson, 1796), pp. 118-162 (p. 127). All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

As many critics have observed, Edgeworth's relationship with the novel genre is extremely ambivalent. This is due to her often stated concern regarding fiction, which is echoed throughout both her published works and in her private correspondence. Indeed in a letter to Fanny Robinson, the author states that "Though I am as fond of Novels as you can be I am afraid that they act on the constitution of the mind as drams do on that of the body."[20] Here, the teenage Maria acknowledges the influence which this form has over the reader, lulling them into a sense of ease and comfort and leaving them, it appears, incapable of resisting its powers.

Despite her reservations however, Edgeworth did write novels. Most of her adult fiction fell into this category and she was a successful and well-respected writer in her day. Her main objection to the form was its perceived immorality and its capacity to portray "bad" behaviour in an alluring and attractive manner. In order to counteract this, Edgeworth pioneered a new fictional approach, which combined a treatment of realistic, ordinary life with a heavily didactic narrative voice. Unwilling to countenance any confusion or ambiguity, Edgeworth persistently clarifies her moral intention throughout her novels, at times laboriously emphasising her message. This technique, while effective for her instructional purpose, proved at times unsuitable to an adult audience and was subject to some criticism. Despite this however, the style was generally popular and helped to establish Edgeworth as a reputable and highly regarded novelist.[21]

While manoeuvring the conventions of the novel to suit her moral purpose, Edgeworth also adjusts her representation of certain types of characters including servants. As Julie Nash observes, "Rather than exclusively creating a fantasy servant class of grovelling subjects or a reactionary servant class of treacherous criminals, Edgeworth explored other possibilities."[22]

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[20] Quoted in Kathleen B. Grathwol, 'Maria Edgeworth and the "True Use of Books" for Eighteenth Century Girls' in *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth* ed. Julie Nash (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 73-92 (p.76).

[21] Mark Hawthorne for instance sees Edgeworth's moral tags and editorial comments as "detract(ing) from the fiction's structural unity." See Hawthorne, *Doubt and Dogma in Maria Edgeworth* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1967), p. 20.

[22] Nash, *Servants and Paternalism*, p. 51.

Indeed in her novels Edgeworth refused these stereotypes which in her literature for children she was more willing to embrace. This marks the principle shift in Edgeworth's approach toward the two genres. In her novels, the figure of the servant becomes much more complex and ambiguous, with Edgeworth dismissing the relatively crude servant characterisation she embraced in her tales for children. Now in her novels, while she does not mercilessly berate servants as a class of useless, scheming reprobates she simultaneously refuses to romanticise a vision of the naïve, ignorant retainer. Instead, she presents an array of servants and these like the other characters in her novels are, according to Nash portrayed as "individuals with faults and strengths."[23]

While this is true and there is a variety of different individual and unique servant characters scattered across her novels, there still remains a persistent concern over the dangerous influence these characters exert on children. The methods however which these servants use differ vastly from those employed by the attendants represented in her works for children. Whereas previously servants had infected children with their bad habits, now these employees use more indirect methods of deceit to harm unsuspecting and gullible children, namely tall- tales and superstitious stories.

This anxiety surrounding servant contact with children is prevalent in both *Castle Rackrent* and *Ennui*, two of Edgeworth's novels set in an Irish context. These texts are often referred to as tales, the term which Edgeworth herself employed when describing these works. Through this term, the author attempts to distance herself from the novel genre, distinguishing her works from those of a more disreputable cast. In these Irish tales in particular, servants are much more ambiguous and take on an increasingly sinister and dangerous role. Indeed, while the concerns surrounding these characters remain largely the same as in the texts discussed above, now these retainers are more ambivalent and difficult to pin down. The main problem is that of interpretation; there is a duality inherent in their representation which makes it impossible to ascertain if they are motivated by malevolent or benign intentions. In this respect they recapture the essence of the notoriously "slippery" servant character which dominated earlier servant representations.

Regardless of their objectives however, the havoc and mayhem caused by these employees and the disastrous outcomes of their actions remain the same. Unlike Fielding's attitude toward servant behaviour, in these novels characters' intentions do not materially alter or change the extent of their misdemeanours. While Edgeworth is sympathetic to servants to a certain extent, she is more concerned with illustrating the damage these employees can cause rather than mitigating the degree of blame apportioned to them. Be it from good intentions or malicious designs, the result of their behaviour is equally catastrophic upon the nature of the social hierarchy.

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[23] Nash, *Servants and Paternalism*, p. 9.

This chaos is illustrated in *Castle Rackrent*, Edgeworth's first and best known tale which was published in 1800 on the eve of the Union between Ireland and England, an act whereby Ireland lost its legislative independence. The tale is written as a first person account from the perspective of Thady Quirk, a long serving employee to the Rackrent family. The narrative charts the history of four successive generations of Rackrent heirs and concludes with Thady's son Jason taking possession of the estate. Thady is undoubtedly Edgeworth's most enigmatic and elusive literary creation. In consequence, critical opinion has largely been divided upon his character and the nature of his involvement in the demise of the Rackrent dynasty.[24] Regardless of one's opinion as to whether Thady is a scheming, manipulative devious peasant or a loyal, simplistic and devoted retainer, this chapter attempts to move beyond this debate, arguing that the chaos Thady brings to the Rackrent estate is indisputable.

Throughout the narrative Thady is representative of the story-telling servant, a figure subject to increasing suspicion toward the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, during this period educationalists and moralists voiced anxious concerns over the nature of these servant tales. Critics of such stories identified two principle problems associated with these tales – form and content. As an oral form of communication, the tale was viewed as primitive and outdated, reminiscent of the pre-modern. In an increasingly modernising society, this form was not only viewed as backward but was also deemed economically unviable. As Helen O'Connell observes

> the traditional oral story recounted at the cottage fireside was prolonged, drawn out and constricted to fill the ample time of the pre-modern. The supposedly

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[24] This debate seems to have originated between O.Elizabeth McWhorter Harden and James Newcomer, dating back to the 1970s. In her argument, Mc Whorter Harden takes issue with Newcomer's interpretation of Thady as a cunning, deceitful traitor who engineers his family's social ascent. Instead she vehemently rejects this idea, seeing Thady as "always loyal to the (Rackrent) family" and maintaining that "he cannot distort the truth." Seamus Deane seconds this perspective, arguing that Thady is "blinded by his pathetic loyalty" and cannot see the significance of the story he tells. Other critics such as Tom Dunne however have supported Newcomer's interpretation, drawing attention to Thady's "devious and false servility" which he identifies as a by-product of the colonial system. For further discussion see James Newcomer, *Maria Edgeworth* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1973); O.Elizabeth McWhorter Harden, *Maria Edgeworth's Art of Prose Fiction* (Netherlands: Mouton, 1971) p. 50-56; Seamus Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature* (London: Hutchinson, 1986); and Tom Dunne, *Maria Edgeworth and the Colonial Mind* (Cork: University College Cork, 1984).

> undisciplined, digressive quality of these stories could not be facilitated within the context of a modernizing economy.[25]

Long-drawn out and garrulous, such stories exemplified time wasting and other slothful habits which were adverse to modern principles of punctuality and proficiency.

More so however, it was the content of the stories which was viewed as threatening. Servants as members of the lower classes were notorious for their credulous, supernatural beliefs. According to eighteenth-century thought, it was commonly alleged that servants inherently lacked the intellectual capacity required for logical thinking. Due to their plebeian origins, this group were generally thought to be devoid of the ability to process information in a rational manner and as such were, it was believed, predisposed to spread supernatural and superstitious beliefs. In consequence of this supposed irrationality, it was thus believed that these employees filled the minds of their credulous young auditors with dangerous and ridiculous notions. Furthermore, while the content of these stories was viewed as dangerous so too was the style of story-telling favoured by servants, in so far as it was highly inaccurate. These tales were renowned for their exaggerated manner, with servants prone to embellish details and distort the facts. The stories were in effect fictitious yarns, containing gross misrepresentations and ultimately far removed from the realm of truth.

The negative influence of these tales is most clearly illustrated in Thady's relationship with Condy, the youngest and final heir in the Rackrent line. Condy we are informed came from "a remote branch of the family"[26] and as such, his inheritance of the estate is uncertain. As a result, it is necessary that he is trained to a profession and being "born to little or no fortune of his own, he was bred to the bar" (85). However, due to his increasing confidence that he will in fact inherit, he neglects his studies and as a result is ill-qualified and incapable of effectively managing Castle Rackrent when he does succeed to the estate. As Sharon Murphy rightly observes "it is because Thady fills his head with stories that Condy becomes increasingly certain that he will inherit, and this, in turn, leads him to abandon the studies through which he could have become his family's saviour."[27] Overly-assured that he will inherit the land, Condy is lured into a false sense of confidence by Thady's tall-tales.

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[25] Helen O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 34.

[26] Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent and Ennui*, ed. Marilyn Butler (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 85. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

[27] Sharon Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), p. 148.

In fact, it is Thady's story-telling that has left Condy fixated and obsessed with this issue of inheritance. Having known Condy since he was a child, the narrator fondly recounts how the young boy "would slip down to me in the kitchen, and love to sit on my knee, whilst I told him stories of the family, and the blood from which he was sprung, and how he might look forward, if the *then* present man should die without childer, to being at the head of the Castle Rackrent estate" (85). These stories recounted by Thady have had a devastating impact on Condy, leaving him indolent, inactive and eventually redundant.

Thomas Flanagan suggests however that Thady's stories could at one stage have had a positive influence upon the occupiers of the estate, only they come too late. Reflecting on the decline of the household Flanagan sympathises with "poor Condy, whose pathetic belief in honour and responsibility, born of a servant's chatter, might have sufficed, if only it had come much earlier, to some Rackrent of the past."[28] Here however Flanagan misses the point. It is Thady's failure to promote notions of social responsibility or financial culpability that leads to Condy's demise. Instead if told earlier, Thady's stories would in all probability only have helped to escalate the decline of the family; either way they certainly would not have saved the Rackrents.

Thady's false notions of honour and respectability perpetuated within these tales further contribute to Condy's downfall. Praising outdated ideals of lavish living and excessive consumption, Thady promotes an outdated, archaic vision of a gentleman which is increasingly out of touch with contemporary reality. This nostalgic ideal is contained in the person of Sir Patrick, a previous Rackrent master who was renowned for his high style of living and generosity. It is this character who, through his tales and bravado, Thady commends to the young, credulous Condy. Instead of promoting modern ideals of application, hard work and accumulation, Thady instead advocates this old-fashioned model of "admirable" conduct which fails to embrace the practicalities of a modern society.

The main problem with these stories however, is that they are highly subjective and in effect completely inaccurate. Based upon his own personal experiences and mixed with information garnered through hearsay, Thady's tales are woven together from a blend of historical fact and partial observations. As Flanagan observes

> It is Thady who creates the illusion of family, out of the feudal retainer's pride in the house which he serves. But he has the retainer's practicality. He assigns Rackrents

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[28] Thomas Flanagan, *The Irish Novelists 1800-1850* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1959), p. 79.

> their role in the family legend in proportion as they are generous toward him or make life easy for him.[29]

His version of Sir Patrick which he presents to Condy does not tell the full story, and indeed is factually imprecise. Exaggerated and embroidered in accordance with his own prejudiced reflections, Thady deludes the young heir, filling his head with erroneous information. The problem is that as a child Condy unreservedly believed these tales, taking them for "gospel truth." The impressionable young boy it is so indicated fell for these tall- tales and is ultimately duped by Thady's fantastical fictions.

As a consequence of listening to such tales, Condy becomes deluded, perilously detached from reality and obsessed with these ancient ideals of honour. The extent of his delusion is highlighted at the close of the novel when he randomly decides to fake his own death in order to be present at his own wake. Having consulted with Thady, the servant assures him that his funeral will be a magnificent affair, "as fine a sight as one could see… as great a funeral as ever Sir Patrick O'Shaughlin's was, and such a one as that had never been known in the county afore or since" (112). The reality of the event however fails to live up to this bravado, and "Condy was rather upon the sad order in the midst of it all, not finding there had been such a great talk about himself after his death as he had always expected to hear" (113). This scene encapsulates the tenor of Thady's relationship with the young Condy which has existed throughout the narrative: the servant raises Condy's expectations to such a high degree that he is bound to be disappointed and disenchanted with the reality.

Edgeworth as such employs Thady to represent the dangerous influence a servant can exert over an impressionable child. Simultaneously however, the novel also attests to the importance of sound parental guidance and the disastrous consequences which await a youngster who is denied this supervision. Indeed, throughout the novel Condy's guardians are conspicuous in their absence, evidently neglecting their charge of parental guidance, thereby empowering Thady with the opportunity to lead the young heir astray. Thus, it emerges that the Rackrents are not only remiss in their professional duties of regulating and ensuring the efficient management of their estate, but they are also inattentive to their domestic obligations. Absent when they are needed, Thady gladly fills the void left by these missing parental figures and usurps their position of influence.

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[29] Flanagan, *Irish Novelists*, p. 77.

The novel concludes with the death of Condy; having drunk from the same horn as his revered ancestor Sir Patrick, he is poisoned, catches a fever and dies six days later. As Thady recounts, Condy "was fond often of telling the story that he learned from me when a child, how Sir Patrick drank the full of this horn without stopping, and this was what no other man afore or since could without drawing breath" (119). Prompted by these tales of heroic feats, Condy attempts to emulate the glorious actions of his predecessor resulting in his premature death.

Tragically, unlike the tales told by the servant characters in the Gothic Romance novels of Radcliffe, the stories Thady tells to the young heir do not result in the restitution of an ancient family to their legitimate station. A popular trope within this genre involved long-serving faithful retainers communicating vital information to the young hero through which he would discover his true lineage and assume his rightful social position. However, instead of enabling Condy to take his rightful place as master of the estate, these fables result in the disintegration and extinction of the Rackrent line. Thady's garrulous and long-winded accounts, instead of setting the family hierarchy to rights, woefully mislead Condy and steer him on the wrong course.

While the damage that Thady causes to the Rackrent family has been long recognised, by comparing this novel with Edgeworth's other works, new light can be shed on this issue. Surveying Edgeworth's fiction, James Newcomer insists that *Rackrent* simply does not fit in with the other novels, and as such must be "always excepted."[30] *Castle Rackrent*, according to this reading is the odd one out; an anomaly, an eccentric deviation from the rest of Edgeworth's works. This chapter however revises this claim and maintains that in fact, the novel's preoccupation with problematic servants ties *Castle Rackrent* firmly in with Edgeworth's canon of published works.

In *Ennui*, we yet again see the manifestation of this anxiety surrounding servant interaction with children. Published in 1809 this text formed part of the "Tales of Fashionable Life" series, which as Richard Lovell stated was intended to highlight "some of those errors to which the higher classes of society are disposed."[31] In keeping with this intention, *Ennui* centres upon the Earl of Glenthorn, an absentee Anglo-Irish landlord who is bored with his affluent lifestyle in England. Instead of fulfilling the administrative and managerial duties which should attend his position, Glenthorn delegates these responsibilities to his subordinates and in consequence lives a life of ease and comfort. It is this lack of exertion which however leads to Glenthorn's ennui and melancholy, resulting in his apathy for life and contemplations of suicide. His intentions however are thwarted by the mysterious arrival of his former nurse Ellinor who comes to visit her former nursling, intent to see him once more before she dies. Her unexpected reappearance however occasions an accident whereby Glenthorn is thrown from his horse and injured.

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[30] James Newcomer, *Maria Edgeworth* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1973), p. 51.

[31] Richard Lovell Edgeworth, 'Preface to Tales of Fashionable Life' in *Castle Rackrent and Ennui*, ed. Marilyn Butler (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 141. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

Throughout his convalescence, Ellinor fondly tends to her former charge and nurses him back to health. In this respect she acts as a foil to Glenthorn's other servants who are depicted as scheming, greedy rascals, wholly unconcerned with their master's wellbeing. During this time however Ellinor fills the young man's head with flattering stories of his family. Recalling this, Glenthorn notes that "She was inexhaustible in her anecdotes of my ancestors, all tending to the honour and glory of the family…" (160). Mirroring Thady's relationship with Condy, Ellinor takes the opportunity to transmit these tales and stories, impressing the young Earl with a sense of awe and respect for his predecessors.

Assessing the effect which these tales have upon Glenthorn, Katie Trumpener sees them as exerting a largely positive influence. She suggests that "Ellinor's legends and stories rescue the Anglo-Irish absentee from the deadly ennui of his caste, teach him the nature of his attachments to Ireland, and create a new unifying national culture."[32] This chapter however questions this view and argues that these stories in fact have a largely negative impact upon Glenthorn. While temporarily rescuing him from his lethargic state, the tales work to instil in him an unrealistic view of Ireland and of the relative security of his position there.

On listening to these stories, Glenthorn's vanity is puffed up with a sense of his own self-importance and consequence. Recalling his emotions, he states that "Ellinor impressed me with the idea of the sort of feudal power I should possess in my vast territory, over tenants who were almost vassals, and amongst a numerous train of dependents" (160). Having been flattered with these tales and his ego duly inflated, Glenthorn returns to Ireland in the midst of the 1798 rebellion. With his expectations raised through Ellinor's stories, he anticipates a glorious reign over loyal, humble and grateful peasants.

These deluded fantasies are reiterated when Glenthorn arrives at his Irish estate. On his approach there he is impressed with the show of celebration and jubilation which accompanies his arrival. He recalls that "These people seemed 'born for my use':… some blessing me for coming to reign over them; all together gave more the idea of vassals than of tenants, and carried my imagination centuries back to feudal times" (178). Glenthorn's perilous detachment from the realities of Irish society has been confounded by the stories he is told by Ellinor. Arriving at his estate, the Earl is blinded by this show of deference and respect and subsequently lulled into a false sense of security. Instead of appreciating the volatile nature of peasant unrest, Glenthorn is not only ignorant of the socio-economic reasons prompting this dissatisfaction but also completely oblivious to the very existence of this discontent.

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[32] Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 214.

The hazard of this lower-class unease is intensified by the presence of Joe Kelly, a scheming member of a secret revolutionary society. Having become acquainted with this character, Glenthorn takes him into his service and refuses to dismiss him despite receiving an anonymous warning that Kelly is not to be trusted. Responding to his agent M'Leod's advice, Glenthorn impatiently replies that "Joe's as honest as his neighbours, I dare say: the fellow diverts me, and is attached to me, and that's all I can expect" (257). Convinced of his own importance and the feudal like devotion of the peasants, Glenthorn is unwilling to even contemplate the notion of insubordination. Ellinor's stories have deluded Glenthorn and confused his understanding, leaving him incapable of rationally appraising his potentially perilous situation.

In a surprising turn of events, halfway through the narrative it is revealed that Glenthorn is in fact Ellinor's child and her supposed son Christy is the legitimate heir to the Glenthorn estate. Here Edgeworth incorporates the child-swop theme, a common motif in romance tales, and subverts it; instead of finding out that he is of aristocratic blood, Glenthorn discovers that he is in fact the son of an Irish peasant. Indeed in some respects the episode is "nothing short of revolutionary"[33] with its implication that a peasant can convincingly pose as an aristocrat, and vice versa. In this way, Glenthorn is unwittingly involved in the deceit and unknowingly cheats Christy out of his rightful inheritance. Edgeworth also modifies this trope in another important way; unlike the earlier novels of Fielding, here there is no obvious indication that Glenthorn is not in his legitimate class position. In *Ennui*, no tell-tale signs or aristocratic visage reveal Christy's true upper-class identity.

Instead, the secret is discovered only through Ellinor's confession and is confirmed by a scar on Christy's head which coincidentally he received as a baby, having been dropped by a neglectful nurse. Justifying her behaviour, Ellinor explains how the real Earl was a weak, sickly infant whereas her own was a thriving, healthy little creature. Thinking "what a pity it was the young lord should die, and he an only son and heir, and the estate to go out of the family the Lord knows where" (274) she switches the infants. In consequence, through her concoction of a false, misleading version of events, Ellinor in effect lies, cheats and deceives the family which she purports to serve.

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[33] Nash, *Servants and Paternalism*, p. 83.

In this way, Edgeworth gestures toward the fraught issue of wet-nursing, an issue of increasing debate and contention throughout the latter end of the eighteenth century. Inspired by Rousseau's valorisation of motherhood as articulated in *Emile*, social commentators were avid in their promotion of maternal breastfeeding, emphasising the importance of this practice in establishing a mother-child bond. Consequently, mothers who failed to fulfil this function were commonly depicted as selfish, bad mothers, who refused their "first duty."[34] Due to Lady Glenthorn's untimely death shortly after the birth of her son, it could be argued that this figure is free from such reproach, insofar as Glenthorn's contact with Ellinor is caused by necessity and not wilful maternal neglect. However as Ya-feng Wo suggests, "the death of Lord Glenthorn's putative mother might also be related to milk fever, an illness usually thought to inflict those women who do not breast feed."[35] Thus it is possible that Lady Glenthorn's failure to carry out her maternal duty results not only in her untimely demise, but also empowers Ellinor to carry out her deceitful child-swop stratagem.

As a character, Ellinor is associated with the past, an archaic entity reminiscent of the nurse figure in ancient romance tales. She is commonly associated with natural affections, an emotional, faithful character that regardless of her failings is genuinely attached to both Christy and Glenthorn. Yet despite this, throughout the novel she is a liability. She is a destructive force whose actions are irrational and spontaneous, lacking forethought or logic. Furthermore, she is portrayed as a figure that is inimical to progress. This is demonstrated when Glenthorn, in a bid to demonstrate his gratitude to his former nurse, builds her a cottage full of modern luxuries and comforts. Ellinor however promptly destroys her new home, littering it with filth and rubbish, revelling in her indolent habits. Recalling the event, Glenthorn notes that

> There was a partition between two rooms, which had been built with turf or peat, instead of bricks, by the wise economy I had employed. Of course, this was pulled

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[34] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), p. 139.

[35] Ya-feng Wu, 'Tainted Milk or Diluted Subject: Breast-feeding in *Ennui* and *Belinda*', *NTU Studies in Language and Literature*, Number 23 (June 2010), 27-70 (p. 38).

> down to get at the turf. The stairs also were pulled down and burned, though there was no scarcity of firing. (199)

In this respect Ellinor proves short-sighted, stuck in her ways and unable to see "the bigger picture." Incapable of recognising or appreciating progress, Ellinor's ignorance proves detrimental and literally destructive to the cause of modernisation.

Drawing upon this scene and focusing in particular on the presence of farm animals within the domestic space, Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace suggests that "The proximity of the dunghill signals Ellinor's tolerance for the unclean, while the proliferation of animals- not only the telltale pig, but other animals as well- suggests her affinity with a certain bestial element."[36] According to this reading, Ellinor is portrayed in an unrelentingly negative light, with few or no redeeming features. She is represented as uncivilised and boorish, almost a figure of disgust. Furthermore, Kowaleski-Wallace describes this character as having "characteristics marking the grotesque"[37] again reiterating her association with undesirable, disagreeable traits. Indeed, Ellinor is an archaic force, firmly associated with the past and not in a positive way; there is no nostalgic hint to her characterisation, no sentimental praising of her primitive and traditional habits. Her erroneous mindset is fundamentally flawed, tending to misdirect and mislead vulnerable youngsters.

In this respect, Ellinor's resistance to progress leaves her simply out of place in the new, updated Ireland which Edgeworth promotes in *Ennui*. The turmoil and havoc which she represents are in this modernised Irish society to be replaced with order, regularity and rationality. As such her presence must be eradicated so that both Glenthorn and Ireland can move forward, progress and purge themselves of the backward, dangerous ways which her existence entails. Ellinor's lies and tall-tales wreck havoc upon the Glenthorn dynasty, resulting in confusion and eventually death. Ellinor therefore must die, leaving Glenthorn finally free from her insidious influence and capable of reinventing himself. Similar to Grace, despite how cruel or unjust the solution may appear, her presence is a hindrance and a threat, and therefore Ellinor must be disposed of.

This theme is again revisited in *Harrington*, this time however Edgeworth concentrates on the damaging impact which tales of a bigoted nature can leave upon young children. Revolving around the aristocratic eponymous hero, the story narrates this character's development to adulthood in the anti-Semitic environment of eighteenth-century England and his eventual triumph over these prejudiced views. A formative incident takes place in the opening scenes, where Harrington as a six year old child is left in the care of a malevolent nursery maid. This maid, impatient to get her young charge to obey her orders, stoops to using supernatural tales and threats to frighten the child into submission. In particular, she capitalises on the figure of “Simon the Jew” and tells Harrington how this tyrant kidnaps and kills naughty children, using their corpses to bake pies.

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[36] Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth and Patriarchal Complicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 161.
[37] Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters*, p. 161.

This story achieves its intended outcome and operates powerfully upon the mind of the young boy, leaving him petrified of this figure. Harrington reflects how

> The threat of ‘Simon the Jew’ was for some time afterwards used upon every occasion to reduce me to passive obedience; and when by frequent repetition this threat had lost somewhat of its power, when the bare idea of the Jew would no longer reduce my rebel spirit, it was necessary to increase the terrors of his name.[38]

Here there are clear echoes of Locke’s warning against the use of these tactics to subdue children into obedience. Having recourse to bugbears and bogey-man figures to assert her control, Fowler illustrates her incapacity to instruct the young man in a reasonable way and represents a viable threat to the theory of practical education. As Katie Trumpener observes, “these teachings fall on impressionable ears, becoming an integral part of Harrington’s knowledge of the world, and he will spend years struggling to rid himself of the primeval fears they induce.”[39]

Speaking of this character, Julie Nash observes how Fowler causes anarchy in the social order by inverting the power balance between master and servant. Nash reflects how

> Instead of an ignorant servant who looks up to her betters, Fowler’s powers of speech allow her to manipulate and control her master. She, not he, is in charge. Servants like Fowler do not just harm their charges through their personal malevolence, they destabilise the social order by reversing the traditional power structure.[40]

In this respect, Fowler is a thoroughly subversive character. Through her deceitful and fallacious tales, she subverts the social hierarchy and gains a usurped authority over her impressionable young charge. In Fowler's hands, stories are thus used as weapons through which she obtains an unwarranted position of power.

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[38] Maria Edgeworth, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth Volume 3 Harrington* ed. Marilyn Butler & Susan Manly (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), p. 168. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.
[39] Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 203.
[40] Nash, *Servants and Paternalism*, p. 39.

Following this event, Fowler promptly disappears from the narrative having found a more advantageous position in a new household. Toward the end of the novel however this mischievous maid randomly returns to once more threaten the stability of the Harrington family. By this stage the hero has fallen in love with and is desirous to marry Bernice Montenero however Lord Mowbray, the hero's rival for Bernice's affection, is determined to spite his adversary's chances of success. To this end, he recruits Fowler and with her help spreads lies and rumours about Harrington, implying that he is mentally unstable and subject to frequent bouts of insanity. Mr Montenero learning that Fowler "had been for many years, a servant in the Harrington family – children's maid" (323) gives credence to the reports and as a result is reluctant to support the marriage of his daughter to such a partner. The unfounded nature of the stories is however eventually revealed and the novel concludes with the happy nuptials of the hero and heroine.

While the issue is fortuitously resolved at the close of the story, Fowler's interference and deceit nevertheless proves a serious threat to Harrington's chances of a happy and advantageous marriage. Indeed the Harrington family, it is revealed, are in financial difficulty and the marriage with the wealthy Monteneros will affect a much needed change in their circumstances. With Fowler's devious meddling and vicious lies however, the alliance is jeopardised and the position of the family thrown into disarray. In this respect, her return toward the end of the novel works as "a potent reminder that the reach of a malicious servant knows no boundary."[41] Not content to cause chaos in the nursery, Fowler's presence continues to haunt and cause disorder in Harrington's adult life.

While both *Ennui* and *Harrington* evidently evince fears concerning the harmful consequences arising from servants' deceitful antics, Edgeworth does gesture to another underlying issue: the problematic absence of parental figures. In both novels, it is implied that Ellinor and Fowler, like Thady, are only enabled to exert their powerful influence over the lives of their charges due to their intimate contact with these youngsters. Negligent in their duties, both Lady Glenthorn and Mrs Harrington abdicate their rightful position of maternal authority, thereby empowering their servants to fill this gaping void. In this respect, Edgeworth's novels reiterate once again the common eighteenth-century interest in maternal figures. Speaking of the genre's preoccupation with this issue, Greenfield observes that "novels endorse maternal practices... not by evidence of their successful enactment but rather by negative examples of their problematic unavailability."[42] By failing to engage in these practices, Edgeworth indicates, mothers permit and invite servants to take their place, with disastrous consequences. Thus, while servants prove hazardous to the well-being of children, it is clear they only wield this power due to the dismal parenting skills exhibited by their employers.

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[41] Nash, *Servants and Paternalism*, p. 40.

The fact that servants are not wholly culpable for this dire state of affairs is also attested to in *Harrington* when the author offers a somewhat surprising, albeit qualified, defence of Fowler's behaviour. This is illustrated when she gestures towards Godwin's philosophical view of human progress as attained through education which is articulated in *Political Justice*. Reflecting on the terror-tales which this character tells to her young charge, the narrator muses that

> In our enlightened days, in the present improved state of education, it may appear incredible, that any nursery maid could be so wicked… but I am speaking of what happened many years ago- nursery maids… are very different now from what they were then; and in further proof of the progress of human knowledge and reason, and in corroboration of the perfectibility of human nature, we may recollect that many of these very stories of the Jews… were some centuries ago universally believed by the English nation, and had furnished more than one of our Kings with pretexts for extortions and massacres. [43]

Edgeworth here makes a surprising reference to Godwin's controversial tenet of human perfectibility. In a bold, radical statement she draws parallels between the behaviour of servants and that of Kings, suggesting that both parties were liable, at different historical periods, to employ erroneous, untrue stories to their own advantage. Just as Fowler abuses Harrington's naivety, Edgeworth implies that former monarchs exploited the credulity of the British population by using these bigoted tales to achieve their own agendas.

Edgeworth however modifies her critique by firstly emphasising that these actions took place in the past, and that these behaviours are no longer practiced by either Kings or servants. Secondly, the author indicates how it is in accordance with the "progress of human knowledge" that servants have advanced beyond this state. In this manner, Edgeworth echoes Godwin's sentiments, implying that servants are amenable to education and reformation. However while both authors agreed in this respect, the consequences which they envisioned arising from servant education differed drastically. Indeed, while Godwin held that educated servants would challenge the current social hierarchy, Edgeworth envisioned learned servants as a stabilising force that would secure and reinforce social harmony.

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[42] Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters*, p. 18.

[43] Edgeworth, *Harrington*, p. 168-169.

In this respect, Edgeworth does not simply dismiss these domestic employees as hopeless sinners, the bane of respectable society. Instead she proposes that with the proper conditions servants are ultimately capable of reformation and recovery. This confidence is also evident in Edgeworth's earlier publications. In *Practical Education* for instance she proclaims that

> What has been said of the understanding and dispositions of servants, relates only to servants as they are now educated. Their vices and their ignorance arise from the same causes, the want of education. They are not a separate cast in society doomed to ignorance, or degraded by inherent vice; they are capable and desirous of instruction. Let them be well educated, and the difference in their conduct and understanding will repay society for the trouble of the undertaking.[44]

Here, Edgeworth unreservedly states her optimism regarding servants. She maintains that their current failings are attributable to flawed social conditions and do not indicate a natural disposition toward vice or ignorance. Instead she argues that through education these employees can eradicate their faults and become valuable members of society.

Edgeworth shared these hopes and ideals with many of her contemporaries, who were all optimistic about the positive effects that would ensue once the lower classes were educated. Speaking of the progressive educational movement enacted in Ireland at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Helen O'Connell states that "improvement writers in Ireland stressed that a solid practical education should make the poor less receptive to revolutionary idealism as well as eradicating the superstitions and backwardness of a dominantly oral, backward, culture."[45] Education according to this view would act as a bulwark, a protective force against the dangers of a revolutionary ideology. According to this reasoning, once the lower classes were provided with a limited and curtailed education they would learn to fulfil the relative duties and responsibilities of their position and become content and productive members of society.

O'Connell recognises that both Maria and Richard were involved in this progressive effort, identifying them as "educational pragmatists motivated by the same counter-revolutionary ideology"[46] which this movement championed. Both father and daughter were convinced that once the lower classes were provided with suitable and effective instruction, they would realise their best interests and would not challenge the smooth operation of the social hierarchy. Educated to a certain extent, the lower classes would have the ability to fulfil their respective social roles effectively and efficiently. While Edgeworth advocated a limited lower class educational programme however, she did not suggest that servants were destined to stay within their allotted class confines. Rather, she proposed that deserving attendants, with the help and guidance of their masters, could strive for and attain a degree of social mobility. While this ideology is clearly articulated in her works directed at an adolescent audience, for instance *Lame Jervas*, it is also present in her adult works of fiction.

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[44] Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, p. 191.
[45] O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement*, p. 73.

Thus throughout her works, what Edgeworth advocates is not a conservative defence of the status quo, but rather a more progressive and flexible vision of the social hierarchy. Envisioning a semi-educated servant class whose development is overseen by a paternalistic and benevolent ruling elite, Edgeworth embraces a programme of social mobility. Speaking of Edgeworth's fictional servants, Nash for instance observes that while "Few of her servants fall neatly into the child-like role prescribed for them by the paternalist ideology,…the attractive vision of the responsible master/father figure gently guiding the grateful dependent is never far from the surface of her work."[47] In this way, although Edgeworth refuses to romanticize an idealised feudal image of master-servant relations, she does not reject the patriarchal system. Instead she reforms it; envisioning an attentive, benevolent and progressively minded master figure that sponsors their servants' education.

In this respect, masters are not only in charge of the education of their servants but also firmly control their access to social mobility. According to the terms of this revised patriarchal relationship, loyal, worthy and deserving attendants will be rewarded with education and consequently the opportunity to advance through the social ranks. Thus, it is implied that once the upper classes subscribe to this system and put it into action, servants will soon recognise that their own interests are best served by being faithful, obedient and devoted retainers. In effect, when masters reward and incentivise good behaviour, Edgeworth suggests, they are more likely to receive it from their attendants.

This approach toward servant relations is evident in her real-life interactions with servants. In a letter to her aunt Ruxton written in June 1813, Edgeworth relates her visit to a former domestic employee, Samuel Essington. This man had previously left the Edgeworths' employment and established himself as hotelier. Recalling the visit, Edgeworth muses how "He showed us his excellent house, and walked us round his beautiful little lawn and shrubberies, all his own making; and cut moss roses and blush roses for us with such eagerness and delight." Furthermore she recalls how the former servant observes to her father that it was "all, all owing to you, sir, that first taught me."[48] Evidently pleased with this event, Edgeworth is keen to highlight Essington's sense of gratitude and humility to his former master. She emphasises too his sense of obligation and his ready acknowledgement that his success is ultimately due to her father, who "first taught him."

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[46] O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement*, p. 73.
[47] Nash, *Servants and Paternalism*, p. 4.

This message is further reinforced by a note added by the editor explaining Essington's connection with the family, informing the reader that he was "The servant who was so faithful and so frightened at the time of the rebellion. He had saved some money and quitted the service of the Edgeworths in 1800."[49] Through hard-work and education, Essington seems to have been rewarded with the opportunity to retire from service and establish himself as a successful business man. In consequence, thanks to the kind and benevolent guidance provided by his master, Essington is enabled to improve his financial position while securing a degree of social prestige.

In this respect, Edgeworth is ardent in her attempts to illustrate how servants can be conditioned into loyal and honest employees through a combination of a curtailed educational programme and effective guidance. Despite this optimism however, she is willing to concede that these conditions are often not available and that employers do not always sponsor their servants to behave in this manner. In fact in a number of her novels she acknowledges that masters are oftentimes culpable for encouraging the bad behaviours of servants through their abuse of the rewards system. Instead of conditioning their employees to be loyal and honest retainers, masters, Edgeworth recognises, all too often reward and encourage dishonest behaviour.

This issue is raised in *Harrington*. As mentioned above Fowler is criticised for the despicable rumours which she circulates about her former charge. However it is also illustrated that Fowler is actually lured by Lord Mowbray into compliance with his schemes by promises of social advancement for her daughter. Indeed "Before he opened his scheme to Fowler, he found how he could bribe her, as he thought, effectually, and secure her secrecy by making her an accomplice. Fowler had a mind to marry her daughter to a certain apothecary, who… would raise her to be a lady."[50] Exploiting Fowler's hopes of securing an advantageous marriage for her daughter, Lord Mowbray uses this information to bribe and secure her involvement in his deceitful stratagem.

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[48] Edgeworth, *Memoirs*, p. 228.
[49] Edgeworth, *Memoirs*, p. 228.

When the truth is exposed and Fowler's guilt is discovered, she capitalises on this excuse in a bid to plead for compassion. Allowing that she had committed a fault she nevertheless maintains that she "was not so much to blame as them that knew better, and ought to know better- that bribed and deceived me, and lured me by promises to do that…"[51] This may seem like a weak plea but actually Fowler has a point. Mowbray has abused his advantageous position, using his influence to corrupt this servant in a bid to achieve his own aims. In this respect, Mowbray is reckless and neglectful of the responsibilities which should attend his position of social privilege.

This topic is also explored in *Ormond* (1817). Classified as one of Edgeworth's Irish tales, it tells the story of Harry Ormond, a young man who has been brought up under the guidance of Sir Ulick O Shane, an influential social-climber whose primary ambition in life is to attain a prominent and lucrative political placement. Sir Ulick is a character with little integrity or dignity and who is not above stooping to lowly tactics in order to advance his cause. Having married the dislikeable widow Scraggs in order to secure her fortune, he soon laments his decision and resolves to obtain a separation. This is achieved it is insinuated, with the aid of Miss Black, his wife's humble companion. In a letter to Harry, Sir Ulick cryptically records that Miss Black

> Has been very useful to me in arranging my affairs in this separation – *in consequence* I have procured a commission of the peace for a certain Mr M'Crule…and… I have caused him, not without some difficulty, to ask Miss Black to be his helpmate (Lord help him and forgive me!)[52]

Here it is heavily implied that Sir Ulick has engaged in a stratagem with his wife's companion in order to extricate himself from an unhappy marriage. Indeed it is revealed that Miss Black preferred "rather to stay in Ireland and become Mrs M'Crule than to return to England and continue companion to Lady O'Shane"[53] and hastily accepts the proposal. Enticing this upper-servant so it seems with the promise of an advantageous marriage in return for her help in this affair, Sir Ulick in effect procures this servant's treachery and rewards it handsomely.

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[50] Edgeworth, *Harrington*, p. 322.

[51] Edgeworth, *Harrington*, p. 321.

[52] Maria Edgeworth, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth Volume 8 Ormond* ed. Claire Connolly (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), p. 122.

As such, Edgeworth acknowledges that masters are actually to a certain extent directly responsible for the devious and deceitful conduct of their servants. Some masters, through bribery and enticements, reward their employees for their underhand and dishonest behaviour. Coaxing their servants into adapting these devious methods, masters misuse this system of rewards, contaminating and corrupting it for their own ends. While this issue is by no means a major theme throughout her novels, Edgeworth's subtle discussion of the topic indicates that she recognises this is a factor which could possibly impact upon servant behaviour. If masters did not behave in this manner, Edgeworth intimates, neither would servants.

Edgeworth's practical attitude towards this issue is illustrated in *Leonora*, her only epistolary novel which she composed on her return from Paris and published some years later in 1806. This story revolves around the eponymous heroine, a virtuous and loyal young woman who is married to the dashing Mr L. Happily married for upwards of a year, Leonora's domestic felicity is destroyed by the arrival of Olivia, a flirtatious coquette of loose morality. Having initially befriended Leonora, Olivia embarks on a sordid affair with Mr L. who, wooed by his mistress's feminine charms, determines to leave his faithful wife. Despite repeated warnings issued by his close friend General B. urging him to end the affair, Mr L. is so infatuated with Olivia that he decides to move with her to Russia. Before they embark on their journey however letters written by Olivia wherein she criticises and denigrates her lover are found and with this revelation the charm is broken, and Mr L. returns to the ever faithful Leonora.

Edgeworth however had difficulty engineering the conclusion of this novel, and struggled to find a suitable plot device by which the letters could be discovered. Advising his daughter of possible solutions, Richard Lovell suggests that Olivia's maid Josephine could solve the problem. In a letter written to Maria he muses that

> I think that the *dirty work* must be done by the waiting maid Josephine… - Genl. B -… may have praised her taste, and her fine eyes… and then begged to have her purse

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[53] Edgeworth, *Ormond*, p. 122.

> mended in which a twenty pound note might have remained by accident… - he may mount his doucers to £50…[54]

Here Richard Lovell proposes that Josephine could be bribed by the General to betray her mistress and procure for him the damaging letters. In this way, Olivia's true character would be revealed and the General would thereby save the marriage of his friend, affecting a reconciliation between husband and wife. On reflection though, Richard Lovell concludes that "This however is not quite the thing for the honourable General…"[55] and the story ends instead with a highly improbable twist involving the interception of the letters by a warship.

This informal correspondence testifies not only to the close working relationship between father and daughter but also sheds light on Edgeworth's attitude toward the behaviour of servants. Instead of reverting to the typical characterisation of the duplicitous servant, Edgeworth rejects this in favour of a more far-fetched and improbable plot contrivance. This is because General B. as the upright, honourable hero of the story would never stoop to the despicable means of bribing a servant. This standard of behaviour is simply below any respectable gentleman and in consequence of this fact Josephine cannot be employed as the convenient plot device to resolve the story. The conduct of servants, Edgeworth therefore implies, is largely determined by the behaviour of their superiors.

Indeed Edgeworth explicitly draws attention to this point in her longest novel *Patronage*, published in 1814. This tells the story of the worthy and respectable Percy family who throughout the course of the narrative experience a variety of hardships over which they eventually triumph. Mr Percy is the kind, loving and attentive patriarch at the head of this household who spurns the notions of servility or favouritism. He is characterised throughout by his virtuous behaviour, impeccable conduct and his idealised domestic relationships with his wife, children and servants. Through his display of independence and integrity Mr Percy earns the respect of all those around him; from the powerful Lord Oldborough right through to his humble domestic servants.

The extent of this esteem is illustrated when the Percys are cheated out of their estate by a devious relative and are in consequence left in an impoverished state. Forced to leave their cherished home, the family are obliged to downsize their domestic abode and this also entails dismissing their retinue of servants. However, a number of their employees refuse to leave their service including Johnson. This young man "whom Mr Percy had bred up from a boy" is we are informed, so talented and "creditable a servant, that he could readily have obtained a place with high wages in any opulent family."[56] Despite this however, Johnson's genuine and sincere affection for his employer makes him determined to follow his master through his trials and tribulations.

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[54] Quoted in Butler, *Maria Edgeworth*, p. 275.

[55] Butler, *Maria Edgeworth*, p. 275.

Remarking on this situation, Edgeworth pointedly draws attention to this unusual circumstance in an authorial aside. Highlighting the difference between Johnson's behaviour and that of a typical contemporary servant, the narrator notes that the reader may be inclined to think that this description is

> romantic and incredible; but it is to be hoped that there are some [readers], who have had happier experience, and who can testify that servants, who have been brought up in well regulated families, who have never been exposed to the example of profligacy, or to temptations to extravagance, and who have been treated with judicious kindness, are capable of the attachment, fidelity, and disinterested gratitude, which is here recorded. (105)

Here Edgeworth clarifies her message regarding servants, illustrating that these employees are capable of being formed into loyal, faithful domestics once they are guided by an intelligent and compassionate master. This master-servant relationship, although she acknowledges it may appear "romantic" is, Edgeworth maintains, actually achievable once the adequate preconditions are available. Ultimately, at the conclusion of the novel it is revealed that Johnson's loyalty has been acknowledged and he is now in the esteemed position of butler. Thus having been protected from harmful influences, with his master's encouragement and assistance Johnson is enabled to reach the top of the servant hierarchy where his loyalty is lucratively rewarded.

Edgeworth therefore implies that in order for servants to change their immoral ways, masters must first reform theirs. It is clear that the behaviour of the serving class is conditioned by the guidance and instruction given to them by the upper classes. As such, masters must lead by example, distributing sage advice and solid moral guidance to their attendants in order to ensure their good conduct and the satisfactory performance of their duties. By rewarding good behaviour and encouraging obedience, masters must persuade their employees that deference and loyalty pave the way to social progression and mobility. Thus by assuming and effectively fulfilling the duties attendant on their position, the upper classes will not only secure the good behaviour of their employees, but also ensure the smooth and effective functioning of society.

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[56] Maria Edgeworth, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth Volume 6 Patronage* (Vols I & II), ed. Connor Carville & Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), p. 105. All further references to this text are given in parenthesis after the quotation.

In addition to supervising the conduct of their employees, Edgeworth insists that these employers must also fulfil their other domestic duty: that of overseeing and managing the education and development of their offspring. These two responsibilities in effect coincide, and it is imperative to Edgeworth's vision of domestic harmony that parents, in order to safeguard their children's intellectual and moral capacities, keep servants segregated from youngsters. Parental figures must protect their future heirs from the essentially dangerous, false and misleading stories told by lower class servants which distract from and undermine the theory of rational education. Thus, through monitoring and preventing servant-child interaction, the upper classes can essentially eliminate this threat of lower class contamination.

Ultimately then, while negligent parents prove the source of this "servant problem," vigilant parental figures provide the solution. Edgeworth is keen to highlight the fact that while servants exert an unwholesome influence upon children, they are only enabled to do so due to the void left by careless, absent parents. Conversely, once parents assume their rightful position and fulfil their assigned domestic responsibilities by personally overseeing the welfare and well-being of their children, the influence which servants currently exert will cease. The dangerous power exercised by servants is effectively, Edgeworth demonstrates, a symptom of upper-class domestic mismanagement, which once rectified, will result in domestic accord.

Speaking of Edgeworth's fictional servants, Tom Dunne observes that within her novels there is a "fascination with the mentality and role of domestic servants."[57] While this thesis agrees with this statement, it has argued that this preoccupation is not limited to her novels but is actually present throughout her works across a variety of genres. Dunne furthermore suggests that within her Irish tales, while she depicts servants as destroyers of families, Edgeworth also employs these figures as saviours of dynasties. Indeed he reflects that "several times in these novels, as in Edgeworth's family history, a loyal servant saved the master's life or property, and it was important for Edgeworth's purpose to show the capacity of the native Irish for loyalty, if treated properly."[58] While Dunne focuses on the fact that Edgeworth's loyal servant figures are Irish peasants, I would however argue that it is equally important that they are servants. Indeed, it was instrumental for Edgeworth’s reformed patriarchal vision to illustrate that servants, once provided with adequate guidance and instruction by their social superiors, would no longer prove a threat to either their masters or their master’s children.

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[57] Tom Dunne, *Maria Edgeworth and the Colonial Mind* (Cork: University College Cork, 1984), p. 16.
[58] Dunne, *Maria Edgeworth*, p. 17.

CONCLUSION

Speaking on the nature of honesty, Daniel Defoe astutely remarks in his *Review*, published in 1711, that “The man is not rich because he is honest, but he is honest because he is rich.”[1] In this respect, the author acknowledges the social and economic factors which have a huge bearing upon one’s behaviour and conduct, in effect shaping and dictating their actions. A wealthy, affluent individual Defoe surmises has no occasion to lie, cheat or deceive in order to survive in this vicious capitalist economy. Financially stable and therefore enabled to comfortably provide for all their material wants, these privileged individuals are not obliged to enter into mean, underhand or despicable shifts in order to secure the provisions required for daily survival. Conversely, it is implied that the criminals and rogues who lack such financial resources are driven by necessity to engage in immoral activities.

It is striking however that despite this seemingly balanced, logical exposition on the issue, the author notably excludes servants from this category of “deserving deceivers.” Indeed in his virulent pamphlet, *Every-Body’s Business is No-Body’s Business* (1725), Defoe lambasts the intrigues practiced by this group, scathingly criticising their “cunning” and “artful”[2] behaviours.

This is because Defoe, like Swift, sees servants not as victims but as canny exploiters of this economic system. These employees have no need to employ these tricks: they have comfortable, stable working conditions, good wages and receive all the necessities of life. Their deceitful methods, Defoe protests, are not motivated by necessity but instead by an excessive greed, which prompts them to adopt these deviant, sneaky behaviours. Servants, according to this reasoning are out for what they can get; wily, selfish, insubordinate creatures who capitalise on their position, extricating a fortune from their careworn, harassed employers. For Defoe, it is servants who are the powerful players in the master-servant relationship; they are the dominant party and hence their deceitful, dishonest behaviour is inexcusable.

This thesis has argued however, that the novelists under consideration view this situation in a very different light. Taking into consideration the nature of the master-servant relationship, these writers express more sympathy and pity for the plight of the servant. The position of servants, these novelists suggest, was not as straight forward as Defoe perceived it. These menials were not necessarily enterprising entrepreneurs, cannily adapting to the demands of the marketplace but rather, were frequently in a much more vulnerable position. Consequently, servants' relationship with truth as portrayed in the novels discussed is much more vexed and complicated than Defoe would allow. While many of the novelists accept that servants are liars and equivocators, these texts nevertheless offer more insightful and enlightened reasons as to why this group engaged in these behaviours.

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[1] Quoted in Eagleton, *The English Novel*, p. 25.

[2] Defoe, *Every-body’s Business*, p. 6.

In this respect, all the novels under consideration refuse to dismiss servants as simply scheming, conniving rogues. By placing servants in the context of their social milieu, these novels are enabled to examine the extenuating circumstances and mitigating factors which influence servant behaviour. Thus, these authors all conclude that dishonest attendants are in some way products of their social environment and that there is nothing natural or innate in their behaviour. Indeed, far from being inherently prone to engage in devious actions, servants, these novels suggest, are far more likely to learn the arts of equivocation and deceit during their working lives.

Thus, reworking Defoe's statement, this thesis maintains that the novelists discussed acknowledge that "A man is not a servant because he is dishonest, but is dishonest because he is a servant." While these novelists generally recognise that deceit is closely allied to the position of servant, not all of the authors view the situation in the same way. Henry Fielding for instance suggests that servants are coerced and goaded into adopting these behaviours due to the demands of their masters. Fielding demonstrates how in an attempt to please and conciliate their employers, these servants mould their behaviour in a bid to pacify their superiors and escape reprimand. Charlotte Smith, on the other hand, suggests that the deceitful conduct of servants is inspired by feelings of revenge and resentment against tyrannical masters. In this respect, their deceit is motivated by feelings of spleen and malevolence. Maria Edgeworth however views the situation differently yet again, and suggests that servant dishonesty, which is channelled through deceitful "tall-tales", is due to the absence of lower-class education.

While all these novelists are eager to alleviate the extent of condemnation placed on the figure of the deceitful servant, other novelists are also keen to highlight the undesirable consequences arising from servant honesty. Tobias Smollett's idealised retainers for instance are illustrated as not only unrealistic, but also highly problematic when placed in the context of their social environment. Their honesty results not only in scuffles and humorous mishaps but is commonly a source of irritation to their employers. Although treated in a comic way, it is clear that these idealised servants are nevertheless in practical terms, far from perfect. Likewise, William Godwin also highlights the difficulties ensuing from a servant's determination to find the truth, and highlights the disastrous social consequences which result from this behaviour.

By subjecting the figures of the honest and deceitful servant to this intense process of examination, these novelists provide a much more insightful and perceptive insight into the difficult predicament faced by these attendants. In this respect, the thesis argues that these novelists advocate a more balanced, temperate approach to the issue than has previously been recognised by contemporary criticism. By suggesting that dishonest servants are not as "bad" as they appear while honest servants are perhaps not as perfect as they are usually perceived to be, these novels in effect advocate a more middle-ground approach to the issue.

Speaking of the representation of servants and their relationship with truth in eighteenth-century literature, Jenny Davidson argues that "from Swift to Hazlitt, writers who treat the dissimulation of servants are chiefly concerned to protect masters from abuse."[3] Writers throughout this period, Davidson therefore seems to imply were overtly hostile towards servants and primarily concerned to shield the upper classes from their deceitful tricks. On a close examination of the novels which this thesis considers however, it is revealed that the situation is not as straight forward as Davidson suggests. Not only do many of these texts attempt to demonstrate why these servants deceive but furthermore, many of these novels hold masters in some way accountable for the wayward actions of their employees. Indeed, social superiors are frequently identified as major culprits, who through force, coercion or neglect, are responsible for the dastardly conduct of their domestic employees.

In accordance with eighteenth-century political and social thought, it was generally believed that deceit was an inherent aspect of the master-servant relationship. Due to the unequal power distribution at the centre of the relationship, it was commonly perceived that servants, as the weaker party, were obliged to equivocate and deceive, and were denied the opportunity to speak or voice the truth. As a dependent, it was a servant's duty to unhesitatingly obey the dictates of their master and to please their employers to the best of their ability. For this reason, servants were categorically denied participation in the political sphere. Speaking of the reform movement in the eighteenth century, Carl B. Cone observes that reformers "were concerned with the oppressions evident in the master-servant...

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[3] Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness*, p. 10.

relationships which might be alleviated by legal reforms. Such reforms would not remove the economic dependence of the lower classes and so would not elevate their members to the status of free agents entitled to a voice in politics."[4] As such, even these intended reforms would not significantly alter the fundamental nature of the master-servant relationship, hence servants would still be obliged to lie and equivocate and their subordinate position would be maintained.

Throughout the eighty-year period which this thesis spans, the treatment of servants and their relationship with truth changes considerably in the novels discussed. In the mid-century, when Fielding engaged with the topic he recognised that servants were forced to lie, and handled the situation in a relatively comic way. In consequence, within his texts there are no serious consequences or implications attached to this deceptive behaviour, and the conduct of servants is largely illustrated as a by-part of their station. Although Fielding discusses this issue, he makes no effort to reform the situation nor does he advocate that a change is desirable. Indeed, according to Fielding's reasoning there is no need for reform: these comic retainers are harmless characters who offer no threat or challenge to the current structure of society. Likewise, Smollett's portrayal of these retainers is also light-hearted and while he denounces their bad habits and deceitful tricks, his condemnation is primarily motivated by a sense of exasperation, with the satirist's intention to highlight the flaws of contemporary society.

By the end of the century however, the situation is treated in a drastically different manner. With the outbreak of the French revolution in 1789, the figure of the deceitful servant becomes a much more loaded figure, containing rebellious connotations. Servants as members of the lower classes are now a force to be reckoned with and have the capacity (and potentially the will) to wreak social havoc. Dishonesty in this tense social context signals insubordination, a desire to overthrow or go against the current social order. In consequence, the acts of scheming and plotting no longer have the comic connotations with which they were previously associated, and are now directed toward more serious ends.

This shift is clearly reflected in the works discussed in the latter part of this thesis. Writing during the revolutionary period, Smith's depiction of these retainers becomes much more consequential, with the lies told by these servants having much greater social significance. Godwin, viewing the situation from a different perspective, also emphasises the heightened importance of servants’ relationship with truth-telling. However, in accordance with his anarchist ideology, Godwin sees servants’ preoccupation with truth, and not their deceitful antics, as posing a fundamental threat to the current social order.

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[4] Carl B. Cone, *The English Jacobins: Reformers in Late Eighteenth-century England* (1968; New York: Scribners, 2010), p. 9.

The significance of this issue is also reflected in the works of Edgeworth. Servant deception is now perceived to be potentially lethal and has increasingly sinister and destructive social implications. Indeed, now the untruths told by servants offer a direct and fundamental challenge to the social structure and contain the potential to throw society into chaos and disarray. As a result, unlike Fielding, Edgeworth is emphatic in her calls to reform servant conduct, insisting that the deceptive behaviours practiced by these attendants must be completely eradicated in order to ensure the survival of the current social hierarchy.

The very different ways in which the issue of servants and their relationship with truth is handled, is, this thesis argues, a testament to the divisive and richly contested nature of this matter. Having considered a selection of authors, all of different social, political and religious persuasions, it is clear that this matter was an enduring topic of concern throughout the eighteenth-century novel. While there was no universal, general consensus reached however, it is clearly recognised by all these authors that servants and their relationship with truth was an extremely complex and difficult affair. As such, all these texts are reluctant to simply dismiss deceitful servants as roguish vagabonds and are willing to acknowledge that, quite often, there was more to the situation than meets the eye.

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