

Writing, Reading, and Collecting Girlhood:
Maria Edgeworth in the Pollard Collection of Children's Books

by

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work. I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or allow the Library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement. I consent to the examiner retaining a copy of the thesis beyond the examining period, should they so wish (EU GDPR May 2018).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. J. P.', written in a cursive style.

Summary

This thesis is the first sustained examination of the Pollard Collection since it became available for research in 2018, and the first thesis to use girlhood as a framework within the Collection. It contextualises the author Maria Edgeworth, the most prolific writer in the Collection, within the scholarly understanding of children's literature. As a librarian with an academic background in children's literature and book history, I possess a unique critical apparatus to examine Edgeworth in a way that she has not been considered before. I present ways to read each section of this thesis and make meaning from the text, the book, and the collection, using children's literature criticism, book history, and collection theory, respectively.

The first section, *Writing Girlhood*, connects Edgeworth's personal experience of girlhood with her signature girl characters. Building on Ó Gallchoir, Manly and Connolly's work, it explores the many roles she played within the social structures of her family, position, class, and home. The section insists Edgeworth embraced her hybrid identity and demonstrates that rather than needing to balance between daughter, teacher, eldest sister, and successful writer, she embraces the nuanced experience of being all these things at once. I use Gubar's kinship model to show these roles exist in relation to one another not as binary opposites but as complements. Drawing on the work of Myers and Havens, I argue that Edgeworth produces a sort of cross-writing that Myers sees as an integration of older and younger voices that deliberately or unconsciously addresses multiple audiences and transcends binaries, creating a "colloquy of past and present selves."¹ Edgeworth's cross-writing was a vehicle for the creation and presentation of a certain type of adolescent girl character, one who is reminiscent of Edgeworth's own lived experience. Using textual examples, I argue that engaging with the critical theories and frameworks used to understand children's and young adult literature (developed in the late twentieth century) enables fresh readings of Edgeworth's work that recentres the figure of the girl and girlhood within her output. Finally, the

¹ U. C. Knoepfelmacher and Mitzi Myers, "From the Editors: "Cross-Writing" and the Reconceptualizing of Children's Literature Studies," *Children's Literature* 25 (1997): 7-8.

section concludes that Edgeworth's radical acceptance of her liminal place within her family and her world, occupying a position on both sides of the threshold of girlhood and easily sliding from side to side, is reflected in the girl characters she wrote unintentionally creating texts that should be considered as progenitors of what Beth Rodgers describes generating a hundred years later as young adult fiction for girls.

The second section shifts the focus from textual to paratextual and argues that the construction of girlhood in Edgeworth's books goes beyond the textual and to the material. I utilise print culture, book history, and paratexts as tools to further the exploration of Edgeworth's constructed girl character. First, I contextualise girls' reading to include trends in nineteenth-century literacy and education as mentioned by Logan and Buckley. Based on the work of Kaufman, Manley, and Wright. I regard libraries as the most reliable social system—with their statistics and records—to measure an increasing female readership, I then integrate Fyfe, Mumby, Cullen and Rooney's research to analyse the impact that the dissemination of cheap print has on the shifting concept of implied girl readers, as the nineteenth century brings about changes in both the ease and affordability of reading across classes. Using examples from Edgeworth's books, this section demonstrates the value of using book history as a methodology for regarding the book as a cultural object. I evaluate paratexts, the components around the text added by printers and booksellers to send messages to girl readers, as Gérard Genette defines them: titles, tables of contents, prefaces, catalogues and frontispieces. The section concludes by arguing that girlhood is understood only by looking beyond Edgeworth's textual constructions to consider the materiality of her books in the Pollard Collection, both as individuals and as part of a collection.

The third section situates Edgeworth's books within the Pollard Collection as the largest and most influential element of the collection when considering girlhood. The first chapter starts by focusing on Paul Pollard: her history as described by Benson, Ferguson, and Barnard, and the amassing of her collection, building on the work of Benjamin, Belk and Witcomb. I argue that the books in Pollard's collection function as Stewart's souvenirs of girlhood: "a source of personal narrative-

making.”² The chapter continues by situating Pollard in a tradition of female collectors and librarians, as delineated by Lundin. It acknowledges the influence these women had on canon formation and how Pollard subverted ideas of canon through her particular collecting habits. Referring back to Section One’s discussion of private and public, I probe the concept of canon in relation to Stimpson’s paracanon, and I further the argument by introducing the concept of “anti-canon” as defined by Pollard’s collection of unknown and uninteresting books. The second chapter differentiates the Pollard Collection after it is bequeathed to Trinity when it has moved from personal to institutional. I argue these books derive meaning in relation to one another, echoing Douglas and Isherwood, and demonstrate how this collection of apparently insignificant books gains cultural capital simply by being given to Trinity College. The chapter queries how the act of collecting these books gives them cultural, historical, and use value, using Bourdieu’s definitions. Finally, it posits how girlhood fills the space of the Collection through the particular constructed girl characters written by Edgeworth, whose prolific cross-writing is understood by myriad readers and whose books subtly influence and permeate the Collection. By integrating the work of Kidd, Pearce, Walklate and Kermode, I illuminate the Pollard Collection as a threshold into the past, into historical girlhood, into textual girlhood, into bibliographical girlhood, and into remembrance of personal girlhood.

In conclusion, the Pollard Collection establishes Edgeworth’s work as “children’s books,” so it is useful and appropriate to borrow from children’s and Young Adult literature methodologies to read her work within this context and to identify her work as a progenitor of what becomes YA. Edgeworth’s books best illustrate the nexus of factors that create the social dimensions of girlhood, which are reflected in social bibliography and in collection, and which bring together various components to create connections among them. Reading text, paratext, and collection hones our understanding of girlhood by drawing together methodologies from children’s literature, book history, and collection studies. Finally, it considers how researchers add a new dimension to the understanding of girlhood and opens

² Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 140.

the potential for other meanings to be derived through further exploration of the Pollard Collection.

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Maria Edgeworth said, “if we take care of the moments, the years will take care of themselves.” Let me take a moment to say thank you.

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Introduction

A Collection of Scholarly Approaches

Girlhood is a timely and important ontological concept with psychosocial and existential implications for a wide variety of academic disciplines. Girlhood exists as a liminal space, as a dynamic, temporal and social construct that, for the purposes of this thesis, can be negotiated through text, book, and collection. This thesis investigates girlhood studies, children's literature criticism, book history, and collection studies. At the intersection of these studies lies the construction of girlhood apparent in the Pollard Collection of Children's Books at Trinity College Dublin. Because the collection is vast, I focus on works by the most prolific author in the collection, Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849). I argue that examining the books as well as the texts allows for deeper understandings of the social and cultural contexts in which definitions and expectations of girlhood were fabricated throughout the long nineteenth century, echoing Andrea Immel's claim that the books in the children's literature special collection are a "largely unexplored invaluable resource."¹ Furthermore, I show that these books function as souvenirs of girlhood.² Kenneth Kidd asserts that children's books, "more than any class of literature ... reflect the minds of the generation that produced them."³ With this in mind, I consider how Edgeworth, her father, and her family, along with her printers and booksellers contributed to the social construction of girlhood and female adolescence, that was prevalent both at the time in which Edgeworth was writing and for the subsequent decades that her texts continued to be produced. I show that this constructed, hybrid adolescent girlhood is temporal, social, malleable, and shifting.

The three sections of this thesis each consider girlhood in the Pollard Collection from a unique but connected perspective. The first section, Writing

¹ Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore, *Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1800*, Children's Literature and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2006), 8.

² Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, 1st paperback ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 134.

³ Kenneth Kidd, "The Child, the Scholar, and the Children's Literature Archive," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 35, no. 1 (2011): 13.

Girlhood, examines Edgeworth and her lived experience, along with the writing and editing practices that produced her girl characters. This section uses children's literature criticism and girlhood studies to interrogate the realities that contributed to Edgeworth's expression of girlhood in her writing. It considers her adolescence and early womanhood as primary influences on her adolescent girl characters. I show how the liminality of both Edgeworth and her girl characters is not depicted as a person teetering on the edge of multiple borders. Instead, her girl characters are crossing and recrossing the boundaries that culture and society often insist are binary opposites, navigating with ease these different landscapes from the boggy place of her home in County Longford, Ireland. I argue that this liminality leads to Edgeworth's adept crossover writing and her ability to appeal to a social and shifting audience. The second section, *Reading Girlhood*, considers Edgeworth's implied girl reader and asks whether that implied reader changed with time or with different productions and editions of Edgeworth's texts. To assess these changes, I inspect paratexts and the physical construction of Edgeworth's books in the Pollard Collection as important sites of meaning-making to enhance my claim that implied girl readers shift over time and that girlhood is amorphously depicted throughout the nineteenth century. The third section, *Collecting Girlhood*, examines the collecting practices of Mary "Paul" Pollard, situating her amongst other female librarians and collectors working to highlight the significance and importance of children's literature in the latter half of the twentieth century. The third section asks questions of value through canon formation and queries the processes and results of the shift from personal to institutional when a collection is donated and used for research. By looking at text, book, and collection, at author, reader, and owner, these three sections offer different approaches to the central research questions: How do Edgeworth's texts influence the construction of girlhood in the Pollard Collection? What can book history tell us about the implied girl reader of Edgeworth's texts? And what is the role of the Pollard Collection in preserving girlhood?

Before offering working definitions of key terms and concepts, I think it helpful first to clarify my approach to children's literature. I find it an advantage that children's literature is, as Peter Hunt states, "highly unstable" and difficult to define because, as a children's librarian, I tend to view children's literature in collection terms, giving wide parameters to include books about and for children; written and

published for children; read by (not always “for”) children; even written by children.⁴ I go so far as to align with Marah Gubar, who compels us *not* to define children’s literature. I fall in that “productive middle ground” of the “vast, silent majority” who continue their research in children’s literature amidst the verbal volley between those who must have clear-boundary definitions and those who say it is impossible.⁵ Gubar’s call speaks to this project’s multi-faceted approach to Edgeworth’s “prolific writing for and about children.”⁶ As Gubar argues:

We can give up on the arduous and ultimately unenlightening task of generating a definition without giving up on the idea that “children’s literature” is a coherent, viable category. More than that, I contend that we should abandon such activity, because insisting that children’s literature is a genre characterized by recurrent traits is damaging to the field, obscuring rather than advancing our knowledge of this richly heterogeneous group of texts.⁷

Just as children’s literature itself is most productively viewed as broad and inclusive, children’s literature studies benefit from the integration of methodologies drawn from other disciplines. I demonstrate in this thesis how book history, material culture, and collection studies work to extrapolate and enhance any meanings derived solely through children’s literature studies.

Maria Edgeworth

Maria Edgeworth’s identity was complex: she was both educator and pupil, radical and conservative, professional and domestic, public and private. The second of twenty-one children that survived past infancy and the eldest daughter of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Edgeworth’s role as writer was wound tightly with her role as daughter. Edgeworth worked as her father’s business agent, managing his affairs and working with his tenants. She was the teacher of his children, her younger

⁴ Peter Hunt, “Children’s Literature,” in *Keywords for Children’s Literature*, ed. Philip Nel, Lissa Paul, and Nina Christensen (New York: New York University Press, 2021), 41. Gubar suggests Dickens and pornography might not fall within the limits of ‘children’s literature.’ I usually agree with pornography, but I know many people who read Dickens as children, both abridged and unabridged.

⁵ Marah Gubar, “On Not Defining Children’s Literature,” *PMLA* 26, no. 1 (Jan 2011): 210.

⁶ Susan Manly, Introduction to *Selected Tales for Children and Young People* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), vii. “Abandoning such activity” is pulled from Gubar’s block quotation following this sentence.

⁷ Gubar, “On Not Defining Children’s Literature,” 210.

siblings, and she wrote stories based on her observations of them. She authored works based on her father's philosophies and treatises of education: philosophies she put into practice as a teacher and older sister. I argue that Edgeworth was comfortable with her many roles which, despite appearing as binary opposites, work as complements that shaped her lived girlhood and moulded her written girl characters.

Edgeworth exhibits this ambiguous identity as an Anglo-Irish female writer. Her place in Irish society was not completely British nor distinctly Irish. She held a privileged position as a Protestant member of the Ascendancy class, unlike her Irish tenants who mainly lived in poverty on her father's land. She was sensitive to the plight of Irish people oppressed by British law, but her concern largely rested with the people of the middle class.⁸ This lived ambiguity informs the constructed girlhood that Edgeworth wrote in her texts for children. Susan Manly, writing about "Simple Susan," a story featuring one of Edgeworth's most endearing girl characters, states that the story, "while not unequivocally radical in tendency, is far from being comfortably conservative," but I contend her point goes deeper than the text, for that blend of radicalism and conservatism also applies to Edgeworth herself.⁹ She used her father's position in society to lend authority to her writing, a privilege that allowed her to voice her opinions, even when those opinions challenged the status quo regarding a woman's right to education.¹⁰ Claire Connolly discusses how Edgeworth was writing within the atmosphere of

a layered set of literary and political possibilities and relationships—including tensions between orality and print, past and present, landowners and peasants, fiction and reality.¹¹

This complex, multivalent identity shows Edgeworth as a dutiful, unmarried adult daughter of an authoritarian father and landlord who thrived in a patriarchal colonial politic. However, she was also a progressive landlord herself and a feminist reformer of education.

⁸ Heidi Kaufman and Christopher J. Fauske, *An Uncomfortable Authority: Maria Edgeworth and her Contexts* (Newark, Del.; [Great Britain]: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 11.

⁹ Susan Manly, "'Take a 'Poon, Pig:' Property, Class and Common Culture in Maria Edgeworth's 'Simple Susan,'" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2012): 308.

¹⁰ Kaufman and Fauske, *An Uncomfortable Authority*, 12.

¹¹ Claire Connolly, "The Secret of *Castle Rackrent*," *European Romantic Review* 31, no. 6 (2020): 666.

The liminality that characterises her identity informs both her novels for adults and her stories for children and adolescents. Many of these texts are characterised by what Mitzi Myers defines as Edgeworth's "cross-writing," whereby she "exhibit(s) similar themes and genres for child and grown-up and thus transgress(es) the usual demarcations between children's and adults' literature."¹² The points I make in Section One about Edgeworth's multi-dimensionality are based on Myers when she explains: "It is not just the traffic between child and adult inside and outside her tales that identifies Edgeworth as a cross-writer, for she negotiates numerous borders—national, historical, and generic, as well as generational."¹³ Recent scholarly criticism, largely feminist and postcolonial, asserts Edgeworth's use of subversion to question the national, cultural, perhaps even psychological discourses of her time. Kaufman and Fauske assert, "Edgeworth's writing continues to challenge readers to understand her historical contexts as much as it obliged her to confront the politics of her literary authority."¹⁴ Reflective of Edgeworth's position in her family and her culture, her writing often reveals a child protagonist who, if not wholly subversive, is autonomous within a society that assumes girls will acquiesce to authority and passively accept their lot in life: she thinks for herself, questions the adult authority figures that guide or mislead her, and trusts her instincts.¹⁵

Edgeworth was a voracious reader and a prolific writer who worked on many projects simultaneously, and these projects often display varied viewpoints, suggesting that she was capable of holding opposing ideas in balance. Her first published work, *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795), was written in response to a correspondence between her father and Thomas Day (1748-1789). The work consists of three sets of letters that satirise and refute Day's assertion, commonly held at that time, that educating women led to impropriety and social disorder. Day was an acolyte of Jean Jacques Rousseau, and he supported the concept of the ideal woman as one held in seclusion from the wiles of the world. He particularly

¹² Mitzi Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*: Rereading Edgeworth's Cross-Writing," *Children's Literature* 25, no. 1 (1997): 126.

¹³ Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*: Rereading Edgeworth's Cross-Writing," 116.

¹⁴ Kaufman and Fauske, *An Uncomfortable Authority*, 11.

¹⁵ Jackie C. Horne, *History and the Construction of the Child in Early British Children's Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 80.

disapproved of women writers.¹⁶ *Letters for Literary Ladies* attempts to show how education can emphasise the feminine ideal, not destroy it, and the work offers both positive and negative examples in its female letter-writing characters. Soon after, in 1798, Edgeworth wrote a ground-breaking work in educational pedagogy, *Practical Education* based on her father's philosophy. The lessons were intended for both girls and boys, and the work is one of the earliest to advocate for child-centred, developmental education for girls and boys equally. Before this, Edgeworth wrote morality tales for children, compiling them into the heavily didactic *Parent's Assistant* (1796), intended to complement the forthcoming *Practical Education*. Sharon Murphy contends her didacticism was one part of a complex response to both her father and the times in which she lived.¹⁷ While critics agree on the didacticism of her work, they do not concur on whether that didacticism is conservative or subversive, which leaves her life, her writing, and her girl characters open to a wide range of interpretations. Her didactic style should not be analysed within a binary framework; instead, it should be understood to result from her multi-faceted lived experience.

Cliona Ó Gallchoir notes that Edgeworth, once marginalised, has been "transformed by recent feminist scholarship, and by a considerable lengthening of its historical perspective."¹⁸ This scholarship now considers her work, her social networks, and the web of allusions in her fictional and non-fictional writing to be more progressive than earlier Irish literary criticism assumed, as seen in her "mirroring public and private spheres, rather than gendered separation," and her "construction of national identity (which) involve specific constructions of gender."¹⁹ Manly and Joanna Wharton, when introducing the special edition of the *European Romantic Review* (2020) that focuses on Edgeworth, note how new scholarship

reveal(s) the transnational influences that shaped Edgeworth's educational and political thought, and the intertexts that situate

¹⁶ Mitzi Myers, "My Art Belongs to Daddy? Thomas Day, Maria Edgeworth, and the Pre-texts of *Belinda*: Women Writers and Patriarchal Authority," in *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century 'Women's Fiction' and Social Engagement*, ed. Paula R. Backscheider (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). Myers makes Day's position clear in this article.

¹⁷ Sharon Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 12.

¹⁸ Cliona Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth* (Brighton: Edward Everett Root, 2021), 8.

¹⁹ Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth*, 5, 8.

Edgeworth's writing within her cultural landscape, giving her works their deeply referential and densely woven texture. The essays' exploration of the print and epistolary worlds and wider cultural history that informed her philosophy at a period of revolution, crisis, and social change yield a transformed understanding of her ideological positioning, and its shifting nature under the pressure of events at home in Ireland, in Britain, and further abroad.²⁰

It is my intention that this thesis contribute to this ever-growing and renewed interest in Maria Edgeworth: in her life and writing, but also in her ability to resonate in contemporary children's literature studies and in the Pollard Collection of Children's Books, over two hundred years after her first collection of stories, *The Parent's Assistant*, was published in 1796.

The Pollard Collection

Lydia Ferguson, current Principal Librarian of Early Printed Books at Trinity, describes the collection in her article "Cultivating Childhood: the Pollard Collection of Children's Books." The collection holds books for children spanning over 300 years, from the mid-1600s to the early 1900s. The earliest dated title is a 1625 edition of *Flores Italici ac Latini sermonis; ex hortis Exercitationis* by Juan Luis Vides (OLS POL 7284). This Latin language and phrase book is one of around 300 seventeenth- and eighteenth-century titles, most of which are schoolbooks and Latin classics. There are also a large number of Puritanical works and early heroic journeys, including thirty-five editions of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, with a 1789 Dublin publication that has not been recorded elsewhere. Multiple editions are found of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). While there are 2000 books designated with the shelfmark OLS POL S, designating them as books published explicitly for schools and education, the remaining 9000 books include everything from religious and moralising tracts to travel, history, and fiction, the majority of which encompass the long nineteenth century. Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century authors include Maria Edgeworth, Anna Letitia Barbauld, and John Aiken, Mary-Ann and Dorothy Kilner, Sarah Trimmer, Mary Pilkington, Jane and Anne Taylor, Mary Martha Sherwood, and Stephanie de Genlis. The

²⁰ Susan Manly and Joanna Wharton, "Introduction: Worlds of Maria Edgeworth," *European Romantic Review* 31, no. 6 (2020): 661.

collection includes both lesser-known and canonical works for young readers: chapbooks, Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*, The Kildare Place Society tracts, and works by Mary Leadbeater are represented as well as Victorian classics and late turn-of-the-century and early twentieth-century titles, stories of adventure and empire by Kipling, Stevenson, and Ballantyne. Lewis Carroll's *Alice* is found in different editions and iterations. There are many magazines and annuals for girls and boys. And while Pollard preferred to collect story books rather than picture books, there are a number of illustrated books in the collection, including many illustrated by Walter Crane.²¹

The Pollard Collection holds a plethora of female authors and an abundance of girl stories, which work together to imbue the Collection with a layer of femininity. Femininity is understood in this thesis to mean attributes, behaviours, and roles related to being a girl, individual ways of acting and feeling that are often a summary of experiences socially constructed as well as culturally influenced. Charles Benson, who worked with Pollard and succeeded her as Keeper of Early Printed Books at Trinity, noted in his introduction to *That Woman!: Studies in Irish Bibliography: A Festschrift for Mary "Paul" Pollard* (2005) that Pollard began collecting children's books as soon as she arrived in Dublin in 1957: "most from the mid- and late nineteenth century as well as delights from earlier years," and "with an emphasis on books for girls."²² Lydia Ferguson agrees with Benson when she asserts Pollard "had a special interest in books written for girls."²³ An initial search of the Collection as presented in Trinity's catalogue reveals this proclivity for girls' stories, particularly those written by female authors. Within the first few pages of search results, titles appear such as *An Old-Fashioned Girl* by Louisa May Alcott (1887), *Not Quite a Lady* by Ruth Lamb (1897), *Bashful Fifteen* by L.T. Meade (1898, 1902), *The Late Miss Hollingford* by Rosa Mulholland (1896, 1908), *Una's Enterprise* by Nora Tynan O'Mahony (1907), *Emma* by Jane Austen (1849), *The Sisters: a*

²¹ Lydia Ferguson, "Cultivating Childhood: the Pollard Collection of Children's Books," in *The Old Library, Trinity College Dublin, 1712-2012*, ed. W. E. Vaughan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012). I have highlighted features of the collection based on Ferguson's article, loosely gathered from pages 192-206.

²² *That Woman!: Studies in Irish Bibliography: a Festschrift for Mary "Paul" Pollard*, ed. Charles Benson and Siobhán Fitzpatrick (Dublin: Lilliput Press for the Library Association of Ireland, Rare Books Group, 2005), xiii. Note that this title reflects Mary Pollard's preferred name "Paul" and most references to her include her preference.

²³ Ferguson, "Cultivating Childhood," 204.

Domestic Tale by Barbara Hofland (1813), *A Wild Irish Girl* by L.T. Meade (1910), *Letters on the Improvement of a Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady* by Hester Chapone (1773), *Alicia and her Aunt* by Barbara Hofland (1829), *The History of Lucy Clare* by Mary Martha Sherwood (1838) and *The Governess: or, The Little Female Academy* (two 1765 editions: one by Sarah Fielding, one a rewritten edition by Mrs. Sherwood). Two of Edgeworth's contemporaries, Mrs. Mary Martha Sherwood and Mrs. Barbara Hofland are well-represented in the collection. Pollard collected editions of their titles in much the same manner she collected Edgeworth titles. There are fifty-seven Hofland titles, ranging from 1809-1890. There are 163 Sherwood titles spanning the years 1818-1908.

This sample of titles and authors, with publication dates similar to later Edgeworth editions, makes the point that Edgeworth's books are in good company in the Pollard Collection. A catalogue search of Maria Edgeworth results in many titles which consist mainly of a girl's name: *Rosamond* (1803), *Belinda* (1801), *The Modern Griselda* (1805), *Leonora* (1806), *Angelina, or l'amie Inconnu* (1803), and *Helen* (1834). Edgeworth is one of many female writers in the Pollard Collection (Mary Leadbeater, Juliana Horatia Ewing, Mrs. Molesworth, Hannah More, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Barbara Hofland, and Sarah Trimmer, to name a few) whose works are titled with girls' names, adjectives, traditionally female subjects (miss, little miss, maid, sister, daughter, young governess, young lady), or connected to objects associated with femininity (new gown, the bracelets, the Limerick gloves, love and marriage). Continue to search through the catalogue, and the point is proven; stories for girls—those named for girls and those that advertised their intended audience through the use of feminized language in their titles— are abundant in the Pollard Collection. I offer a more detailed discussion of titles in Section Two, arguing that these titles indicate how feminine elements of the collection become evident even before these texts are read.

Edgeworth's work is a central element of the Pollard Collection. Ferguson claims that her books "are one of the most important parts of the collection as a whole."²⁴ Ferguson further notes that "one of the great strengths of the collection is that Paul collected editions, not just titles, so that there are many different editions

²⁴ Ferguson, "Cultivating Childhood," 197.

of some works, making it possible to trace the popularity of a book, and how it was regarded at a particular time.”²⁵ There are multiple editions of all Edgeworth’s collections of children’s stories in the collection. There are also nineteen editions of *Popular Tales* and three editions of *Tales of Fashionable Life*, intended for adults. These books span one hundred years in publication dates, offering the researcher ample primary sources for examination. The multiple editions not only allow for the tracing of Edgeworth’s popularity, as Ferguson states, but they offer the opportunity to look at the material culture surrounding Edgeworth’s books. This is particularly true of print culture and how it informs a girlhood experienced by female writers and girl readers, as exemplified by Edgeworth, over the course of a century. Edgeworth projects the strongest voice of girlhood in the Pollard Collection, a voice that helps scholars to define what is a girl’s story and how these stories are constructed textually and physically. The many Edgeworth editions show a shifting concept of girlhood as it is constructed or reconstructed by the writer, the printer, and the implied girl reader over time.

This femininity is a characteristic often displayed in book collections. Deborah O’Keefe writes in *Good Girl Messages* (2016) that reading is a feminine “activity that is girlish in that it earns approval from one’s elders and requires sitting still for long periods of time.”²⁶ Perhaps this was said in jest; however, O’Keefe goes on to say that “such immersion in reading can be an instance of passive, escapist, feminine behavior as much as it is a spur to such behavior.”²⁷ If reading books is a feminine act, then by extension collections of the books girls read are feminine, regardless of the themes found in the books. Furthermore, if the collection is feminine, it demonstrates the multiplicity of girlhood in a variety of ways: through the texts and paratexts, in the printing and construction of the books, and by the relation of the books to one another in the collection. The construction of girlhood is seen through the construction of the collection.

The process of constructing the collection indicates that Pollard may have collected her own girlhood, one that influenced which books she purchased, and

²⁵ Ferguson, “Cultivating Childhood,” 194.

²⁶ Deborah O’Keefe, *Good Girl Messages: How Young Women Were Misled by Their Favorite Books* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 26.

²⁷ O’Keefe, *Good Girl Messages: How Young Women Were Misled by Their Favorite Books*, 20.

which she passed over. The Pollard Collection exhibits the general themes of collecting itself: desire and nostalgia, saving and loss, the urge to erect a complete system against the destructiveness of time.²⁸ The books in the Pollard Collection represent experiences of the past never to be repeated, experiences housed in books that provoke and preserve in readers their memories of girlhood, marking them as souvenirs of childhood.²⁹ Pollard's ideology of girlhood influenced how she built the collection when it was her hobby and how she intended it to be accessed and researched when it shifted from her personal collection to an institutional collection. The narratives in these books can be connected to wider thematic discussions about femininity and the role of books in the construction of girlhood. By collecting a semblance of her own girlhood, Pollard's collection contributes to constructions that impact the broader thematic and cultural discourse about girlhood.

Girlhood Understood

Examining Pollard's influence on the collection, along with how Edgeworth's texts shape the collection, necessitates an understanding of the term "girlhood." Mary O'Dowd considers "the transition from girlhood to womanhood to be the main theme of girlhood studies, particularly regarding the history of the girl."³⁰ Children's literature scholars place similar emphasis on understanding the concept of girlhood. The term is given renewed critical and theoretical significance via Jacqueline Reid-Walsh's entry in *Keywords for Children's Literature* where she starts by emphasising, "there is no all-encompassing definition of girlhood ... nor is it a static or universal state."³¹ Girlhood is variously conceived of as a temporal condition and as an ontological one. It is "the time when somebody is a girl" or "the fact of being a girl" or, more complexly, "the period when a person is a girl, and not yet a woman, or the state of being a girl."³² These descriptions highlight girlhood as a temporal space of potential, a phase of being which is elusively tied to another state of being that is

²⁸ John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, introduction to *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion, 1994), 1.

²⁹ Stewart, *On Longing*, 23.

³⁰ Mary O'Dowd and June Purvis, eds., *A History of the Girl: Formation, Education and Identity* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 17.

³¹ Philip Nel, Lissa Paul, and Nina Christensen, eds. *Keywords for Children's Literature*, Second edition. ed., Keywords (New York: New York University Press, 2021), 88.

³² Oxford and Cambridge definitions appear in a simple google search: "definition of girlhood."

promised but “not yet” attained. Girlhood is an in-between space, the parameters and limitations of which are malleable and shape-shifting. I argue that many of Edgeworth’s characters negotiate this in-between space, which I designate “girlhood,” neither child nor woman, yet often both. Peter Hollindale acknowledges the elusive concept of childhood, writing, “childhood is not a fixed concept, nor one on which we ourselves hold special and terminal wisdom, but rather one that fluctuates with the historical process and will continue to do so” showing girlhood to be amorphous, temporal, open to interpretation.³³ Girlhood exists as a fluid, changing construction that varies according to shifting cultural and social presumptions. Pamela J. Bettis and Natalie G. Adams remind us that “girlhood is a construction made and remade through the material realities and discursive practices of the society,” and thus, “ideal girlhood is constantly being rewritten Edgeworth’s books are material agents through which she constructs girlhood and are also the agents of print culture. Her books are internalised in a cyclical manifestation of editions read by girl readers across the long nineteenth century. Girlhood is not only textual but textured through a process where psychosocial responses to text are woven together with authorial intentions for story and material constructions of books.

Girlhood is also a literary construct. It is presented and represented within texts written for and about girls. Texts perpetuate an author’s particular ideas of girlhood by setting them indelibly in print in a timely induction, enculturing readers into a set of cultural narratives and values. Yet even this act is transient, and as some semblance of the author’s ideas of girlhood remain in print, the interpretation and engagement with certain ideas shifts over time. Hollindale states, “books are both about formative experiences and *are* formative experiences,” and notes, “processes of formativeness are integral to the story as well as to its reception,” which is to say that girlhood is partially made up by children’s books, but also amidst the alchemy that occurs between book and girl reader.³⁴ As a result, the Pollard Collection offers the chance to see how past constructions inform current understandings of girlhood and to highlight the many iterations of girlhood that are simultaneously present at different times.

³³ Peter Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books* (Stroud: Thimble, 1997), 60.

³⁴ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 12-13.

Many critics have examined eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary girlhoods, typical of Edgeworth's books in the Pollard Collection. Jackie Horne describes writers of the time using "gender chronism," which she defines as "historically specific concepts of gender," to show how "actions that in one period may have been condoned as feminine may no longer be considered feminine in another."³⁵ O'Keefe offers several adjectives to describe how female characters were presented: sensitive, helpful, passive, submissive, obedient, fearful, helpless, enduring, sacrificing. She argues that girl readers would willingly internalise the feminine ideal presented to them through girl characters in books because they "were already in sympathy with those qualities."³⁶ This implies a wider social context in the construction of girlhood beyond the writer and the reader, one that would have imposed a societally driven feminine ideal onto girl readers. Acknowledging this social and societal dimension, Lynne Vallone and Claudia Nelson, writing in *The Girls' Own* (1994), suggest that "the Girl's relation to the world, established through familial relationships, domesticity, work, reading and so forth," informs girlhood because her relation to the world "was always understood to be inseparable from her gender."³⁷ Vallone asserted this earlier in her book *Disciplines of Virtue* (2000) and agrees with O'Keefe, stating:

The successful girl internalizes the implicit or explicit ideological messages communicated by her reading, her family, her community, her social class, her sexuality, and finds, ultimately, that happiness and virtue lie within her self-control.³⁸

This idea of internalising echoes Susan Stewart's idea of "within within within," an interiority, a private experience of girlhood that often reflects a more social, outward experience of girlhood.³⁹ The deeply personal and unshared experience of reading girls' books melds with the public-facing aspects of girlhood as envisioned through social structures and realities and contemporary print culture, a

³⁵ Horne, *History and the Construction of the Child in Early British Children's Literature*, 207.

³⁶ O'Keefe, *Good Girl Messages*, 14, 20, 27.

³⁷ Claudia Nelson and Lynne Vallone, *The Girl's Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830-1915* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 2.

³⁸ Lynne Vallone, *Disciplines of Virtue: Girls' Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 5.

³⁹ Stewart, *On Longing*, 61.

“materialised secret.”⁴⁰ Every reader has her reading, an “acknowledgedly individualist and private reading” that concurrently is made plural by the reader’s position in the “intertextual space where, as Roland Barthes has said, ‘all readings are plural.’”⁴¹ As such, this internalisation process in girls meant that constructing girlhood was a power struggle, as girls formed their own interpretations of the role based on, or in opposition to, already constructed ideals, thereby adding to the multiple possible meanings of girlhood.⁴² Girl readers, regardless of the time or place, internalise the ideologies imposed upon them that in turn define their girlhood. Some of these girl readers grow up to be women writers who externalise these views, too. There is both internal interpretations and external productions of the values and ideals associated with girlhood, cyclically perpetuated through writers, books, and girl readers.

Before I continue, let me acknowledge the varied, multiple genders who experience texts in much the same way as I have just explained for girl readers. Hollindale’s concept of an unfixed and fluctuating childhood could mean boyhood as well as girlhood and can also be queered in a nonbinary representation of gender depending on the self-identification of the reader.⁴³ To narrow the scope of this project in the interest of making it manageable and simply because that is where my interest lies, I have chosen to focus on girl readers and girlhood.

The intricacies of constructing girlhood hint at the complexity of girlhood evident in Edgeworth’s works in the Pollard Collection. I argue it is not enough to ask simply “What was the author’s idea of girlhood?” or “Who were the girl readers of Edgeworth’s works?” but also to question what characterised Edgeworth’s own girlhood: to ask what were society’s intentions for girls when Edgeworth’s books were printed. How would Edgeworth’s printers and booksellers, mostly male, influence this construction of girlhood? This thesis moves beyond questions of authorial intent to query how booksellers’ printing choices determine an intended purchaser and reader and thereby contribute to the construction of Edgeworth’s girl readers. Using bibliography as a primary method in my analysis enables a holistic

⁴⁰ Stewart, *On Longing*, 61.

⁴¹ Christine Wilkie-Stibbs, *The Feminine Subject in Children’s Literature* (New York; London: Routledge, 2002), xii. She refers to Barthes’s *S/Z* (New York: 1975), pg. 16.

⁴² Nelson and Vallone, *The Girl’s Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830-1915*, 5.

⁴³ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children’s Books*, 60.

view of the book (as well as the text) as a cultural product that “mak(es) visible and stable the categories of culture” by reflecting and upholding the ideological values of the time of its production.⁴⁴ Quite simply, girls’ books send direct messages about girlhood that girl readers can embrace or reject, either response being an acknowledgement of an assumed or implied set of expectations for girl readers.

Adolescence and Young Adult (YA) Literature

Adolescent literature, usually referred to now as Young Adult (YA) literature, is classified into three categories by Roberta Seelinger Trites: “books written specifically for adolescents,” “books written for the general trade market which have adolescent heroes and heroines,” and “general books of interest to young adults.”⁴⁵ I find these categories mimic what I expressed earlier in my discussion on children’s literature: this “genre,” if we can call it that, is as fluid and amorphous as the wider category “children’s literature.” What is harder to pinpoint is a chronological age for this group of readers. Showing just how cultural a construction “young adult” is, the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association, adopted a manifesto in 2008 written by Michael Cart, which acknowledges: “the conventional definition of ‘young adult’ has expanded (from 12-18 in the 1960’s) to include those as young as ten and, since the late 1990’s, as old as twenty-five.”⁴⁶ Just over a hundred years ago, Lucy Soulsby’s definition of adolescence in 1893 is defined as an “uncomfortable stage” that “most girls growing up” pass through; it is “certainly not any special number of years. It is most frequently found between the ages of thirteen and twenty-seven, but some girls never go through it, and some never emerge from it!”⁴⁷ Even in 1802, Sarah Trimmer, a contemporary of Edgeworth’s, claimed in her *Guardian of Education*, “all young gentlemen and ladies to be *children*, till they are *fourteen*, and *young persons*

⁴⁴ Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption: with a New Introduction*, Rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 1996), 38.

⁴⁵ Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 7. Trites refers to the ALA in her discussion.

⁴⁶ Michael Cart, “The Value of Young Adult Literature,” *American Library Association*, 2008.

⁴⁷ L. H. M. Soulsby, *Stray Thoughts for Girls* (Oxford; London: J. Parker & Co, 1893), v.

till they are at least *twenty- one*.”⁴⁸ Sarah Bilston defines adolescence as “an awkward age,” which is the “developmental interval between childhood and womanhood.”⁴⁹ She admits the transition to womanhood, a time when “a girl hovers on the edge of her adult identity” and assimilates into society, is somewhat problematic and involves further questions because there is⁵⁰

a lack of consensus about what the awkward age actually is: is it a period of physical change...? Is it heightened or even created by social and familial influences? Is it a concept available only to girls of the middle and upper classes (most of the texts that discuss this were ‘hardly available to a working-class reader’)? And when does it occur?⁵¹

Carol Dyhouse participates in the discourse around female adolescence and notes that late Victorian and Edwardian society indicated that girlhood ended with marriage and that a woman’s maturity depended on her acceptance of economic dependence on her husband.⁵² This is fraught with complications because the key here is when she accepts this dependence, despite a socially and legally acceptable marriageable age fluctuating throughout the long nineteenth century. Dyhouse’s argument has economic implications, and she argues that because girls moved from dependence on father to dependence on husband they were “condemned ... to a permanent adolescent state.”⁵³ This is significant when considering Edgeworth, and I show in Section One how Edgeworth appears to concomitantly refute and support such a state as an unmarried woman of independent means who remained in her father’s house. The thresholds into womanhood shift as readily as the girlhood they purport to eschew.

⁴⁸ Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education, a Periodical Work; Consisting of a Practical Essay on Christian Education Founded Immediately on the Scriptures and the Sacred Offices of the Church of England: Memoirs of Modern Philosophers, and Extracts from their Writings; Extracts from Sermons and Other Books Relating to Religious Education; and a Copious Examination of Modern Systems of Education, Children’s Books, and Books for Young Persons/ Conducted by Mrs. Trimmer.*, vol. 1 (London: J. Hatchard, 1802), 6. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁹ Sarah Bilston, *The Awkward Age: Girls in the Transition to Womanhood in Women’s Popular Fiction, 1850-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

⁵⁰ Bilston, *The Awkward Age*, 2.

⁵¹ Bilston, *The Awkward Age*, 2.

⁵² Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge, 2013), 118.

⁵³ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, 118.

This same amorphous quality is evident in textual constructions of adolescence for girl readers, particularly as texts reflected and responded to social realities for adolescent girls. Because there will always be wide disagreement on the ages of YA readers, consider Trites's further clarification as a way to distinguish between children's and adolescent literature:

The basic difference between a children's and an adolescent novel lies not so much in how the protagonist grows ... but with the very determined way that YA novels tend to interrogate social constructions, foregrounding the relationship between the society and the individual rather than focusing on Self and self-discovery as children's literature does.⁵⁴

Similarly, Kristine Moruzi claims texts for girls

grapple with changing expectations of an adolescent girl who was old enough to think about her role in her family, her position and influence in her community, and her function in society ... in a period where the term "adolescence" had not yet been formally introduced. ... Many of the issues about education, employment and marriage are eerily reminiscent of these earlier times.⁵⁵

Beth Rodgers claims the "advent of adolescence as a recognizable life stage between childhood and adulthood can be explicitly connected to the social conditions of the late nineteenth century," but like Moruzi, I argue we can see earlier signs acknowledging adolescence in Edgeworth's time.⁵⁶ Edgeworth, Trimmer, and their contemporaries were taking care to point out their stories were meant for different stages of childhood and used terms like "young persons" to distinguish them from children. This thesis in no way considers Edgeworth as a YA author, nor would Edgeworth have considered herself as such because such a distinction did not yet exist when she wrote. However, I will show there are elements in her fiction (outside her story collections intended to teach young children) that can be considered precursors to adolescent fiction, what we now would call YA for girls. I discuss how the literature we now recognise as YA was generated by Edgeworth and her

⁵⁴ Trites, *Disturbing the Universe*, 20.

⁵⁵ Kristine Moruzi, *Constructing Girlhood Through the Periodical Press, 1850-1915* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 1.

⁵⁶ Beth Rodgers, *Adolescent Girlhood and Literary Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle: Daughters of Today* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2.

contemporaries long before the terms “adolescent” and “young adult” were used with any regularity; literature conceived from Enlightenment thought from which a modernised figure of the child was also born. Edgeworth gives the reader a young woman moving toward or on the brink of some rite of passage into adulthood, be it new or recent marriage (*Leonora; Helen*), being orphaned (*Helen; Angelina, or L’Amie Inconnu*), motherhood, or taking in orphaned children (*The Good Aunt*). Many of her characters occupy that space between childhood and adulthood, marking them as precursors to the adolescent heroes of turn-of-the-(twentieth)-century girls’ fiction. Moreover, through the many Edgeworth editions, we can trace the early stages of the evolution of YA literature; a coming-to-be in the material history of the book.

When singling out the adolescent girl in relation to Edgeworth’s texts, I refer to Hollindale when I explore the actions and behaviours “which collect and interact with each other” between those vested in producing girls’ literature and the girls who read it, to understand what constitutes adolescent girlhood.⁵⁷ Hollindale claims adulthood is “the second phase of childness.”⁵⁸ In other words, childness never leaves us, and Hollindale’s “childness” helps to clarify that shifting, liminal concept of adolescence, both child and adult, girl and woman, that are continuously interacting with each other. Reading Edgeworth’s girl characters as extensions of her own lived experience creates space for an adolescent character born a century before those more regularly featured in the discourse of girls’ stories. It acknowledges the literary traditions that were in practice long before Rodgers, Bilston, Vallone, and colleagues wrote about adolescent literature at the fin de siècle, ages before the American Library Association drew a line under a definition and a time for YA literature.

Book History and the Materiality of Books

Just as adolescent literature functions as threshold literature on the doorstep of adulthood, so do paratexts function as thresholds of the text. As such, by studying the paratexts, we can follow the growth of the genre. Moruzi declares that “the role

⁵⁷ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 76.

⁵⁸ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 76.

of print culture in producing gender is not to be underestimated.”⁵⁹ Andrea Immel asks, “to what extent ... might children be seen as a symbiotic “extension” of print culture itself?”⁶⁰ Immel and Moruzi’s statements energise my argument in Section Two regarding how the decisions made by Edgeworth’s printers and booksellers about design, layout, organisation, and added features like illustrations and catalogues add layers to the girlhood she writes. Book historian David Pearson insists that “contemporary scholars need to focus on the importance of the whole book, and not just the words on the page,” which is what Section Two of this thesis does, demonstrating that the material form through which texts are transmitted influences their meaning.⁶¹

Donald McKenzie was the first to call for a “sociology of texts” to widen the consideration of influences beyond the writer in the production of books.⁶² The term “sociology” was initially defined in 1873 by Herbert Spencer to “recognize truths of social development, structure and function.”⁶³ But McKenzie’s focus, somewhat myopic, is on those developments and human agents directly involved in book production. Jerome McGann considers dissemination and reception of books and is more widely inclusive when he lists those who participate in “the order of books”: “Authors, artists, engravers; printers and publishers ... the paper makers, type foundries, and book binders; translators ... book distributors ... the reviewers of the books ... and finally those end-of-the-line consumers.”⁶⁴ Neither McKenzie nor McGann is concerned with the child reader, the educator, nor with any number of stakeholders we recognise in children’s literature: stakeholders who participate in a wider social reality that surrounds girl readers. I call for a furthering of the sociology of texts in what I term social bibliography, to consider systemic factors that work to influence how and what books are published for girls. McGann suggests there are “socio-institutional forces beyond the control, and often beyond the awareness, of the agents,” but he does not expound on what he thinks

⁵⁹ Moruzi, *Constructing Girlhood Through the Periodical Press*, 206.

⁶⁰ Immel and Witmore, *Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1800*, 12.

⁶¹ David Pearson, *Books as History: the Importance of Books beyond their Texts* (London; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2012), 22.

⁶² D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, The Panizzi Lectures 1985 (London: British Library, 1986), 5-8.

⁶³ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 6.

⁶⁴ Jerome McGann, "Literature by Design since 1790," *Victorian Poetry* 48, no. 1 (2010): 12.

these forces are, except to say these forces “can easily pass notice,” and “the cultural impact of those forces is nonetheless enormously significant.”⁶⁵ I analyse these forces in Section Two when I widen the sociological scope beyond McKenzie and McGann to consider not only the historical development of steam printing and cheap print but gains in female education, literacy rates and a growing upwardly mobile and reading public beyond the confines of the middle and upper classes in the nineteenth century. A sociology of texts should acknowledge “the full range of social realities in which the medium of print had to serve.”⁶⁶ I expand McKenzie’s idea of sociology in my definition of social bibliography to include agents of social discourse beyond print culture that could affect how books for girls were materialised: family, community, society, travel, politics, and institution.

My idea of social bibliography derives from David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, who centre the reader in their approach to bibliography, now usually referred to as book history:

Book history attempts to integrate understanding of the individual act of reading, how (the reader) create(s) meaning from these symbols in ink that (the writer has) written and the publisher has chosen to present in this format ... and why you bought or borrowed this book, who you are, where and when you are reading this, often aggregated with details of other readers to create a social profile of readership.⁶⁷

This reader-centred approach aligns with my purpose more effectively as I attempt to answer questions about the materiality of Edgeworth’s books in the Pollard Collection and how they generate and project concepts of girlhood. I answer these questions through the study of paratexts, which offers an added layer of understanding of the material implications of Edgeworth’s books. Gérard Genette and Marie Maclean declare a “text rarely appears in its naked state, without the reinforcement and accompaniment of a certain number of productions, themselves

⁶⁵ McGann, “Literature by Design since 1790,” 13.

⁶⁶ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 6.

⁶⁷ David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, *An Introduction to Book History* (London: Routledge, 2013), 117.

verbal or not, like an author's name, title, a preface, illustrations.”⁶⁸ Paratexts relative to the text within the book object do what Anne Lundin calls the “cultural work of reflecting and constructing the world about it in a way that matters so deeply that its effects are represented in myriad re-visions.”⁶⁹ In my second section, “The Paratextual Girl,” I discuss at length changing paratextual elements and their impact on Edgeworth’s texts as a way to map the shifting material construction of girlhood in the Pollard Collection.

Collection Studies and the Book as Souvenir

I agree with Matthew Grenby when he says, “perhaps most useful and least freighted with ideological baggage are the (children’s) books themselves as they survive in the archives.”⁷⁰ Each book functions as a souvenir, as discussed in Stewart’s *On Longing* (1993), where books function as objects of memory and nostalgia.⁷¹ These book souvenirs “evoke and resonate to the experience, but never entirely recoup it,” meaning the books in the collection echo the experience of girlhood.⁷² However, the collection as a whole also functions as a souvenir of girlhood, as “a mode of containment” for the myriad models of girlhood found within the books. Book collection works to contain the items that include narratives of girlhood.⁷³ Each book in the collection is representative of what the collection stands for, working together to form a new context, a new whole.⁷⁴

Sandra Dudley, like Stewart, gives weight to the roles nostalgia and longing play in girls’ books, representing “a longed-for past time, prior to a rupture.”⁷⁵ The “rupture” can be understood as growing up, puberty, or the onset of adulthood. The rupture means that the reader changes drastically and “shifts the context of meanings enacted in the mutual relationships of objects and human beings,” leading

⁶⁸ Gérard Genette and Marie Maclean, “Introduction to the Paratext,” *New Literary History* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 261.

⁶⁹ Anne H. Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature: Beyond Library Walls and Ivory Towers* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 131.

⁷⁰ M. O. Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 197.

⁷¹ Stewart, *On Longing*, 135-40.

⁷² Stewart, *On Longing*, 136.

⁷³ Stewart, *On Longing*, 159.

⁷⁴ Stewart, *On Longing*, 151.

⁷⁵ Sandra H. Dudley, “Objects, Collectors and Representations,” in *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories*, eds. Sandra H. Dudley et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 3.

Dudley to declare that “the engagement of humanity with its artefacts is manifold, complex and continually shifting.”⁷⁶ The Pollard Collection contains or embodies what Dudley describes: a dynamic, temporal, cultural and negotiated, shifting construction of a malleable girlhood. The books have a socio-historical trajectory: they construct, acquire, and change meanings and values based on when and by whom the books are called up from the stacks. The books and their users “constitute and express each other;” their material culture is embedded in social relationships.⁷⁷

Not only do books and users express each other, but Douglas and Isherwood highlight “the total pattern” and “the totalizing creative effort” that books have in relation to one another, where they reflect and refract meanings from other books within the collection, weaving a web of textual constructions:

Each thing’s (book’s) value depends on its place in a series of complimentary other objects. Instead of taking one object at a time, and finding a piece of information that it communicates, as if it were a label indicating a thing, the anthropological approach captures the whole meaning space in which objects, once purchased, are used.⁷⁸

Douglas and Isherwood maintain that this meaning “flows and drifts; it is hard to grasp.”⁷⁹ This is not unlike girlhood, being dynamic, temporal, negotiated, and whose meaning is also culturally and socially constructed. As the meaning between books flows and drifts, so, too, does meaning drift and shift between book, text, and context. Lundin is concerned with “text and context at play.”⁸⁰ She explains:

Scholars turn to special collections for their ... rare book materials. They come for a physical object ... and are introduced to the contextual framework of that object. Text becomes context in the discovery of differences being related, of a larger world of knowledge extrinsic and intrinsic in meaning. The transformation of a simple children’s book into studies in textual history, sociohistory, biography are the metaphorical leaps possible in scholarly

⁷⁶ Dudley, “Objects, Collectors and Representations,” 15.

⁷⁷ Dudley, “Objects, Collectors and Representations,” 3, 13.

⁷⁸ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption: With a New Introduction*, xxi.

⁷⁹ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 43.

⁸⁰ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children’s Literature: Beyond Library Walls and Ivory Towers*, xvi. Lundin also discusses this at length in her article “Text and Context: Special collections and scholarship” found here: https://doi.org/10.5860/crl_50_05_553.

collections of children's literature and with a fellow scholar-librarian.⁸¹

Lundin seeks "to connect not isolate texts" in a process of challenging canon formation in children's literature. She states that "choosing greatness must convey greatness," implying that Pollard's collecting and bequeathing are acts that work to canonise the books in her collection. For now Trinity participates in the prizing of children's literature through "cultural positioning, cultural validation."⁸² I argue that the Pollard Collection reflects its canonicity, in spite of the fact that the majority of books in the collection are not canonical but are the lost, neglected, crumbling, mouldy remnants of long-forgotten domestic spaces, picked up over the years by the amateur collector, Pollard. Pollard collected not only Perry Nodelman's touchstones (canonical texts) but the "touchstones that touch us," and so the collection brings together Catharine Stimpson's paracanonical texts, samples of Baudrillard's "love objects," that sit side-by-side with classics. This multiplicity and variety gives the Pollard Collection its character.⁸³ Stimpson declares paracanonical "love" can "beautifully enhance the relationship between a text ... and a specific community of readers."⁸⁴ The Pollard Collection exudes that kind of "love" seen in the physical condition of the books, assumed to be loved to near-death by child readers. Yet, I argue that while the Pollard Collection functions as a paracanon of "loved" books, it more likely resembles an anti-canon, my term for a collection of books lost to time, devoid of any remaining or contemporary cultural significance, imbued with value simply by being collected and preserved by Pollard.

Pollard collecting girlhood reflects what Susan Pearce sees as part of human experience: "A means of constructing the way in which we relate to the material world and so build up our own lives. It is essentially an investigation into an aspect of human experience."⁸⁵ Collecting the aspect of girlhood through girls' books

⁸¹ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 63.

⁸² Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 141.

⁸³ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 148. Baudrillard discusses the love object in his essay, "The System of Collecting," in Elsner and Cardinal's *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion, 1994), 85.

⁸⁴ Catharine Stimpson, "Reading for Love: Canons, Paracanons and Whistling Jo March," *New Literary History* 21, no.

⁸⁵ Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1995), 4.

resembles Judy Attfield's "ecology of personal possessions," an ecology resembling Edgeworth's own girlhood and the girls' stories she wrote.⁸⁶ The blurry, hybrid girlhood found in the Pollard Collection is also seen in what Vivian Ting Wing Yan calls

the blurred zone of in-betweenness, where the formal qualities of objects can be fully experienced, and where personal narrations, such as desire, emotions or memories can emerge from the human stories embodied within objects.⁸⁷

These scholars describe the interstitial relationality of meaning in the collection, which shows how the Pollard Collection blurs the formality of the special collection with more personal, human stories of girlhood found within and between the books.

In Section Three, I argue that the Pollard Collection embodies the personal, as an extension or expression of self through the collected girlhood Pollard amassed in the books by Maria Edgeworth. To do so, I draw on Kate Flint's idea that the space between text and reader can stretch to include the space of the collection:

These spaces may to some degree be products of the texts themselves, constructing the response of the ideal reader. Simultaneously, readers may bring their own assumptions to them. The same texts, in other words, may elicit complicity or resistance; the same reading subject, for that matter, cannot be relied upon to be a stable identity, responding in a predetermined way to each text that she encounters.⁸⁸

Here, Flint extends Wolfgang Iser's arguments about the space between text and reader, where Iser declares the interaction is experiential and phenomenological. Using Flint's work alongside the work of Stewart, Douglas, Kidd, Steedman, and others, I argue that the Pollard Collection is that space where all texts weave a tapestry of girlhood, read by different girls at different times across generations,

⁸⁶ Judy Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 155.

⁸⁷ Wing Yan Vivian Ting, "Living Objects: A Theory of Museological Objecthood," in *The Thing About Museums: Objects and Experience, Representation and Contestation*, eds. Sandra H. Dudley et al. (London: Routledge, 2012), 174.

⁸⁸ Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 40. Flint refers to Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (France: Éditions Gallimard, 1969), 115, 182.

held together in relation to one another in a space that envelops every possible textual iteration of girlhood.

Reading This Thesis

This thesis shows the multivocal and multivalent nature of the interdisciplinarity involved in reading girlhood in the Pollard Collection. Steedman notes:

Just as contemporary critics of children's books understand that young people, like adults, have the ability to interpret texts in different ways, so too studies of the reception of children's books in the past should be expected to turn up multiple readings of texts.⁸⁹

Reading processes are varied in this thesis and require an Edgeworthian connection "between reading and flexible, inventive thinking" to better provide "food for thought."⁹⁰ Louise Rosenblatt describes the reading act as

an event involving a particular individual and a particular text, happening at a particular time, under particular circumstances, in a particular social and cultural setting, and as part of the ongoing life of the individual and the group.⁹¹

I agree with this description largely because the collection gathers all these particulars and holds them together, suspends them as if in aspic, allowing me to scrutinise them from different angles. The three sections of this thesis present different angles from which to examine the construction of girlhood, so it follows that there would be a reading process that relates to the focus of each section. Section One, "Writing Girlhood," largely concerns texts. This section considers reading to be what Iser describes as "a dynamic interaction between text and reader."⁹² This interaction is a phenomenological one, a reader-response theory that

⁸⁹ Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930* (London: Virago Press, 1995), 11.

⁹⁰ Manly, introduction to *Selected Tales*, xxvii.

⁹¹ Louise Rosenblatt, "Viewpoints: Transaction versus Interaction: a Terminological Rescue Operation," *Research in the Teaching of English* 19, no. 1 (Feb 1985): 100.

⁹² Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: a Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 107.

emphasises the way readers experience texts and, therefore, gather meaning from that experience. Iser contends that when reader and text interact, this transaction happens in the consciousness of the reader, and meaning is created.⁹³ Iser echoes Sartre when he states, “since the process of writing includes the process of reading and these two interdependent acts require two differently active people, the combined efforts of author and reader bring into being the concrete and imaginary object which is the work of the mind.”⁹⁴ That object is the text, a work that becomes the product of both of the author’s mind and the reader’s mind.

Section Two, “Reading Girlhood,” is concerned with a different kind of reading: the reading of books. This reading is physical and prioritises the reader’s engagement in a concrete, tactile interaction with the book object, what material culture scholar Sandra Dudley describes as “the process of perception lying between oneself and the object.”⁹⁵ Dudley’s assertion sounds quite like Iser’s in Section One in that reading is described as a perception, but the interaction here is between reader and book, not reader and text. This is a reading of the object: the physical commodity as a container of the text. It is less cerebral and more sensory, and as such, material culture takes a similar approach to book history. Book historian Roger Chartier moves beyond Iser to say that “reading is not only an abstract operation of the intellect: it puts the body into play and is inscribed within a particular space, in a relation to the self or to others.”⁹⁶ Chartier prioritises the physicality of reading when he insists meaning “depends upon the forms through which they (texts) are received and appropriated by their readers.”⁹⁷

Readers, in fact, never confront abstract, idealized texts detached from any materiality. They hold in their hands or perceive objects and forms whose structures and modalities govern their reading and consequently the possible comprehension of the text read.⁹⁸

⁹³ Iser, *The Act of Reading: a Theory of Aesthetic Response*. My synopsis of Iser’s theory comes from the first chapter of Iser’s book.

⁹⁴ Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 108. Iser refers to Sartre’s “Was ist literatur?”, 1958, 35.

⁹⁵ Sandra H. Dudley, *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 12.

⁹⁶ Roger Chartier, “Labourers and Voyagers: from the Text to the Reader,” in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2002), 90.

⁹⁷ Chartier, “Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader,” 88.

⁹⁸ Chartier, “Labourers and Voyagers,” 88.

And finally, Chartier makes this important distinction:

There is no comprehension of writing, whatever it may be, which does not depend in part upon the forms in which it comes to its reader. Hence the necessary distinction between two groups of apparatuses: those which reveal strategies of writing and the intentions of the author, and those which are a result of the publisher's decisions or the constraints of the printing house.⁹⁹

Chartier is speaking of two apparatuses but also of two readers: the author's intended girl reader and the publisher's intended girl reader. Section Two focuses on the latter.

Section Three, "Collecting Girlhood," considers any and all readers as they fit within the collection. Andrea Witcomb agrees with Chartier when she describes "embodied forms of knowledge" as those "which cannot be articulated through language but which reside instead in sensorial experience."¹⁰⁰ Witcomb is speaking not just about the objects in connection with readers, in this case the Pollard books, but also about the space collections inhabit, where the sensorial experience is to be found:

All these (embodied forms of knowledge) move away from traditional binary oppositions of subject-object and mind-body, and focus instead on the space in-between, the space of engagement between people and the material world which surrounds them and of which they too are a part. This is a space in which the senses rather than the world are privileged, and in which matter (objects) can act upon subjects (people) through material and sensorial engagement as much as people can change and act upon matter.¹⁰¹

The collection creates a space where binaries can be loosened, where meanings can become more subtly multi-faceted depending on how the books are read in relation to one another. This is especially true when attempting to deconstruct the girlhood within the collection, to celebrate the queerness of girlhood in all its varied representations in these books: in the stories they tell, how the stories are oriented

⁹⁹ Chartier, "Labourers and Voyagers," 91.

¹⁰⁰ Andrea Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration: Some Thoughts," in *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories: Essays in Honour of Professor Susan M. Pearce*, eds. Sandra H. Dudley et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 44.

¹⁰¹ Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration: Some Thoughts," 44.

within both time and space within the collection, but also in the ways girl readers might interpret the constructs and characterisations of girlhood. It is not a matter of “outing” characters post-publication but acknowledging the queer spaces they inhabit within the text, giving room for readers’ interpretations. The queering of the space in the collection is a relational phenomenon beyond authorial intention, which is located somewhere between the author and the reader. I delve into more detail in Section Three about Douglas and Isherwood’s ideas concerning “the total pattern” within a collection and how the books each engage in “the totalizing creative effort” of the collection, but for now, their concept of finding meaning in the relationship between books is how we read the collection.¹⁰² We cannot read the whole collection (the Pollard Collection holds around 12,000 books), so we try to read the nature of the collection instead and attempt to understand its story through the individual narratives of the books as they relate to other books.

The Pollard Collection tells its story to us via a sensory experience of the books that are associated with the experience of memories. We read the collection by reading the context of representation that it encompasses. In other words, we read between the lines, or in this case, the books. Significance always lies in the perceived relationship between objects, and who perceives these relationships changes constantly, illustrating Rosenblatt’s many “particulars” occurring within the timeless nature of the collection.

Filling the Gaps

Although there has been a resurgence in research on Edgeworth’s texts, scholarly work on Edgeworth’s tales for children remains scattered, and the context of this work often falls outside the scope of children’s literature studies. There is much made of the children’s texts as educational tools as they reflect her nonfiction writing and their political and philosophical influences, but Edgeworth is not usually situated within the remit of children’s literature studies. Even more scant is the discourse around Edgeworth’s adolescent tales and cross-written novels, which would situate her more firmly in the territory of YA literature studies. Scholarship

¹⁰² Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, xiii.

often focuses on the contemporary time period her novels were produced, and attention is paid to when she wrote texts versus when she published them. Yet there is a clear need for research that connects her early work with her later work, offering a fresh approach beyond some recent narrow feminist and postcolonial critical readings of her texts.

Literary studies rarely look beyond the first edition when close reading, which tunnels the vision to miss the wider field considered in book history studies. Literary studies alone might not consider the recurrence of Edgeworth's girl characters across editions and stories. Book history and collection studies bridge this gap. Furthermore, while research on Edgeworth grows ever more nuanced and nutritious, there is still a dearth of scholarly work on Edgeworth that draws meaningfully from the critical and methodological frameworks associated with children's literature studies. Some of the core areas of investigation in children's and YA literature studies include issues around gender, including girlhood, power, identity, adolescence, implied readers, special collections, and canonisation. My decision to focus on the materiality of Edgeworth's books combined with the reality of her lived girlhood experience works to bridge some of these gaps and reposition her within the rich field of children's and YA literature studies, girlhood studies, and book history. By combining different scholarly approaches, I effectively illustrate the complex, layered construction of girlhood in Edgeworth's books as they are positioned within the Pollard Collection. Girlhood studies, lain alongside children's literature studies, paint a richer historical picture of the books and their author. Social bibliography offers a stronger connection to social systems as a sociological study regarding book history to include more than print culture but wider systemic influences like education, literacy, work, and travel. Going beyond the text to the material offers new insights into constructions and presumptions about girlhood that are often not considered together.

Reimagining adolescent girlhood as a literary extension of Edgeworth's own girlhood helps deconstruct and push beyond the binary constrictions of Edgeworth's hybridity. While terms like "adult" and "child" help frame girlhood, I show that Edgeworth's construction of adolescent girl characters falls outside that binary in the way adolescence is extended and shaped within her work. It is even

easier to blur those binary edges when considering rereading and remembering as an adult and the many ways time no longer moves linearly but spirals or weaves in and out through each encounter with a book.¹⁰³ Exploring this extended adolescence allows for the creation of a scholarly space where “adult critics and children exist simultaneously within individual readers.”¹⁰⁴

If Edgeworth is one key figure in this thesis, the other is Mary “Paul” Pollard. But while there is ample scholarship about Edgeworth’s life and work, there is a lack of solid information about Paul Pollard’s life, around her collection process, and around the material within her collection. Biographical information about Pollard is scant, and the handful of resources repeat material present in earlier resources.¹⁰⁵ She was born in Essex, England in 1922 and was the oldest of four children. Her parents were Irish immigrants; her father was a doctor. Pollard originally studied medicine, intending to follow in her father’s footsteps, but she had a change of heart just before finishing the course and trained as a librarian instead. Before coming to Ireland, she worked at Southlands Teacher Training College, now part of the University of Roehampton. In 1957, she moved to Dublin to take up two part-time assistant librarian positions, one at Marsh’s Library and one at Trinity College. She left her position at Marsh’s in 1965 when appointed to a full-time position at Trinity, already having been designated as Trinity’s rare books librarian in 1964. Marsh’s was unable to pay her a salary those first eight years but compensated for this by allowing her to live in one of two librarian’s apartments and letting her remain there for the rest of her life. Her reputation and her influence at Trinity grew exponentially. She was instrumental in establishing the Department of Early Printed Books, creating a workspace and a reading room on the higher floors of the east pavilion of the Old Library in 1968, coinciding with the building of the Eavan Boland Library. Based on her growing reputation and output, her teaching of historical

¹⁰³ Alison Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books: A Poetics* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 13.

¹⁰⁴ Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books: A Poetics*, 14.

¹⁰⁵ There are just a handful of small articles that discuss Pollard’s life: Charles Benson’s introduction in the Pollard Festschrift *That Woman!*, noted below, is the most complete. He also wrote the entry for her in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, citing Trinity’s muniments and his personal knowledge as sources. Lydia Ferguson’s brief description in “Cultivating the Child” is also noted below. Michael Suarez’s entry in the *Oxford Companion to the Book*; Toby Barnard’s obituary in *The Independent*, 02 July 2005; and a blog post by writer Catherine Anne Cullen, at <https://tarryathome.wordpress.com/the-pollard-collection-at-trinity-who-was-pollard/>. Wikipedia has a brief page on Pollard, which lists these sources and offers the same repeated information of her life.

bibliography to M.Phil. students, and her development of cataloguing best practices for rare books, she was appointed sub-librarian in 1970 and the first keeper of early printed books in 1980. She retired in 1983 to pursue her research on the Dublin book trade, eventually publishing two books: *Dublin's Trade in Books, 1550–1800* (1989), which came out of the Lyell lectures which she delivered at Oxford University in 1986–7, and *A Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade, 1550–1800* (2000). She was elected a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 2002. Mary “Paul” Pollard died on 24 June 2005.

This is a summation of the information available about Pollard’s life, and most of it is professional. I had difficulty finding anyone who knew her well, either as a colleague or a friend. One colleague in the Library knew of her, with him starting his career in a different department only a year before she retired. I was pointed in the direction of a Trinity Professor Emeritus of History and Palaeography, who responded to my direct message on Twitter stating that she only met Pollard a few times, but it was her and Pollard’s good friend Charles Benson who knew her best. Charles died on 13 November 2017, a year before I came to Trinity. While attending a Library Association of Ireland Rare Books Group symposium in November 2022, I chatted with a number of members hoping to find someone who knew Pollard, even remotely. My colleague in Early Printed Books reached out to a former rare books librarian on my behalf, who worked with Pollard at Trinity until she moved on. By a stroke of luck, I was later introduced to her at a lecture at the Royal Irish Academy, and I was able to ask her a few questions. She told me she was a trainee under Pollard and that she learned so much from her over the years. She felt she owed her career to Pollard. She shared her thoughts on Pollard’s expertise but answered that she knew little of her personal life as they were “firm but professional friends.” When I asked her why she thought a formidable expert on the Dublin book trade would collect children’s books, she answered, “Paul had a childlike wonder of the world! She was always learning, always loved what the world had to offer!” She was delighted to hear about this thesis, claiming Pollard would be “over the moon.”

Over the course of the fifty years she lived at Marsh’s Library, Pollard stacked the children’s books she collected against the walls of the apartment, which was

notorious for being frigidly cold.¹⁰⁶ Pollard intended to work on this personal collection in her retirement, but she died before publishing any work on it. Years before her death, she sold to Trinity a portion of the collection consisting of school texts. Upon her death in 2005, she left the remaining collection to Trinity, along with her annotated reference books, her notebooks, and her notecards full of details and descriptions of the children's books.¹⁰⁷ While cataloguing of the collection is nominally complete, Pollard's notebooks, letters, and ephemera have not been catalogued or made accessible for research, and the archival collection as it exists in the Library is incomplete as a result. This is a further gap that cannot be easily crossed.

This thesis is the first sustained critical examination of the books in the Pollard Collection. It is important to consider the collection as a necessary part of the equation when determining girlhoods, both literary and cultural, and understanding what has been preserved as a way to influence what is valued for research. Examining the many editions of Edgeworth's work in the Pollard Collection allows me to explore changing ideas of girlhood and to consider Edgeworth's influence on cultural constructions of girlhood. Although it may appear that Edgeworth's influence has waned or faded from memory, she continues to influence the discourse concerning children's literature, particularly girls' fiction and this thesis offers a vital reconsideration of her work for young readers.

As a children's librarian, children's literature scholar, and a book historian, I am strongly positioned to approach this research from my own unique hybridity and perspective toward girls' stories. Donald McKenzie proclaimed, "I unite us as collectors, editors, librarians, historians, makers and readers of books."¹⁰⁸ I am all these things. I utilise a collection of scholarly approaches to examine the texts, the books, and the collection. While single titles can be influential, even life-changing to young readers, I assert it is children's literature in community, in groups, and in collections that holds not only the power to understand but the space to consider the nuanced expressions of lived, literary and even a collected girlhood exemplified

¹⁰⁶ Toby Barnard, "Paul Pollard: Historian of the Dublin Book Trade," *The Independent* (London) 2005, Obituaries.

¹⁰⁷ Ferguson, "Cultivating Childhood," 190.

¹⁰⁸ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 8.

in the many Edgeworth editions in the Pollard Collection. This thesis considers not the already-lauded classics but the insignificant books that make up the anti-canon. This is less about first editions than it is about many editions of girlhood.

My unique combination of children's literature, book history, and collection studies opens the discussion to include other ways of making meaning beyond authorial intent. I consider reader response in light of print culture and socialisation, developments in female education, and canon formation and prizing. All these elements work together to present a comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of girlhood, children's literature, and adolescence as culturally constructed: temporally relevant concepts, ever morphing and changing over time. Edgeworth constructs girlhood through her characters, happily situated in a shifting adolescence reminiscent of her own girlhood, creating girls in her texts that surely stand as progenitors of the heroes of young adult fiction developed a century later. This thesis presents new and innovative ways of unlocking an Edgeworthian girlhood hiding between the covers of her books in the Pollard Collection.

Section 1: Writing Girlhood

The first section connects Maria Edgeworth's personal life and her own complex experience of girlhood with her signature girl characters and argues that Edgeworth's cultural, social, and familial liminality allows her to create cross-written characters. Beginning with background details of Edgeworth's personal life, this section places her in the context of the late eighteenth century. It then builds on Ó Gallchoir, Manly, Myers, and Connolly's work on Edgeworth's identity by situating Edgeworth amidst the complexities of her position as an Anglo-Irish daughter of the Ascendancy class. It explores the many roles she played as a girl, daughter, sister, and woman within the social structures of her family, her position and class, and her home location. The section also considers the political and temporal influences, described by Kaufman and Fauske, that coloured her drawing of her girl characters. Gubar's kinship model, which sees growth as a "messy and unpredictable continuum" where "younger and older selves are multiple and interlinked, akin to one another rather than wholly distinct," frames my argument that all these roles

intermingle—not as binary opposites, but as complements.¹⁰⁹ The section insists Edgeworth was comfortable with her hybrid identity and demonstrates that rather than needing to balance between daughter, teacher, eldest sister, and successful writer, she embraces the nuanced experience of being all these things at once. Drawing on the work of Myers and Havens, I argue that Edgeworth produces a style of crossover writing that Myers sees as an integration of older and younger voices that addresses multiple audiences and transcends binaries, creating a “colloquy of past and present selves.”¹¹⁰ Edgeworth’s crossover writing was a vehicle for the creation and presentation of a certain type of adolescent girl character, one who is reminiscent of Edgeworth’s own lived experience. Using textual examples, I argue that engaging with the critical theories and frameworks used to understand children’s and young adult literature (developed in the late twentieth century) enables fresh readings of Edgeworth’s work that recentres the figure of the girl and girlhood within her output. Finally, the section concludes that Edgeworth’s radical acceptance of her place within her family and her world, occupying a position on both sides of the threshold of girlhood and easily sliding from side to side, is reflected in the girl characters she wrote. Unintentionally, she wrote texts that should be considered progenitors of what Rodgers describes as young adult fiction for girls.

Section 2: Reading Girlhood

The second section shifts the focus from the textual to the paratextual and argues that the construction of girlhood in Edgeworth’s books goes beyond the textual and to the material. I utilise print culture, book history, and paratexts as tools to further the exploration of Edgeworth’s constructed girl character. To start, I contextualise girls’ reading to include trends in literacy and education in nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland, as discussed by Logan and Buckley, the time when most Pollard editions of Edgeworth’s books were printed. I acknowledge the impact of sociological attempts to record girls’ reading through surveys and interviews, mainly by Edward Salmon, but because there was no formal education system for

¹⁰⁹ Marah Gubar, “Risky Business: Talking about Children in Children’s Literature Criticism,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2013): 453-54.

¹¹⁰ Knoepfelmacher and Myers, “From the Editors,” 7-8.

girls yet, I regard libraries as the most reliable social system, with their statistics and records, to measure an increasing female readership, based on the work of Kaufman, Manley, and Wright. The section integrates Fyfe, Mumby, Cullen, and Rooney's research to form my analysis of the impact that the dissemination of cheap print adds to the shifting concept of implied girl reader as the nineteenth century brings about changes in both the ease and affordability of reading across classes. Print culture adds a new dimension to the understanding of girlhood because everyone involved in the production of the book object — publisher, illustrator, binder, seller — adds their own intentions for the implied girl reader.¹¹¹ The second chapter uses case studies and examples of Edgeworth's books from the Pollard Collection. This section demonstrates the value of using book history, particularly social bibliography, a concept I refined from the work of Bowers and McKenzie. This methodology looks at researching children's literature as a way to look around the books in order to understand the books. Regarding the book as a cultural object, I evaluate paratexts, the components around the text added by printers and booksellers to send messages to girl readers, as Gérard Genette defines them: titles, tables of contents, prefaces, catalogues, and frontispieces. I discuss how paratextual constructions of girlhood look beyond the text to illustrate the shifting literary construction of girlhood. The section concludes by arguing that girlhood is understood only by looking beyond Edgeworth's textual constructions to consider the materiality of her books in the Pollard Collection, both as individuals and as part of a collection.

Section 3: Collecting Girlhood

The third section situates Edgeworth's books within the Pollard Collection as the largest and most influential element of the collection when considering girlhood. The first chapter starts by focusing on Paul Pollard: her history as described by Benson, Ferguson, and Barnard, and the amassing of her personal collection, building on the work of Benjamin, Belk, and Witcomb. I argue that the books in Pollard's personal collection function as Stewart's souvenirs of girlhood as "a source

¹¹¹ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 7.

of personal narrative-making.”¹¹² The chapter continues by situating Pollard in a tradition of female collectors and librarians, as delineated by Lundin. It acknowledges the influence these women had on canon formation and how Pollard subverted ideas of canon through her particular collecting habits. Referring back to Section One’s discussion of private and public, I probe the concept of canon as it relates to Stimpson’s paracanon, and I further the argument by introducing the concept of “anti-canon” as inspired by Pollard’s collection of unknown and uninteresting books. The second chapter within this section considers the Pollard Collection after it is bequeathed to Trinity when it has moved from personal to institutional. Developing the idea of social bibliography discussed in Section Two, it argues that these books derive meaning in relation to one another, echoing Douglas and Isherwood, and demonstrates how this collection of apparently insignificant books gains cultural capital simply by being given to Trinity College. It queries how the act of collecting these books gives them cultural, historical, and use value, using Bourdieu’s definitions. Finally, it posits how girlhood is made manifest in the books collected: how girlhood fills the space of the collection through the particular constructed girl characters of Maria Edgeworth, whose prolific cross-writing is understood by myriad readers and whose books subtly influence and permeate the Pollard Collection. By integrating the work of Kidd, Pearce, Walklate, and Kermode, I illuminate the Pollard Collection as a threshold into the past, into historical girlhood, into textual girlhood, into bibliographical girlhood, and into remembrance of personal girlhood.

Just as the collection can encompass many versions of girlhood, the methods used in this thesis are equally diverse. I offer an innovative, interdisciplinary approach to wrestle with concepts that continue to be at the centre of discourse in children’s literature: girlhood, adolescence, implied readers, special collections, and canonisation. I suggest a longer prehistory to young adult girls’ fiction by inserting Edgeworth at the beginning of the continuum of writers of texts for girls that present timely and relevant depictions of adolescent girlhood, one hundred years before Rodgers starts her prehistory in the late nineteenth century. I consider Edgeworth’s ability to thrive in many different yet concurrent roles as a unique quality that

¹¹² Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration," 43.

produces her crossover writing and construction of adolescent girl characters who occupy that opaque space between childhood and womanhood. I further Donald McKenzie's "sociology of texts" to consider systemic influences on girlhood and the pressure points they exert on girl readers, and I do this by placing paratexts within their wider social contexts. In this way, prefaces, titles, intertitles, publishers' catalogues, book covers, and illustrations are examined through the lens of children's literature criticism, as are the texts they encompass. Finally, I encourage a new understanding of canon formation as exemplified by the books in the Pollard Collection to show how these books are not canonical but rather anti-canonical: they are the neglected, dusty, ramshackle books whose value is not inherently understood but materialises when they are collected and preserved for future research. Through these three sections, I illuminate a girlhood that is complex, ever-shifting, socially and culturally influenced, whose many layers of construction are best understood through my unique lens and hybrid research, which illuminates the girl found in the text, the book, and the collection.

1. Writing Girlhood

“It is curious that the Edinburgh Reviewers laugh at us for introducing into every story some charming wife, sister, mother, or daughter, who acts the part of the good fairy of the piece.”¹

“Write on, shine out and defy them.”²

¹ Anna Letitia Barbauld and Anna Letitia Le Breton, *Memoir of Mrs. Barbauld: Including Letters and Notices of Her Family and Friends* (London, G. Bell and Sons, 1874), 114. Edgeworth to Barbauld in a letter dated 26 February 1826.

² Barbauld and Le Breton, *Memoir of Mrs. Barbauld*, 145. Barbauld’s advice to Maria Edgeworth in a letter dated 1810.

1.1 The Girl Edgeworth



Figure 1: "Unknown woman engraved as Maria Edgeworth" by Mackenzie, after William Marshall Craig, November 1808. Courtesy: National Portrait Gallery

This chapter scrutinises Edgeworth's style of crossover writing, insisting her place in the Protestant Ascendancy and her role in the development of children's literature was more complex than readings of her children's texts previously carried out might imply. Edgeworth's didactic children's stories position her as a conservative writer with a voice of privilege, but to see her simply as conservative is too narrow a view: she was a politically progressive reformist with views based on Enlightenment philosophies who championed female education and utilitarianism. Current scholarly work is no longer dismissive of Edgeworth's writing for and about children, but it is easy to trace the origins

of the criticism starting with Peter Hunt or F. J. Harvey Darton in the 1980s. Their early iterations of childist criticism created a binary between adult and child readers.³ I show that Edgeworth's crossover writing does not fit into this framework but rather fits into a more contemporary critical understanding of childist literary criticism, one that fosters what Mitzi Myers and U. C. Knoepfelmacher see as an integration of older and younger voices, addressing multiple audiences and transcending binaries, creating a "colloquy of past and present selves."⁴ This chapter examines Edgeworth's girlhood within the framework of her Anglo-Irish identity, illustrating complexities beyond being born in England and living in Ireland. It considers her position imposed by class and gender within the Protestant

³ Peter Hunt advocated for a new critical approach in his article "Childist Criticism: The Subculture of the Child, the Book and the Critic" (Signal, 1984), where he pressed adults to centre children's personal, cultural, and psychological differences when reading texts for children. Seven years later, in his book *Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature* (Blackwell, 1991), he stated that he had not intended to "imply a them/us division," (16).

⁴ Knoepfelmacher and Myers, "From the Editors," vii-viii. For a current, more integrated approach to childism, see Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak and Macarena García-Gonzalez, "Thinking and Doing with Childism in Children's Literature Studies," *Children & Society* 37, no. 4 (July 2023).

Ascendancy. As I show, her life in County Longford situated her between public professional and private domestic life as a writer, educator, and daughter, allowing her to espouse radical and conservative views at the same time, which were communicated to her intended girl readers. The combined personas define her hybridity and inform her writing, particularly as she constructed tales and characters for both adult and child readers based on her lived experience. As a result, Edgeworth's writing for children is reappraised here as crossover writing, not simply because she lived and wrote at a time when the age of reading audiences was seen more fluidly, but because she based her writing on her lived experience and she relied on her own girlhood to inform the stories she wrote. Her crossover writing evolves from her personal, complex identity.

Edgeworth's hybrid identity materialises in her writing process: she drafted stories for adults and children simultaneously, and she expected both adults and children to read her stories for children. Her texts that were not written expressly for children, such as *Helen* (1834) and *Patronage* (1814), often had adolescent females as main characters, while stories included in her collections for children, namely *Moral Tales* (1801) and *Popular Tales* (1804), included female protagonists of undetermined age on the brink of marriage.⁵ She revisited her characters in subsequent stories and wrote them over time, measured by both the characters' changing ages and the books' changing publication dates. The same characters appear in texts written over three decades and appear at different stages of girlhood: Rosamond, Caroline, Leonora, and Cecilia first appear as young girls in *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) and *Early Lessons* (1801) for children, and later as young women in the novels *Patronage*, *Helen*, and *Leonora* (1806), indicating these stories were meant to appeal to girl readers of different ages during different stages of their lives. A further indication of crossover writing occurs when Edgeworth's characters slip between adolescence and childhood. For example, the character Rosamond in *Patronage* (1814) is older than the Rosamond who reappears years later in *Rosamond, the Sequel to Rosamond in Early Lessons* (1821), where she is back to being thirteen. These age reversals and time twists, while not described as

⁵ *Popular Tales* was not "for children" explicitly but was of interest to older children and read by young people who had grown up with *The Parent's Assistant*.

deliberate by Edgeworth in her letters, function as a means to play with the boundaries of girlhood and womanhood.

Beverly Lyon Clark describes the “crossover writer” as “someone whose work (for children) could appeal to adults and could be read in adult terms.”⁶ Clark seeks to “read *Little Women* the same way (she) read(s) works written for adults” in an attempt to “revalue” Alcott.⁷ Clark’s attempt assumes that Alcott and her contemporaries only intended for children to read their works. It also implies that children’s literature was valued only inasmuch as it held value for adult readers, disregarding girl readers and their responses to the text. This is not true of Alcott and not true of Edgeworth, writing decades before Alcott in a culture that did not unequivocally separate works by their intended readership.⁸ Clark’s approach is too adult-centred, a rigid imposition of the value adult readers place on a text. I posit Edgeworth’s crossover writing is better able to “integrate the conflicting voices (she) heeds” of woman and girl through “interplay and cross-fertilization.”⁹ In fact, Edgeworth uses few conflicting voices but instead “activates a traffic between phases of life,” easily manoeuvring her girl characters from childhood to womanhood and back again.¹⁰

Refuting Clark’s understanding of crossover writing, this chapter demonstrates that Edgeworth’s writing contributed to the later development of a specific category of texts for adolescent readers. Through her crossover writing, Edgeworth creates an adolescent female protagonist that grows directly from Edgeworth’s lived experiences. In this way, Edgeworth acts as a progenitor to the writers of young adult texts formally identified as materialising in the late nineteenth century, fifty years after Edgeworth’s last novel, *Helen* (1834), appeared in print.¹¹ Her characters, both adult and child, possess a quality that positions her works as precursors to Victorian young adult texts such as those by L.T. Meade, Julia

⁶ Beverly Lyon Clark, *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), xi.

⁷ Clark, *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America*, xi.

⁸ Although this would change at the end of the nineteenth century. See Bilger, Vallone, and Rodgers for more on the market and material culture that drove the definition of young adult fiction in the late Victorian era.

⁹ Knoepfmacher and Myers, “From the Editors,” vii.

¹⁰ Knoepfmacher and Myers, “From the Editors,” viii.

¹¹ Beth Rodgers, Lynne Vallone, and Sarah Bilston cover at length the development of young adult literature for girls at the end of the nineteenth century.

Horatia Ewing, Mrs. George Vaizey, Charlotte Yonge, and Rosa Mulholland. These authors write about the inexperienced girl learning skills, navigating social norms and expectations, and encountering life's dilemmas as she grows into herself, just as Edgeworth's characters, including the "ingénue making her début in high society," had done decades before.¹² Like the characters in many of these later young adult novels, Edgeworth's adolescent protagonist often "appears to combine both viewpoints, with a surface of apparent sophistication masking a core of inexperience and comparatively greater innocence."¹³ This chapter examines the liminality of Edgeworth's identity and lived experience as it influences the texts she wrote and the adolescent girl characters she created. It looks particularly at Edgeworth's crossover writing as a vehicle for writing adolescent girlhood found within the Pollard Collection.

Crossover Writing

Crossover fiction is an age-old tradition that refers to fiction that crosses from child to adult or adult to child. However, using the term "cross" rather than "dual," for example, implies a diverse readership rather than merely two distinct readerships of adults and children and leaves space for the adolescent reader who may be defined as both or neither child or adult.¹⁴ Crossover fiction "blurs the borderline between two traditionally separate readerships: children and adults."¹⁵ Often, we cannot talk about crossover fiction unless it is somehow considered within the broader canon of children's literature, but I propose that Edgeworth lived and wrote in a time when "books found their own audience," and lines were blurred between child and adult audiences.¹⁶ Edgeworth was the consummate crossover writer who addressed a "diverse, cross-generational audience" that included "readers of all ages: children, adolescents, and adults."¹⁷ While the term "crossover writer" is

¹² Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 308.

¹³ Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and its Adult Readership* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 117.

¹⁴ Sandra Beckett, *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 4, 8.

¹⁵ Beckett, *Crossover Fiction*, 2.

¹⁶ Beckett, *Crossover Fiction*, 2.

¹⁷ Beckett, *Crossover Fiction*, 3.

modern, and I acknowledge it is anachronous, I use it to describe the Edgeworth titles I examine here and as a way to discuss the crossing over of texts and readers.¹⁸

This thesis is primarily concerned with readers and readership, which shifts the focus more specifically on Edgeworth's writing as it fits into the framework of crossover writing in children's literature. In this light, it is important to consider Mitzi Myers' specific term "cross-writing" as cognate to Edgeworth's crossover writing. For Myers, Edgeworth's cross-writing envelopes more than just the ages of readers; it includes genres and types of texts she wrote. Myers states, "it is not just the traffic between child and adult inside and outside her tales that identifies Edgeworth as a cross-writer."¹⁹ Myers' observation is literary, but these negotiations are also biographical, reflecting Edgeworth's lived experience, which in turn negotiates with wider social contexts, not just the characters she creates or the reader she envisages. Edgeworth negotiates numerous borders, highlighting characters inside and a hybrid audience outside the texts. Her first readers, as fellow members of the Ascendancy, were negotiating similar boundaries. "National, historical, and generic as well as generational borders" are discussed here because they frame her Anglo-Irish identity, which informs every text and every character, especially her adolescent girl characters.²⁰ It is not only, as Myers states, the traffic inside and outside her tales but also the traffic of her life that shapes Edgeworth's writing.

Myers argues that the Edgeworth family's living situation informed her writing as a "cross-generational representational space ... for the household itself physically embodies cross-writing."²¹ A lived experience of girlhood in the Edgeworth house was a multigenerational construction of femininity; the household brought together children, maiden aunts, younger married sisters, Edgeworth as an unmarried professional, and her fourth stepmother who was younger than she was. Edgeworth's literary output is similarly mixed: throughout her career, she produced tales for children and what we now consider novels for adults. Her work addressed a broad audience, and her stories, including her adult novels, were first read to and

¹⁸ For a detailed history that leads to the current usage of "crossover writing," see Beckett, who discusses how the term is currently used to exemplify adult readers reading YA texts.

¹⁹ Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*," 116.

²⁰ Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*," 116.

²¹ Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*," 127.

critiqued by her family, including the youngest children. This mélange of cross-writing and cross-living creates the hybridity that infuses the tales, making her young adult female protagonists relatable and readable to an adult-child dual audience.

Edgeworth's crossover writing creates a complex web of interconnected texts. Sharon Murphy states that "no texts (of Edgeworth's) should be read in isolation from the others, as they were all connected in a larger didactic enterprise."²² Edgeworth wrote and edited numerous works concurrently, particularly between 1795 and 1815 when many of her texts were published. Murphy succinctly gives the publication details of her works:

The Parent's Assistant, or Stories for Children was published in 1796, *Moral Tales for Young People* in 1801, *Early Lessons* between 1801 and 1802, and *Popular Tales* in 1804; within the same period, she published *Practical Education* in 1798, *Castle Rackrent* in 1800, *Belinda* in 1801, and *Essay on Irish Bulls* and *The Modern Griselda* in 1802; so it is not surprising that the themes in Edgeworth's works persistently overlap.²³

Murphy makes her point about crossover writing based on these publication dates, but the reality is even more complex. While collections may have been compiled and printed during these years, the stories included were often written years earlier, many of which were penned when Edgeworth was a teenager. The significance of her juvenilia highlights Edgeworth as a girl writing within and about girlhood during her own girlhood. In 1780, at the age of twelve, Edgeworth began attending Mrs. Devis's Academy for Young Ladies in London and spent holidays with her father's friend, Thomas Day. Claire Connolly observes that it was during this time that Edgeworth began to formulate ideas for what would later emerge as *Letters for Literary Ladies (Letters)*, printed in 1795 when she was twenty-seven years old. She wrote, but never published, a translation of Genlis's *Adelaide and Theodore* in 1783 when she was fifteen.²⁴ She wrote her first story for children, the "autobiographically based 'The Bracelets,'" included in *The Parent's Assistant* when

²² Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 42.

²³ Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 43.

²⁴ Claire Connolly, introduction to *Letters for Literary Ladies* (London: J.M Dent, 1993), x.

she was nineteen in 1787. However, that work was printed in 1796 when she was twenty-eight.²⁵ Manly states that many of Edgeworth's tales, which were later printed in collections, were invented out of necessity between 1790 and 1792, when Edgeworth, at the age of twenty-two, had to care for half a dozen younger siblings aged two to ten, before they joined their parents abroad for two years in Clifton, near Bristol.²⁶ Manly notes, "the children relied on her for tales to keep them entertained and interested" as they had few toys or books in their cramped temporary home.²⁷ Butler reveals most of her first collection, *The Parent's Assistant*, was written in Clifton: the stories "Lazy Lawrence," "The False Key," "Mlle Panache," "The Mimic," and "Old Poz" which are set in and around Bristol, directly connecting her life to her writing.²⁸ Creating stories to tell aloud became a favourite pastime of the family, a practice that would be used for story creation, critiquing, and cross-editing throughout Edgeworth's life.

Within Edgeworth's crossover writing structure, Myers considers Edgeworth's cross-writing politically motivated, compelling scholars to take her "child-centered texts seriously as reformist spaces intertextual with grown-up works and lives."²⁹ Myers goes further to say:

In cross-writing similar themes and genres for child and grown-up and thus transgressing the usual demarcations between children's and adults' literature, Edgeworth figures her political and cultural answers within child characters and within the child-like genre of the tale, (thereby embodying) a revisionist political agenda.³⁰

Myers makes the point that women's writing in the period during which Edgeworth wrote was politically motivated and concerned with rebellion, war, and violence. She reminds us that civil war was not just fought on the battlefield but on domestic fronts, which points to the unavoidable involvement of women and children in the

²⁵ Susan Manly, introduction to *Selected Tales for Children and Young People* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), xii, xxi.

²⁶ Manly, introduction to *Selected Tales*, xiii-xiv. See also Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 159.

²⁷ Manly, introduction to *Selected Tales*, xiv.

²⁸ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 159.

²⁹ Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*," 126.

³⁰ Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*," 126.

daily activities of war and rebellion.³¹ Edgeworth's writing reflects her concern about the 1798 rebellion and the results of that conflict. "Her multilayered and multidisciplinary accounts and recyclings in letters, memoirs, legal documents, and fictions for both children and adults reflect, refract, and gender war and Revolution repeatedly and obliquely," and often position the figure of the child within these narratives as a way to explore the realities of post-Rebellion Ireland in the early 1800s.³² Particularly, Myers asserts Edgeworth's work "imagines the child's body and voice as crucial to affective renewal and to cultural and political regeneration."³³ In other words, as a reformist, Edgeworth dares to hope and re-envision society as more communal, crossing cultural borders and reimagining Anglo-Irish spaces. Myers notes her cross-writing is a "transgressive and creative miscegenation of public and private spaces, gender and generational issues, and domestic and national politics."³⁴ Calling Edgeworth a "paradigmatic 'border crosser,'" borrowed from post-colonial criticism, Myers sees Edgeworth as an "intellectual author and cultural worker" who positions the child as a vehicle for critique and transformation, a re-examination even, of the realities of Anglo-Irish domestic life in times of conflict. Edgeworth's "interweaving tales of the Irish, the English, and the Continental, juxtaposing the juvenile with the adult, and aligning conventionally "feminine" alongside conventionally "masculine" concerns" pushes Edgeworth's crossover writing into complex, more nuanced iterations beyond just child and adult, Anglo or Irish.

Paired with Edgeworth's use of romance conventions, what looks political, or like a political response, is often Edgeworth's focus on female education and women's roles in society. Her response is represented in the construction of her girl characters and their stories' plots. These texts, whether for children or adults, present, preserve, and promote ideas of girlhood, which supported Edgeworth's theory that education had wider national and political consequences.³⁵ Myers and Knoepfmacher contend that cross-writing may help revise notions of a Romantic, natural childhood, which certainly seems to be the case for Edgeworth, whose

³¹ Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*," 117.

³² Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*," 118.

³³ Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*," 119.

³⁴ Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*," 119.

³⁵ Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 42.

national and political concerns often place the figure of the child in more realistic contexts.³⁶ She sets girl characters into domestic tales, asserting both their independence and interdependence on other females, highlighting their ability to work “with and among other women,” much like Edgeworth did herself.³⁷ This practice works to subvert the “natural” femininity embraced by Rousseau of a passive, uneducated man-pleaser to show a more organic construction of girlhood predicated on personhood and less on gender. Focusing on Edgeworth’s crossover writing helps to illuminate girlhood and frame historical and literary adolescence. Conversely, looking at girlhood in the Pollard Collection refocuses critical attention towards Edgeworth’s particular representation of girlhood and considers other representations like book production, discussed in Section Two. Cross-writing girls and cross-reading tales assert the interdependence between Edgeworth’s child and adult texts as her signature theme, a theme explored more fully in the next chapter, where I analyse how she names her girl characters across the different texts for adults and children.³⁸

Defining Girlhood

Girlhood cannot be easily defined, nor can the construction of it be easily explained, but it must be understood to fall within the concept of “childhood,” as seen when Peter Hollindale asks, “how much does our composite image of childness, our answer to the question What is a child? split automatically for us into ‘What is a boy?’ and ‘What is a girl?’”³⁹ Childhood is a concept fraught with inconsistencies and is rarely defined by those it concerns: children. It is not that childhood does not exist in the eyes of children; rather, it exists as fictional representations or textual constructions, as Jacqueline Rose states, “outside the culture in which it is produced.”⁴⁰ Rarely do we ask children to define childhood, particularly within the

³⁶ Knoepfmacher and Myers, “From the Editors.” This is discussed at length in the article.

³⁷ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers’ Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 118-19.

³⁸ Myers, “Canonical ‘Orphans’ and Critical *Ennui*,” 123.

³⁹ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children’s Books*, 82.

⁴⁰ Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction*, New Cultural Studies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 44.



Figure 2: OLS POL 5865. Simple Susan by Maria Edgeworth. London: T.J. Allman, 1860. One of Edgeworth's most endearing characters and widely reprinted stories, from *The Parent's Assistant*, 1800 3rd ed.

discourse of children's literature scholarship, yet adult authors have consistently written the child into stories intended for child readers. In Edgeworth's time, when the Enlightenment theories and educational practices of Locke and Rousseau were establishing boundaries around childhood and defining it as a previously unacknowledged separate life stage, this conversation happened without the input of children. Julia Mickenburg and Lynne Vallone declare that "it is important to acknowledge the phantom child — implied, addressed, represented, assumed — always lurking though perhaps never quite possible (as Rose would say)."⁴¹ Hollindale and Rose both contend

children's texts are never free of adults' idealised perception of childhood.⁴² For this reason, children's literature is central to the construction of childhood, just as girls' stories are key to the construction of girlhood. To consider the child in children's literature is to acknowledge that "the sociological and biological conditions of childhood are historically determined, inconstant, temporary, culturally diverse, and reversible."⁴³ Thus childhood, and therefore girlhood, is both a cultural and a literary construct. Both historical and contemporary texts for children are the result of adults' combined observations of children and reflections on their own childhoods; the result of a time lived, remembered, sometimes survived, often romanticised or idealised.

Edgeworth's story collections (*The Parent's Assistant*, *Early Lessons*, *Moral Tales*, *Popular Tales*) were initially informed by the observation of younger siblings recorded in stepmother Honora Edgeworth's "child register" of children's

⁴¹ Julia L. Mickenburg and Lynne Vallone, introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature*, eds. Julia L. Mickenburg and Lynne Vallone (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

⁴² Peter Hollindale, *The Hidden Teacher: Ideology and Children's Reading* (Woodchester: Thimble Press, 2011), 36, 39. Like Hollindale, Rose discusses this throughout her work *The Case of Peter Pan*, but she speaks clearly on this in her conclusion (137).

⁴³ Hollindale, *The Hidden Teacher: Ideology and Children's Reading*, 19.

conversations “revived” by Edgeworth and written as an attempt to capture childhood for her readers.⁴⁴ While conversations about childhood happened without the input of children, Edgeworth actively involved children, especially girls, in her literary constructions of girlhood. Edgeworth and her father insist in the preface of *Practical Education* (1798) “that we rely entirely upon practice and experience.”⁴⁵ Because she intended to educate girls through her writing, teaching both “lessons of understanding and of the heart,” offering both a practical and a moral education, she wrote characters that are both realistic and idealised, a combination of girls she knew and fictional children she created to be good examples for her readers.⁴⁶ As an adult writing stories independently of her father, she created a hybrid experience of girlhood that relied on a composite experience of girls drawn from memory, observation, and revision. She involved young female relatives in the revision of her texts, relying on their observations and experiences as much as her own.⁴⁷

Edgeworth writes realistic, rational girl characters who demonstrate idealised behaviours and characteristics. These girl characters are both “natural and supernatural” and are contrived by expectation, wish fulfilment, and experience.⁴⁸ By presenting ‘real’ girls based on her observations of her younger sisters, she is not constructing but reconstructing girls that are amalgams of experience and ideals: experienced in her observation of her younger sisters while romanticised by her looking back on that childhood time as a memory. Hollindale offers another definition of childhood that reflects Edgeworth’s assembled girl. He states that

⁴⁴ Manly, introduction to *Selected Tales*, xii.

⁴⁵ Maria Edgeworth and R. L. Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (London: J. Johnson, 1801). Preface is unpaginated in this edition.

⁴⁶ Vineta Colby, *Yesterday's Woman: Domestic Realism in the English Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 90. Colby takes the term “education of the heart” directly from the preface of *Practical Education* where the Edgeworths claim this to be as important as scholarly education. Colby highlights that Edgeworth, in company with Hannah More, Elizabeth Hamilton, and other contemporaries, referred to two branches of education as “the culture of the heart and understanding” (91).

⁴⁷ Maria Edgeworth, *Maria Edgeworth's Letters from Ireland*, ed. Valerie Pakenham (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2018). There is abundant source material in biographies, prefaces and footnotes in her story collections and in her letters which illustrate both Edgeworth’s observations of her stepsiblings and the extensive revisioning of her works that involved family readings and manuscript editing by various family members.

⁴⁸ Jackie C. Horne, *History and the Construction of the Child in Early British Children's Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 102.

"however good we are at understanding children, and recalling childhood ... whatever we may be doing, we are not constructing our own childhood. We may be reconstructing it."⁴⁹ He gives us this particular definition of "childness:"

Childness is a composite made up of beliefs, values, experiences, memories, expectations, approved and disapproved behaviors, observations, hopes and fears which collect and interact with each other to form ideal and empirical answers to the question 'what is a child?'⁵⁰

Hollindale's question invites another question: What is an Edgeworthian child? Specifically, what is an Edgeworthian girl? Myers claims Edgeworth's characters, girls who are "perfectly good" and worth emulating or "perfectly bad" and worth eschewing, were "every nineteenth-century youngster's imaginary playmates."⁵¹ In Edgeworth's texts, the girl is idealised in an attempt to create a relatable girl.⁵² Edgeworth's girl character embodies Hollindale's constructed, imagined childhood, for the Edgeworthian girl hero is wishful thinking on Edgeworth's part: she represents a projection formed from the collective memories and perceptions of her family and friends. Edgeworth's ideal girl is constructed at the crossroads of Edgeworth's observation, her teaching and her personal aspiration. She is a cross-written, hybrid girl.

To understand Edgeworth's construction, we start by attempting to define girlhood, a concept as elusive as childhood. Beth Rodgers quips, "there have, of course, always been girls, but what it *means* to be a girl is not always the same thing across time and circumstances."⁵³ I agree with Anita Harris that "the category of girl is constantly shifting and cannot be linked to a fixed age or developmental stage in life."⁵⁴ Miriam Forman-Brunell comments that girlhood is a "constructed, changing

⁴⁹ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 29.

⁵⁰ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 76.

⁵¹ Mitzi Myers, "Reading Rosamund Reading: Maria Edgeworth's 'Wee-Wee Stories' Interrogate the Canon," in *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle, and Naomi Sokoloff (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 61.

⁵² Horne, *History and the Construction of the Child in Early British Children's Literature*, 24. Horne discusses the 'ideal' child in her introduction.

⁵³ Beth Rodgers, *Adolescent Girlhood and Literary Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle: Daughters of Today* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 4.

⁵⁴ Anita Harris, *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-first Century* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 191.

and contested category of experience and expectation,” adding to myriad statements that girlhood is shifting and hard to negotiate.⁵⁵ But it is Claudia Nelson and Lynne Vallone who rightly acknowledge the diversity of girlhood experience, stating that

depending not only upon her age, but also upon her class, educational attainments, and marital or biological status ... a “girl” might be what Charlotte Yonge termed a “home daughter” in her early twenties, a wife and mother aged seventeen, or a self-supporting member of the workforce at twelve.⁵⁶

While Nelson and Vallone speak of adolescent girlhood in the Victorian period, it holds true for Edgeworth’s time as well, and the description uses a broad but appropriate stroke to paint a picture for this study. Along with Nelson and Vallone, much of the discourse defining fictional representations of adolescent girlhood centres upon Victorian literature for adolescent girls, as seen in the works of Rodgers, Bilston, Mitchell, and Dyhouse. Where Rodgers challenged the argument that adolescence is a mid-twentieth-century phenomenon, arguing the case for the “prehistory of the cultural adolescent” in the late nineteenth century, I contend that there is an even longer history of cultural adolescence, seen in the literary and fictional representations of Maria Edgeworth.⁵⁷ Edgeworth’s girl characters are equally as fluid and shifting as the adolescent girls discussed by Rodgers, Harris, Nelson and Vallone. Rodgers states, “adolescence in general, and female adolescence in particular, could represent an ambiguous and difficult concept within Victorian theorizations of gender, sexuality and culture.”⁵⁸ This is no less true for young women of Edgeworth’s time, with its own ideologies of gender and culture. Bilston, despite noting that the term “adolescence” first appeared in the English language in 1482, warns against the use of the term “adolescent” as its connotations shifted regularly in the nineteenth century when most of Edgeworth’s books were produced and before a more stable but too-modern understanding formed in the twentieth

⁵⁵ Miriam Forman-Brunell, foreword to *Girlhood: A Global History*, ed. Jennifer Helgren and Colleen A. Vasconcellos (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2010), xi.

⁵⁶ Nelson and Vallone, *The Girl's Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830-1915*, 3.

⁵⁷ Rodgers, *Adolescent Girlhood and Literary Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle*, 2. Rodgers uses this phrase when referring to Jon Savage’s work *Teenage: the Creation of Youth* (2007).

⁵⁸ Rodgers, *Adolescent Girlhood and Literary Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle*, 1.

century.⁵⁹ I acknowledge the issues with the term “adolescent,” yet I will continue to use it to describe the transitional period from childhood to womanhood, often referred to in this thesis as girlhood. Girlhood is this transitional space where childhood and womanhood overlap. I prefer Marah Gubar’s kinship model as a framework which

holds that children and adults are separated by differences of degree, not of kind, meaning that we should eschew difference-model discourse that depicts children as a separate species in favor of emphasizing that growth is a messy and unpredictable continuum. There is no one moment when we suddenly flip over from being a child to being an adult.⁶⁰

Girlhood is a space of everchanging boundaries that Edgeworth was quite comfortable living within and expressing through her writing. Gubar’s idea of kinship illustrates the dynamic interplay that occurred within Edgeworth’s lived and literary girlhoods, connecting and filling the space where girls existed within that “messy continuum” known as adolescence.

Mary O’Dowd asks, “a central question in the history of the girl is when does girlhood end and womanhood begin?”⁶¹ This is also central to my discussion, for rarely does an actual physical puberty or menarche serve as the threshold between the two states within Edgeworth’s fiction, although eighteenth-century society might certainly have used menarche as the launch point for marriage eligibility. That young women were commonly married in their teen years and considered spinsterly after twenty suggests puberty was viewed as a likely boundary between childhood and adulthood. This is recorded in journals and writings of young women of the time. Dorothea Herbert reveals in her *Retrospections* that she attended the weddings of five friends in a short span of years, brides whose ages spanned fifteen to eighteen at the time they were wed. Dorothea also laments her own spinsterhood at age twenty-two.⁶² At what point does a girl become a woman? Is there a difference

⁵⁹ Bilston, *The Awkward Age*, 3. Bilston refers to Peter Blos, who then refers to the Shorter English Dictionary, 1967. Shorter states the age range for females is from 12-21 years.

⁶⁰ Marah Gubar, “Risky Business: Talking about Children in Children’s Literature Criticism,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2013): 455.

⁶¹ O’Dowd and Purvis, *A History of the Girl: Formation, Education and Identity*, 17.

⁶² Dorothea Herbert, *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert, 1770-1806* (Dublin: Town House, 1988), 279.

between an adolescent girl and a young woman? Is it age or experience that acts as a threshold? If we agree that girlhood is socially constructed, the shift into womanhood must also be socially determined, reflected in, and influenced by literary culture. O'Dowd makes the point that

the expansion in the print market of advice books for young women coincided with the development of the concept of adolescence. The new awareness of this life stage between childhood and adulthood does not, of course, mean that behaviour later defined as adolescent did not exist at an earlier time. Girls living in eighteenth-century Ireland manifested many of the characteristics associated by twenty-first century society with adolescent behaviour including a developing sense of self-identity, increasing sexual awareness, and resentment at parent authority.⁶³

Rodgers contends that literary culture combined with social advances in education and child labour laws produced this adolescence, and it was only at the turn of the twentieth century that this extended girlhood was allowed to girls of all classes. While descriptions of female adolescence became prolific in the late nineteenth century, coinciding with the material culture of adolescence, this developmental phase was not new to late Victorians; female adolescence was a melting, blending, resisting, and integrating state, albeit one within a narrow middle-class structure, at least a century before.

Situating Edgeworth

Claire Connolly calls Edgeworth “an Irish writer, writing from a boggy place,” implying that both her locale and her perspective are not always clearly presented or understood.⁶⁴ The phrase “boggy place” offers a descriptive image from which we might try to understand Edgeworth’s position, both literally and figuratively. Bogs are an intriguing metaphor for Edgeworth and her writing. They are described as murky, muddy, soggy, and nutrient-poor. Using “boggy place” suggests that Edgeworth is enigmatic and not easily understood and that it is necessary to cut

⁶³ Mary O'Dowd, "Adolescent Girlhood in Eighteenth Century Ireland," in *A History of the Girl: Formation, Education and Identity* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 133.

⁶⁴ Claire Connolly, "Cambridge University Press Irish Literature in Transition (2020) Launch" (paper presented at the British Association for Irish Studies 2020 online conference, Trinity Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute, 2020).



Figure 3: The Corlea Amenit  Bog Walk today, which runs through what was the Edgeworthstown estate. The trail is maintained by County Longford and includes a visitors' centre:
<https://www.longford.ie/en/visit/trails/corlea-bog-amenity-walk/>

through some grey area and clear the fog. Certainly, her Anglo-Irish status can be confusing today when we try to reconcile her privilege and come to terms with her life and writing. Yet the metaphor is incomplete, as bogs may appear desolate on the surface while they

actually nourish and provide a home for fungi and shrubs, sphagnum moss, reeds, sedges and heather, huckleberries, cranberries, blueberries, insects, salamanders, frogs, and newts. The lack of oxygen in bog soil and the anaerobic quality with the ability to preserve is reminiscent of the collection, as discussed in Section Three. Much like a collection, bogs delve far deeper than their surface indicates, and time can stand still in a bog. They are not simply spaces, which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as unfilled areas, but places; they are specifically significant, as Connolly knows when choosing a "boggy place" to situate Maria Edgeworth.

"Place" is a term defined by Jon Anderson as a "trialectic concept ... at once locational, sociocultural, and temporal."⁶⁵ It is a space where one can "culturally order and geographically border places in line with their own values and ideas."⁶⁶ Geographically, Edgeworth's home county of Longford is indeed home to hectares of bogland, much of which is now protected. Her father and brother William (1794-1829) worked to determine the practicability of draining the bogs through civil projects from 1809-1811. The drainage was meant to aid in peat collection and create potential for the cultivation of hemp crops. Ardagullion bog lies near Edgeworthstown and the Corlea Trackway (Figure 3). This Iron Age bog road still runs across the county, blurring the boundaries between past and present, wild and cultivated land. Edgeworth lived most of her life on her father's estate. Far west of

⁶⁵ Jon Anderson, "Place," in *Oxford Bibliographies Online* (Oxford University Press, March 2023).

⁶⁶ Anderson, "Place."

Dublin, remote and rural, the Edgeworth estate can be seen as a frontier space, a border. John Stephens and Robyn McCallum see borders as Anderson's sociocultural place full of "liminal spaces between meanings," not just spaces between places or states of being, such as age. They continue: "Borders are thus also a marker of hybrid or liminal subjectivities, such as those that would be experienced by persons who negotiate among multiple cultural, linguistic or racial systems throughout their lives."⁶⁷ Connolly's term "boggy place" conjures more than images of the Longford landscape. This border identity, both physical and personal for Edgeworth, situates her in an amorphous place within her family, class, and profession: a richly nourished place that allows for her many roles and identities to be muddled together and flourish.

Heidi Kaufman and Chris Fauske describe Edgeworth as "a woman, a member of the landholding elite, an educator, and a daughter who lived under the historical shadow of her father."⁶⁸ However, Edgeworth's identity is more complex than Kaufman and Fauske suggest, and this identity is not merely projected onto her writing; it is the combined result of what she lived and wrote. Edgeworth was a daughter of the Ascendancy, living in what was considered a wild Irish place, the western edge of British civilisation. Yet Edgeworthstown House was an oasis of culture and learning amidst the boggy wilds of the Midlands, with a constant stream of visitors including scientists like John Herschel and Humphrey Davy, literary figures like Scott, Goldsmith, and Wordsworth, and many extended family and friends. She was comfortable in this space; it allowed her to assume many roles that defined the lived experience of a professional, unmarried woman. Her crossover identity is formed by these so-called contradictory roles that complement shaping her lived experience. In actuality, this is Gubar's kinship model, a life that merges girlhood and womanhood through connection, similarity and relatedness.⁶⁹ The roles she played harmoniously coexisted: she was governess to younger siblings, estate manager for her father, and a daughter, teacher, oldest sister, and companion of her last stepmother, Frances, who was a year her junior. After her father's death,

⁶⁷ Robyn McCallum and John Stephens, "Ideology and Children's Books," in *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature*, ed. Shelby Anne Wolf et al. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 369.

⁶⁸ Kaufman and Fauske, *An Uncomfortable Authority*, 11.

⁶⁹ Gubar, "Risky Business," 450.

she assumed his role as guardian, sponsoring her younger sisters' debuts, guiding their marriage decisions, and acting as their chaperone on trips abroad. She also assumed the role of provider, using her earnings from writing to save the family estate from financial ruin when her brother's mental health deteriorated. Yet she remained unmarried and unwavering in her desire to be known as her father's daughter, as someone who graciously relied on his guidance. These roles work together to paint the picture of a woman content to remain a daughter while concurrently acting as a mother, a woman happy to be both English and Irish centuries before the Good Friday Agreement made that hybrid space acceptable to fill in Ireland. Edgeworth thrived in her blended identity, which created the luscious, marshy girlhood that she projects onto her girl characters through her writing.

Edgeworth's liminal subjectivity is often simplified as "Anglo-Irish," but this is a too convenient term to describe her more complex reality without asking what exactly situates her on an Anglo-Irish threshold. Though English-born, residing in Ireland for most of her life as a member of the Protestant Ascendancy distinguishes the class situation of her Anglo-Irishness. Joep Leersen warns against outdated arguments that present a "binary polarity" of the "mutually antagonistic interests" within which "Anglo-Irish" was often defined, teetering between colonial Ascendancy privilege and solidarity with the cause of Ireland.⁷⁰ Leersen insists we move beyond placing eighteenth-century Anglo-Irishmen in a "middle nation" between a pro-England/anti-Ireland (or the reverse) position and instead understand that this historically situated group were more interested in the "community of persons sharing in the same government and the same capital," and the public benefit through improving Irish infrastructure.⁷¹ Leersen defines Anglo-Irishness as a border identity that is

middle class, enlightened, complacent in its economic security, joining the notion of individual liberty with that of social consensus and government accountability, aiming to ensure stability and to prevent or alleviate disaffection by reconciling the interests of the state and of the body of its citizens.⁷²

⁷⁰ Joep Leersen, "Anglo-Irish Patriotism and Its European Context: Notes towards a Reassessment" in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland/Iris an dá chultúr*, vol. 3 (1988): 7-24, 8, 10, 12.

⁷¹ Leersen, "Anglo-Irish Patriotism and Its European Context," 14.

⁷² Leersen, "Anglo-Irish Patriotism and Its European Context," 15.

In other words, there was more to being Anglo-Irish in the eighteenth century than simply being good Irishmen, loyal to the British Crown, or both. Butler notes that a principal theme in Edgeworth's Irish writing was that "an individual's duty lay in identifying his interests within his country," and the Edgeworths, as progressive landlords, scientists, and educationists, embodied Leerssen's concept.⁷³ Furthermore, the juxtaposition of Irish and English, radical and conservative, professional and domestic, private and public, empowered yet dependent, delimits the threshold space—the space between meanings where Edgeworth both lived and wrote. This propinquity of supposed opposites gives a deeper, more nuanced definition of "Anglo-Irish." It offers a richer physical and psychological landscape from which to position Edgeworth in relation to her stories for girls, particularly for adolescent girls negotiating similar thresholds of age, marriage, autonomy, and dependence. In broader terms, Edgeworth was an Anglo-Irish writer who championed Irish autonomy while concomitantly defending the gentrified life she lived. She was both a teacher and a daughter who remained unmarried within her family's protection despite her ability to live independently due to her financial success as a writer. Hence, her hybrid identity derives not only from her combined Englishness and Irishness, as Kaufman and Fauske claim, but also from the simultaneous living of both a professional and a domestic life in a sympathetic and reforming landed family, with private and public personas that she presented to her family and the world. This complex identity makes her lived girlhood and her literary construction of girlhood worth examining together. Edgeworth's own identity, which allowed her to perform both adult and child roles at once, gives her the ability to fray the edges of other seemingly opposite identities: private and public, teacher and pupil, writer and daughter, Irish and English.

Just as Edgeworth's experience of girlhood was lived in a blend of private and public realms, Edgeworth intertwines her private observations of her younger siblings with fictional stories and characters, resulting in the construction of a girl character born in the family library at Edgeworthstown but broadcast to the world. Mona Narain looks at the intersection of the private and the public through

⁷³ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 453.

Edgeworth's writing, "where fiction, instruction, and the didactic intermingle to construct and prescribe complex identities."⁷⁴ Narain focuses on *Practical Education* (1798) and *Moral Tales* (1801), to examine how Edgeworth constructs public and private roles, but Edgeworth projects an image of girlhood through her other works: *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) and *Early Lessons* (1801) as well as *Moral Tales*. Because Edgeworth worked on fiction and non-fiction simultaneously, she integrated a "discussion about the construction of private subjectivity and its public performance" through her writing.⁷⁵ She "often wrote fictional pieces as illustrations of her theories and her theories were based on real life stories."⁷⁶ Her most famous is Rosamond in *Early Lessons*. Marilyn Butler, Hilary Havens, and Edgeworth's stepmother and biographer, Frances Edgeworth, concur that the character Rosamond is both autobiographical and a reflection of the younger siblings Edgeworth observed.⁷⁷ Rosamond reflects and refracts Edgeworth's ideal girl: she reflects the internal Edgeworth and her sisters, but she refracts the combined real girls into a new character who will meet society's approval. For Edgeworth, girlhood is formed in the inward space of home and self but must also meet the publicly approved moral standard. The result is a cultivation of female subjectivity rooted in both the personal and the domestic, blooming outward into the wider culture.

Edgeworth cultivates this female subject who straddles home and public just as thoroughly in her nonfiction writing, starting in the preface to *Practical Education* (1798), where she says, "We may boast of the superior delicacy of our fair countrywomen; a delicacy acquired from domestic example, and confirmed by public approbation."⁷⁸ In chapter XX, "Female Accomplishments," Edgeworth acknowledges:

⁷⁴ Mona Narain, "Not the Angel in the House: Intersections of the Public and Private in Maria Edgeworth's *Moral Tales* and *Practical Education*," in *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Julie Nash (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 57.

⁷⁵ Narain, "Not the Angel in the House," 58.

⁷⁶ Narain, "Not the Angel in the House," 58.

⁷⁷ Hilary Havens, *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Authorship from Manuscript to Print* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 129. Also discussed in Butler's biography, 477, and Frances Edgeworth's memoir, I: 252.

⁷⁸ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, v.

Accomplishments, it seems, are valuable, as being the objects of universal admiration. Some accomplishments have another species of value, as they are tickets of admission to fashionable company. Accomplishments have another, and a higher species of value, as they are supposed to increase a young lady's chance of a prize in the matrimonial lottery. Accomplishments have also a value as resources against ennui, as they afford continual amusement and innocent occupation. ... Women are peculiarly restrained in their situation, and in their employments, by the customs of society ... they should be encouraged, by all means, to cultivate those tastes which can attach them to their home. ... Every art, however trifling in itself, which tends to enliven and embellish domestic life, must be advantageous, not only to the female sex, but to society in general.⁷⁹

Where Edgeworth makes a distinction is in the usefulness of accomplishments (music, drawing, and dancing being the primary skills) beyond being a young woman's "best ticket of admission into society" to win "a prize in the matrimonial lottery."⁸⁰

Out of the prodigious number of young women who learn music and drawing, for instance, how many are there, who, after they become mistresses of their own time, and after they have the choice of their own amusements, continue to practise these accomplishments for the pure pleasure of occupation? As soon as a young lady is married, does she not frequently discover, that "she really has not leisure to cultivate talents which take up so much time?"⁸¹

Edgeworth expresses that "from whatever cause it arises, we may observe, that after young women are settled in life, their taste for drawing and music gradually declines."⁸² Society's taste for what is "accomplished" is flighty and unpredictable. Therefore, the best course for a young woman to be truly accomplished is to avoid a "system of female education, if the system of female manners, conspire to show in the fair sex a degrading anxiety to attract worthless admiration," which often produces "unequal marriages, which are sometimes called *excellent matches*, (and) seldom produce much happiness."⁸³ Instead, Edgeworth proposes that the "anxious, but reasonable mother ... determine upon her own conduct in the education of her

⁷⁹ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 522-23.

⁸⁰ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 522.

⁸¹ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 523.

⁸² Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 525.

⁸³ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 534. Emphasis in original.

daughters” by “avoiding the common errors of the frivolous” and considering “what is meant by the word success.”⁸⁴ Edgeworth posits success is “the permanent happiness of her child” long after the marriage is secured and that a child’s happiness is the object of “the good and enlightened mother.”⁸⁵ The good mother is key to a girl’s successful education. Edgeworth gives direction on that as well:

One of the best motives which a woman can have to cultivate her talents after she marries, is the hope and belief, that she may be essentially serviceable in the instruction of her family. ... Her knowledge of their minds, her taste, her judgment, her affection, her superintending intelligence, will be of inestimable value to her children. If she has any skill in any accomplishment, she will, for the first years of her daughters' lives, be undoubtedly the best person to instruct them. ... Habits of attention and industry (must be formed). ... We must, in education be careful to rank mere mechanical talents below the exercise of the mental powers.⁸⁶

The Edgeworths “famously advocated an educational system that stressed individual liberty, regardless of the child’s gender.”⁸⁷ Edgeworth makes no gendered distinction when discussing the acquisition of knowledge in the early, practical education of children. In fact, the words “boys” or “girls” rarely appear in the chapters on toys, tasks, attention and the chapters that make up the book’s first section. Phrases use the word “child” or “children” in most instances, for example: “We may exercise the ingenuity and judgment of children by these models of machines,” and “In teaching a child to read, every letter should have a precise single sound annexed to its figure.”⁸⁸ Even in later chapters where some distinction is made between boys and girls, as in the chapter on Accomplishments, there is little separation of boys and girls overall regarding the acquisition of knowledge across subjects often relegated to boys in school, such as science, engineering, mathematics, and economics. Girls were as capable and as interested in learning as boys.

⁸⁴ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 534-35.

⁸⁵ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 535.

⁸⁶ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 536.

⁸⁷ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story: the Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 267.

⁸⁸ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 24, 43.

Edgeworth and her father produced *Practical Education* amidst the late eighteenth century's heated discourse on education, which included fierce debates on female education. They believed education had a twofold purpose: "the culture of the heart and of understanding," bridging the gap between acquiring domestic and public skills.⁸⁹ *Practical Education* includes chapters ranging widely from Geometry, Chemistry, and Mechanics to Female Accomplishments, Vanity, Pride, and Understanding. This mingling of subjects relating to work in public life with values in the domestic sphere gives the mixture of topics equal importance for both boys and girls to learn. *Practical Education* reaffirms the idea that girls' education should be a private endeavour, but it claims that women's domestic space is a place where female intelligence is valued, and gender equity is made manifest through education. Late eighteenth-century women were restricted in the types of public identities they could assume, but they could be recognised and valued in these "private but nonetheless crucial roles" for which a proper education prepared them.⁹⁰ Clíona Ó Gallchoir notes Edgeworth, with other educated, intellectual women of her time, "propose(s) that certain forms of privacy could be of social worth and value equal to public identity and activity."⁹¹ This resulted in the plethora of women writers and salonnières that successfully blended public and private spheres.⁹² Amy Prendergast states that Edgeworthstown House was one of "elite sociability" and "Enlightenment Ireland's most famous literary household ... bearing witness to a wide range of intellectual activities."⁹³ Because the tenets of *Practical Education* are based on teaching through domestic conversations and everyday scientific experiments, Edgeworth manages to intersect public knowledge with private conversation by making the home the centre for learning, attempting to

⁸⁹ Colby, *Yesterday's Woman*, 91.

⁹⁰ Clíona Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005), 10.

⁹¹ Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation*, 11.

⁹² Edgeworthstown was one of many locales for literary and scientific discourse in Ireland, which included Elizabeth Vesey's house in Lucan, Dublin; Elizabeth Hastings, Lady Moira's house in Ussher Island, Dublin; Lady Jane Wilde's house in Merrion Square, Dublin. There were notable salons in England as well: Mary Berry (1763-1852), Lady Holland (1771-1845), and the Countess of Blessington (1789-1849). Lady Holland's (1771-1845) salon was political as well as literary. Note the location of Edgeworthstown far west of Dublin, emphasising my point that the family was secluded yet connected to the outside world. For more on literary salons see Prendergast, *Literary Salons Across Britain and Ireland in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Palgrave, 2015).

⁹³ Amy Prendergast, *Mere Bagatelles: Women's Diaries from Ireland, 1760-1810* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2024), 40.

equate the private sphere with the public and insisting girls were as capable as boys to function within a combination of both.

Edgeworth had already intervened in the debate on female education by writing her first published work, *Letters for Literary Ladies* (*Letters*), in 1795, three years before *Practical Education* was printed. *Letters* was written in response to correspondence between Edgeworth's father and his friend Thomas Day (1748-1789). Day did not approve of Richard Edgeworth encouraging his daughter's writing. Edgeworth later responded with acute social commentary on the advantages of female education in *Letters*, reinforcing the tenets of *Practical Education* through her epistolary narrative. The letters between Day and Edgeworth's father were part of the wider, highly politicised discourse concerning female modesty and decorum in the late eighteenth century, coinciding with the arguments concerning female education. Men like James Fordyce (*Sermons to Young Women*, 1766) and John Gregory (*A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, 1774) were advising young women on how to be more desirable to men: they should be modest and avoid being bold or assertive, and they should not appear too smart, as these characteristics would not appeal and might render young women unsuitable for marriage. Gregory tells them:

Be even cautious in displaying your good sense. It will be thought you assume a superiority over the rest of the company. But if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who, generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts, and a cultivated understanding.⁹⁴

Edgeworth read Gregory at school and later wrote to Fanny Robinson that when she read it, she never before had "so high an opinion of the private character of the writer," but at the time of writing to Fanny, she questions why this should be so: "You may remember lending me (Gregory) at Mrs D's ... whether it was the time at which I read it, as I was then allowed to read very little? Or the intrinsic merit of the

⁹⁴ John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*. By John Gregory, M.D. F.R.S. Late Professor of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, and First Physician to his Majesty in Scotland. To which is Prefixed An Account of the Life of the Author (Edinburgh: printed for A. Strahan, and T. Cadell, London; and W. Creech, Edinburgh, 1788), 122. Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

book I cannot tell but it made an impression on me which I have never forgotten.”⁹⁵ Gregory may have stayed in the back of her mind as she developed her theory on female education that did not support a woman’s use being merely ornamental. Fordyce preaches in a similar vein to Gregory:

I would exhort and even enjoin christian women, always to dress with decency and moderation, never to go beyond their circumstances, nor aspire above their station ... in short, never to spend too much time or thought on the embellishment of the body ; but always to prefer the graces of the mind, modestly, meekness, prudence, piety, with all virtuous and charitable occupations, all beautiful and useful accomplishments suited to their rank and condition. These are the chief ornaments of their sex.⁹⁶

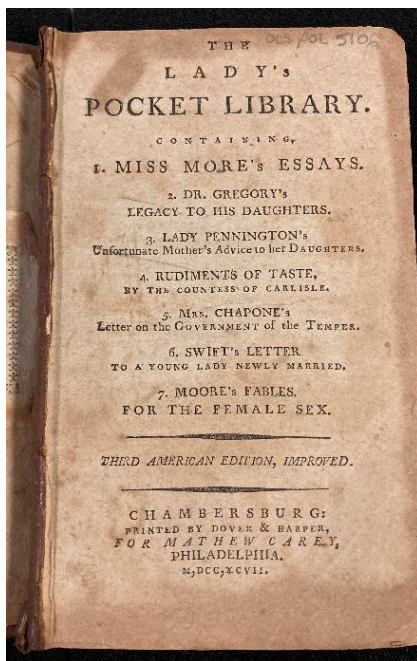


Figure 4: OLS POL 5106. The Lady's Pocket Library by Hannah More. Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1797. A strong sampling of essays on female conduct which includes essays by Hester Chapone, Hannah More, Dr Gregory, Lady Pennington, The Countess of Carlisle, and Jonathan Swift.

Edgeworth’s *Letters* is a rebuttal to this argument. Years had passed since that letter to Fanny Robinson, and Edgeworth’s text now aligned with women writers like Catherine Macaulay (*Letters on Education*, 1790) and Mary Wollstonecraft (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792), who also criticised the emphasis on accomplishments. They each advocated for women’s intellectual growth and education as a crucial element for the betterment of society, challenging the societal structures that subordinated women and undermined their potential. However, the aftermath of the French Revolution and the war with France in 1793 “brought about a conservative rejection in Britain of anything that smacked of revolutionary or ‘Jacobin’ ideas, including those

⁹⁵ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, 18 September 1783. MS 21,826/5. Copies, (in the hand of Harriet Edgeworth [Mrs. Butler]), of Letters from Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson Including a Description of the Manners and Customs of the Irish, 6 items, c.1782-1783, also Copies of Letters from William L. Beaufort to Fanny Robinson, c.1797. National Library of Ireland Archives, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.

⁹⁶ James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women, in Two Volumes, by James Fordyce, D.D.* vol. 1. (London: [n.p.], 1775), 4-5. Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

which seemed to unsettle the gender status quo.”⁹⁷ Where Macaulay and Wollstonecraft were outspoken and radical, calling for autonomy and political independence for women, Edgeworth was less so. Ó Gallchoir affirms *Letters* reveals Edgeworth’s concerns that “extremes of both radicalism and conservatism could result in the prescription of severely limited roles for women.”⁹⁸ Edgeworth was able to avoid censure by “defend(ing) the Enlightenment ideal of women’s intellectual equality in a context in which these ideals were increasingly viewed as suspect” by using a pragmatic philosophy focused on education in the domestic sphere to strike a harmonious balance between husband and wife, a progressive idea couched in language more palatable to conservatives.⁹⁹

Letters is an early example of how young women, whose boundaries extended no further than the drawing room, might publicly “articulate their views and contribute to ongoing debates about their lives” in an acceptable fashion.¹⁰⁰ She did this by writing a century before “the creation of a space in which actual girls could respond to such debates” in the new girls’ magazines of the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁰¹ By becoming a literary lady, the very thing Thomas Day found reprehensible, Edgeworth blazed a trail for women writers that moved them out of the drawing room and into a more, if not completely, public life. Her writing allows her to reject the common Enlightenment division of public and private spheres and to extend this rejection into the writing of her children’s stories, in which girl characters adeptly straddle the realms of home and beyond. Her texts are concerned with “moral improvement of private selfhood,” an interaction, not a separation, of the private and the public spheres.¹⁰² The resulting stories for children were a way to broadcast to society what was happening in the Edgeworth home, where valuing daily life experiences worked to realign the teaching of important practical knowledge from the academic sphere into the domestic. And so, one family’s utilitarian, practical method for teaching daughters and sons equally at home became hugely popular and widely recognised in the public sphere, allowing

⁹⁷ Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth*, 11.

⁹⁸ Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation*, 47.

⁹⁹ Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth*, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Rodgers, *Adolescent Girlhood and Literary Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle*, 7.

¹⁰¹ Rodgers, *Adolescent Girlhood and Literary Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle*, 7.

¹⁰² Narain, “Not the Angel in the House,” 61.

Edgeworth's personal anecdotes to contribute significantly to the public discourse on education.

Edgeworth's educational theory and writing practice inevitably point to an understanding that reading, like writing, is both a private and public act. In privileged, literate families in the eighteenth century, "reading aloud was an important and frequent daily activity" that often "took two hours a day;" conversations, questions, and reflections followed the reading.¹⁰³ The practice of home reading was varied and dynamic in the Edgeworthstown home library and included reading both educational treatises and entertaining tales. Adults instructed children by having conversations about what the younger ones were reading. Acting out stories or putting on parlour dramas was encouraged as a vehicle to perform or display what was learned and internalised. Reading aloud to one another was an everyday occurrence; the family gathered daily in the afternoon to hear Edgeworth read her works, and they all, regardless of age, offered her feedback.¹⁰⁴ Thus, reading and writing were both a private and a public endeavour. The Edgeworths' library preceded the Victorian parlour, a "little world" where "the dramas of domestic life" were acted out.¹⁰⁵ Edgeworthstown House had no parlour or drawing room, ensuring the library was where all the family business took place: education of younger children, estate business with tenants, receiving of visitors, family gatherings, and, in a corner amidst the bustle of daily life, at a desk her father made for her, Edgeworth writing (Figure 5). Edgeworth commented in her letters how much she enjoyed writing amidst the family's activities, first as an adolescent and later as a house daughter:

I am seated at this moment in the middle window of the recessed library. Sneyd & Honora ... laughing over Stern's Maria, which they are reading aloud ... Here is Harriett ... putting a map of the world together ... and in the middle of the room is Fanny skipping rope with all her might— and behind my mother's back who is working at the table lolls

¹⁰³ Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles, "Children Reading at Home: an Historical Overview," in *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature*, ed. Shelby Wolf et al. (New York; London: Routledge, 2011), 17. Arizpe and Styles refer to Lorna Weatherill's survey *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (1990), with direct reference on page 143.

¹⁰⁴ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 99.

¹⁰⁵ Thad Logan, *The Victorian Parlour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

Sophy reading from Jenny Wren or Mother Hubbard ... And here comes William with a new lock & key in his hand ... And here comes my aunt Mary talking of Henry's prescription...¹⁰⁶



Figure 5: "The Library Where Maria Edgeworth Wrote" in *Irish Pictures* by Richard Lovett. London, 1888.

She did not long for a room of her own, a separate space to write, but preferred the desk her father built in the library, both a symbolic and a physical representation of the space she occupied within her family, on the estate, and in her fiction. She helped her father manage his estate, keep accounts, and meet tenants in the library. Butler claims she was most fruitful writing children's stories in the 1790s, when she found her place among her younger siblings "as a teacher and, more importantly, as an inventor of stories," involving the entire household and thus strengthening her position.¹⁰⁷ This position, working at her desk in the library, allowed her to participate in the communal life of the family while simultaneously focusing on her writing, autonomously crafting an independent career. Her stories of girlhood were written in the library, borne of her imagination in a half-life between participation, memory and observation. The library at Edgeworthstown is at once a private space belonging to the family and a public space belonging to the estate, and so the writing Edgeworth produced in this space is appropriately fluid:

¹⁰⁶ Maria Edgeworth, *Maria Edgeworth's Letters from Ireland*, ed. Valerie Pakenham. Letter to Margaret Ruxton dated 13 October 1807.

¹⁰⁷ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 290.

children's stories, witty drawing-room tales and tales that dealt with "the *real* interests of the world" through social commentary.¹⁰⁸ The space she occupied in her library speaks to her private world while looking out to a public one.

The library was a place Claudia Mitchell and Carrie Rentschler see "not as a static container for girls and their practices but, instead, as an active, material production of power and social relationships."¹⁰⁹ Contrary to L. H. M. Soulsby's claim that the "lack of an obvious social space" marked female adolescence, and in opposition to Henry James, who discussed in the preface to his novel *The Awkward Age* (1899) how a girl who has left the schoolroom "lacks a clear location in her home or out of it," the Edgeworthstown library was that active space for social relationships.¹¹⁰ The library was everything from nursery schoolroom to business office, making it a place where adolescents could remain comfortable while they straddled childhood and adulthood. There is evidence of this in a surviving portion of the handwritten catalogue of the library, where the tastes of many readers were represented. Máire Kennedy explains:

The catalogue notes the initials of each book's owner, thus we know some of the books owned by Maria, for example *Democracy in America* by de Tocqueville, Fenelon's *Education des filles*, *Memoires de Madame de Genlis*, Rousseau's *Inégalité des hommes*, Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* and *De l'esprit des loix*, and we also know which books were easily accessible to her in her family library. It is very unusual for individual ownership to be documented in this way; at least sixteen members of the family are represented in the library.¹¹¹

Sixteen book owners, children and adults, show not only a hybridity of ownership but that their books on the shelves of the formal family library meant young people, as well as adults, were welcome in that space while more public-facing events were happening there at the same time. The library focused that hybridity by bringing the

¹⁰⁸ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 303.

¹⁰⁹ Carrie Rentschler and Claudia Mitchell, "Introduction: the Significance of Place in Girlhood Studies," in *Girlhood and the Politics of Place*, ed. Carrie Rentschler and Claudia Mitchell (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016), 2.

¹¹⁰ Bilston, *The Awkward Age*, 2. Bilston discusses both James and Soulsby in her introduction.

¹¹¹ Máire Kennedy, "Women and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," in *The Experience of Reading: Irish Historical Perspectives*, ed. Bernadette Cunningham and Máire Kennedy (Dublin: Rare Books Group of the Library Association of Ireland and Economic and Social history of Ireland, 1999), 83.

broader Edgeworth estate inside while sending the Edgeworth family out into society through the parade of guests' visits and salons held there. Thus, Edgeworth's stories and tales inspired readers, both the Edgeworth siblings and readers outside the family, to engage in these activities in their discussing, dramatising and editing practices. The unique situation at Edgeworthstown provided a model, acting out of the tenets of *Practical Education*, published for the beneficial use by other Anglo-Irish families. The Edgeworth family strongly influenced society by printing and using Edgeworth's tales for their own children's education and then publishing and disseminating them for other families to read and use. This influence emanated from the Edgeworthstown library. Ó Gallchoir states, "for Edgeworth, the idea of a space neither fully private nor fully public, neither exclusively male or exclusively female, was located in the estate, a space which men and women could exercise socially useful roles and communicate freely with one another."¹¹² At Edgeworthstown, the library was the focal point of the estate, the microcosmic place from where such hybridity emanated.

The situation at Edgeworthstown made Edgeworth a pivotal figure in the lively and multi-generational family home. Her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744-1817), had four wives. Two of those wives were Honora and Elizabeth Sneyd, sisters who invited their remaining unmarried sisters to live at Edgeworthstown. The two Sneyd aunts remained long after both sisters died, and a fourth, unrelated wife came to the estate. Education of the children in the family fell to the parents, aunts, and Edgeworth as the eldest daughter of twenty siblings at home. There were forty-four years between Edgeworth and her youngest half-sibling, a span which helped form her hybrid identity: she was not one of the children, nor was she a parent. Moreover, while she was responsible for educating younger siblings, she was under her father's tutelage and editing eye. Thus, she was both adult and child, teacher and student.

Edgeworth was not educated in the rational manner she espouses later in her writing of *Practical Education* (1798), for she was with her mother for the first five years of her life, while her father, passionate at the time about Rousseau's Romantic educational philosophy in *Émile* (1762), brought her older brother Richard to

¹¹² Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation*, 10.

France in hope to educate him in the Rousseauian philosophy while he courted another woman. Edgeworth then spent years away at school in Derby, where her imaginative ways were not yet discouraged. She completed schoolwork early to read without interruption, and she read novels voraciously. She told wild tales and ghost stories to her classmates at night, the most notorious involving an adventurer who disguised himself with a mask of human skin.¹¹³ In a letter to her friend, Fanny Robinson, she recalls:

Our leaping off the top scaffold at the hazard of our necks ... and our having the foolscap on for walking on the Rails of the stairs going to the Drawing Room & Miss Ford's popping out upon us and crying *So Ladies!* and a thousand other pretty pranks" that they might laugh over "by the fireplace where you and I chattered many a livelong hour."¹¹⁴

Edgeworth's education at school was "pleasant, well run, and by what were to become the Edgeworths' standards, no more than conventional."¹¹⁵ Not solely focused on academics, subjects included French, Italian, embroidery, handwriting, and dancing. In another letter to Robinson, Edgeworth, age fifteen, confides her unease about attending balls:

I have an odd opinion to ask you – are you happier at a ball than anywhere else? ... I am inclined to believe that it is all the preparations, the Music, the dress, the praise & the bustle, which constitute the charms of a Ball You are a very agreeable person, agreeable manners & many external accomplishments which I want – You are active, nimble & dance well. I am awkward & dance very ill. ... It is not therefore the least surprising that you should be happy in a ballroom ... or that I ... should feel myself much less at ease in company than among friends.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Frances Anne Edgeworth, *A Memoir of Maria Edgeworth, with a Selection from her Letters* (London: Joseph Masters and Son, 1867), 1, 10. See also Hawthorne, 9.

¹¹⁴ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, 6 December 1783, letter quoted in Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 55. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁵ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 52.

¹¹⁶ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, [n.d.] [copy], MS 21,826/2. Copies, (in the hand of Harriet Edgeworth [Mrs. Butler]), of Letters from Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson Including a Description of the Manners and Customs of the Irish, 6 items, c.1782-1783, also Copies of Letters from William L. Beaufort to Fanny Robinson, c.1797. National Library of Ireland Archives, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland. Note Pakenham dates this letter 'Autumn 1783.' Emphasis in original.

Based on surviving letters, Robinson appears to be Edgeworth's only true friend from school. She writes to Robinson that "it seems both our last letters had been copied from each other, the ideas are so very similar yet we are at least a hundred miles distance from one another!"¹¹⁷ Their correspondence has anecdotes and conversations typically adolescent, offering insight into the teenaged Edgeworth that does not appear elsewhere. Edgeworth complains of the summer heat but muses Robinson must be used to it if she can "sit baking in a playhouse to see Mrs Siddons." This leads Edgeworth to tease Robinson about being "Siddons mad" and admitting that if it were the novelist Frances Burney, Edgeworth would be equally starstruck and "completely happy." She then entreats Robinson to "do me the honour of procuring a correspondence" with Burney, gushing over Burney's *Evelina* and declaring she "should not only be desirous but ambitious of her friendship."¹¹⁸ In the same letter, she admits she hates exercising ("I said I was not fond of it"); she apologises for being too busy to write because she declares, with some shock to herself, she is writing a book ("Well then, I am writing a book— a book!— yes a book), and she worries about her teachers thinking she was mean to classmates when she was at school. She implores Robinson to show Miss Van her letters to prove the teacher is mistaken. Edgeworth wants her teachers to know that although she may have "a particular turn for ridicule" according to Van, she has outgrown the need to exercise it for fear of causing "the uneasing of others."¹¹⁹

There must have been a falling out at one time because Edgeworth spends a few sheets of paper extolling on the virtues of Robinson's friendship in response to Robinson's apologising for being "a very saucy girl" and asking if Edgeworth "hates her." Edgeworth acknowledges their bad tempers and pledges to do better as a friend.¹²⁰ Yet, peppered throughout the letters are references to schoolmates, which are not always pleasant. Edgeworth is surprised Miss Hartley wishes to write to her, saying, "there was no sympathy between us" and noting, "her heart is the least desirous thing about her," and asks, "how should I estimate the real sentiments of a

¹¹⁷ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, 18 September 1783. MS 21,826/5. National Library of Ireland Archives.

¹¹⁸ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, 15 August 1875 [copy], MS 21,826/3x. National Library of Ireland Archives.

¹¹⁹ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, [n.d.] [copy], MS 21,826/1. National Library of Ireland Archives.

¹²⁰ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, 6 and 18 December 1784 [copy], MS 21,826/ 6, 7. National Library of Ireland Archives.

friend if they are all exaggerated?" Later, conceding, "So Hartley's a great friend of yours. Well then I am sure she must be altered." She calls Miss Ekins "a pretty but affected young lady" and chastises Robinson for ending a letter before she spilled the gossip:¹²¹

Pray how can you stop just when you had raised my curiosity about Miss Ekins? Do you mean Louise Ekins? I lived at school with her for a twelvemonth. ... I suppose she does not say much more for me but you know me my dear Fanny & I flatter myself you will not suffer anyone to usurp my place in your heart or judge me without a hearing.¹²²

In the same letter, she writes on 28 October that she hopes to hear from Miss Burney, but then the following line dated 02 November shares her extreme disappointment that Burney will not write to her. She brings up a scandal in the newspapers about "Miss Patterson & Lady (?)" and then notes, "how I have forgot my prudence within this twelvemonth! I hope you have burnt my letters."¹²³ Lastly, Edgeworth expresses jealousy and some anxiety in an eighteenth-century version of "fear of missing out" when she learns Fanny is to return to school for another year:

Going to Wimpole Street again ... with your gay and entertaining companions. ... I consider this as a kind of second parting and I shan't hear from you and you'll quite forget me! And I shall be all alone in Ireland! ... Keep me in your mind, will you ever talk, will you ever more think of your Edge? Let my drawer, let my bed, my stool, anything stand for me.¹²⁴

These letters offer a glimpse into Edgeworth's adolescence, but there are more than schoolgirl thoughts to consider here. At school, she had been teased for her bookishness, but she tells Robinson, "I am not to be mocked out of a good thing—a girl of fifteen & a philosopher where joined sound ridiculous ... surely there is

¹²¹ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, 18 September 1783 [copy], MS 21,826/5. National Library of Ireland Archives.

¹²² Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, 18 September 1783 [copy], MS 21,826/5. National Library of Ireland Archives.

¹²³ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, 18 September 1783 [copy], MS 21,826/5. National Library of Ireland Archives.

¹²⁴ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, 18 September 1783 [copy], MS 21,826/6. National Library of Ireland Archives.

nothing ridiculous in a girl of fifteen's attending to the feelings of her own mind & endeavouring to find out what makes her more or less happy."¹²⁵ The letters' anecdotes are entwined with Edgeworth's developing thoughts on politics, rebellion, and the Irish situation; on Irish people's work ethic and culture; on her endeavours on the estate and in her writing; and thoughts on reading novels and other genres to consider their influence for the betterment of society. The letters, written between 1782 and 1785 when she was aged fourteen to seventeen, stand as personal artefacts from adolescence that straddle the border into adulthood quite seamlessly: Edgeworth is both schoolgirl and estate steward, giggling over Burney's novels and musing over history and politics; learning to dance and embroider while developing "habits of business and accuracy" balancing account books and meeting tenant farmers.¹²⁶ She embraced hybridity with apparent ease and "marvellous acuteness and patience."¹²⁷ Edgeworth and Robinson wrote letters to one another for years. They shared sketches of their towns. After speculating in almost every letter when they might meet again, Edgeworth, at twenty-two, visited her now-married friend, Mrs. Frances Hoare, in Roehampton, England, in 1792, a decade after they met at school.

During her absence from home while at school, her father determined, with the influence of his second wife Honora Sneyd and after the debacle in France with his eldest son, that a rational education was best. He developed a method for learning to read, but the plan grew to include a method for teaching "scientific and technical knowledge as well as morality" through stories for children.¹²⁸ The attempt to educate Richard in France illuminated that Richard was unteachable and unmanageable, and he eventually left on a ship for America in 1779 at age fifteen, forsaking his rights as the eldest son. It was not until Edgeworth went to Ireland in 1782 at the age of fourteen, her schooling complete, her father now married to his third wife Elizabeth Sneyd, with seven young stepsiblings at home to be taught, that she was subject to his rational education. Once home in Ireland, her father enlisted her as his accountant and agent for the estate and to complete the work of Honora's

¹²⁵ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, [n.d] 1782, letter quoted in Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 74.

¹²⁶ Frances Anne Edgeworth, *A Memoir of Maria Edgeworth, with a Selection from Her Letters*, 1:14-15.

¹²⁷ Frances Anne Edgeworth, *A Memoir of Maria Edgeworth*, 1:14-15.

¹²⁸ Arizpe and Styles, "Children Reading at Home: an Historical Overview," 7.

educational practices. He “supervised and corrected everything she wrote” as she worked to put into words what he had theorised a decade earlier.¹²⁹ He preferred her rational and didactic writing, once exclaiming, “I don’t want any of your painting— none of your drapery! I can imagine all that— let me see the bare skeleton.”¹³⁰ Despite many successful years away at school, she voiced her preference for private, home instruction. The result was a hybrid education, a combination of the Romantic and the practical, formal and informal, that helped to shape the imaginative, passionate yet prudent Edgeworth.

While her father’s practical influence on her writing is indisputable, there is still evidence peppered throughout her tales of Edgeworth’s attempts to balance the didactic and moral “education of the heart” with amusement, resulting in yet another successful bonding of apparent opposites, the fantastic and the practical.¹³¹ Manly contends there is a fairy-tale element to her realistic tales, where children “defeat real-life ogres, oppressive land agents, homelessness, public calumny.”¹³² Similarly, Augustus Hare related an anecdote during a family reading of Sydney Owenson’s *O’Donnel* in 1815: Edgeworth’s father stated, “this is quite improbable!” to which she replied, “never mind the improbability, let us go on with the entertainment.”¹³³ This story also appears in Frances Edgeworth’s memoir of Edgeworth, where she explains, “Maria was always so much interested in a story that she would not stop to reason upon it,” implying Edgeworth, the reader, was quite willing to let a text transcend the realities of daily life.¹³⁴ In Edgeworth’s story *Garry Owen* (1832), young Cecilia tells her brother, “I wish I was a fairy, even for one day, a good fairy, I mean... I would raise my wand and have a good house raised,” wishing to help a family in distress.¹³⁵ The greedy and unkind attorney Mr Case in *Simple Susan* (1800) is “the giant over the hedge,” and a servant’s influence in *The Good French Governess* (1802) is “gnomelike.”¹³⁶ Stronger evidence of her propensity

¹²⁹ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 159.

¹³⁰ Hawthorne, *Doubt and Dogma in Maria Edgeworth*, 7-8.

¹³¹ Colby, *Yesterday’s Woman*, 91.

¹³² Manly, introduction to *Selected Tales*, xxvi.

¹³³ Augustus Hare, ed., *The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth* (London: Edward Arnold, 1894), 609.

¹³⁴ Frances Anne Edgeworth, *A Memoir of Maria Edgeworth, with a Selection from Her Letters* (London: Joseph Masters and Son, 1867), 166.

¹³⁵ Maria Edgeworth, *Self-denial and Other Tales* (London and Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1889?), 35.

¹³⁶ Maria Edgeworth, *Moral Tales for Young People* (London: J. Johnson, 1802), 9. Simple Susan “giant over the hedge,” 49, vol. 3 in *The Parent’s Assistant*, 3rd ed. (London: J. Johnson, 1800).

for fantasy and imaginative entertainment lies in her letters, with numerous accounts of her amusing younger siblings, as in this letter to her sister Honora in 1809:

Yesterday at dinner I was considering which of the children I would begin with if I was to play a hungry ogress and I said I would eat little Francis for supper & Sophy for breakfast & Harriet in between breakfast and dinner and Fanny for dinner...¹³⁷

Evidence of the fanciful and the rational entwined in Edgeworth's writing pushes against the dualism or "forced binary" of instructional vs entertaining in a subtle reflection of Edgeworth's own hybridity as teacher, daughter, writer, and reader.¹³⁸ Mostly, though, the rational wins out. *Garry Owen's* Cecilia mourns there are no fairies, calling it "nonsense," and Rose, for her loyalty to Susan in *Simple Susan*, is offered a servant's place of work in the big house. Despite instances of fantasy popping up throughout her stories, Edgeworth's works appear to set aside her childish, imaginative ways of storytelling to ensure her tales end with logic and her characters mature enough to understand that the rational should prevail in all cases.

Edgeworth had an intense desire throughout her life to please her father, a sentiment that originated when she was sent away to school and persisted long after his death. Eminent Edgeworth bibliographer Bertha Coolidge Slade said, "it would be impossible to write of her, or of her works, without recognizing his power over all that concerned her, or, indeed his entire family."¹³⁹ Kaufman and Fauske call her "a daughter who lived under the historical shadow of her father."¹⁴⁰ She has been recognised almost universally as the acquiescing child to a parent who controlled with high expectations. He spelled out his expectations in a letter to ten-year-old Maria when she was away at school. The letter indicates he delayed answering her previous letter so that she might grow in resolve and perseverance. It also expresses the "true perfection of the female character" as long as it is not "placed too forward:" an "amiable girl" with a "benevolent heart," "complying temper," "obliging manners"

¹³⁷ Edgeworth, *Maria Edgeworth's Letters from Ireland*, 101.

¹³⁸ Christine Wilkie-Stibbs, *The Outside Child In and Out of the Book* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 123.

¹³⁹ Slade, *Maria Edgeworth, 1767-1849. A Bibliographical Tribute ... With Eight Plates ... and Four Facsimiles*, xv.

¹⁴⁰ Kaufman and Fauske, *An Uncomfortable Authority*, 12.

along with “gentleness, reserve & real good sense.”¹⁴¹ In a postscript in the same letter, her stepmother Honora reinforces the importance of taking her father’s advice to “be everything he approves.”¹⁴² This directive is a response to Edgeworth’s rebellious and unacceptable behaviour after the death of her mother, which led to her being sent away to school at age seven. Almost at that moment, Edgeworth intuitively desires that she be “ambitious of the valuable praise” of her parents; praise she clamours for in her first letter home: “I intend to make great improvement in everything I learn: as I know it will give you great satisfaction to hear that I am a good Girl.”¹⁴³ Her father wanted “true judgment” and “the regulation of your behaviour” which can only result “from reflection” of past transgressions, while Honora directed Edgeworth to “endeavour to improve yourself in everything which you have an opportunity of learning.”¹⁴⁴ Edgeworth took these directives to heart.

Edgeworth had years at school to internalise her father’s expectations so that when she returned home at fourteen, teaching siblings and documenting their learning behaviour, she was not only exposed to but also immersed within the expectations her father set out for his girls. This influenced how she constructed and reconstructed girl characters in her stories, fictional amalgams of younger sisters, cousins and anyone brought up in his and his second wife Honora’s philosophy. Edgeworth’s girl started as an internalised concept but was quickly projected to the outside world through her first collection for children, *The Parent’s Assistant* (1796). This practice of blending the private and public and using private experience for public-facing texts was, as stated earlier, an extension of her home life, but it was also part of her own construction of herself.

Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace contends Edgeworth consciously chose to become the dutiful daughter and live under the myth of the benevolent patriarch

¹⁴¹ Richard Lovell Edgeworth to Maria Edgeworth, [n.d.], 1778, MS 10,166/7/12 Pos. 9206, Edgeworth Papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland. Also quoted in Butler, 55-56 and Pakenham, 24.

¹⁴² Honora Sneyd Edgeworth to Maria Edgeworth, [n.d.], 1778, MS 10,166/7/12 Pos. 9206, Edgeworth Papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.

¹⁴³ Maria Edgeworth to Honora Sneyd Edgeworth, 30 March 1776, MS 10,166/7/10 Pos. 9206, Edgeworth Papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.

¹⁴⁴ Richard Lovell Edgeworth to Maria Edgeworth, [n.d.], 1778, MS 10,166/7/31 Pos. 9206, Edgeworth Papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland; Honora Sneyd Edgeworth to Maria Edgeworth, 1778, MS 10,166/7/14 Pos. 9206, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.

despite her father's neglect and abandonment of her as a young child.¹⁴⁵ More recent scholarship explores the complexity between the young girl Edgeworth and her father. Caroline Gonda's examination of the character Virginia in *Belinda* contends Virginia, abandoned by her father at an early age, holds all the dreams of a neglected child wishing to be reunited and in good graces with her father, in a striking resemblance to Edgeworth's early years.¹⁴⁶ What strikes is Gonda's interpretation of Virginia's reunion with him: "The whole episode is presented with terrific ambivalence, and mixed messages abound: along with the sentimental cliché's and mockery is a strain of fantasy and wish fulfilment which makes the scene a difficult one to interpret."¹⁴⁷ Gonda is alluding to how it reflects Edgeworth's innermost feelings about her own reunion with her father after the death of her mother. The reunion scene in *Belinda* paints "a shifting and uneasy picture of love between a father and daughter who are strangers to one another ... It also suggests, however fleetingly, the possibility of more frightening, violent emotions on the part of the wronged and rejected daughter."¹⁴⁸ Virginia has a profound moment when she considers how she feels about her father as a result of the abandonment. She decides, "I cannot forgive my father; but I can love him."¹⁴⁹ In the end, Virginia decides to "make it the business of my life to please him (her father)" in a reflection of Edgeworth's decision to hold her father as "the first object and motive of my mind."¹⁵⁰

Ann Owens Weekes states Edgeworth's didacticism did not emanate from her father but from herself due to the circumstances of her early childhood and her desire to replace her first stepmother in her father's affections. The didacticism is "the ultimate if indirect result of the neglect and loneliness of Maria's childhood and

¹⁴⁵ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*. A detailed account of Maria's early years occurs on pages 46-57.

¹⁴⁶ Caroline Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions, 1709-1834: Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 218.

¹⁴⁷ Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions*, 219.

¹⁴⁸ Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions*, 219.

¹⁴⁹ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda: Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 410.

¹⁵⁰ Richard Lovell Edgeworth and Maria Edgeworth, *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Esq. Begun by Himself, and Concluded by His Daughter, Maria Edgeworth. In Two Volumes ...* (London: Printed for R. Hunter, successor to Mr. Johnson ... and Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy ..., 1821), 2:iii. Virginia's words are found in Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1999), 409.

the consequent desire never to risk exile again.”¹⁵¹ Myers highlights Edgeworth as one of “the large number of the period’s women writers (who) record unhelpful or absent mothers.”¹⁵² Elizabeth Thiel considers the vestiges of a nineteenth-century middle-class family ideology in her book *The Fantasy of Family* (2008) and examines what happens in a family when a mother dies, arguing when that void is filled with a stepmother, the eldest daughter is displaced.¹⁵³ Not one but three stepmothers displaced Edgeworth. Adding to this “fantasy of family” is the fact that her second and third mothers were sisters. Marrying a deceased wife’s sister was a situation receiving much attention in the public discourse at the turn of the nineteenth century; it was not permissible but often overlooked and eventually forbidden by law in the Marriage Act of 1835.¹⁵⁴ The Sneyd family disapproved of Elizabeth’s marriage to Richard Edgeworth. Still, the couple married a mere eight months after Honora’s death despite these protestations.

In this redefinition of family, Edgeworth perpetuates the myth of the benevolent patriarch by adopting the role of “deputy wife,” as seen in her co-writing Honora’s *Philosophy of Education* with her father, teaching her younger siblings, recording their behaviour, writing *Practical Education*, collecting rents, and managing his estate correspondence, even being given a younger brother, William, to raise.¹⁵⁵ She balanced working as his partner in business while remaining his pupil by having him edit everything she wrote. This commanded his close attention and ensured the continuation of their “literary partnership.”¹⁵⁶ She managed to

¹⁵¹ Ann Owens Weekes, *Irish Women Writers: An Uncharted Tradition* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 36-37.

¹⁵² Mitzi Myers, “Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children’s Books,” *Children’s Literature* 14 (1986): 54-55.

¹⁵³ Elizabeth Thiel, *The Fantasy of Family: Nineteenth-Century Children’s Literature and the Myth of the Domestic Ideal* (London: Routledge, 2008), 26.

¹⁵⁴ Thiel discusses this in *The Fantasy of Family*, referring to the Marriage Act of 1835 that was based on the Anglican Common Book of Prayer’s ‘Table of Kindred and Affinity.’ This table considered marriage to both blood relations and relations by marriage to be incestuous, and marriages of both ‘sanguinity’ and ‘affinity’ were prohibited. The list found here: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160411225239/https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/table-of-kindred-and-affinity.aspx> is almost comical in who it includes, and one must wonder what drove the necessity for such a list in the first place. Nevertheless, Richard Lovell Edgeworth chose to marry his deceased wife’s sister despite family protestations and accusations of impropriety. There is also reference to this impropriety in the *Dublin Historical Record* 55, no. 2 (Autumn 2002): 196-207.

¹⁵⁵ Claudia Nelson, *Family Ties in Victorian England* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2007), 87.

¹⁵⁶ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 159.

remain in both his good graces and his sight at all times, with many other younger children to distract him.¹⁵⁷ Edgeworth was second born in this family, and while only ten siblings lived long enough to see the birth in 1799 of their half-sister Fanny, number seventeen by fourth wife Frances Beaufort Edgeworth, five more would follow, bringing the total number of children to twenty-two, concluding with the birth of the youngest child, Michael Pakenham Edgeworth (1812-81). By balancing these roles for herself, she secured the positions of deputy wife, student-daughter, and female author indefinitely, embodying the possibilities all these roles would afford her in adolescence and new adulthood and bringing forward that vitality to flourish within various identities throughout her later adult years.

Edgeworth lived at home her whole life under her father's protection until he died. She earned a substantial living from her writing, rendering her financially autonomous, and she adeptly navigated dealings with her publishers. Yet she welcomed and appreciated her father's involvement in the business of her writing affairs.¹⁵⁸ Catherine Gallagher highlights the debt that Edgeworth owed her father in allowing her a useful, productive profession despite "her time, energy, education, and talents" being "otherwise unemployable."¹⁵⁹ This "also allowed her to conceive of her 'author-self' as the expression of a conglomerate being larger than her individual self," as seen in her execution of his thoughts, which were not simply dictation but her crafted, creative expression of his ideas.¹⁶⁰ The result of their collaborative process often presented as his taking credit and appropriating her work, illustrated in the section on prefaces in Section 2.2 ahead. Although highly successful, Gallagher saw her time and energy "to be largely at her father's disposal."¹⁶¹ Time, she happily gave in his service and, as a result, in service of herself as well, seen in the growing reputation she earns as a writer.

¹⁵⁷ Emily Lawless, *Maria Edgeworth* (London: Macmillan, 1904), 38.

¹⁵⁸ For examples of Edgeworth's dealings with printers and publishers, see Bugg's edited *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook* (2016) and Edgeworth's letters to R. Hunter, the nephew who succeeded Johnson, and Baldwin & Cradock, dates ranging from 1814-1837, available online at the National Library of Ireland: MS 51,138/4/1.

¹⁵⁹ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: the Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 271.

¹⁶⁰ Gallagher, *Nobody's Story*, 270, 271. Gallagher finds the term "authorship self" in Edgeworth's correspondence with the Ruxtons.

¹⁶¹ Gallagher, *Nobody's Story*, 270.

Edgeworth never married nor expected to live independently from her family.¹⁶² She navigated this blended identity well, writing in her father's memoir that "few female authors, perhaps none, have ever enjoyed such advantages, in a critic, friend, and father, united."¹⁶³ And while, close to death, he told her, "no daughter since the creation of the world has ever given a father more pleasure," he was still making demands of her on his deathbed, telling her to be good and requesting she finish his memoir.¹⁶⁴ She acquiesced to his wishes like a young girl rather than a woman in midlife.¹⁶⁵ Butler and Pakenham quote him, saying, "I did not know how much I loved Maria until I came to the parting with her:" a heartfelt sentiment yet one that pricks like an afterthought.¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, one of Edgeworth's early biographers, Helen Zimmern, notes in 1883 that the birth of Richard Lovell Edgeworth's daughter, "destined to be his companion and friend, is an event he does not even note in his memoirs."¹⁶⁷ Edgeworth completed his memoirs after he died and did not edit her birth into the narrative. Ironically, and likely much to his ghostly chagrin, for all his bombast and arrogance, prefacing and taking credit for her writing, Zimmern states his death meant that he would "always be remembered as the father of his daughter."¹⁶⁸

Edgeworth was immensely popular and among the best-paid writers of her day, yet even professionally, she chose to depend on her father. Butler notes, "she was paid £2,100 for *Patronage* in 1814, the year in which Walter Scott earned £700 for *Waverley* and Austen paid to publish *Mansfield Park* herself."¹⁶⁹ Along with two collaborations, *Practical Education* and *Essays on Professional Education* (1809), her father edited and censored her work, negotiated her publishing contracts, and prefaced and commented on almost everything she wrote. Edgeworth considered her joint projects with her father to be her best work despite the novels she wrote independently of him, *Castle Rackrent* (1801) and *Helen* (1834), being vastly more

¹⁶² Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 492.

¹⁶³ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Esq.*, 2:351-352.

¹⁶⁴ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 289. Edgeworth writes of this encounter with her father in a letter to Étienne Dumont dated September 1817.

¹⁶⁵ Hawthorne, *Doubt and Dogma in Maria Edgeworth*, 7-8.

¹⁶⁶ Found in both Butler, *A Literary Biography*, 401, and Pakenham, *Maria Edgeworth: Letters from Ireland*, 212. Both are referring to a letter from Edgeworth to her Aunt Ruxton dated ?14 June 1817.

¹⁶⁷ Helen Zimmern, *Maria Edgeworth* (London: W. H. Allen, 1883), 6.

¹⁶⁸ Zimmern, *Maria Edgeworth*, 2.

¹⁶⁹ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 492.

successful than the novels written under his scrutiny. Slade comments, “by her own estimate, she owed everything to her father. The fact that her best work was done without him lays her judgment open to doubt.”¹⁷⁰ Although Edgeworth credited her father for everything she accomplished as a writer, the subversive qualities in her narratives show that Edgeworth may have written more autonomously than she realised, indicating that she adeptly negotiated a balance between dutiful daughter and autonomous writer.

Edgeworth’s writing practice began in earnest in 1779 when she was eleven years old. Her father requested letters from her that were less formal and more familial, and he set writing tasks requiring her to complete stories he began or write original tales based on themes he suggested. That Edgeworth’s writing life started in her adolescence, away from the home life she longed to be part of, helps construct an ideology that informs Edgeworth’s definition of herself as a “literary lady” who was both dutiful daughter and female writer. It also supports my assertion that Edgeworth’s writing allowed her to project a certain girl to the world, who was practically educated and compliant, not necessarily the impetuous girl she was herself but more her father’s ideal girl. Thiel’s argument that nineteenth-century writers of children’s texts like Edgeworth, Mrs Sherwood, and Hannah More “emphasized that parental guidance was crucial to the child’s moral and spiritual well-being” hints at how Edgeworth rewrote her early life as a reaction to her young girlhood because, in Edgeworth’s case, her parents adopted an “out of sight out of mind” approach to her upbringing and set her outside the family for many years.¹⁷¹ Later, when she was considered “the most distinguished and popular woman writer of her time,” she worked to strike a balance between autonomy and acquiescence by using her author’s voice to comment on everything from gender to politics while also voicing repeatedly in her letters her deference to an exacting father.¹⁷² In *Maria Edgeworth and Romance* (2004), Sharon Murphy states the romance tradition “allows an author to deny the reality in which he finds himself, and to impose his romanticised or idealised perceptions upon what he sees.”¹⁷³ She contends, and

¹⁷⁰ Slade, *Maria Edgeworth, 1767-1849. A Bibliographical Tribute*, xx.

¹⁷¹ Thiel, *The Fantasy of Family: Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature and the Myth of the Domestic Ideal*, 6.

¹⁷² Slade, *Maria Edgeworth, 1767-1849. A Bibliographical Tribute*, xxii.

¹⁷³ Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 101.

Myers agrees, that Edgeworth uses her tales for children to “romanticise and rewrite her early life.”¹⁷⁴ *Simple Susan*’s hero, the eponymous Susan, was kind and quiet, obedient and gentle. Lucy of “Harry & Lucy” from *Early Lessons* was eager and industrious. Even Rosamond, Edgeworth’s “real” autobiographical girl, was a reinvention, as Edgeworth herself was so badly behaved after the death of her mother she “committed a series of rebellious acts, including throwing tea in someone’s face, climbing out of a garret window (causing a passer-by to run inside and warn her maid), trampling on a set of newly glazed hotbed frames, and cutting the squares out of her aunt’s checked sofa covers.”¹⁷⁵ Edgeworth fabricates girlhood by writing about idealised girls who embody the qualities seen in Susan, Lucy, and Rosamond and experience girlhood very differently than Edgeworth did. This girlhood she projects informs the cultural definition of girlhood that permeates within the many subsequent editions of her books while contributing to her multifaceted identity as a female author.

Among the various facets of Edgeworth’s hybrid identities, her status as an Anglo-Irish writer is often discussed, although the term “Anglo-Irish” is fraught with opposing definitions and understandings. When examining this particular identity, it is important to describe what Ireland was like in the tumultuous latter half of the eighteenth century.¹⁷⁶ Ireland was an impoverished nation grappling with oppressive British laws. And while the eighteenth century has often been described as a period when little happened in Ireland, Ian McBride challenges this by stating that Ireland was involved in British conflicts abroad for much of the century, discussed below, and that “deep-seated tensions—between Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter, settler and native, landlord and tenant—all culminat(ed) in the explosion of 1798.”¹⁷⁷ The century also saw recurrent conflict over the constitutional relationship between England and Ireland. The Irish parliament was subordinate to

¹⁷⁴ Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 45. Mitzi Myers addresses this issue in “Romancing the Moral Tale: Maria Edgeworth and the Problematics of Pedagogy” (London: 1991), 100.

¹⁷⁵ Audrey Bilger, *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen* (Detroit; [Great Britain]: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 66. Marilyn Butler gives a fuller account of Maria’s struggles and unhappiness at this time in *A Literary Biography*, 45-48.

¹⁷⁶ Brendan Smith et al., *The Cambridge History of Ireland*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Volume 3 of this work gives detailed information on 18th C. Irish history, including the facts presented in this paragraph.

¹⁷⁷ Ian McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland: the Isle of Slaves* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2009), 1.

the whims of the British parliament and king, and there was parliamentary infighting and aristocratic rivalries constantly at play, exacerbated by the undertaker system that ensured parliamentary majorities for the executive at Dublin castle: the undertakers would “deliver parliamentary votes in return for a share in devolved power”... their affairs were local, often provincial, and considered largely irrelevant to real parliamentary business at Westminster, yet the undertakers exerted fierce control in their districts. The viceroy did not reside in Ireland but for six months every two years, and “had no understanding of local interests and dilemmas,” yet the constituents were continually vying for votes and favour.¹⁷⁸

Religious belief, ethnicity, and the ownership of land were so closely entwined in Ascendancy Ireland that the Irish Penal Laws of 1695 intensified the injustices instigated by Protestant English, barring Irish Catholics and Dissenting Protestants from land ownership, holding public office, voting or attending universities. Particularly fraught were the controversies between Anglicans and Presbyterians, confounded by the Test Act of 1763 that restricted the civil rights of non-Anglicans, denying the right to hold office to anyone who refused to swear an oath to the King and Anglican Church. This worked to strip Irish people of both economic and political power, prioritising Church of Ireland Protestants and marginalising Catholics and Dissenting Protestants who opposed this favouritism. Amidst these conflicts was the very real “threat of a Jacobite invasion,” with six military arrays happening in the first half of the century.¹⁷⁹ The eighteenth century remained the “Protestant Century,” with the other four-fifths of the population accorded only minor roles, and where the “limits of the possible for eighteenth century Irish people, in military and diplomatic affairs, in intellectual resources and in social resources” were severe.¹⁸⁰

The Irish involvement in British military affairs also contributed to the tumultuous century. Britain was at war with France for half the century: 1689-97, 1702-13, 1739-48, 1756-63, 1775-83, and 1793-1802. “These wars, many of them forgotten today, were very costly. Irishmen fought in each of these overseas

¹⁷⁸ McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 1, 281, 283.

¹⁷⁹ McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 1.

¹⁸⁰ McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 2, 21.

conflicts, usually on both sides, and partly because they believed the future of Ireland was at stake.”¹⁸¹ There was also the social and cultural impact of military garrisons involving relations between the army and the civilian population, with the military “putting down riots, aiding revenue officers and assisting magistrates in the routine maintenance of law and order.”¹⁸² Thus, by the end of the century, United Irish propaganda declared that British power relied on Irish manpower, decrying the labour and sweat of Irish people, leading to The 1798 Rebellion, which “represents the inevitable product of politico-religious tensions which had been simmering for one hundred years.”¹⁸³ This resulted in the Act of Union in 1800, which brought martial law to Ireland in the nineteenth century.

Continuity of internal colonisation continued throughout the eighteenth century, “often conducted in the guise of agricultural ‘improvement.’ ‘Improvement’ stood for the extension of metropolitan manners into the provinces, but also for the reformation of what the English saw as Irish barbarism.”¹⁸⁴ The crop failures that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands in the 1740s had lingering, devastating effects, all while increasing industrialisation incited deeper resentment of the trade restrictions implemented through the Navigation Act of the 1650s.¹⁸⁵ Industrialised, urban settings propagated the growth of the Defenders, the “lower-class overwhelmingly Catholic organisation,” which spread throughout much of Ireland in the 1790s.¹⁸⁶ Originally concerned with self-defense against the Orange Order and other sectarian violence, the Defenders worked politically toward a more egalitarian society and were part of the broader revolutionary movements of the time. Abroad, the American colonies recently gained independence from Britain, and France freed herself from French Monarchy, offering both hope and a template for rebellion—this combination of events created even greater discontent among the Irish people. By the 1790s, Ireland was hungry for freedom and ready for change, only to be quashed by the stronger British colonial power.

¹⁸¹ McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 43-45.

¹⁸² McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 46-47.

¹⁸³ McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 45.

¹⁸⁴ McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 6.

¹⁸⁵ Brendan Smith et al., *The Cambridge History of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). For detailed information on events in Irish history at this time, refer to volume 3 of this work, as mentioned above.

¹⁸⁶ McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 2.

Irish independence was defined differently by various factions. In 1782, the Irish parliament, comprised of members of the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy, persuaded Britain to allow it to govern without approval from London, thereby granting autonomy while remaining loyal. Within the Irish parliament was a minority to which Edgeworth's father Richard belonged, who wished to restore rights to their Catholic and Dissenter neighbours. These members of the Ascendancy believed Ireland should remain a British colony, but Irish people should be treated in the same manner as other citizens of the Empire. For factions outside of the Ascendancy, Irish independence from Britain was the goal. To this end, in 1791, Irish Protestant lawyer Theobald Wolfe Tone created a group known as the United Irishmen. Equally represented by Catholic and Protestant members and initially committed to nonviolent change, this group called for the emancipation of all religions and a break with Britain to form a new republic. However, by 1798, after years of unsuccessful negotiations, the United Irishmen incited a Rebellion that would ultimately fail and lead to Britain's punitive Act of Union in 1801, which abolished the Irish Parliament. A mere nineteen years after gaining a measure of independence, Ireland found herself once again the oppressed subject of Britain, stripped of identity and expected to assimilate with British culture and norms.¹⁸⁷

Edgeworth lived amid this turmoil, placing her in an interstitial position when Irish national identity was in question, securing her place in Irish society as a place not wholly British nor distinctly Irish. Her position illustrates Homi Bhabha's claim that there is a space "in-between the designations of identity" and that "this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy."¹⁸⁸ Edgeworth's cultural hybridity springs from this boggy place, which, as discussed earlier, confirms and consolidates her liminality.¹⁸⁹ Bhabha's hybridity begs another question about whether the two "fixed" identities that form this hybridity are pure in the first place and if the mixing identities have previously been

¹⁸⁷ Smith et al., *The Cambridge History of Ireland*. Once again, the comments here are derived from a wide reading of passages detailing this history.

¹⁸⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 4.

¹⁸⁹ Jane Suzanne Carroll, "Girlhood and Space in Nineteenth-Century Orphan Literature," in *Rereading Orphanhood: Texts, Inheritance, Kin*, ed. Diane Warren and Laura Peters (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 187.

mixed themselves. This is a common consideration in Ireland, where one parent may be Protestant, the other Catholic, or one is Irish and the other English, to name only a few of the many hybridities extant in Ireland today. Asking whether Edgeworth was Irish, English, or both is not unlike probing the earlier section's question about her adolescent girlhood: can we assume that both childhood and womanhood are stable when we attempt to pinpoint the boundaries around girlhood?¹⁹⁰ I contend neither stage has clear boundaries to insert adolescent girlhood; there is no fixed mark. Adolescent girlhood is as malleable, changeable, and cultural as the stages adjacent to it. The very concept of hybridity relies on this fluidity and fluctuation. Bhabha's hybrid space is cultural, but for Edgeworth, it grows from the physical space that is her border frontier home. It is a place where she is sometimes Irish, sometimes British, but most often both, as it is a place that allows her to hold conflicting views at once. As an Irish resident, she was sensitive to the plight of Dissenters and Catholics oppressed by British law, but her concern was for the people of the middle class.¹⁹¹ She held a privileged position as a Protestant landholder, unlike her Irish tenants, who mainly lived in poverty. During the 1798 Rebellion, Kowaleski-Wallace remarks, "the fear of physical violence and destruction of property were well known to the family at Edgeworthstown."¹⁹² The Edgeworths were forced to flee their estate and narrowly escaped being killed in an ammunition cart explosion while they were fleeing in August 1798.¹⁹³ Richard Lovell Edgeworth was nearly lynched by an angry Protestant mob who thought he was associated with the United Irishmen. Just a few weeks later, in early September, his estate was "deliberately spared" by rioting Catholic rebels because he was a known sympathiser of Irish causes.¹⁹⁴ These events speak to the ambiguity of the Edgeworths' position in the vicinity of their home society, where they were both persecuted and revered for their progressive ideals and championing of Irish causes.

Edgeworth's fear and unhappiness about the 1798 Rebellion initially reveal a paternalistic attitude toward the Irish. In attempting to subdue the realities of Irish

¹⁹⁰ Carroll, "Girlhood and Space in Nineteenth-Century Orphan Literature," 189.

¹⁹¹ Kaufman and Fauske, *An Uncomfortable Authority*, 11.

¹⁹² Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters*, 143.

¹⁹³ Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 126-127. Maria discusses the event in a letter to Aunt Ruxton dated 5 September 1798.

¹⁹⁴ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 138-9. Edgeworth correspondence in September and October show how upset the family were by the events in County Longford of the 1798 Rebellion.

life, Edgeworth's Romantic vision assumes the Irish need a benefactor: they "needed protection, needed to be domesticated to be kept safe, and needed to be controlled of their own rebellious childlike tendencies."¹⁹⁵ As a young woman, Edgeworth believed her family to be of a superior race and class than the Irish as the result of her coming of age during a time when the British imperial mindset was dominant all over the world, imposing upon occupied countries a definition of "civilised" that looked distinctly like English culture.¹⁹⁶ In a letter to Fanny Robinson, Edgeworth discusses how "the Irish are perhaps the laziest civilized nation on the face of the Earth" and notes:

It is not to be supported that idleness is inherent in the Irish— no they only want motive. Give them motive and they will exert themselves; but not till then— ... If we look back into the history of England we shall find that the English were once as indolent a nation as the Irish are at present. Every nation has passed this stage in their progress to civilization. ¹⁹⁷

This idea that Ireland as a young nation has to "catch up" to England, that it is somehow behind in its growth as a nation, and that every other nation has "passed this stage" infantilises the Irish. In a faint echo of her father's attitude toward his children and his tenants, Murphy declares, Edgeworth romanticises Britain's colonial activity in Ireland by asserting Britain colonised Ireland as an act of mercy, or "to share the benefits of their superior way of life with other peoples and lands."¹⁹⁸

However, once Edgeworth moves home to County Longford and begins working closely with Irish tenants on her estate, her ideas about Ireland and how or why it is infantilised grow more nuanced and complex, as seen twenty years after the letter to Robinson when she challenges Irish stereotypes in *An Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802). Perhaps her strongest efforts toward the stability of the young nation of Ireland occur when she tackles questions of insurrection and unrest through her educational theory, particularly regarding the education of the poor. Manly notes,

¹⁹⁵ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters*, 98.

¹⁹⁶ Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 103.

¹⁹⁷ Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Robinson, [n.d.] [copy]. MS 21,826/1. National Library of Ireland Archives. Note Butler dates this letter August 1782.

¹⁹⁸ Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 101.

“Edgeworth’s response to those in the Ascendancy class who worried that mass education might lead to mass insurrection was that education and the access it allowed to sources of information and to evidence was essential for a more unified and stable social order.”¹⁹⁹ She expounds on this: “The Edgeworths’ desire to make education accessible to all classes in Ireland was closely connected with their conviction that it was a means by which violent uprising and vengeance for unjust policies could be avoided if combined with reformed government and the redress of justified grievances, such as the penal laws.”²⁰⁰ This desire for peace often drives Edgeworth’s stories for children: the “fictional explorations of the individual and social transformations possible through a diffusion of knowledge” rather than through violent acts.²⁰¹ Where, because the adults “who guide or govern the child characters” in her tales often are “setting a bad example” and failing to “behave civilly, her child heroes have to find creative ways to respond to, or simply to endure, this misgovernment.”²⁰² In this way, Edgeworth sets up the figure of the child to show how Ireland might better govern itself. What Edgeworth and her father could not accomplish in Parliament through educational reform, her stories achieve most effectively by depicting community and mutually beneficial cooperation. Manly suggests “that Edgeworth’s hard-working child characters ... may be read not simply as children, but as representatives of an Irish adult working class that had been infantilized and subjected to unjust repression” in a parallel drawn between the “Catholic majority in Ireland and neglected or misgoverned children.”²⁰³ As Edgeworth wrote and published her stories for children in the same years that she crafted a philosophy of mass education, the question of unrest persevered, and the Act of Union was implemented in 1801. Her father’s appeals to the Irish Parliament in 1799 for an equitable education system did not come to fruition until the establishment of the national school system in 1831. The Edgeworths proved their dedication to their educational philosophy by building one of the first national

¹⁹⁹ Susan Manly, “Maria Edgeworth’s Child Heroes, Irish Education and ‘the spirit of revenge,’” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, No. 34 (2019): 29.

²⁰⁰ Manly, “Maria Edgeworth’s Child Heroes,” 29.

²⁰¹ Manly, “Maria Edgeworth’s Child Heroes,” 30.

²⁰² Manly, “Maria Edgeworth’s Child Heroes,” 30, 32.

²⁰³ Manly, “Maria Edgeworth’s Child Heroes,” 33.

schools and integrating and allowing poor children to attend regardless of their religious affiliation.

Attempting to place Edgeworth in this context of Ireland's unrest, Kaufman and Fauske frame Edgeworth's efforts in a hybrid circularity: "Edgeworth supported and identified Irish causes, thereby disassociating herself from the English, while simultaneously maintaining her class and her position on the estate her family took from the Irish generations before."²⁰⁴ Her sense of place is complex; her writing is grounded in the landscape of her home estate in Ireland. It is a physical place that allows her to both question who has authority over that country and eschew any outside entity attempting to control it. She was confident the land should be ruled by the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy, not by the English, and not by the Irish themselves. From this double landscape, she claims an Irish identity to give a historical context for her exploration of culture while also refuting that identity in favour of claiming her British ascendancy to speak with authority. This identity, which affected Edgeworth when she moved from England to Ireland as a teenager, becomes a key factor in her stories for girls. Edgeworth uses both British and Irish landscapes as settings for her stories and slips between official and unofficial registers in her dialogue. Butler offers insight into what can be seen as an intentional blending of space and place in Edgeworth, stating Edgeworth was not inclined to description and often gives only partial descriptions of settings in her stories.²⁰⁵ There are valleys, neat cottages, gardens, and villages, but in stories like "The White Pigeon," descriptions seem intentionally vague and might be set in either England or Ireland. This moves the focus away from the physical landscape toward the interior landscape of emotion and identity in the girl characters, making the experience of girlhood a universal one. Her sense of place grew from the Edgeworthstown estate, from where she was excluded for many years but adopted wholeheartedly in adolescence. It was a sociocultural place that often competed with itself in her writing and life. Kaufman and Fauske define this space as "her sense of place, her contemporaries' various senses of place, and our historical sense of her

²⁰⁴ Kaufman and Fauske, *An Uncomfortable Authority*, 12.

²⁰⁵ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 162.

place,” all of which intersect at the locus Edgeworth inhabits as both writer and reader, sometimes as a woman, sometimes as a girl.²⁰⁶

Yet, she does not write for the Irish, and certainly not for Irish girls.²⁰⁷ Edgeworth writes in English for English-reading Ireland, which excludes the majority of Irish children at the turn of the nineteenth century, most of them from rural areas and poorer classes. While Edgeworth is concerned with what Joanna Wharton calls “the education of the Irish poor,” it is clearer to see this concern for “teaching the rich to properly ‘reward’” while “teaching the poor to ‘deserve’ reward” as it applies to English society, not Irish, based on language use alone.²⁰⁸ Wharton falls short in her consideration of just how many of the “Irish poor” could read at all in the 1790s, let alone read or be read to in English. Historical sociolinguist Aidan Doyle notes that 45% of the population in Ireland spoke Irish at the turn of the nineteenth century, further reduced to only 23% in 1851.²⁰⁹ This reduction in the Irish language is owed in large part to the National School system started in 1831 via the Education Reform Act, but this is enacted thirty-five years after Edgeworth writes her children’s stories. Half the population cannot be assumed to be literate in the English language at this time, especially not the children. Furthermore, in 1831, teaching in the English language was, and remains, mandatory in national schools, yet at the time, “education was an irregular experience for most children.”²¹⁰ In the decade prior to the 1831 Act, “some 44 per cent of boys and 26 per cent of girls aged six to thirteen were attending a school.”²¹¹ Irish children’s participation in school, even after the 1831 Education Reform Act, depended on the agricultural calendar and family necessity, neither conducive to regular or lengthy school attendance. At about fourteen, children left school either to work alongside their mother or father or to find live-in work in another

²⁰⁶ Kaufman and Fauske, *An Uncomfortable Authority*, 12.

²⁰⁷ Kaufman and Fauske, *An Uncomfortable Authority*, 25.

²⁰⁸ Joanna Wharton, “The Optical Telegraph, the United Irish Press, and Maria Edgeworth’s ‘White Pigeon,’” in *Material Enlightenment: Women Writers and the Science of the Mind, 1770-1830*, (Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2018), 57, 58.

²⁰⁹ Aidan Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language from the Norman Invasion to Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 129. Doyle, like most scholars, also notes the impact the years of famine and hunger have on the decline of use of the Irish language.

²¹⁰ Sarah-Anne Buckley and Susannah O’Riordan, “Childhood since 1740,” in *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, edited by Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 6.

²¹¹ Buckley and O’Riordan, “Childhood since 1740,” 6.

household. This continued long into the late 1800s, for it was not until 1892 that school attendance began to be compelled, and then only in urban areas.²¹² In short, into the early half of the nineteenth century, Irish girls who were found predominantly in the working and lower classes were unlikely to be active participants in literacy and educational instruction. The exception could be found in middle-class girls who were dowered and married off or those working-class Irish girls who were able to secure jobs as servants above stairs in elevated households.

Edgeworth establishes herself as an Irish writer for the English and the English-speaking Irish middle and upper classes. Her stories may depict characters of the poorer classes, but the stories were intended to teach lessons to middle-class children, and often the poorer characters were set as ideal objects of study. "Lazy Lawrence," "Waste Not, Want Not," "The Orphans," "The Basket Woman," and "Simple Susan," all found in *The Parent's Assistant*, focus on the "resourcefulness and quiet heroism of working-class children" in order to "teach more socially privileged characters and readers about self-reliance and integrity."²¹³ It is not until *Popular Tales* (1804), the last of Edgeworth's collections of stories for older children, that her father's preface declares the stories to be for the new reading public, not be restricted to the middle and upper classes, in particular for those readers not usually considered "polite."²¹⁴ Within this hybrid fictional landscape, Edgeworth presents girl characters who, like herself, traverse the threshold between British and Irish identities, between authority and rebellion.

Conclusion

The political and social landscape from which she writes and her sense of place within the family and Ireland's cultural milieu are central to Edgeworth's textual construction of girlhood, one that would have lasting implications for future writers. She continually reappraises her own status and contributes to the shifting discourse of femininity over time. Edgeworth cannot be situated in either the public or the private but must be considered as operating simultaneously within both spheres. She must be seen as both child and adult, English and Irish, independent and

²¹² Buckley and O'Riordan, "Childhood since 1740," 6.

²¹³ Manly, introduction to *Selected Tales*, xxvi.

²¹⁴ Maria Edgeworth, *Popular Tales*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1804), iii.

protected. From her position in the margins as a writer with a complex hybrid identity, Edgeworth questions the establishment and challenges accepted notions of girlhood. In writing and rewriting her own complex girlhood, Edgeworth allows her readers to eschew the limited and patriarchal construction of girlhood. Norma Clarke states, “women who wrote rational literature for children were consciously or inadvertently offering those children, and the adults they would grow into, tools for reappraising their social and political situations.”²¹⁵ The impetus for offering girl readers these tools came from knowing that Edgeworth “faced the daunting task of writing in a culture alternately hostile to and fascinated by women writers.”²¹⁶ The literary lady was an ambiguous figure, especially if the literary lady was a girl.

²¹⁵ Norma Clarke, "'The Cursed Barbauld Crew:' Women Writers and Writing for Children in the Late Eighteenth Century," in *Opening the Nursery Door: Reading, Writing and Childhood, 1600-1900*, ed. Mary Hilton, Morag Styles, and Victor Watson (London: Routledge, 1997), 93.

²¹⁶ Kaufman and Fauske, *An Uncomfortable Authority*, 18.

1.2 The Edgeworthian Girl Character

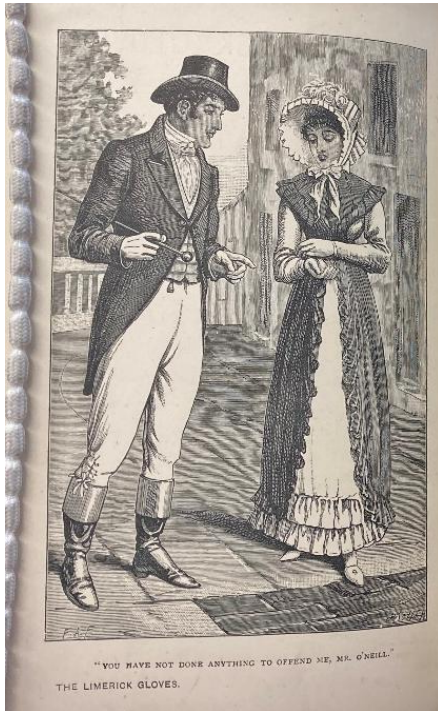


Figure 6: OLS POL 5840. *The Limerick Gloves and the Will* by Maria Edgeworth. London: Routledge, [n.d.].

Hollindale suggests that “the boundaries between child and adult, children’s literature and adult literature, are always simultaneously existent and nonexistent, real and unreal, precise and imprecise.”²¹⁷ This simultaneity speaks to Edgeworth’s crossover writing, which manifests from the nebulous nature of her unique female adolescence that rejects precise definitions with regard to age, physical traits, or emotional growth. Specifically, Edgeworth’s hybrid identity results from a womanhood formed by the qualities of her adolescence. She adheres to those qualities of potentiality and possibility long into what observers would call womanhood. The result is ambiguous because that late girlhood

looks remarkably similar to her new womanhood. Her written characters occupy the place between child and adult: able to straddle both sides by being ideal, innocent, pure young women who encounter the intrigues and deceptions of adult life. They are the living embodiment of Hollindale’s “youth,” a term to describe “continuities which lengthen and blur the boundary between childhood and adult life.”²¹⁸ The texts considered in this chapter include young female protagonists who embody some or all of three distinct qualities in their construction: they grow with the tales and appear in multiple stories over time; they live an extended adolescence, often existing in a space between girlhood and womanhood beyond, or despite, conventional rites of passage like marriage, and their construction is the product of Edgeworth’s lived experience as seen in both her fictional and non-fictional texts, her letters and her stories, her public and private writing.

²¹⁷ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 83.

²¹⁸ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 116.

Edgeworth grew up with her tales, beginning her writing life in adolescence. The heroes of her stories are girls of varying ages, from young girls learning small domestic tasks (Lucy, Rosamond) to young women learning to navigate and secure their futures (Helen, Leonora, Griselda, Angelina). She wrote experiencing the same pressure as her readers, to conform to the same social expectations and aspire to the same ideals. However, Edgeworth continually resists these societal pressures in her writing and models this resistance for her readers. Edgeworth's expectations for female readers are both revolutionary and conformist, a combination of didactic and romantic prose where the romance "denotes a female author's desire to 'escape' from the restrictions imposed by a patriarchal authority."²¹⁹ This duality in her writing hints at her desire to circumvent a strict adherence to the didactic, as discussed in the previous chapter, and shows her ability to write comfortably within both educational and entertaining philosophies. She makes frequent use of melodramatic tropes: hidden and mistaken identities; absent, dead, or foster parents; shipwrecks, narrow escapes, and eventual marriage in her moral tales.²²⁰ Even as she does so, she subverts the established tropes of melodrama by using them to structure a narrative in which her characters rebuke romance novels' bad influence on young women. She often laces this equivocal approach with humour in her tales, with sly observations by the narrator directed to the reader. In this way, Edgeworth subverts the subversive. She utilises romantic tropes to hook readers into the story all the while reinforcing traditional conventions with instructive, moral endings to her tales that eschew fashion. In this way, she upholds conventional thought on roles for young women while championing female education—central tenets of all Edgeworth's texts for both girl and women readers.

A Community of Girl Characters

Starting with "The Purple Jar" in 1796 and stretching forty years to *Helen* in 1834,

²¹⁹ Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 17. Murphy refers to Jane Spencer in *Rise of the Woman Novelist* (1986) to make her points about the romance conventions in writing.

²²⁰ Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 17. Here Murphy relies on Northrop Frye and Samuel Johnson for her description of romance conventions. My use of "melodramatic" relies on the Oxford English Dictionary's definition, which cites the use of the French "mélodrame" in 1788 as "a type of incident-filled popular drama" further "characterized by exaggerated characters and a sensational plot intended to appeal to the emotions."

Edgeworth creates a community of girl characters by using the same girls' names in different tales: an act of world-building that sets up characters with complex interpersonal relationships. While it is nowhere noted that Edgeworth intended to create this community of girl characters, the reader is left not only with the impression of a well-formed and constructed world but also a more intimately created community. Edgeworth refers to her girl characters in her letters to various correspondents, including her stepmother Frances, her sisters, her cousins Sophy and Meg Ruxton, and particularly to her aunt Margaret Ruxton. She recalls in a letter dated September 1804 how her father "continues to think Olivia & Leonora flat & spiritless & stuffed with morality."²²¹ Moreover, in a letter to her Aunt Ruxton dated 20 July 1812, she writes "... I am just beginning to write again and am in Patronage — and corrected all the faults you pointed out to me and Susan who was a fool is now Rosamund and a wit – or at least only half a fool."²²² She refers to her characters with fondness and intimacy which makes them seem real. While some of these recurring characters are overtly considered to be the same girl in many different tales, others are not so clear. For example, Edgeworth and her stepmother Frances Edgeworth both allude to the autobiographical Rosamond as being the same girl whom we first see in *The Parent's Assistant's* "The Purple Jar," and repeatedly surfacing in *Early Lessons* (1801), *Continuation of Early Lessons* (1814), *Rosamond, a Sequel to Early Lessons* (1821), and *Patronage* (1813).²²³ Caroline is another character who is noted to be one and the same in *Letters for Literary Ladies* and *Patronage*, where she is given the surname "Percy" in both texts. Other girl characters are not quite obviously given the same identities across texts. However, we find a Helen in "Mademoiselle Panache," *Leonora*, and *Helen*. A Leonora makes an appearance early in "The Bracelets," and another appears later in *Leonora*. Cecilia is Leonora's school friend in "The Bracelets" and Helen's married friend in *Helen*. This reuse of names exhibits an interconnectedness; it creates a layer of intertextuality that allows the tales to obliquely relate to one another and operate

²²¹ Edgeworth, *Maria Edgeworth's Letters from Ireland*, 86.

²²² Edgeworth, *Maria Edgeworth's Letters from Ireland*, 155. Emphasis in original.

²²³ Edgeworth, *A Memoir of Maria Edgeworth, with a Selection from her Letters*, I:252. See also Marilyn Butler's *A Literary Biography*, 477.

on multiple levels that include gender and national identity for both child and adult reader.

The characters are presented in different life stages throughout the texts, reinforcing Edgeworth's crossover writing and intended dual audience. Also because of this, readers of various ages are drawn to their stories at different stages of their own lives. The characters' ages reflect the ages of Edgeworth's implied readers, ranging from young girl to adult woman. Furthermore, Edgeworth's characters move across her tales, allowing both characters and implied readers to create a community of girlhood. This community is evident in the dialogue between characters. It is built in the intimate conversations they hold in dressing rooms, the breakfast table, and through their exchanged letters.

Letters for Literary Ladies

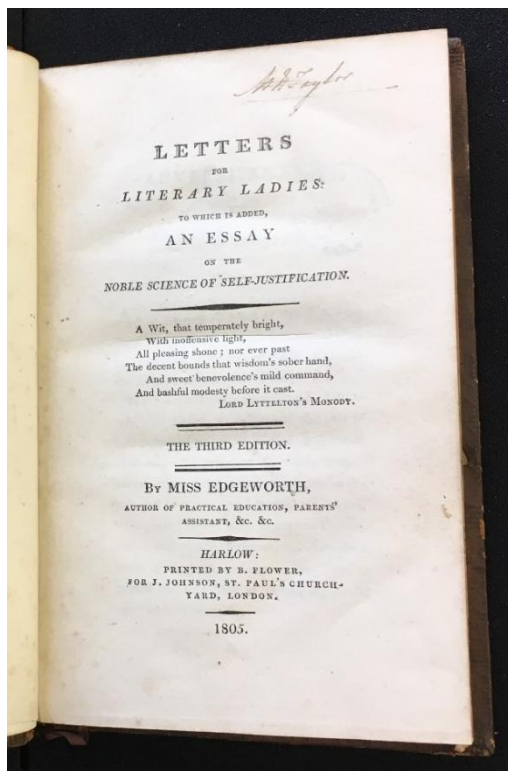


Figure 7: OLS POL 5999. *Letters for Literary Ladies* by Maria Edgeworth. London: J. Johnson, 1805 3rd ed.

Maria Edgeworth was a teenager when she wrote two of the three sections that comprise her debut text *Letters for Literary Ladies* in 1787, not printed until 1795 (Figure 7).²²⁴ Heather Ingman states the text “reveals the extent to which Edgeworth’s feminism was moulded by her father’s Enlightenment belief in the cultivation of reason in both sexes and in the advancement of society through education;” however, closer scrutiny of “this witty parody of Rousseau” indicates that she was finding her own authorial voice.²²⁵ *Letters* was a clarion call for the education of girls and an erudite reproval to the charge—by her father’s conservative friend Thomas Day—that

²²⁴ Maria Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies; to Which is Added, An Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification* [1795] (London: Dent, 1993), 62.

²²⁵ Heather Ingman, *Irish Women's Fiction: From Edgeworth to Enright* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2013), 3.

allowing daughters to write was indecorous. *Letters* was a reaction to a correspondence between Edgeworth's father and Day in 1783, at a time when Richard Lovell Edgeworth forbade his daughter to read novels on Day's advice but had long been encouraging her to write. Edgeworth uses epistolary writing as a real-life simulation to both challenge and promote the current societal norms regarding women writers ("Letters of a Gentleman and his Friend") and women's role as wife ("Letters of Julia and Caroline"). The text is divided into sections: the first section consists of letters between male friends that show opposing views on the eighteenth-century debate on women's education, essentially refuting the accusation that literary ladies were unattractive and make unsuitable wives. The second section comprises letters between two female friends, charting the demise and untimely death of Julia, who had poor judgment as a wife and mother despite Caroline's letters full of advice. The third section is a satirical essay on "the noble science of self-justification," which uses humour as a vehicle for social commentary on the role women play within a marriage. Edgeworth's age at the time of writing marks her as an adolescent author who produced an adolescent text, one that matures in voice and narration as the reader works through its sections.

The first section's letters use male voices to express disdain at "literary ladies," but also to give authority to the educational philosophies Edgeworth expresses. Narain states that taking on the "male authorial personae" was "an essential strategy because no woman was considered enough of an expert in education at the time to be able to debate it with any degree of authenticity."²²⁶ Edgeworth cunningly intuited that her juvenilia would not be taken seriously if written in a young female voice, so she writes in a male voice in the "Answer to the Preceding Letter." This allows her to challenge authority, essentially "criticizing the common practice of educating women for the sole purpose of pleasing men:"²²⁷

I dread, that she (my daughter) should acquire preposterous notions of love, of happiness, from the furtive perusal of vulgar novels, or from the clandestine conversation of ignorant waiting-maids : I dread, that she should acquire, even from the enchanting eloquence of Rousseau, the fatal idea, that cunning and address are the natural

²²⁶ Mona Narain, "A Prescription of Letters: Maria Edgeworth's Letters for Literary Ladies and the Ideologies of the Public Sphere," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 28, no. 3 (1998): 273.

²²⁷ Julie Nash, *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), xiii.

resources of her sex; that coquetry is necessary to attract, and dissimulation to preserve, the heart of man.²²⁸

The argument is made in the gentleman's voice, and the rebuttal against a conservative repression of women is amplified from within the status quo of domestic life. Edgeworth advocated for the education of women to allow them to "be capable of filling the heart of a man of sense and merit; that she is worthy to be his companion and friend."²²⁹ In *Letters*, this role is that of wife, a role Edgeworth never took on herself; however, she did perform the role of dutiful daughter and deputy-wife flawlessly. This section of *Letters* is a rational argument for why literary ladies make good wives. It shows her reliance on her father's opinion and editing pen and can be seen as a leaping-off point for her as a writer. She is flexing her authorial muscles as a young woman writing to please her father, first and foremost: a paradoxical twist with an impetus to please a man who is not her husband. She develops her own theories of female education within the parameters of his philosophy, relying on his voice and hidden in the shadows of her writing.

The second section's letters between Julia and Caroline are not structured by the argument and debate of the first section but follow a similar form. Read as an epistolary novelette, this exchange in letters between friends offers the reader an intimate sense for the dramatic events unfolding in Julia's life and what appears to be Caroline's immediate response to them. They offer the reader some emotional insight into the characters' thoughts by creating what Nicola Watson describes as a sense of authenticity while presenting multiple perspectives within the story. The characters appear as real people in the epistolary fictional format that explores "the description, and often critique, of modern domestic life among the gentry refracted through plots concerned with the possible fates of young women in the marriage marketplace."²³⁰ Julia and Caroline are beyond the marketplace, settled in married life, a situation which allows the epistolary novel to merge personal introspection with social commentary. This space, according to Connolly, exists "somewhere

²²⁸ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 4th ed. (London: J. Johnson and Co., 1814), 100-101.

²²⁹ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 132.

²³⁰ Nicola Watson, "Epistolary Fiction," In *The Oxford History of the Novel in English: Volume 2: English and British Fiction 1750-1820*, eds. Peter Garside and Karen O'Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 372, 374.

between the public and the private, the logical and the spontaneous.”²³¹ Caroline and Julia’s letters are a debate similar to the preceding gentlemen’s letters, but here we have letters between a rational woman and her sentimental friend. The multiple perspectives enable “the exploration and exemplification of the moral and social consequences of different courses of (mostly) female conduct in private life, advising against, variously, ill-considered friendships.”²³² It also allows Edgeworth to present the follies and the fallout from not thinking or applying reason to life’s decisions. Julia’s poor choice in marriage, her decision to leave her husband, and the resulting banishment from society are countered with Caroline’s sound judgement in favour of maintaining respect and a husband’s affection. If the gentlemen’s letters were theoretical and echoed the language of philosophy and debate, the letters between the fictional ladies are dramatic with literary flair to show what happens when the theory is shown in practice.

While “Letters of Julia and Caroline” focuses on argument rather than event—what Butler termed the “war of ideas”—it still reads like a novel, a balance which works to keep Edgeworth’s argument engaging and entertaining.²³³ The emotional tone is set immediately in the first line of the first letter from Julia to Caroline: “In vain, dear Caroline, you urge me to *think*; I profess only to *feel*.”²³⁴ Julia insists, “a woman’s part in life is to please” and that (women’s) “*lively nonsense*” and “*amiable defects*” win more than our noblest virtues.²³⁵ It is worth noting that Julia only writes one letter—the rest are Caroline’s responses to Julia—which shows Caroline to be “philosophical,” Julia to be impetuous, Caroline to think first, Julia to act first.²³⁶ The epistolary format allows for the dramatic events to occur in the background of the real tension of the story: that between the restrained Caroline and effusive Julia, who argue their drastically different philosophies regarding female conduct. The titles of the letters as they are read in sequence intensifies that background drama: “Letter from Julia to Caroline,” “Caroline to Julia on her intended marriage,” “Caroline to Lady V upon her intended separation from her husband,”

²³¹ Connolly, introduction to *Letters for Literary Ladies*, xxv.

²³² Nicola Watson, “Epistolary Fiction,” in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, 374.

²³³ Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002). From the title.

²³⁴ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 115.

²³⁵ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 119–20.

²³⁶ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 119, 125–27.

and lastly “Caroline to Lord V...” in which she describes Julia’s death to her estranged husband. While the letters’ titles hint at the drama in the narrative, the body of Caroline’s letters details her rational approach. That the text favours Caroline’s responses over Julia’s by only showing the reader one of Julia’s letters and all of Caroline’s responses prioritises Caroline’s side of the argument and skews the narrative in favour of reasonable conduct.

When Caroline warns Julia not to “indulge (a) taste for romance and poetry,” Edgeworth uses romance conventions in a tale of letters to state the evils of impulsivity and imagination. She subverts the idea that fiction was dangerous to young women and challenges patriarchal assumptions about women’s reading.²³⁷ It is dramatic fiction, the very thing Caroline advises against, yet its form is conventional. It allows Edgeworth, a happy reader of novels herself despite her father’s early embargo, to approve of novels without advocating for them directly, enabling her to involve the reader as another voice in the discourse. This blending of style and form positions the “Letters of Julia and Caroline” as a bridge between the opening “Gentlemen’s Letters” and the closing “Essay on Self-Justification.” The text, then, first appearing to parrot her father and his circle’s ideas, concludes with a witty and well-voiced exploration on female conduct. Edgeworth writes the heart of this middle section, a close female friendship between women just over the threshold of marriage, in the popular epistolary format that subtly frames the discourse at the time regarding female education and conduct.

The final section on “Self-Justification” broadcasts Edgeworth’s distinct brand of satire and humour from the first page, where she addresses the reader: “candid pupil, you will readily accede to my first and fundamental axiom— that a lady can do no wrong.”²³⁸ Burlesque and hilarious, this part of the text is confident and needs no father’s protection. She deftly ignores potential male readers: “I address myself chiefly to married ladies; but those who have not as yet the good fortune to have that common enemy, a husband, to combat, may in the meantime practise my precepts upon their fathers, brothers, and female friends.”²³⁹

²³⁷ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 134-35. Using fiction to warn of the evils or argue against fiction was a common trope, and *Letters* foreshadows one of the most famous: Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, finished in 1803 but published posthumously in 1817.

²³⁸ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 190.

²³⁹ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 193.

Highlighting the space between girlhood and womanhood, Edgeworth invites adolescent females to share her joke, emphasised again when she states, “Timid brides, you have, probably, been addressed as angels — Prepare for the time when you shall again become mortal,” indicating that the shift from demure bride to shrill wife is just around the corner.²⁴⁰ Told with confidence, “Self-Justification” shows a maturity in Edgeworth’s humour and observation that no longer needs approval of a male voice nor support from a thinly veiled didactic fiction like “Julia and Caroline,” but it freely satirises woman’s place in the domestic sphere. The essay reflects Edgeworth’s voice in private letters, amongst trusted confidantes, sisters, cousins, and aunts. In “Self-Justification,” Edgeworth writes “on the pleasures of being admired for wit and erudition” that there are “evils which ... may overbalance the good,” but rather than affirm the Gentleman’s declaration, she shows its absurdity by using humour to expose the preposterousness of women who act in such ways.²⁴¹ By the end of “Self-Justification,” the reader conspires with Edgeworth, knowing no decent, learned woman would ever think this behaviour suitable. The reader, as a literary lady herself, is in on the joke.

Letters is partly juvenilia, and as such we can see Edgeworth’s growth as a writer within its structure. Her voice grows from dutiful daughter in the Gentlemen’s Letters to witty and cunning woman in “Self-Justification,” with a sense of the dramatic appropriately played out in the middle section’s narrative between Julia and Caroline. Edgeworth’s maturing writing style creates a microcosmic representation of female adolescence in *Letters*, through what Irish historian Mary O’Dowd identifies as a threefold division of adolescence, charting the transition from girlhood to womanhood in eighteenth-century Ireland. The Gentlemen’s Letters represent preadolescence, the preteen years ages nine or ten to thirteen with a characteristic desire to please and accept “a system of rationalism that rejected the emotions.” The middle teenage period, fourteen to seventeen or eighteen, features a sense of self-identity and defiance, as seen in the Julia and Caroline fiction where Edgeworth defies the rational to give “the emotions a place in human behavior.” “Self-Justification” represents young adulthood, the late teens through early twenties: the threshold of womanhood in its conformity, or perhaps resignation, to

²⁴⁰ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 193.

²⁴¹ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 23.

what awaits in marriage or spinsterhood, neither providing a way to live outside family expectations.²⁴² Young adulthood also shows “an increasing engagement with the public world,” seen in Edgeworth’s direct approach to draw her readers into the satire of “Self-Justification” and mimic the advice books of her youth.²⁴³ *Letters* is a microcosmic representation of Edgeworth’s adolescence as a writer, moving through stages of growth as she finds her authorial voice growing into its fullest, most authentic version. Gloriously reflecting her wit and humour by the end of the text, she convinces her reader to agree that “a literary lady is no longer a sight.”²⁴⁴

From *Letters*, Edgeworth will grow to negotiate the trajectory of social and cultural developments regarding femininity that mark the decades of her active writing life from 1795-1834. Jackie Horne notes that women writers were responding to “constructions of femininity that were increasingly constraining during the opening decades of the nineteenth century,” as Enlightenment’s relaxed response to Puritanism induced a pendulum swing toward conservative Evangelicalism, and eventually, Victorian ideas of femininity.²⁴⁵ Edgeworth writes through all these movements, starting with *Letters*, where Claire Connolly notes that the text “negotiates the gap between her faith in the Enlightenment promise of progress, and her growing awareness of Enlightenment fear and distrust of women.”²⁴⁶ Though she published first in 1795, her popularity was at its peak in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, a time when Evangelicalism was taking hold. Vineta Colby states that due to a growing conservatism to push women back into the domestic sphere, Edgeworth was under increasing pressure at this time to provide suitable texts that impressed a moral upon its female readers.²⁴⁷ Edgeworth continues to write through this era to see Victoria crowned and public and private spheres pushed further apart along gendered lines. Her own liminalities within her lived experience provided stability as she moved through these sequential, cultural

²⁴² O’Dowd, “Adolescent Girlhood in Eighteenth Century Ireland,” 54.

²⁴³ O’Dowd, “Adolescent Girlhood in Eighteenth Century Ireland,” 54. O’Dowd takes these stages from Alexa Curtis’s “Defining Adolescence,” *Journal of Adolescent and Family Health* (2015), and Leo B. Hendry and Marion Klop’s *Adolescence and Adulthood* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

²⁴⁴ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 54.

²⁴⁵ Horne, *History and the Construction of the Child*, 22.

²⁴⁶ Connolly, Introduction to *Letters for Literary Ladies*, xvi.

²⁴⁷ Colby, *Yesterday’s Woman*, 121.

iterations of femininity, which secured her writing success and her own footing in society while also challenging the limitations of that feminine space.

Belinda and Virginia

While this thesis is framed within the context of books found in the Pollard Collection, it is important to mention a text not held in the collection that is germane to Edgeworth's construction of adolescent girlhood: *Belinda* (1801). There are three copies of *Belinda* in Early Printed Books: two Dublin editions, 1801 and 1802, and one 1821 edition by R. Hunter in London. The novel begins with our hero Belinda being presented to society to begin her search for a happy marriage, likely placing her in her late teen years. Kathryn Kirkpatrick suggests she is seventeen and articulates that it is not Belinda's "successful marriage alliance" that shows her coming of age but "her increasing reliance on her own reasoned opinions."²⁴⁸ Kirkpatrick declares that "Edgeworth's emphasis on Belinda's developing rationality places the novel in the tradition of Enlightenment feminism, which had long maintained that the education of women in the right use of reason produced the best wives and mothers."²⁴⁹

Contrasting Belinda is the character Virginia, a young adolescent girl whom Belinda's love interest Clarence Hervey is educating to be the perfect wife, akin to the real-life pursuits of Thomas Day. Edgeworth describes Virginia as residing in a secluded "very small cottage," with beehives and "rose trees in full blow;" she first meets Hervey with a "sweet innocent smile," showing the "blush of modesty," and large eyes with "artless sensibility" while she guilelessly offers him a rose.²⁵⁰ Instantly, her grandmother, who had laboured to keep her away from the wily world, sends her indoors, and the emotional Virginia's eyes fill with tears as she throws down the roses in a tantrum before huffing inside.²⁵¹ Later, Hervey attempts to "prove the simplicity of her taste and the purity of her mind" by presenting her with a choice between a rose bud and diamond earrings. She chooses the rose bud,

²⁴⁸ Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda: Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), X.

²⁴⁹ Edgeworth, *Belinda*, X.

²⁵⁰ Edgeworth, *Belinda*, 363-64.

²⁵¹ Edgeworth, *Belinda*, 364.

evidently due to her “perfectly pure, disinterested, unpractised heart.”²⁵² Caroline Gonda notes that Virginia is kept “artificially innocent” in strict isolation from, and ignorance of, the world, where she is educated “in a bizarre type of retirement and domesticity, with her limited knowledge of the world drawn from romances.”²⁵³ Gonda stresses:

Virginia displays the exact opposite of what Edgeworth deemed desirable in a young woman of good character. She is a caricature, a cautionary tale to any young reader, highlighting the stupidity and gullibility, that vacuous emptiness that fills her mind. ... In Virginia, then, we seem to see Edgeworth’s indictment of the innocent heroine of sensibility: beautiful, affectionate, childishly open in her emotions — and a bearer of very little brain. It is hard to take her — or the plot in which she appears — too seriously.²⁵⁴

Gonda contends Virginia’s education “is like a ghastly parody of the one which has produced Belinda,” reminding us that Virginia “falls in love with a portrait of a man she has never met, and dreams endlessly of romance.”²⁵⁵ Indeed, the picture Edgeworth paints of her is one of simplistic naivety and frank immaturity, standing in high contrast to the characterisation of careful, contemplative Belinda, in a typical Edgeworthian masterstroke of painting oppositional models of different girlhoods within one text for readers to contemplate. Even though it is not in the Pollard Collection, *Belinda* indicates a constructed female adolescence that we see within the many editions of Edgeworth’s other works that are found in the Collection.

Queering Angelina

Another of Edgeworth’s texts that paints a diverse picture of girlhood occurs in “Angelina, or L’Amie Inconnu” (“Angelina”), a story which appeared in 1801 in *Moral Tales for Young People*. A tale that satirises romantic idealism, “Angelina” is centred

²⁵² Edgeworth, *Belinda*, 371, 367.

²⁵³ Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions*, 215. The reference to Virginia having an insatiable appetite for reading romances occurs on pg. 380 of the 1999 edition of *Belinda* used here. This theme of reading too many romance novels is strong in “Angelina, or L’amie Inconnu,” which acts as a cautionary tale about the dangers of reading the “wrong” books, misreading formative texts and the adverse effects it can have on building good character and judgment in oneself.

²⁵⁴ Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions*, 216.

²⁵⁵ Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions*, 216.

upon sixteen-year-old Anne Warwick's misguided friendship with an older woman writer. Anne writes her a fan letter that sparks a two-year friendship via written correspondence, and the women refer to one another by their pen names Angelina and Araminta. Like Virginia's plotline in *Belinda*, "Angelina" can also be seen as a cautionary tale, one that shows the follies of putting too much belief in the sensibilities found in romance novels (both girls read romance extensively). Edgeworth assures readers in the last line of the story:

Instead of rambling over the world in search of an *unknown friend*, she attached herself to those, of whose worth she received proofs more convincing than a letter of three folio sheets stuffed with sentimental nonsense.—In short, we have now in the name of Angelina Warwick, the pleasure to assure all those whom it may concern, that it is possible for a young lady of sixteen, to cure herself of the affectation of sensibility, and the folly of romance.²⁵⁶

But the journey to this end is not straightforward for Angelina. Angelina is "disgusted with the shallowness of the life" that she sees around her in an apt description of the adolescent girl's psychosocial "adjustment of the individual to the world."²⁵⁷ She craves a life different to the insipid, shallow one her current guardian, Lady Diana Chillingworth, provides her. She runs away in rebellion of that life to live with Araminta in her cottage in Wales. Araminta encourages Angelina, and a lock of her hair hangs in a locket around Angelina's neck. Angelina attempts to resist social norms which include Lady Chillingworth's superficial fashionable life and the prospect of marrying a stranger. Despite never having met Araminta, Angelina flees to her in a moment of "queer departure,"²⁵⁸ to become part of a chosen family that feels familiar albeit unknown to her, reorienting the home space to one that Sara Ahmed suggests reflects queer lives and relationships. This queerness intensifies when Angelina learns she is to share her Araminta with her husband-to-be, Mr Hodges.

²⁵⁶ Edgeworth, *Moral Tales*, 255. Emphasis in original.

²⁵⁷ Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation*, 45.

²⁵⁸ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 75-76.

The story is full of outbursts, jealousies, fainting, and other highly dramatic scenes, emphasising the silliness of the pen friends' romantic sensibilities, but the significance lies in the ending. Angelina comes to her senses quickly enough when she gets to Araminta's cottage. Ahmed states, "it matters how we arrive at the places we do," indicating that emotions move us to and from what we come in contact with, shaping our decisions along the way.²⁵⁹ Ahmed is concerned with the queerness of bodily orientations and lived experience. Angelina, while moving away from the prescribed expectations of heteronormative life, moves toward some sort of homosociality, something she may not yet understand fully but feels in her heart. It is no wonder she gets lost on her way to Araminta's cottage; her inability to follow directions is something Ahmed notes is a failure to follow the line, not being able to "get it straight."²⁶⁰ This queerness may be read as Angelina's inability to conform; she arrives at Araminta's quite disoriented and further confused when reality does not reconcile with her romantic expectations. "Angelina" queers the space for new interpretations of the characters and their relationships within the text. Angelina does not fit in either Lady Diana's or Araminta's home. Ahmed declares, "orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitation, as well as 'who' or 'what' we direct our energy and attention toward."²⁶¹

In the end, Angelina realises not that she does not want to be with a woman, but that she is with the wrong woman. Gonda insists, "it's no surprise when the young fan goes off with another older woman who's obviously more suitable, someone more classy and stylish, who's a bit flirtatious but not too threatening."²⁶² The narrative is queered even further, because "Araminta as an object of desire may have turned out to be a disappointment, a sham, a fiction; but Angelina's longing to share her life with a female friend persists."²⁶³ This coming-of-age story does not end in marriage to a man, although it does end in a more suitable match, one to a woman of the right class and upbringing. That Angelina prefers the company of

²⁵⁹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 1.

²⁶⁰ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 16-17.

²⁶¹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 3.

²⁶² Caroline Gonda, "Maria Edgeworth's Angelina, or L'amie Inconnue: Queer Materiality and The Woman Writer's Grotesque Body," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 17, no. 3-4 (2013): 280.

²⁶³ Caroline Gonda, "Maria Edgeworth's Angelina, or L'amie Inconnue," 279-80.

women might be justified in different ways: she is still young, will grow out of it, craves a mother's guidance, is in love, finds herself deeply attracted, has an intellectual crush, or is bored. Yet at the heart of these rationales are multiple queer allusions that colour the narrative, proving Angelina does not have to be written as a lesbian or, more relevant to the time, a Llangollen Lady, to be queer. She diverges from the conventional path as she searches for herself and learns to balance reason and emotion. In the end, in the stroke of a word in the last line of the story, she sheds her romantic sensibilities, but she does not shed the essence of her queer identity or her name. Edgeworth refers to her reformed hero as "Angelina Warwick," not "Anne," keeping the pen name that best describes the young woman who has found her way home at last.

The Young Rosamond

One of Edgeworth's most enduring stories, "The Purple Jar," is included in the first and second editions of *The Parent's Assistant* (1796), but Edgeworth moved it from the third edition into a collection of stories for younger readers called *Early Lessons* (1801). "The Purple Jar" is the story of Rosamond and her mother out shopping, when seven-year-old Rosamond covets a purple jar that she sees in an apothecary's window. Murphy contends that literature of the revolutionary period emphasizes the need to educate women to prepare them for their role in society.²⁶⁴ This is certainly what Rosamond's mother is doing as she guides her daughter to make a practical choice towards a pair of sturdy shoes over a decorative jar. The story shows how daughters are often educated to become like their mothers and how mothers must supervise daughters' rites of passage into womanhood. In Edgeworth's view, with her focus on early education being the purview of the mother, the growth of the daughter relies upon the guidance of the mother, either to emulate or forego. Edgeworth's models for exemplary mothers and girls are peppered throughout her tales and lessons. Moreover, their interactions with the many female cautionary figures—of ill judgment, poor breeding, or unhealthy appetites for what is fashionable—serves to accentuate their virtues. The preface to *The Parent's Assistant* states that the purpose of these stories is to educate, to teach

²⁶⁴ Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*, 14.



Figure 8: OLS POL 5846. Rosamond and her mother pictured in Maria Edgeworth's *Early Lessons*. Boston: Crosby and Nichols, 1846.

"useful knowledge," and to enforce "justice, truth, and humanity."²⁶⁵ However, the construction of the mother in "The Purple Jar" is also a romantic, ideological construction where the mother is perfect and "lives exclusively for and through her children, and finds fulfilment in the very act of forming her children into certain kinds of individuals."²⁶⁶ "The Purple Jar" highlights the complex female character within the practice of subordination, as seen when Rosamond is being almost cruelly instructed by her mother, said to be modelled after Edgeworth's first stepmother, Honora.²⁶⁷ Edgeworth allows the child reader a glimpse of freedom through Rosamond, a model for learning and independent thinking, and she

advocates for equality in educating girls by giving Rosamond a mother who insists Rosamond think for herself. Yet the narrative reimagines Edgeworth's experience. Her first stepmother Honora was not just a strict, disciplined educator, she is described by Butler as having a "high standard of conduct" that she expected her children to emulate.²⁶⁸ Her friendship was conditional upon their performance, and she believed in "speedy and consistent punishment" which included not giving breakfast to four-year-olds until they could make their beds and dress themselves.²⁶⁹ Manly sees Honora as "preoccupied with obedience" and "much admired but strict," something Butler agrees with when she claims Honora's children were in awe of her.²⁷⁰ Butler offers some perspective on the difficulties

²⁶⁵ Maria Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant; or Stories for Children, part I*, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1796), iii.

²⁶⁶ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers' Daughters*, 112.

²⁶⁷ Maria Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant, Moral Tales for Young People*, vol. 10, ed. Elizabeth Eger and Cliona Ó Gallchoir, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Marilyn Butler and Mitzi Myers (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003), viii.

²⁶⁸ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 49.

²⁶⁹ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 47, 50.

²⁷⁰ Manly, introduction to *Selected Tales*, xvi. See also Butler, 49.

Honora must have faced in mothering “someone else’s children,” especially when it was known Edgeworth and her elder brother grew up with little training in manners or discipline in her mother’s family.²⁷¹ Perhaps this is the reason she was sent away to school so young. There are echoes of Honora in the character of Rosamond’s mother, but Edgeworth also gives Rosamond a mother who keeps her daughter at home, as did her own mother, happy to devote her time and energy to Rosamond’s instruction and care. This presents an amalgamated girlhood typical of Edgeworth, who bases Rosamond on her own girlhood but furthers an ideal version of the mother through her narrative, offering a more hopeful model than Honora. This narrative has traces of wish fulfilment and romanticisation of the mother who did not live to see her daughter grown.

We meet Rosamond again in *The Continuation of Rosamond in Early Lessons* (1814) and in *Rosamond, A Sequel to Rosamond in Early Lessons (A Sequel, 1821)*. At the end of *A Sequel*, Rosamond is fourteen years old. She reappears as a young adult only a few years older in *Patronage* (1813). The publication dates overlap the ages Rosamond appears in print. She is older in *Patronage* years before she is younger in *A Sequel*, a slippage showing the fluidity of girlhood as a confluence of textual constructions and memories. This reflects Hollindale’s unstable memory from which identity, and therefore girlhood, is constructed, inasmuch as Rosamond is presented in anecdotes that are not sequential in time: she is both recalled and reconstructed by Edgeworth. This “discontinuous nature of existence” allows Edgeworth to revise and alter her memories to fit her narrative needs.²⁷² Rosamond’s construction is autobiographical: she has romantic sensibilities and a wicked sense of humour, is flawed but eager to please. When we meet Rosamond in *Patronage*, she is deciding upon marriage. We see that her early education by a capable mother means “it was fortunate for Rosamond that she had prudent friends, but that they had not made her in the least afraid of their superior wisdom. ... And now when she was called upon in an important event of life to decide for herself, she acted with consummate discretion.”²⁷³ This quotation expresses a common theme

²⁷¹ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 49.

²⁷² Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 71.

²⁷³ Maria Edgeworth, *Patronage* vol. 7, ed. Connor Carville and Marilyn Butler in *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Marilyn Butler and Mitzi Myers (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 99. The paragraph quotation occurs in chapter 32.

of Edgeworth, that early education is instrumental in the formation of young women's exemplary character. Because Edgeworth writes characters like Rosamond across time and texts, the reader witnesses the positive effects of an Edgeworthian education. The trajectory of girlhood moves satisfactorily toward womanhood, largely because the girl relies on the example of her mother and other adults who support her. Rosamond reflects Edgeworth's own place in the family. We can picture Rosamond in the Edgeworthstown library, as comfortable there as her creator, able to make life decisions both independently and interdependently because she occupies a liminal but secure space within and among family. But unlike Edgeworth, Rosamond remains in perpetual girlhood as her age shifts across texts. While Rosamond grows, she never definitively grows up; where we saw Edgeworth pictured as a mature woman writing in her library (Figure 5), Rosamond remains a girl forever (Figure 8).

Leonora Growing Up

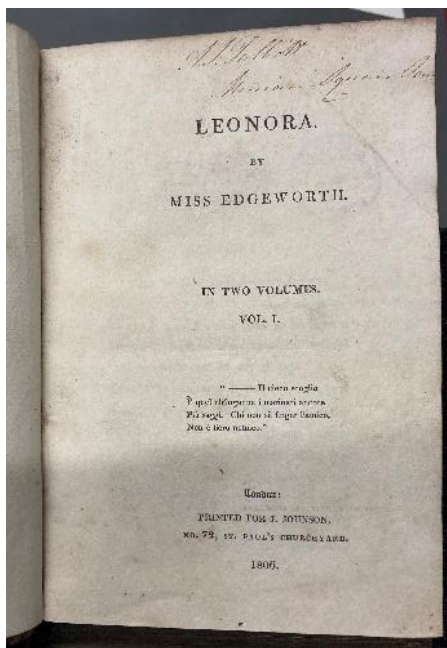


Figure 9: OLS POL 6062-6064. *Leonora* by Maria Edgeworth. London: J. Johnson, 1806 1st ed.

Leonora, like other Edgeworth heroines, is a recurring character in more than one text. The reader encounters one Leonora as a schoolgirl in a story from *The Parent's Assistant* titled "The Bracelets," and later, another Leonora appears as the main character of her own epistolary text *Leonora*. Butler goes to lengths to describe the "real-life women (who) contributed something to this most persistent character," suggesting that the Leonora in "The Bracelets" was modelled on Edgeworth's school friend, Fanny Robinson, and that Leonora's mother, the Duchess in *Leonora*, was modelled on Edgeworth's aunt Margaret Ruxton.²⁷⁴ Butler also claims that "with Leonora the Edgeworth heroine is born, well-educated but gentle, modest, domestic;

²⁷⁴ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 54.

and most typically, a wife and aunt, the hub of a secure and happy family."²⁷⁵ Despite Edgeworth's affinity for her Rosamond character, Butler insists Leonora is the model Edgeworth wished for herself, a construction of both Leonora's and her own character together, drawn to perfection when Edgeworth was nineteen and working tirelessly to meet her father's expectations.²⁷⁶

In "The Bracelets," Leonora masterfully navigates the community of girls with whom she lives at school, in what Myers calls "the pleasures and pains of interdependence," and Edgeworth tells us specifically how Leonora became the model heroine:²⁷⁷

(She) had been educated by her mother in a manner more suited to her sex ... her judgment had been early cultivated, and her good sense employed in the regulation of her conduct; she had been habituated to that restraint which, as a woman, she was to expect in life, and early accustomed to yield; complaisance in her seemed natural and graceful.²⁷⁸

This contrasts with Cecilia, Leonora's best friend, whom Edgeworth characterises as the product of her lack of early education due to her mother's death when she was young. Cecilia is educated by her father alongside her brother, which results in her learning to value academic and material accomplishments but leaves her bereft of any emotional understanding. She has not learned empathy or gained perspective to understand the ramifications of her behaviour, often showing what Fiona Robinson calls "her ignorance about sentimental commodities."²⁷⁹ As a result, Cecilia is "ever desirous of doing what was right, but she has not yet acquired sufficient fear of doing wrong," as Leonora had.²⁸⁰ Edgeworth further compares the girls: Cecilia is "active, ambitious," and "enterprising," while Leonora is "contented, unaspiring, temperate." Leonora is "proud" but Cecilia "vain," a quality that makes

²⁷⁵ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 54.

²⁷⁶ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 54.

²⁷⁷ Mitzi Myers, "De-Romanticizing the Subject: Maria Edgeworth's 'The Bracelets,' Mythologies of Origin, and the Daughter's Coming to Writing," in *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995), 108.

²⁷⁸ Maria Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant; or, Stories for Children, part II*, vol. 1 (London, 1796), 58.

²⁷⁹ Fiona Robinson, "Peculiar Dearness: Sentimental Commerce in Maria Edgeworth's "The Bracelets," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 329.

²⁸⁰ Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant; or, Stories for Children, part II*, 57.

her both “more anxious to please” and “more apt to offend.”²⁸¹ Edgeworth concludes the comparison by stating, “Leonora was the most anxious to avoid what was wrong, Cecilia the most ambitious to do what was right.” Cecilia is described as not well liked, but a leader; Leonora is loved but “too indolent to govern.”²⁸²

Leonora’s indolence appears in a modern context as avoidant. As someone who is “anxious to avoid what was wrong,” Leonora is most concerned with keeping the peace and promoting harmony among the girls who attend Mrs Villars’ school with her. Edgeworth exalts Leonora’s restraint, pointing to her constancy as a friend and mentor to the other girls: she has “prudence and good sense” which, combined with her “habitual gentleness,” marks her as consistent and reliable, a steadiness taught to her by her mother at home.²⁸³ This is what Robinson calls “the gender-specific restraint” that Leonora employs at a high level of interpersonal intelligence, working to establish emotional harmony between her fellow students.²⁸⁴ This is important to Edgeworth and is promoted in *Practical Education*, where she states, “even the acquisition of talents and knowledge ought, however, to be but a secondary consideration, subordinate to the general happiness of our pupils.”²⁸⁵ “The Bracelets” reflects this when Mrs Villars, who acts *in loco parentis* as friend and paragon as well as teacher, tells Cecelia she likes her “as a pupil” but is unsure about her “as a companion.”²⁸⁶ She then distinguishes between good nature and good temper, saying Leonora has the latter, which is most desirable. But the truth is Leonora would rather not tell, not say, not confront. She is without ambition and often does not express herself, but that is her choice: a quality that marks her as easily contented and well balanced as she strives not to influence negatively the general mood of her friends. In other words, she puts others’ emotional needs first and, as a self-denying young girl, is set up as a model for girl readers. Her “aptitude for navigating the emotional currents of the school’s little society” is both learned and innate, the result of the “education of the heart” as laid out in *Practical Education*

²⁸¹ Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant; or, Stories for Children, part II*, 21-22.

²⁸² Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant; or, Stories for Children, part II*, 22.

²⁸³ Edgeworth, *Leonora*, 24-25, 43, 79.

²⁸⁴ Fiona Robinson, “Peculiar Dearness,” 342. This “restraint” is described by Edgeworth in the text, as quoted in footnote 276 above.

²⁸⁵ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 277.

²⁸⁶ Edgeworth, *Leonora*, 24-25.

in Chapter X “On Sympathy and Sensibility.”²⁸⁷ So, where Edgeworth describes Leonora as “indolent,” we might read “reticent” or perhaps “resigned” as she works on her female disposition and prepares for the role she will certainly assume as a young woman.

The indolence of Leonora in “The Bracelets” is also a characteristic of the other, older Leonora in the beginning of the novel *Leonora*, whose indolence might be understood as her refusal to look critically at the situation of her friend Olivia in France, a refusal that shows an adolescent naivety. In “The Bracelets,” Edgeworth subverts the passive Leonora’s description by insisting that “notwithstanding the gentleness of her temper,” she was “more independent than Cecilia” and “had more reliance in her own judgment.”²⁸⁸ In *Leonora*, the opening line penned by Leonora’s friend exclaims, “what a misfortune it is to be born a woman!” but Leonora proves in the end to have the strength of character Edgeworth implies, after painfully maturing into the model young woman.²⁸⁹ The two Leonoras are nowhere said to be the same character, yet to a reader, Leonora’s girlhood exemplified in “The Bracelets” might extend into the early years of marriage in *Leonora*. Edgeworth gives both characters similar qualities to show the significance of both the Leonora’s early education by attentive mothers. In “the Bracelets:”

Leonora ... who had been educated by her mother in a manner more suited to her sex, had a character and virtues more peculiar to a female: her judgement had been early cultivated and her good sense employed in the regulation of her conduct; she had been habituated to that restraint which, as a woman, she was to expect in life, and early accustomed to yield; complaisance in her seemed natural and graceful.²⁹⁰

In *Leonora*, Olivia asks Leonora “why had I not such a friend, such a mother as yours, early to direct my uncertain steps, and to educate me to happiness?”²⁹¹ She describes Leonora as “a woman who is interesting in the extreme, who has charmed me by the

²⁸⁷ Fiona Robinson, “Peculiar Dearness,” 33. “Education of the heart” is found in the preface to *Practical Education*, vii.

²⁸⁸ Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant; or, Stories for Children, part II*, 59.

²⁸⁹ Maria Edgeworth, *Leonora*, (London: J. Johnson, 1806), 1.

²⁹⁰ Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant; or, Stories for Children, part II*, 58.

²⁹¹ Edgeworth, *Leonora*, 10.

simplicity of her manners and the generous sensibility of her heart."²⁹² But it is the last letter of the novel where Leonora's mother sings her praises and reminds Leonora of the rewards her strength of character will bring her:

Your temper, fortitude, and persevering affection, have now their just reward ... Let me exult in the accomplishment of my prophecies ... Your prudence will prevent you from indulging too far your taste for retirement, or for the exclusive society of your intimate friends. ... Your rank, your fortune, and I may be permitted to add, your character, manners and abilities, give you the power of drawing round you persons of the best information and of the highest talents. ... Your husband will find, in such society, everything that can attach him to his home, and in you his most rational friend and his most charming companion.²⁹³

In the beginning of the novel, Leonora retains qualities of an adolescent girl: a young woman married a mere eighteen months, caring for her sister's children but still without her own children, not yet a mother. She is titled, a Lady, but with little knowledge of the world. She is particularly Edgeworthian, resulting from that fluidity and crossover writing Edgeworth excelled at. Leonora is wilfully naive, unwilling to look critically at her situation or take her mother's advice, and opens her home to Olivia, a woman of ill-repute who has been too long abroad in France and seduces Leonora's husband. Leonora lacks the experience to foresee a pattern in Olivia's behaviour that might make her think twice about inviting her, and she accepts Olivia's excuses and cries of persecution. It is not until the end of the tale, once Leonora matures, that she remembers to rely on her own judgment, and she stoically perseveres through adversity thanks to her mother's careful early guidance. Her patience pays off in her husband's return to her, her family intact. *Leonora* is not unlike *Letters* in that the epistolary format allows for argument and differing opinions, along with advice and guidance in the letters, to philosophise about the conduct of the characters situated in an engaging and tense narrative. Its unique intersection of melodrama and morality work to make this a text particularly adolescent, seen in both Leonora's personal growth and also in her growing

²⁹² Edgeworth, *Leonora*, 60.

²⁹³ Edgeworth, *Leonora*, 286-291.

understanding of her responsibilities and place in society. Edgeworth's expert crossover writing creates, in *Leonora*, an enduring character who embodies the hybridity and complexity of girlhood.

Letter writing was key to a young woman's expression of self and identity formation in the late eighteenth century, and it is no surprise that the letters in *Leonora* reveal much about the characters' stages of growth. Leonora's young womanhood lacking experience is read through the correspondence with her mother, who shows wisdom and worry in her responses. Leonora writes to her mother only after she has invited Olivia to stay, rather than seek her advice before, and writes a lengthy defense of her position to her disapproving mother. She tells her, "I have discerned, or rather that she (Olivia) has revealed to me, all her faults," and "she has been imprudent; but I repeat in the strongest terms, that I am *convinced of her innocence*."²⁹⁴ Leonora effuses praise for Olivia and her "affectionate heart," "superior abilities," "fascinating manners," while her mother writes reasonable arguments against Olivia and expresses "the terror which I feel at the idea of my daughter's becoming the friend of one of these women."²⁹⁵ Edgeworth uses this correspondence to show contrasting notions of femininity. We read Leonora's girlhood as innocence, passive acceptance, kindness and openness, while we read her mother as a wiser woman, sceptical, cautious. Edgeworth adds another layer: Mrs. Helen C., currently staying with Leonora, is a considerate and loyal older friend who is contrasted with the conniving, sexualized, younger Olivia.²⁹⁶ Leonora writes her dismay of her mother's judgment in a petulant rebuttal where she places her mother in "a palace of ice" that is home to her mother's "coldness of mediocrity."²⁹⁷ Sarah Bilston argues, "highlight(ing) tensions between the girl and her mother" indicates the awkward age of adolescence, the awkward age being "the transition to womanhood: a time when a girl hovers on the edge of her adult identity."²⁹⁸ Leonora is hovering, about to cross the threshold into womanhood, but she unknowingly resists. The reader can see her position: no longer girl but not quite woman, despite

²⁹⁴ Edgeworth, *Leonora*, 15, 34. Emphasis in original.

²⁹⁵ Edgeworth, *Leonora*, 34, 38.

²⁹⁶ Notice yet another use of the name Helen. While connections are less obvious in this case, the Helen of *Leonora* exhibits the same loyalty and consideration of the eponymous Helen (1834).

²⁹⁷ Edgeworth, *Leonora*, 31.

²⁹⁸ Bilston, *The Awkward Age*, 2.

already being married and caring for children. Leonora's assimilation into society is somewhat problematic because she is sulky and contrary to her mother; she misses important social cues and ignores advice on how to handle herself as a married Lady. This supports Leonora's rough start in the beginning of her epistolary tale. The letters between mother and daughter invite the reader inside this personal exchange, creating an intimacy that is broadcast to the world, allowing us into the sacred shared space between women as mother attempts to guide daughter. Much like *Letters* and Edgeworth's personal correspondence, Edgeworth makes the private public in *Leonora*, which allows her to explore these various models of femininity on the page, models that reflect both real women and written characters.

Leonora reflects Edgeworth's personal practice through its epistolary form. The letters between Leonora and her mother reflect the correspondence of Edgeworth with her father's sister, Margaret Ruxton, who continuously volleyed letters with Edgeworth and read all her manuscripts. Young women in Ireland were engaged in extensive journaling and letter writing in Edgeworth's time. She was nineteen when she wrote "The Bracelets" and thirty-five when she wrote *Leonora*. Leonora's age is not given in *Leonora*, but her marriage is only eighteen months old at a time when it was common for brides to be wed in the teen years.²⁹⁹ And while *Leonora* was not written until Edgeworth was in her thirties, it coincides with the timing of her first and only marriage proposal.³⁰⁰ Leonora and Cecilia are girls of twelve or thirteen in "The Bracelets," not much younger than Edgeworth was when she wrote the tale. Edgeworth spent her early years at Mrs Latuffierre's school at Derby and entered Mrs. Devis's Academy for Young Ladies in London when she was twelve. She wrote "The Bracelets" with that experience just a few years behind her. The composition of letters formed part of the education of young girls, included in writing classes young women attended. Letters became more personal by the end of

²⁹⁹ O'Dowd, "Adolescent Girlhood in Eighteenth Century Ireland." O'Dowd discusses the age of consent being thirteen at this time and into the nineteenth century. See also Maria Luddy's work on marriage in Ireland at this time.

³⁰⁰ On December 3rd, 1802, while touring in Paris with her parents, Maria, aged thirty-four, wrote to her aunt Ruxton about an offer of marriage she had just refused. The man was Abraham Niclas Clewberg-Edelcrantz, a Swedish bachelor of forty-six commissioned by his king to tour Europe in search of inventions. He was ambitious, smart, and well-liked by Richard Lovell Edgeworth. Maria refused to consider living away from her family in the Swedish court, but the decision to refuse him was a difficult one. Butler gives a lengthy description of the events in her *Literary Biography*, 192-196.

the eighteenth century, when “letter writing was a skill to be learnt, practised and polished,” and letters were intended “to be read out loud on social occasions and the style of writing was given a great deal of thought.”³⁰¹ Edgeworth relied on a wide network of female family members for guidance and support, entertainment, news, connection, all through letter-writing. The ideal letter was a mixture of family news and literary comments on books being read by the letter writer, a form at which Edgeworth was an expert.

Edgeworth was very particular about her letters, and insisted each letter was for the intended addressee alone. She considered her readers in every letter she wrote, knowing each letter would be received differently by different readers. She was choosy about which correspondents could share or read her letters aloud, knowing some letters, while written privately, were intended for public consumption. Valerie Pakenham’s edited collection *Maria Edgeworth’s Letters from Ireland* (2018) includes letters to her most trusted confidante, her cousin Sophy Ruxton. Edgeworth’s letters were so widely cherished that Sophy was known to share them, but the decision to make public some letters written privately to Sophy did not sit well with Edgeworth, who admonished Sophy for sharing the letters with company. In February 1805, she tells Sophy, “the habit of sharing letters is a vile practice,” even as she understands Sophy and her mother (Aunt Ruxton) only want to share Edgeworth’s talents from pride in her accomplishments.³⁰² In January 1809 she writes:

My dear friend... I am going to give you as good a scolding as ever you had in your life... You sent my letter to you to Anne Nangle & she read it at Allenstown... but no part of it was fit for anybody but you. And how could you serve me so – you who know what an utter horror I have of sharing letters – You with whom I thought myself safe on this score that I could write any nonsense that came into my foolish head or heart. Very well – you will bring me only to write show letters to you, and then you will see how you like them.³⁰³

³⁰¹ O’Dowd and Purvis, *A History of the Girl*, 227. See O’Dowd for extensive treatment of the writing and reading practices of Irish girls.

³⁰² Edgeworth, *Maria Edgeworth’s Letters from Ireland*, 89.

³⁰³ Edgeworth, *Maria Edgeworth’s Letters from Ireland*, 117-118.

Between these letters sits *Leonora*, printed in 1806, where Leonora writes to her mother:

As to Olivia's letters – I am sorry I sent them to you; for I see that they have lowered instead of raising her in your opinion. But if you criticise letters, written in openness and confidence of heart to a private friend, as if they were set before the tribunal of the public, you are – may I say it? – not only severe, but unjust; for you try and condemn the subjects of one country by the laws of another.³⁰⁴

Here *Leonora* is a perfect imitation of Edgeworth's lived experience. Amidst the prevalent letter-writing culture of young women of Edgeworth's time, Leonora, like Sophy, has breached an unspoken rule about sharing a woman's letters with an unintended audience. Edgeworth's letters, along with the journals of Dorothea Herbert and Mary Shackleton Leadbeater, and the autobiographical writings of Sydney Owenson, Laetitia Pilkington, and Margaret Leeson are strong examples of young Irish women's private writing, but these examples were made public long after their existence and usually after the death of the writers.³⁰⁵ *Leonora* nudges this private practice into the public sphere in Edgeworth's lifetime, as she was a prolific pen pal while concurrently writing stories and novels. *Leonora* reinforces Edgeworth's efforts in *Letters*, where she first professionalised and fictionalised the practice of private correspondence among women. Her cross-writing conflates personal and public writing, allowing her to admonish the public practice of sharing private correspondence while using a public practice of writing a novel to highlight the importance of private writing. Letters between friends, and letters from mother to daughter, authenticate not only this private practice but women's writing in all its forms.

The Adolescent Helen

Helen is the last girl Edgeworth wrote, appearing in the novel *Helen* a full seventeen years after *Ormond* (1817), and is the culmination of her attempts to write girlhood and of her cross-writing. Butler claims that "when Maria Edgeworth wrote the tale

³⁰⁴ Edgeworth, *Leonora*, 55.

³⁰⁵ O'Dowd and Purvis, *A History of the Girl*. O'Dowd discusses all these women's writings in chapter 4.

which expressed herself, she wrote *Helen*.”³⁰⁶ Patrick Murray claims *Helen* is “the only Edgeworth novel to allow the claims of romantic love; prudence, calculation and circumspection are for once swept aside by emotion,” and scholars like Butler, Manly and Ó Gallchoir agree.³⁰⁷ It is also the only novel written after her father died, exempting it from his heavy-handed influence. Helen is an orphaned hero much like

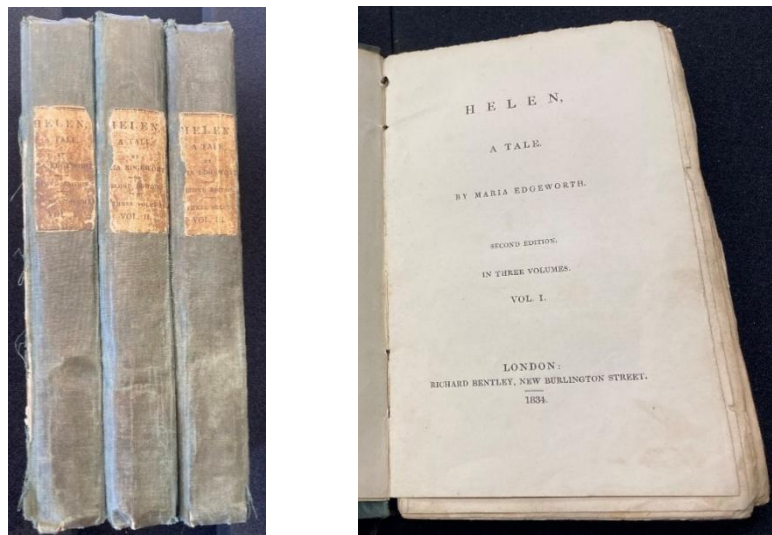


Figure 10: OLS POL 6067, 7921, 7922. *Helen* by Maria Edgeworth. London: Richard Bentley, 1834 2nd ed. Spines and title page of *Helen*, 1834 2nd ed.

her orphaned author: a woman of means but not married. She is loyal and wishes to be admired by her closest circle; she is not worldly, yet she shows wisdom, all qualities Edgeworth possessed herself. Even at this point in her writing career, Helen seems like a projection of the kind of girl Edgeworth wished to be. Helen is described early in the text as young and “sweet-tempered,” “kind hearted,” “and not in the least selfish,” a typical Edgeworthian construction of a hero fit for her eponymous tale.³⁰⁸ Also typical is the manner in which Helen is educated and prepared for adult life through the guidance of Lady Davenant, the mother of Helen’s childhood friend, Lady Cecilia. The text is set at Lady Cecilia’s estate, where Helen, figuratively orphaned for the second time when her uncle dies, is invited to remain

³⁰⁶ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 459.

³⁰⁷ Patrick Murray, *Maria Edgeworth: a Study of the Novelist* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1971), 66. Butler discusses *Helen* in her *Literary Biography*, and Manly and Ó Gallchoir discuss this in the introduction to the Pickering & Chatto volume, 1999.

³⁰⁸ Maria Edgeworth, *Helen, a Tale*, vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), 7.

permanently. This orphaned adolescence is manifest in the text as a physical marginality. Helen crosses thresholds of homes that are not hers. She moves from her deceased uncle's house to her new guardian's home and then to her childhood friend Cecilia's estate (notice Cecilia has reappeared since "The Bracelets"). Every day she crosses from private into public rooms in Cecilia's house, where she learns to navigate between the authentic and performative versions of self, and to move between girlhood and womanhood. The business of daughters, mothers, and friends is conducted privately in conversations in boudoirs and at dressing tables, as when Lady Davenant discusses with Helen her daughter's happiness in marriage, but once the women leave that space, their expected and not necessarily genuine roles are performed publicly, marking the shift from boudoir to drawing room, dressing table to dining table.

Butler notes that Lady Davenant was modelled on Edgeworth's aunt Margaret Edgeworth Ruxton, Edgeworth's guide in all matters and strongest literary influence outside her father.³⁰⁹ Edwina Keown's entry for Edgeworth in *The Dictionary of Irish Biography*, a project of the Royal Irish Academy, describes Ruxton:

an influential critic for the embryonic author. Whereas Richard favoured facts, Margaret favoured lively character scenes and abhorred vulgarity. She supplied Edgeworth with the novels of William Godwin and Anne Radcliffe, and encouraged her to write *Castle Rackrent* (1800) – based on the family chronicle *The Black Book of Edgeworthstown*.³¹⁰

Ruxton was more than a helpful critic or literary influence on Edgeworth. She "came to be idolized by Maria" who "developed a real emotional dependence" on her aunt.³¹¹ Likewise, Lady Davenant offers Helen advice throughout the text, most of which revolves around marriage, indicating the whole household is intent on seeing Helen over this adolescent threshold to maturation. Although Lady Davenant is a controversial figure involved in politics and has a past that she only alludes to cryptically, her advice to Helen is sound.

³⁰⁹ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 54.

³¹⁰ Edwina Keown, "Maria Edgeworth," in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, February 2011.

³¹¹ Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 54, 102, 112-113.

The text allows for various, sometimes conflicting views on women's roles in politics to exist simultaneously. The narrator's voice adds a layer of perspective concerning politics and women when describing Lady Davenant attending a clandestine meeting as the only woman in the room:

The political conferences were held in Lord Davenant's apartment: to what the conferences tended we never knew and never shall; we consider them as matters of history, and leave them with due deference to the historian; we have only to do with biography. Far be it from us to meddle with politics – we have quite enough to do with manners and morality.³¹²

Yet only a few pages later, when Helen and Lady Davenant are alone in the Lady's chamber, Lady Davenant exclaims, "let us consider this matter rationally, and put our hope, and our fears, and our prejudices out of the question, if possible," as she begins to counsel Helen on how women's position in society is different that it was "a hundred years ago, or as it was sixty, or I will say thirty years since."³¹³

You can hardly expect, Helen, that you, as a rational being, can go through the world as it is now, without forming any opinion on points of public importance. You cannot, I conceive, satisfy yourself with the common namby-pamby little missy phrase, 'ladies have nothing to do with politics.'³¹⁴

In this way, the text speaks to both the private and the public side of women's lives. Edgeworth uses different voices in the text to present both sides of a situation, as she does in her children's fiction, insisting the reader choose for herself which side she might take.³¹⁵ *Helen* stands, along with *Belinda*, *Leonora*, and *Letters*, as Edgeworth's "engagement with women's problematic relationship to the public and the political," especially for the women in the stories who stand on the threshold of

³¹² Edgeworth, *Helen*, 218.

³¹³ Edgeworth, *Helen*, 233.

³¹⁴ Edgeworth, *Helen*, 233.

³¹⁵ Myers, "Canonical 'Orphans' and Critical *Ennui*." Myers discusses at length throughout the article this practice of empowering child readers.

adulthood and public life.³¹⁶ The conversation between Helen and her mentor ends with the classic Edgeworthian caveat of Edgeworth's proto-feminism:

Depend upon it, Helen... that when you are married, your love for a man of superior abilities, and of superior character, must elevate your mind to sympathy with all his pursuits, with all the subjects which claim his attention (because) female influence must, will and ought to exist on political subjects as on all others; but this influence should always be domestic, not public.³¹⁷

This exchange between Helen and Lady Davenant shows Edgeworth had not let go of her Enlightenment era views, despite this novel being written forty years later in the early Victorian period. This indicates yet another liminality in Edgeworth, a philosophical hybridity that allowed her to articulate Enlightenment views long after they were fashionable. That the novel was so well received and now praised by scholars suggests the outmoded views on domestic femininity were not unwelcomed by contemporary readers nor met with disdain by critics who understood her unique hybrid positioning.

Helen reflects many of the same ideological values that were present in Edgeworth's earliest writing and suggests that Edgeworth's views on girlhood mature but do not change. Helen is young, unmarried, orphaned, moved from house to house, and transitions for the first time from the private world of the nursery via Lady Davenant's chambers, to the public world of Lady Cecilia's drawing room filled with dignitaries, politicians, and artists. Helen learns how to be "out" in society, culminating in her match to "a man of superior abilities" with whom she also happens to love, after fortunes are lost and reclaimed and Cecilia's indiscrete marriage scandal averted.³¹⁸ While Helen is a young woman on the verge of marriage, the concerns with morality included here are not so different to those expressed in Edgeworth's *Rosamond* stories. Helen and Rosamond are years apart in age, yet they are both girls who share many of the same challenges and qualities united by Edgeworth's overarching ideas about girlhood: its potential and its

³¹⁶ Edgeworth, *Helen*, vol. 9, ed. Susan Manly and Clóna Ó Gallchoir in *The Novels and Selected works of Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Marilyn Butler and Mitzi Myers (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), ix.

³¹⁷ Edgeworth, *Helen*, 234.

³¹⁸ Edgeworth, *Helen*, 234.

qualities of loyalty and humility. Edgeworth stretches girlhood into a life stage spanning decades, characterised by shifting growth and hybridity.

Debates about what women ought to do and how they ought to behave are as prominent in *Helen* as they were in the *Rosamond* stories and in *Letters*, yet it would be anachronistic to consider her work as feminist. As Bilger argues, “the term ‘feminism’ did not exist when these women (Edgeworth et. al.) were writing.”³¹⁹ As a response to social circumstances, early feminism was reactive, and in the eighteenth century, “enlightenment feminism was based on the tenet that women are rational creatures who should be treated as such.”³²⁰ Forty years of writing finds Edgeworth still insisting on equity for women in the domestic sphere through prudent characters fixated on self-improvement.

Helen is Edgeworth’s most precursive example of what would later be known as young adult fiction, as an example of a form honed decades later. It meets many of the requirements of young adult fiction as defined in the introduction of this thesis, particularly by Trites and Cart, who note a focus on the relationship between society and the individual as well as the personal growth offered in children’s literature. The story is of interest to young adults, and the main character stands on the brink of adult identity, as Bilston says.³²¹ Beckett calls it a “literature of transition from childhood to adulthood and the lines are particularly blurry.”³²² The lines defining adolescence may be blurry, but the focus of adolescent fiction, by definition, points squarely on the protagonist, who mimics not only the age and experience of the implied reader but also their inner life. Aileen Douglas notes that

Psychology, emotion and the affective are notably absent from the fiction for adults which established Edgeworth’s reputation in the period before 1820. It is in the stories for older children that Edgeworth begins to realise this aspect of character, work she would continue with remarkable effect in her last novel, *Helen* (1834).³²³

³¹⁹ Bilger, *Laughing Feminism*, 10.

³²⁰ Bilger, *Laughing Feminism*, 10.

³²¹ Refer to my introduction pages 16-17 for these references, already quoted.

³²² Beckett, *Crossover Fiction*, 122.

³²³ Aileen Douglas, “What Follows: Maria Edgeworth’s Works for Older Children” in *Women’s Literary Education, 1690-1850*, ed. Jessica Lim and Louise Joy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 96-113, 101.

Helen is a text with an ambiguously adolescent main character, Helen, whose moral, mental, and emotional arc is at the heart of the tale. It offers readers a view of Helen's hopes, fears, and dilemmas, tailored to the stage of life adolescents experience.³²⁴ Helen is not quite ready for womanhood. She is impressionable yet she knows herself. She is grounded but still needs guidance. Her character is the focus of the tale, and the plot revolves around her fate. Caroline Gonda goes further to describe the novel as "the configuration of emotional conflicts and their resolutions" to form "a sustained drama of personal relationships" and a "prolonged emotional crisis."³²⁵ Helen's affection for her friend combined with her naivety lead her astray. She is persuaded by Cecelia to deceive Cecelia's jealous husband and claim the authorship of some love letters which Cecelia had written before she met him. Cecelia assumes Helen should protect her no matter the cost to Helen or its effects on her prospects with Granville Beauclerc.³²⁶ Cecelia uses the words that manipulate Helen so effectively: "save me now" and "Granville need never know," "oh! For my mother's sake! ... would you make the death of that mother?"³²⁷ Gonda states Helen is repressed by Cecelia; that Cecelia's use of "emotional blackmail, fear and betrayal" shows she does not believe that Helen, "an orphan with no home of her own, may stand to lose as much if her marriage is broken off as Cecelia does if her marriage breaks up."³²⁸ Thus, Helen is relegated by both class and marital position, seen as a lack of maturity with no small amount of gullibility, to a lower status in the eyes of her friend. This status is blurred by the realities of her relationships: Helen is "sometimes daughter to Lady Davenant, sometime companion and confidante, toggling between adult-child and adult-adult relationships throughout the novel."³²⁹ She also shoulders the adult burdens of her friend, a married woman of status, when that friend cannot bear the responsibility of her own actions. Eighteenth-century literary scholars might argue that Edgeworth did not write young adult fiction but was simply a crossover writer writing for a mixed audience like so many of her contemporaries, creating characters with adolescent qualities that appeal to a

³²⁴ Sarah K. Hertz and Donald R. Gallo, *From Hinton to Hamlet: Building Bridges between Young Adult Literature and the Classics* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2005).

³²⁵ Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions*, 227. Note Gonda quotes Butler's *Literary Biography*, 473-74.

³²⁶ Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions*, 232.

³²⁷ Edgeworth, *Helen*, 322-23.

³²⁸ Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions*, 231-32.

³²⁹ Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions*, 231.

diverse readership. However, Edgeworth's longtime commitment to involving sisters and friends close in age to her characters in the editing process shows that Edgeworth did have a specific audience in mind and knew who her audience would be.

A Community of Female Editors

Edgeworth was sixty-six when *Helen* was published in 1834, after extensive revision by a community of female family members, including her Ruxton aunt and cousins and her half-sisters Lucy Edgeworth, Fanny Edgeworth Wilson, and Harriet Edgeworth Butler. We can see the influence of Edgeworth's lived experience and her own life-long girlhood in this novel, but due to the age gap between author and protagonist, *Helen* presents a weaker connection to Edgeworth's contemporary lived experience than her previous texts. *Helen* is as much about her younger sisters as it is about her writing literary girlhood. Hilary Havens states that "more than any other of her novels, *Helen* was influenced by Edgeworth's family and her readers."³³⁰ The sisters edit and rewrite and offer suggestions throughout the text, and they bring their perspective to the work. Many of the half-sisters and cousins also remained unmarried, as in the case of Edgeworth's cousins, Sophy and Margaret Ruxton, or marry in later years, as is well-documented in Edgeworth's letters. The women in the editing circle were all significantly younger than Edgeworth. Fanny, Harriet, and Lucy were daughters of Edgeworth's third and last stepmother, Frances, who herself was a year younger than Edgeworth. Fanny Wilson was thirty-one years younger and was "given" to Edgeworth to raise. She married at thirty and was thirty-five when *Helen* was published. Harriet Butler was thirty-three years Edgeworth's junior, married at twenty-five, and was thirty-three when *Helen* was published. Lucy Edgeworth was thirty-seven years younger, twenty-nine years old in 1834, and would not marry for another eight years at age thirty-seven.

Helen is the only complete surviving manuscript of Edgeworth's texts, held at the British Library. Part of the near-final draft is written in Lucy's handwriting, supposedly dictated by Edgeworth to get the conversation right and "achieve a

³³⁰ Havens, *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 144.

greater degree of realism.”³³¹ Lucy was the only unmarried sister-editor and closest in age to the character Helen. Lucy may not have written *Helen*, but she seriously influenced its production. Manuscript evidence shows that the sisters influenced Edgeworth to “moderate her initial ambitious aims.”³³² Seen as compromises that Edgeworth made in the joint editing process, Edgeworth “limited her transgressions of social and patriarchal norms in her revisions, implicitly acknowledging that the system of networked authorship within which she worked was shaped by gender.”³³³ This is due to Edgeworth’s implicit acknowledgment of the shared girlhood with her sisters and cousins. Writing *Helen* is a manifestation of all these women’s input, the result of both their fears and their comfort with the society in which they were producing this text. That these women were navigating marriage and public life influences how *Helen* was revised. The plot of *Helen*, like *Leonora*, which was edited in much the same process, moves away from Edgeworth’s own experience and into female spaces she never inhabited, namely life after marriage and moving away from family. She addresses the potential weaknesses of the novel by compensating for this lack of experience, and she addresses the age gap between herself and her character Helen by soliciting the insights of her much younger half-sisters, newly married and settled abroad, and by using a wide community of female editors to revise the text.

The character Helen is a projection of their ideal young woman to make the perfect wife, an ideal that the married Edgeworth editors would have opinions about and aspire to be for their own husbands. The key to this ideal is Helen’s freshness, her naivety, her untrained and unworldly innocence, and her malleability into the shape of the perfect wife, as seen when Churchill considers Helen for his bride:

She would do credit to his taste; he thought she would, when she had a little more *usage du monde*, do the honours of his house well; and it would be delightful to train her! If he could but engage her affections, before she had seen more of the world, she might really love him for his own sake.³³⁴

³³¹ Havens, *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 145.

³³² Havens, *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 144. The examples in this paragraph are discussed in pages 144-148.

³³³ Havens, *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 149.

³³⁴ Edgeworth, *Helen*, 31. Emphasis in original.

Churchill is excited about the prospect of such an innocent young woman, who does not know better than to take him for who he is, without guile or manipulation, and who shows immense potential to be “trained” into his ideal wife. This potential to be taught, to be fashioned into an ideal, be it at age seven like Rosamond or near adulthood like Helen, is the essence of Edgeworth’s ideal girlhood.

Manly and Ó Gallchoir agree with Butler that *Helen* is a “deeply felt study of domestic relationships.”³³⁵ The focus on interpersonal relationships and description of feelings are a success for Edgeworth. The novel reads differently than earlier texts: it is less pedantic, more descriptive, and uses the drama of its plot and characters simply for entertainment. It is successful because this is a story about girlhood written without the input of her father and is instead helped by the hands of so many women in its creation. Because this text was written so late in Edgeworth’s writing life, it is not only romantic but nostalgic. Lady Davenant puts it best when she remarks to Beauclerc: “As we advance in life, it becomes more and more difficult to find in any book the sort of enchanting, entrancing interest which we enjoyed when life, and books, and we ourselves, were new.”³³⁶ Edgeworth is motivated to write one of her most successful tales with this idea in mind, conjuring her own memory of the stories that moved her when she was a younger and voracious girl reader.

Conclusion

While the term “adolescent” first appears in a dictionary in the fifteenth century, the psychosocial discourse around adolescence did not exist during Edgeworth’s time, as it is largely seen as the result of Freudian psychoanalysis, started in 1896. Child labour laws and leisure time were still ideas for the future in Ireland; historian Sarah-Anne Buckley states that “child labour in mills and factories was not extensive in Ireland” with legislation in the 1830s and 1840s, and the 1878 Factory and Workshops Act imposing restrictions on the employment of children.³³⁷ At the time

³³⁵ Edgeworth, *Helen*, x.

³³⁶ Edgeworth, *Helen*, 333.

³³⁷ Sarah-Anne Buckley and Susannah O’Riordan, “Childhood Since 1740,” in *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 8.

Edgeworth was writing, Irish children left school at fourteen, either to work alongside parents or to find live-in farm or domestic work. This equates with O'Dowd stating that middle class Anglo-Irish girls were readied for marriage at this age, the age of consent being thirteen.³³⁸ Everyone, both lower class and middle class, "left school" at this age.³³⁹ "It was not until 1892 that school attendance began to be compelled, and then only in urban areas," meaning "work was a central factor in many children's lives up to this year and beyond."³⁴⁰ Dyhouse argues that "as industrial society came to subject children and the young to ever longer periods of tutelage and formal schooling, the transition from childhood to a generally recognized adult status became more drawn out and complex."³⁴¹ But in Ireland, it was not until 1967 that the introduction of free secondary education in the Irish Republic led to adolescence being seen as a central stage of development. This was decades after the industrialisation and education reformation policies were put in place in Victorian Britain, offering young people of all classes the time and the education to become literate consumers of print culture. If it was not until the late Victorian period that female adolescence is democratised to include working and poorer women, it does not eclipse the existence of a young adult female experience had in earlier generations.

If adolescence was an existing but little understood period of life, this is redoubled for girlhood: it is known and recognised but not properly defined and discussed in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. Edgeworth, with her experience, makes girlhood the central question of her writing. She writes girls as central and influential characters, and she makes girls, in all their variety and dynamism, the ideal audience for her work. Her work pre-empts the development of Young Adult (YA) fiction because of its special quality of cross-writing. Edgeworth also pre-empts the fin-de-siècle notion Beth Rodgers describes as an extended adolescent girlhood. Edgeworth certainly wrote girl characters who experienced this extended adolescence. Through their cross-writing and central focus on the emergence and development of young women's identities, Edgeworth's stories are

³³⁸ O'Dowd, "Adolescent Girlhood in Eighteenth Century Ireland," 17-18, 147.

³³⁹ Buckley and O'Riordan, "Childhood Since 1740," 5.

³⁴⁰ Buckley and O'Riordan, "Childhood Since 1740," 6.

³⁴¹ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, 115.

strong progenitors of the category now known as YA literature, and Edgeworth's characters are solid examples of young adult protagonists. Angelina, Caroline, Helen, Julia, and Leonora are not girls, for they are out of school, beyond formal education, and only gain by acquaintance or example, chaperoned into Town for the season, or sent to live with an aunt or woman of model character. They are not women in that they remain under the protection of parents or male family members and guardians, even if they are financially independent, as is the case in *Helen*. They are not allowed to venture on their own, work any profession, or oppose their mother's wishes for a husband. Some, like Leonora and Rosamond, do not seem to grow up in a linear fashion at all but shuttle between adolescence and childhood. Some, like Angelina, Rosamond, and Helen, are not yet married. Some, like Leonora, Julia, and Caroline, are newly so. In short, these young women protagonists are middle-class representations of a unique life stage that decades later comes to be known as adolescence, or young adulthood.

I have demonstrated how Edgeworth sets up her young female protagonists as examples, products of early education detailed in *Practical Education*, but the girl characters do not stay very young. Butler states, "the age group which Maria Edgeworth thought of at a particular time partly depended on the age of her real-life audience."³⁴² In essence, Edgeworth intended for the characters to grow with her readers, and therefore with herself. This construction creates a female adolescence defined by the spatial, social, and developmental liminalities that both Edgeworth and her heroes occupy. Young women cross thresholds by marrying (*Leonora, Letters*) or leaving home for school ("The Bracelets"). They experience romantic incidents or rites of passage like the death of a parent or guardian (*Helen, Angelina*), loss of fortune, or a harrowing near-death experience (*Rosamond, The Good Aunt, Helen, Simple Susan*). Often, they are remanded to the care of a protector because of the incident (*Helen, Angelina*). The result is a literary hybridity that reflects Edgeworth's experience.

The Edgeworthian girl, the composite character that Edgeworth creates, is both conforming and subversive, young and adolescent, independent yet acquiescent. She is the hybrid girl that fills all of Edgeworth's collected stories for

³⁴² Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography*, 161.

children and adolescents. By using girls' names in different stories and creating a community of characters who appear in various stories, Edgeworth allows these different manifestations of girlhood to exist side by side in her works. Edgeworth's composite girl is the basis for the girl we find in the Pollard Collection: a collective girlhood shaped by a collective editing circle, present in all the stories by the collection's most prevalent author. Because the Pollard Collection allows all girls to co-exist, Edgeworth is the best example of how this happens, through her lived experience and her insisting on a collective editing process for all her stories involving many different women readers. Edgeworth's society of girl characters is mirrored by the society of women surrounding her texts. In the next section, I will examine the community of girls who were encultured as readers through Edgeworth's work. I move the discussion from the texts to the books, from writing girlhood to reading girlhood, and demonstrate how book history and material culture enable fresh insight into the construction of girlhood within Edgeworth's works in the Pollard Collection. While Section One focused on the ways Edgeworth constructed girlhood as a cross-written, literary device, Section Two examines the ways girlhood is built by books, and how their bindings and paratexts work together to curate an audience.

2. Reading Girlhood

It is absolutely out of our power to drive the fair sex back to their former state of darkness ; —the art of printing has totally changed their situation ; their eyes are opened, — the classic page is unrolled, they *will* read!¹

¹ Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies*, 100.

2.1 The Reading Girl



Figure 11: "Young Girl Reading" by Jean Honoré Fragonard, c. 1769, a year after Edgeworth was born. Courtesy: National Gallery of Art.

The first section considered Edgeworth's lived experience as a girl as it influenced her writing and the stories she chose to tell, and it examined girlhood as represented in Edgeworth's written girl characters. This chapter illuminates the ways Edgeworth's constructed girl characters are evident in the book objects that contain Edgeworth's texts. It explores nineteenth-century reading culture starting with Edgeworth's reader and shows how that reader changes over the decades. The chapter then affirms the influence print culture had on Edgeworth's texts by showing how printing decisions and publishing trends

allowed for enhanced or transformed constructions of Edgeworth's girl characters. These trends sometimes affirmed—other times contradicted—previous constructions of literary girlhood. Finally, the chapter delves into the complexities of book history and print culture as it existed in the wider cultural context of the long nineteenth century, showing how Edgeworth's girl characters were regarded, shaped, and even transformed over the decades in an attempt to update or extend older constructions. While the texts largely remain unaltered, my deep analysis of the books, particularly the paratexts, demonstrates that the implied girl reader is indeed shifting over time. This is the central difference: the focus on text in Section One shifts to paratext in Section Two, moving from the text to the book object.

There are over 300 Edgeworth titles held in Early Printed Books & Special Collections at Trinity. Many of these have multiple volumes and span over 100 years, from 1796-1948.² Within Special Collections, The Pollard Collection of Children's

² During the course of writing this thesis, the Old Library Redevelopment Project has been going on, which means at different times, certain collections and books' records were suppressed from the catalogue as they were transported, moved offsite and generally made unavailable for research. I have

Books claims over 320 books, starting with the 1796 first edition of the *Parent's Assistant* (vol. I) to the 1948 copy of *Lazy Lawrence and Other Stories*, to the selected stories from the *Parent's Assistant* illustrated by Chris Hammond. For this study, only books held in the Pollard Collection are examined, and only titles that span the long nineteenth century from 1796 and stretching to 1931 are discussed. Books in the Pollard Collection include both Edgeworth's children's story collections and her novels. Among the children's books there are twenty editions of *Popular Tales* ranging from 1804-1925; twenty-one editions of *Moral Tales* ranging from 1802-1907; thirty-two editions of *The Parent's Assistant*, 1796-1948; and forty-four editions of *Early Lessons*, 1809-1933, twenty-one of which include stories about Rosamond, her most famous girl character.

Each of these story collections was printed in multiples of anywhere from one to six volumes, with the Pollard Collection holding some incomplete sets; however, a significant number of these editions are complete sets. The editions range in date from 1795-1948. The nineteenth century saw decade after decade of innovations and advances, all used in printing practices coloured by Enlightenment and Evangelical thought in the earlier half of the century and dominated by Victorian culture and industrialisation in the latter half. Edgeworth's editions in the Pollard Collection offer a unique glimpse into nineteenth-century readership simply because they are produced in every decade of the century. This collection offers an assemblage of expressed nineteenth-century girlhood navigated through paratextual evidence: titles, prefaces, tables of contents, illustrations, and publishers' catalogues. This chapter explores this evidence to highlight the shifting, changing girl reader over the century.

Print Culture, Book History, Paratexts

The esteemed bibliographer Fredson Bowers defines bibliography (more commonly

struggled to get an accurate number, so I am relying on a compilation of old printouts of searches I did in very early initial stages of the project, searches I attempted in the catalogue at later stages, and my notes, which include my spreadsheet of every Edgeworth book I looked at in the Pollard Collection. That stands at 321 items, but it is an incomplete record as I did not look at all copies of certain novels, foreign language titles, or the sets of *Tales and Novels* held there. On 05 February 2024, the Classic Catalogue revealed a list of 303 titles, but I am interested in how many books (volumes) are held in Special Collections. That is the elusive number. Note this number does not include digitised or modern (post-1950) editions.

referred to now as “book history”) as “a way to establish the genealogy of each text and report the relationship between editions, which acts as a bridge to textual criticism.”³ He explains that “before a critic can attempt a definitive evaluation of the contents of any book he must be in possession of every fact which has any bearing on the history of its text.”⁴ Donald McKenzie takes Bowers’ theory further by insisting bibliography “accounts for a history of the books ... as a record of cultural change” and is what he calls a “sociology of texts,” one that considers both linguistic interpretation and historical explanation.⁵ He maintains that the demands of scholarship in literature and history require a knowledge of bibliography, particularly as new critical theories develop. This suggests that “all bibliography is historical bibliography” in this interdisciplinary approach.⁶

McKenzie calls for historical bibliography, not simply physical bibliography, but I posit the method at work here is social bibliography: a method that considers social influences beyond the combining of print culture and textual analysis. It also includes trends in marketing, education, religion, work, industrialisation, and an ever-growing adoption of leisure time by the reading public. I expand McKenzie’s idea here. He took a decidedly historical approach to focus on the producer and how book printing was done before, and while he implored colleagues to consider the wider social context, his focus was on publishing history. In this thesis, the focus is on girlhood as a social construct that commingles with other social constructions, not only historical ones. A book historian’s purpose is typically twofold: to consider the physical object of the book as it houses the author’s text and to consider the object as it was produced and received by the culture in which it was presented. By expanding McKenzie’s definition of the “sociology of texts” from historical to social bibliography, book history most successfully offers insight into the connections and contradictions between Edgeworth’s motives for writing girl stories and the publishers’ incentive for publishing them.

Social bibliography deciphers the significance of Edgeworth and the impact of her stories for girls at the time they were published, and it also detects patterns

³ Fredson Bowers, *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (Princeton: Princeton Press, 1949), 11.

⁴ Bowers, *Principles of Bibliographical Description*, 9.

⁵ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 7.

⁶ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 3.

in editions of the same texts over time. Because social bibliography considers the wider social context, it highlights the interaction of author, book, and reader as something of specific concern to the scholars of children's literature. More generally, social bibliography asks scholars to "consider the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission and consumption," but it particularly queries systemic social influences that affect the reader, beyond the printing houser.⁷ These influences are discussed below and include developments in education, literacy and library statistics, and the readership that resulted from the dissemination of cheap print. Using book history to examine girlhood and its many literary and material manifestations takes these social influences into account, providing a unique perspective from which this thesis, as the first sustained study of the collection, can mine the riches of the Pollard Collection.

This chapter uses bibliographic methods to examine paratexts such as bindings, prefaces, catalogues, frontispieces, titles, and tables of contents. The work of Gérard Genette, particularly *Paratexts* (1987), forms the basis for my understanding of these elements. Paratexts are described by Genette as gateways into the texts. They enfold and enrich Edgeworth's original texts, each paratext acting as a threshold from which to derive meaning, offering insight into why each text was presented as it was. For this study, the paratexts that best act as thresholds into deeper textual understanding are as mentioned above: prefaces, catalogues, frontispieces, titles, tables of contents, and bindings.⁸ I focus on these threshold texts that create a space: an "undefined zone" that has both an "inward side (turned toward the text)" and an "outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text)."⁹ These paratexts embody that osmotic space between "text and off-text" and as such allow for both a consideration of authorial intention, admittedly difficult to ascertain, and social influence, sometimes subtle or elusive, to commingle in this unbound space. Here, meaning is sharpened and contrived, leading to various

⁷ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 7.

⁸ Other bibliographic descriptions are less socially focused and more book history focused, and as such origins of paper, watermarks, gatherings, cancels, and other descriptive bibliographic details will not be considered here.

⁹ Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.

definitions of adolescent girlhood as represented both inside and outside the text.¹⁰ Paratexts resemble the liminality of the girlhood they express, working to bridge meaning from within the text to outer cultural representations. They highlight how the printing process was socially influenced as it relates to the production and consumption of these stories. Specifically, paratexts reflect publishers', and therefore society's, ideologies of girlhood. What follows is a discussion about how paratexts and the materiality of books help us to read and understand Edgeworth's texts as they were presented to girl readers, to track a shift in readership of Edgeworth's texts over the course of the nineteenth century.

Girl Readers: Implied, Surveyed, Actual

Edgeworth insists, "sentimental stories and books of mere entertainment" must be used "sparingly in the education of girls" because it "lowers the tone of the mind and induces indifference to the unavoidable everyday activities in life."¹¹ Immoderate novel-reading affects the female mind by producing "frantic passions" which are "drawn upon too large a scale" for domestic life, and therefore contort any difference between fiction and reality. Girls who read this way are "continually disposed to make mistakes in their conduct," as it "diminishes, instead of increasing, the sensibilities of the heart."¹² Edgeworth has equally strong feeling for what boys should not read: tales of voyages and adventures, a genre allowed to girls who "understand the impossibility of their rambling about the world" but which are "incompatible with the sober perseverance necessary to succeed in any other liberal profession" for boys.¹³ She continues that boys preparing for a trade or profession must see that "patient drudgery" as a positive and not be swayed by the prospects of an "adventuring imagination."¹⁴ While Edgeworth believed "gender should determine genre" there is a common theme for boy and girl readers: do not dream or excite the imagination. Be reasonable, and read books that help secure an acceptance of one's lot in life.¹⁵

¹⁰ Genette, *Paratexts*, 2.

¹¹ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 333.

¹² Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 333-4.

¹³ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 336-7.

¹⁴ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 337-8.

¹⁵ M. O. Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 55.

Practical Education promises not to repeat the tenets set down in *Letters for Literary Ladies*, but it does offer a detailed description on “the merits of a literary education of the female sex:”

That it will tend to the happiness of society in general, that women should have their understandings cultivated and enlarged as much as possible; that the happiness of domestic life, the virtues and the powers of pleasing in the female sex, the yet more desirable power of attaching those worthy of their love and esteem, will be increased by the judicious cultivation of the female understanding ... Her imagination must not be raised above the taste for necessary occupations ... Her mind must be enlarged, yet the delicacy of her manners must be preserved: her knowledge must be various ... Scrupulous caution in the choice of the books which are put into the hands of girls may ... excite in their minds a taste for propriety, as well as a taste for literature.¹⁶

Who were the girl readers Edgeworth intended to follow this improvement? How did that reader shift over the course of the nineteenth century? Using social bibliography as a methodology works to bridge the gaps in the fractured tracing of girl readers' lives by examining the social lives of the books girls read. Education and literacy and library statistics work to offer a picture of the expanding reading public that surely included girls and women, yet they do little to illuminate what was actually being read by girls in nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland.¹⁷ Publishing records are similarly elusive, for they can indicate which books were hugely popular based on sales, but they cannot comprehensively account for who purchased or read what was sold. Research in life writings, letters, and diaries, can illuminate what writers were talking about with their pen pals, and the Edgeworths were an excellent family for writing and sharing letters. However, these practices do little to show beyond the Edgeworths' class and status what the mass reading public was reading. Newspapers and serials discussed and reviewed books, but this practice rarely involved books girls might read. These efforts tried to puzzle together what was being read in the 1800s, but the absence of any research on the books

¹⁶ Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 549-550.

¹⁷ A continuing practical dilemma for children's librarians is the ubiquitous circulation statistic, which shows how often a book was checked out, but cannot indicate if that book was actually read.

themselves leaves holes that can be filled with social bibliography. I combine study of social realities with examination of Edgeworth's books in an attempt to discover the implied girl reader and the actual girl reader over time.

A place to start is with correspondence between Edgeworth and her first publisher, Joseph Johnson. In 1799, Johnson wrote to Richard Lovell Edgeworth, noting he did not want to wait to publish cheap editions of *The Parent's Assistant* and that news of a Dublin edition (published by John Chambers in 1798) and the inevitable American edition was welcome if it meant "the greater the circulation the more extended the good."¹⁸ The letter also confirms the Edgeworths' desire for a cheap edition of certain stories to be published individually, as well as an edition for schools. Edgeworth and Johnson wanted to cast as wide a net as possible to increase the affordability and accessibility of *The Parent's Assistant*, which indicates their intended readers stretched across class boundaries.

A word needs to be said about the implied girl reader in relation to intended and actual girl readers. Edgeworth's intended reader was discussed in the last section. The implied reader has been a critical consideration as early as in Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) where he defines the reader more as the image of the reader that the author creates in tandem with the image of themselves as writer, a second self.¹⁹ Booth explains this is necessary to find agreement about the text between writer and reader. John Preston elucidates the "created self" is "the reader invented by the author in order to make his fictional world work;" he is a fictional reader, "a fiction the real reader is willing to cooperate with," who understands the desired outcome when reading the text.²⁰ But the implied child reader, or here specifically the implied girl reader, is a term of art in children's literature scholarship that not only wrestles with the power dynamic between adult author and child reader but with adult scholars who for too long disregarded the child reader. In 1978, Aidan Chambers challenged this "rejection of any concept of the child-reader-in-the-book" as being done by "those people who sought most

¹⁸ John Bugg, *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook*, 53-54. Letter from JJ to RLE 19 February 1799 and [n.d.] 1799.

¹⁹ Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 138.

²⁰ John Preston, *The Created Self: the Reader's Role in Eighteenth Century Fiction* (London: Heinemann, 1970), 2.

earnestly for critical respectability.”²¹ Chambers, in company with other reader-response critics, insists that it is the relationship between author and reader that finds meaning in a text; that “it takes two to say a thing” and one of these two should be the child reader, not an adult reader evaluating the text.²² Chambers hopes books might “take a child as he is but then draw him into the text.”²³ He centres the child reader as the primary means of deriving meaning from the text, without any pretension to appeal to the adult reader. Children’s literature criticism asserts the implied child reader “helps to establish the author’s relationship with the (child) reader implied in the story, to see how he creates that relationship and to discover the meaning(s) he seeks to negotiate.”²⁴

Barbara Wall defines the implied reader as the reader for whom the author has shaped the story, who is always there.²⁵ That implied reader is encoded by the narrative, projected by the author. Chambers, Wall, and colleagues agree that this is done “sometimes consciously, sometimes not” and done “deliberately or otherwise” by the author.²⁶ It is the inevitable unconscious that piques the interest of children’s literature scholars and drives the consideration of paratexts and book history as a way into this unconscious construction. Bibliographer Timothy Young questions the “isness and aboutness” of books, citing the “subversion and resistance in bibliography” that can illuminate resistance by books, by writers, by bibliographers and librarians, and—I would add—resistance by readers and scholars. That resistance struggles against adhering to any definitions or conclusions, and Young suggests we first ask a book “what do you think you’re doing?” and then ask ourselves the same thing.²⁷ Style, tone and language, pace, point of view, and dialogue are all techniques encoded in the narrative by adult writers to engage the implied child reader, even if that reader is not whom the author had in mind. Roberta Seelinger Trites further considers cultural references as well as narrative position

²¹ Aidan Chambers, “The Reader in the Book: Notes from Work in Progress,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, 1978 Proceedings (1978): 1-19, 1.

²² Chambers, “The Reader in the Book,” 2.

²³ Chambers, “The Reader in the Book,” 3.

²⁴ Chambers, “The Reader in the Book,” 3.

²⁵ Barbara Wall, *The Narrator’s Voice: The Dilemma of Children’s Fiction* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 7.

²⁶ Chambers, “The Reader in the Book,” 2.

²⁷ Timothy Young, Yale University, in the 2024 Sandars Lecture at Cambridge University Library. I watched this live online on 19 November 2024. Quotations are from my notes.

and narrative structure.²⁸ This chapter works to extend these techniques to include printing and publishing practices that might also, deliberately or otherwise, complement or complicate the text's implied girl reader. Thus, not just the work itself but the book implies the kind of reader to whom it is addressed, and this may not coincide with the author's private view of their audience. This is a central element of children's literature criticism: the concept of the implied child reader offers a critical approach that is

concerned less with the subjects portrayed in a book than with the means of communication by which the reader is brought into contact with the reality presented by an author. That it is a method which could help us determine whether a book is for children or not, what kind of book it is, and what kind of reader it demands.²⁹

Because the implied girl reader is what Walker Gibson termed a "mock reader," one who may be "a person we refuse to become, a mask we refuse to put on, a role we will not play," it goes without saying that neither the implied nor intended reader necessarily represents the actual girl reader.³⁰

Dominic Cheetham intones the implied reader is "a judgment about what kind of person a text is aimed at or suitable for" but insists that although texts do not change, the audience does.³¹

The textual features of a text may be unchanging creations of the original author, but audiences are not. To claim that a text has, for example, an implied child audience, is automatically to make judgements about what is a 'child'. But since the concept of child is intimately bound up with cultural experience and expectation, and since culture is constantly changing, there can be no absolute implied audience to be discovered. In other words, the implied audience of any text is culturally and temporally variable, rather than fixed.³²

²⁸ Trites, *Disturbing the Universe*, 72-75.

²⁹ Chambers, "The Reader in the Book," 11.

³⁰ Walker Gibson, "Authors, Speakers, Readers and Mock Readers," *College English* 11, no. 5 (Feb 1950): 265-69, 269.

³¹ Dominic Cheetham, "Audience in Children's Literature," *English Literature and Language* 49 (2013): 21.

³² Cheetham, "Audience in Children's Literature," 22.

Edgeworth's contemporary Irish girl readers were largely middle to upper class and were more likely to be Anglo-Irish, not necessarily Irish. Only girls of Edgeworth's class and the merchant middle class were literate in late eighteenth-century Ireland. Edgeworth hoped girls of all classes would read her books, but Edgeworth was mostly published in England. Therefore, to discuss her contemporary readership, English, not Irish, readers must first be considered. Yet it is the fact that her readers change over the course of the next century that makes the arguments of this chapter and reinforces the value in social bibliography to show how other factors conspired to ensure that the Irish Ascendancy girl did not remain the only reader of her books.

Edgeworth chose Johnson, a progressive, like-minded printer in London, to ensure the books were marketed across class barriers. Johnson was a Dissenter, and a fellow proponent of mass education, which drove his practice to print copies that more people might afford. The correspondence between Edgeworth and Johnson shows their shared interest in her stories having appeal to children of "both classes."³³ His letter dated 5 October 1795 indicates ongoing discussion of the printing of *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) where he mentions "the last sheet of stories for poor children is not printed off" and that "the stories for the poor are paged separately that if any one be disposed to give them away separately he may have the opportunity." He concludes, it is "a little unfortunate that we cannot call the stories for poor children what they really are, nobody likes to be called poor."³⁴ This shows a continual discussion around the concerns for producing and marketing appealing stories to children of "both classes."

Johnson's influence on Edgeworth's early texts is in their affordable constructions as books. His books appeared most often without a printer's mark and are undistinguished in quality, presented in a quarter binding with a paper spine and paper over boards for covers. Leslie Chard states that "there can be no doubt that Johnson sacrificed fine printing for cheapness and popular consumption"³⁵

³³ John W. Bugg, *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 17.

³⁴ Bugg, *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook*, 17.

³⁵ Leslie Chard, "Bookseller to Publisher: Joseph Johnson and the English Book Trade, 1760 to 1810," *The Library* s5-XXXII, no. 2 (1977): 145.



Figure 12: OLS POL 5823.
Joseph Johnson's green
parchment quarter
binding, pasted directly
onto the gathers of
The Parent's Assistant,
1st ed., 1796.

(Figure 12). But Johnson printed cheaply out of principle rather than for profit; he could have reprinted popular fiction if profit was the aim. Johnson advocated for cheap books largely because of his belief that "liberty and the welfare of the country depended precisely on the education of the people;" an end which he pursued consistently.³⁶ Eventually, with each subsequent edition he printed, Johnson's affordable books were able to be enjoyed by an audience that might include poor English children, Irish tenants' children, children of the British gentry and the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy class.³⁷ Johnson was the first to publish all of Edgeworth's works for children, most notably *The Parent's Assistant* (1796), and the result was the popularising of this first collection in a binding so commonly mass produced, it is recognised in multiple editions found in the Pollard Collection. A further result was the blooming popularity of two girl characters in *The Parent's Assistant* which represent the widening readership of Edgeworth's girls' stories: one of Edgeworth's preferred class, Rosamond, and one of a decidedly lower class, Simple Susan.

As literacy rates grew, so did concerns about what girls were reading. Sarah Trimmer, who Grenby calls "the most important individual influence on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British children's literature," produced *The Guardian of Education* (1802-1806), "a sustained critical analysis" which reviewed books for their moral, religious, and political implications.³⁸ She championed works that reinforced the doctrine of the Church of England, loyalty to the monarchy, and the social hierarchy such as in Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795). She eschewed texts that appeared revolutionary. She criticised Rousseau's *Émile* (1762) for excluding the formal teaching of Christianity and teaching children to undermine authority, and she criticised Wollstonecraft for

³⁶ Chard, "Bookseller to Publisher," 147.

³⁷ Finkelstein and McCleery, *An Introduction to Book History*, 113.

³⁸ M. O. Grenby, "'A Conservative Woman Doing Radical Things:' Sarah Trimmer and *The Guardian of Education*," in *Culturing the Child, 1690-1914: Essays in Memory of Mitzi Myers*, ed. Donelle Ruwe (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 137.

attempting to subvert family structures by promoting gender equality. Apparent opposites, the radical Wollstonecraft and conservative More both proffered a project of cultural reform grounded in “woman’s ability to make a difference in her social world.”³⁹ Trimmer’s efforts at reform fall in with Wollstonecraft and More as seen in her establishment of the first Sunday School and later a School of Industry for women in 1789. *The Guardian of Education* was her product “to protect, to strengthen, and even to take control of educational theory and practice” by emphasising pedagogy and regulating the teaching of fashionable accomplishments in the education of girls.⁴⁰ *The Guardian of Education*’s reviews highlight Trimmer’s primary concern that children’s literature be “improving” and “enhance a child’s life, economically, socially, morally, or spiritually.”⁴¹ More broadly, Trimmer’s work established a canon of children’s literature in an attempt to bring respectability and usefulness to the genre. Trimmer was perhaps the first who set in print the reasons for censoring the kinds of stories children should read, setting off a continuing tradition of valuing what was worthy and of benefit to the young girl reader.

Kate Flint notes the volume of commentary on women’s reading increased dramatically in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, an increase that occurred in tandem with the rapid growth of novel production.⁴² Margaret Beetham concurs:

There survives a large body of material from the nineteenth century about reading and specifically about women’s reading which was either concerned with theories of reading or attempted to offer a practical guidance on what and how to read.⁴³

³⁹ Myers, “Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers,” 54.

⁴⁰ Grenby, “A Conservative Woman Doing Radical Things,” 146.

⁴¹ Grenby, “A Conservative Woman Doing Radical Things,” 152.

⁴² Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914*, 24.

⁴³ Margaret Beetham, “Women and the Consumption of Print,” in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1800-1900*, ed. Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 56.

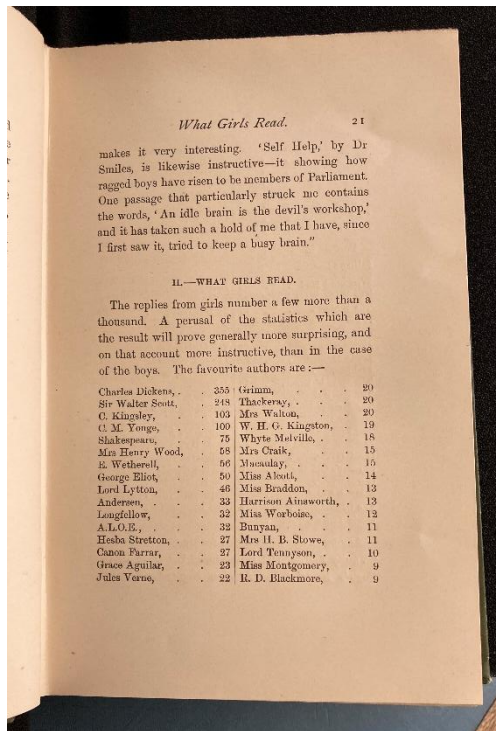


Figure 13: A page listing "What Girls Read," the results of a survey by Edward Salmon printed in his *Juvenile Literature As It Is*. London: Henry J. Drane. 1888.

One such reviewer was Edward Salmon who wrote *Juvenile Literature as it Is* (1888). Salmon was not alone in his concern for what children should read. Like Sarah Trimmer decades before, Salmon and his contemporaries continued the commentary on girls' reading to include Charlotte M. Yonge's *What Books to Read and What to Lend* (1886), Phillis Browne's *What Girls Can Do* (1885), and headmistress Lucy Soulsby's *Stray Thoughts on Reading* (1897) with her recommended list, "The Girls' Library—What to Read." Salmon was different from these women in that he belonged to that group of "nineteenth century social investigators who invented 'modern'

methods of social survey and statistical analysis," methods which are invaluable to research, but "were shaped by anxiety about the dangers of popular reading."⁴⁴ Salmon's 1888 book stands out from Trimmer, Younge, Brown, and Soulsby in that it compiles extensive data derived from interviewing 2000 children between the ages of eleven to nineteen, four years prior in 1884. Yet, in spite of this research, his writing retains the anxieties common to his contemporaries.

I use Salmon here as an example of the challenges that "social surveys and statistical analysis" bring to the pursuit of uncovering actual girl readers. Over a thousand girls answered his survey, but his comments on what girls reported reading merit some scrutiny, as he shows a strong bias against their self-reporting. Paul Raphael Rooney suggests that personal or anecdotal accounts of reading can offer perspectives to counter factual sources, as even these "will inevitably be

⁴⁴ Beetham, "Women and the consumption of print," 56. Beetham mentions the 1833 report "Immoral and Irreligious Works Sold in Manchester" for the Manchester Statistical Society, the year fits nicely between my mention of Trimmer and the women of the last decades of the century, indicating this was an ongoing concern of the nineteenth century.

framed by a certain level of narrative and mediated.”⁴⁵ This is important because Salmon’s book gives us both the accounts of reading and a mediated, framed narrative in his interpretation of the survey results. Anecdotal evidence is a cultural product that asserts the reading environment of its time and can illuminate ideals and assumptions about reading. It offers evidence in lieu of or alongside empirical data. Salmon devotes a chapter to “what girls read” (Figure 13) and announces: “Dickens as a favourite author, ‘Westward Ho!’ as a favourite book, ‘The Girls Own Paper’ as a favourite magazine, and ‘Evangeline’ as favourite poetry.”⁴⁶ He is surprised about “the almost complete absence of reference to society papers or papers chiefly gossipy in character.”⁴⁷ But then, his assumptions creep in. Salmon considers the voting “not quite sincere” on the girls’ part,⁴⁸ and he concludes most tellingly that “the question may fairly be asked, do their replies really represent what girls like best in literature?”⁴⁹ He continues:

Three things, at least, I should say, contributed to make them vote as they have done. In the first place, doubtless they considered it proper to vote for such names as Scott and Dickens, although, perhaps they had not read two of the works of either; in the second, Dickens’ or Scott’s works are probably in the school or home library, and hence easily get-at-able; in the third, personal inquiries induce me to believe that young ladies do not take particular notice of authors’ names, and such household words as Scott and Dickens would occur to their minds more readily than the patronymics of the authors who devote their energies solely to writing for girls.⁵⁰

In short, Salmon dismisses the girls’ responses as easily influenced and unreliable, suggesting they listed books they had not read but may have felt they ought to have read. He cannot believe they do not choose domestic fiction by women writers over books with implied male readers, but he does trust the results at least enough to say:

Unless these lists are to be entirely discredited, they must open the eyes of parents to the real needs of our girls. Mr Welsh is doubtless

⁴⁵ Paul Raphael Rooney, *Railway Reading and Late-Victorian Literary Series* (London: Routledge, 2018), 19.

⁴⁶ Edward Salmon, *Juvenile Literature as it Is* (London: Henry J. Drane, 1888), 27.

⁴⁷ Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, 27.

⁴⁸ Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, 27.

⁴⁹ Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, 30.

⁵⁰ Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, 30-31.

correct when he surmises that much of the popularity, from the publisher's point of view, of books for girls, is due to the fact that they are bought by parents and friends for the purpose of presentation. If girls were to select their own books, in other words, they would make a choice very different from that which their elders make for them.⁵¹

Note that Salmon makes a distinction regarding the publishers' othering of "books for girls," a category set apart and only suitable for girl readers, despite books for girls not being reported as favourites or first choices by the girls themselves. I illustrate Salmon's findings and his interpretation of them to point out the cultural influences at work in understanding girls' reading. Salmon is caught in the cultural web of defining a limited domestic girlhood, a web he struggles to untangle as he processes what he assumes to be true about girl readers and the very different results his survey makes clear:

But to write for girls is a very different thing from writing for boys ... Girls' literature, properly so called, contains much that is excellent, much that is beautiful and ennobling. It appeals in the main to the highest instincts of honour and truth of which humanity is capable. But with all its merits, it frequently lacks the peculiar qualities which can alone make girls books as palatable to girls as boys books are to boys.⁵²

Salmon concedes that the reader adults have in mind for the books that appeared in his survey results is not the actual reader, showing the bias in both the survey and the interpretation of the data. Beetham warns that sociological documents like Salmon's are "themselves texts which need careful reading,"⁵³ The implied girl reader of books for girls is not necessarily the real reader who responded to Salmon's surveys. In much the same way, Edgeworth's intended girl reader is not likely to be the girl who read her books throughout the nineteenth century.

Literacy, Education and Female Readers

Changes to the readership of Edgeworth's books happen as a result of a number of

⁵¹ Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, 31. Welsh is Salmon's colleague who helped with the project.

⁵² Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, 123.

⁵³ Beetham, "Women and the Consumption of Print," 56.

social and systemic changes, from advancements in education—particularly for girls to include educational access to books—to publishing practices and the advent of cheap print, to the widespread distribution of books through libraries and railways. These factors are key to the process of social bibliography I highlighted in the earlier section and work to demonstrate the shift in Edgeworth's girl readers.

It is difficult to glean enough data to know what percentage of the growing reading population were young women and girl readers. At home, women's libraries were catalogued relatively seldom compared with men's, and children's even less so. Richard Lovell Edgeworth, for example, kept a catalogue of his library but did not record any of the children's books he owned.⁵⁴ Women had access to their fathers' and brothers' libraries, but it is difficult to tell how frequently they used these libraries and how they engaged with books that were not their own.⁵⁵ Archival records are also inconsistent. Some libraries show very few women's names in the lists of subscribers. One reason for this was the widespread practice of women borrowing on their husbands' accounts and signing their husbands' names. Flint discusses women's reading not being very well documented, but she asserts that women likely had library subscriptions in their husband's or father's names, as many libraries were predominantly male subscribers. Other records show, particularly in Bristol, Bath, and other spa towns, an average thirty percent of users were women.⁵⁶ Literacy was equally as hard to determine, since the census method of determining literacy was "based on ability to sign the marriage register," and writing one's name is an unreliable indicator of reading ability.⁵⁷ The Second Annual Report of the Registrar General in 1840 shows that 67% of men and 51% of women were literate. By 1900 those numbers were 97% and 96% respectively, which shows an incredible growth in numbers of literate females, but it does not show the quality of that literacy. It begs the question of whether women could read or could only sign their name.

⁵⁴ Toby Barnard, "Children and Books in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," in *That Woman! Studies in Irish Bibliography, a Festschrift for Mary "Paul" Pollard*, eds. Charles Benson and Siobhán Fitzpatrick (Dublin: Lilliput, 2005), 227.

⁵⁵ Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914*, 24.

⁵⁶ Paul Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users: Collected Papers in Library History* (London: Library Association, 1969), 193.

⁵⁷ Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 170.

Education trends may offer more insight here. Maurice Quinlan, in *Victorian Prelude* (1941), notes how the eighteenth century sparked “the growing army of women readers” during a time when “women were beginning to cultivate more intellectual interests.” This is largely the result of a rise in boarding schools for girls which became popular after the middle of the century and were educating thousands of young women.⁵⁸ As Quinlan explains, “these institutions were particularly favoured by the socially ambitious daughters of the newly wealthy middle class. Even tradesmen could afford to educate their daughters, as schools modelled on more exclusive seminaries were more inexpensive.”⁵⁹ Young women learned basic maths, penmanship, “read the more elegant English authors,” and studied French without the expectation to become fluent.⁶⁰ But there were plenty of complaints about these schools. Quinlan quotes *Sentinel Magazine* who printed a range of complaints about how many of these schools were popping up in the suburbs of London:

The daughter of one of the lowest shopkeepers at one of these schools is as much miss and young lady as the daughter of the first viscount at the other ... It would be of much more consequence they should be well instructed in how to wash the floor than to dance upon it.⁶¹

Quinlan concludes with tongue in cheek:

How many floors went unwashed or how many honest husbands were neglected while boarding school wives languished over novels is not on record, but the fact that thousands of young women had become readers was to be of great consequence.⁶²

Edgeworth herself attended boarding school in Derby from age seven, and when she was twelve, she started at Mrs. Devis’s Academy for Young Ladies in London. The trend for schooling girls away from the domestic space pushed women’s education

⁵⁸ Maurice J. Quinlan, *Victorian Prelude: A History of English Manners 1700-1830* (New York: Columbia U. Pr., 1941, 63.

⁵⁹ Quinlan, *Victorian Prelude*, 63.

⁶⁰ Quinlan, *Victorian Prelude*, 63. Quote is from *Sentinel Magazine* (July 1773, 209-10).

⁶¹ Quinlan, *Victorian Prelude*, 63.

⁶² Quinlan, *Victorian Prelude*, 63.

outside the home. It set the stage for what was expected in the national schools, soon to be set up in the first half of the nineteenth century and which contributed to the rise in the reading girl public.

In Ireland, Edgeworth's home country, similar developments were occurring, if at a slower pace. "At the end of the eighteenth century the demand for education was rising from previously low levels," and growing interest by the state resulted in a "succession of public enquiries which would record the details of increased provision."⁶³ The expansion continued through the nineteenth century and paralleled a revolution in literacy levels. In the 1820-30s there was a wide gap between male and female students, with male students nearing 75% of the school population. From the 1840's onward the gap narrowed, and by the 1870's the gap was closed when "the proportion of girls at school generally equalled that of boys."⁶⁴ Sarah-Anne Buckley notes that "in 1821 some 44% of boys and 26% of girls aged six to thirteen were attending a school."⁶⁵ She also comments that the Young Ireland movement of the 1840s "saw it as their patriotic duty to give the Irish people the 'national' education that the British government was deliberately preventing them from receiving," intimating that the National Education Act of 1831 was slow to put into practice.⁶⁶



Figure 14: The Edgeworthstown school, built in 1840. Following the Education Act of 1831, Maria Edgeworth applied for state funds to build it. Boys were taught on the ground floor, girls upstairs. It now houses the Maria Edgeworth Centre.

Nevertheless, public education meant more and more girls of all classes were learning how to read. The establishment of the Irish national school system in 1831

⁶³ John Logan, "Sufficient for Their Needs: Literacy and Elementary Schooling in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Origins of Popular Literacy in Ireland: Language Change and Educational Development* (Dublin: Department of Modern Irish History, UCD, 1990), 113.

⁶⁴ John Logan, "The Dimensions of Gender in Nineteenth-Century Schooling," in *Gender Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Public and Private Spheres*, ed. Margaret Kelleher and James H. Murphy (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997), 36.

⁶⁵ Buckley and O'Riordan, "Childhood Since 1740," 6.

⁶⁶ Rebecca Anne Barr, Sarah-Anne Buckley, and Muireann Ó'Cinnéide, *Literacy, Language and Reading in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), 5. Buckley is quoting James Quinn in her timeline introduction.

hurried an already-growing trend toward mass literacy and an Irish reading public (Figure 14). Coincidentally, Edgeworth was in her authorial prime at this time and prolifically writing and publishing from 1800-34. The education reforms and the growing number of community libraries, along with the introduction of cheap print, discussed momentarily, worked together to bring about substantial change in literacy and reading culture, especially for girls, across Britain and Ireland.

Furthermore, and more specifically, The Act of Union in 1801 worked to consolidate the readership of Edgeworth's books. The Union saw the book trade unify across the Irish Sea, which would also help to solidify Edgeworth's books as both English and Irish. The Act worked effectively to halt the Dublin book trade, as British copyright was now in effect in Ireland. The editions in the Pollard Collection reflect this shift, with most Edgeworth publications having been produced in

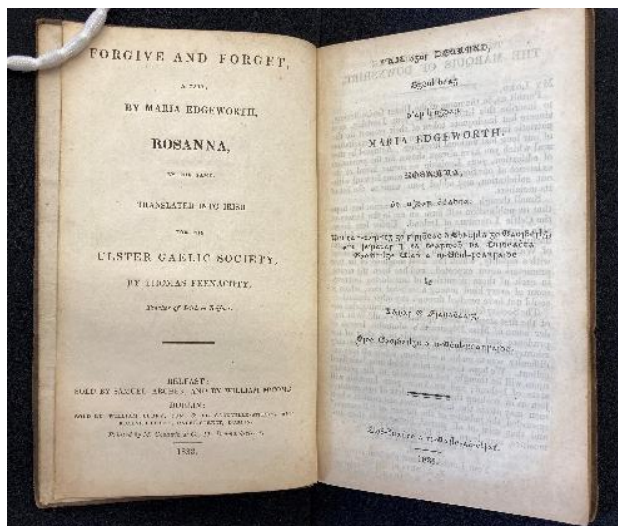


Figure 15: OLS POL 5827. Maith agus Dearmad, sgéul beag d'ar b'ughdar Maria Edgeworth; Rosanna, ón ughdar chéadna. Belfast and Dublin, 1833.

London mid-century. An exception was a few Irish schoolbooks, like the 1833 Irish-English dual language edition of two of Edgeworth's stories: "Rosanna" and "Forgive and Forget." These confluences suggest that her readers, while intended by her to be English or Anglo-Irish, would be Irish as well (Figure 15). Further complicating this is the archival evidence seen in Pollard's purchasing notebooks (1956-97),

examined later in Section Three, which shows Pollard purchased Edgeworth books from Irish booksellers, auctions, estate sales, and individuals, but it does not indicate whether her vendors obtained books from Britain as well as Ireland. Crucially now, the Irish girl reader must be considered alongside English readers, for even though Edgeworth's books were mostly produced in England, and had little to do with Ireland, the fact that Pollard purchased mainly from Irish booksellers indicates the existence of both Irish and British readers post 1850, when literacy rates in Ireland began to compare with British ones.

Repeal of Taxes on Knowledge and Cheap Print

Before scrutinising individual books, some explanation of the wider social situation in the nineteenth century is important to put girl readers and their books in context. There were many factors that influenced more broadly who was reading and how they read. The nineteenth century saw sweeping repeals on taxes, widespread interest in the instigation of public education to help literacy rates increase exponentially, and innovations in printing press technologies, which combined to create a wider variety of girl readers with different kinds of books to appeal to this wider, more diverse, and divergent group. These more widely available, more affordable books reached a reading public that was growing across classes.

First, the repeal of the taxes on knowledge: the term is attributed to Scottish headmaster Alexander Adam (1741-1809), who supposedly said “a tax on paper is a tax on knowledge.”⁶⁷ They included duties and taxes on newspapers, their advertising content, and the paper on which they were printed. Aileen Fyfe says, “they had the effect of restricting all forms of printed knowledge ... to that small circle of affluent readers for whom an additional penny or two made little difference,” and they “posed a real challenge to ... ambitions to provide cheap educational publications.”⁶⁸ Taxes on knowledge were at their height of enforcement during Britain’s war with Napoleon, particularly around 1815, and they affected not only the British printing trade but the Irish one as well. This was a result of the Act of Union essentially merging the markets after 1800. Fyfe explains:

Restrictions on the circulation of treasonable, seditious, or militarily sensitive information are not unexpected during wartime, but after the war, the restrictions actually increased. Napoleon’s armies were no longer a threat, but the British ruling classes saw danger in the possible influence of French political ideas on radicals, demagogues, and the uneducated masses.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ A. and C. Black, *Edinburgh Review* 62 (1836), 126. Adam’s quote appears in the *Edinburgh Review*, in Article VII, where the editors review the book *On the Diffusion of Knowledge Amongst the Middle Classes* by James Williamson, M.D.

⁶⁸ Aileen Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge: William Chambers and the Business of Publishing, 1820-1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 16.

⁶⁹ Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, 15.

By the middle of the century, the taxes on knowledge would be abolished: advertising duties in 1837, stamp tax 1855, and paper duty in 1861.⁷⁰ The repeal of these taxes happened at a time when attitudes regarding the education of the working class had changed. In 1831, the first National Education Reform Act was introduced, discussed in more detail below. Men of the middle and professional classes were given the right to vote in 1832, which worked to challenge and change prevailing assumptions about literacy and education. The result was an increase in demand for cheap print, seen in the increasing amount of children's material being published for the schools and for a growing literate population.

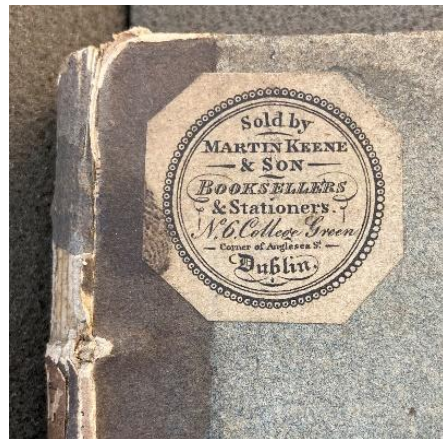


Figure 16: OLS POL 6197. *Contes choisis pour des enfants*. (Selected Tales for Children). Traduits de l'anglais de Mlle Edgeworth. Imprimés sur l'édition de Paris. 1817. Printed: Neill & Co. Edinburgh. Imprint of a French language title printed in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Due to an increase in incomes between the 1860s and 1890s, paralleled with single-volume first editions and much cheaper later editions, novels then became affordable for most people.⁷¹ By the 1840s, issuing a mid-priced reprint a few years after the first (expensive) edition was published had become routine practice for the big publishing houses. This practice was possible in part because the duties were repealed, and Reform Acts were instituted. Often offered at 6d (pence), these were well within the means for the lower-working classes earning approximately one hundred pounds a year or less. A three-decker (three volume) novel of the early-nineteenth century cost almost a week's wage of a lower-middle class worker, so this change in publishing practices was instrumental in bringing books to new audiences. Robert Baxter estimates the population of England and Wales in 1867 to be around twenty-one million, of which sixteen million were working class.⁷² The middle and lower classes made up a much larger percentage of the population and

⁷⁰ Fyfe, *Steam- Powered Knowledge*, 15-18.

⁷¹ Simon Eliot, "From Few and Expensive to Many and Cheap: the British Book Market 1800-1890," in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, eds. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 290-91.

⁷² Robert Dudley Baxter, *National Income. The United Kingdom ... Read before the Statistical Society of London, January 21, 1868* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1868).

now found themselves with purchasing power. Like cheap books produced in high volume numbers, the lower classes competed as consumers simply by virtue of the sheer number of them.

Libraries and Leisure Reading

The increasing number of community libraries further propelled growth in the number of nineteenth-century readers who read for pleasure. Education was no longer the only reason to read. Libraries were an enormously popular space, a nineteenth-century social reality conducive to the efforts of social bibliography, where readers may be surmised based on circulation and recorded visits. Even more compelling is the influence libraries had on publishing trends, as seen in sales statistics. The growth of the novel, in literacy, and in female readership ignites a synergy that manifests in public reading spaces best represented by libraries and as later discussed, railways.

Paul Kaufman, in his history of libraries, defines two types of community libraries: circulating libraries and private subscription libraries, which originated from seventeenth-century coffee houses and newsrooms.⁷³ Of all the many kinds of



Figure 17: "Mudie's Library" by Louis H--- in the *London Society* v.16, no.95, Nov. 1869. In the public domain.

libraries that existed at that time, most were private: institutional, organisational, ecclesiastical, parochial and cathedral, school and college, learned society foundations, literary and philosophical organisations, and book clubs. It was the public-facing community libraries, like the most famous Mudie's Library (1842, Figure 17), that were significant to the widespread promotion of reading in the early 1800s. The Library in Innerpeffray, Scotland is known to be the first free public lending library, founded in 1680. Marsh's Library was founded in the early eighteenth century by Archbishop Narcissus Marsh (1638–1713) as the first public library in

⁷³ Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users: Collected Papers in Library History*, 188.

Ireland: "Although there were earlier libraries, they were either in the university or in churches. This Library was intended to give anyone who was able to read a place to study."⁷⁴ The Dublin Library Society was a subscription library founded in 1791, and that stayed in business until 1881. Its most famous patron was Daniel O'Connell, who was a daily visitor to the D'Olier Street premises.⁷⁵ Keith Manley's book, *Irish Reading Societies and Circulating Libraries Founded Before 1825*, offers a clear sense that

a varied, if somewhat unevenly distributed, network of libraries developed in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Ireland — a network that facilitated access to both 'improving' literature and to novels, and that was particularly dense in Dublin (in the form of circulating libraries) and in the Presbyterian heartland of Counties Antrim and Down (in the form of reading societies).⁷⁶

Manley notes that one consequence of the Act of Union was the application of British copyright law to Ireland, because of which Irish reprinting of British books collapsed and the "imports of books printed in London quadrupled."⁷⁷ For this reason, I will turn the focus back to Mudie's in the nineteenth century.

Because community libraries bought so many copies of titles from publishers, Mudie's and other circulating libraries held great sway over publishers. Altick notes, "the publishers found it more profitable to supply, say, five hundred copies of a new book to a few reliable customers, either directly or through jobbers, than to dispose of them one by one through the bookshops."⁷⁸ Kaufman gives a detailed account of how reading was changing because of these libraries. The second quarter of the eighteenth century "began a flood of new fiction... Servants and other people of lower classes were beginning to read books, which they never would have

⁷⁴ From the Marsh's Library website by an unidentified writer, accessed 24 July 2023. <https://marshlibrary.ie/about/history/>

⁷⁵ From the Dublin Review of Books online article dated October 2020, with no author or further details noted. Accessed 22 September 2023. <https://drb.ie/the-dublin-library-society/>

⁷⁶ Jonathan Jeffrey Wright, "Irish Reading Societies and Circulating Libraries Founded before 1825: Useful Knowledge and Agreeable Entertainment. By. K. A. Manley. Pp 248. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2018. €58.50.," *Irish Historical Studies* 44, no. 165 (2020), graph.

⁷⁷ K. A. Manley, *Irish Reading Societies and Circulating Libraries Founded Before 1825: Useful Knowledge and Agreeable Entertainment* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2018), 75.

⁷⁸ Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 295.

bought, but now could rent for a few pennies a week. As a new phenomenon it was automatically suspect. It was part of new stirrings for basic literacy.”⁷⁹ He continues:

Such widening outlook for these classes, caught in endless drudgery, often dogged with lifelong poverty, was almost a miracle of escape. But more than escape, such reading meant entrance into new worlds, not only of visible scenes, but of thoughts and emotions. The values were false, the presentation aesthetically pitiable, but the new horizons were there, and the vistas were endless.⁸⁰

Kaufman is pinpointing the moment when literacy begins to bloom among all classes in Britain at the end of the eighteenth century. Even Salmon acknowledges the reading habits of girls “highly or lowly placed on the social ladder.”⁸¹ While girls higher on the ladder were able to afford books and read them in their home library, girls on the lower rungs would subscribe to libraries like Charles Edward Mudie’s (Figure 17), the proprietor of the most symbolic of these libraries, who began lending books from his London bookseller’s shop in 1842. Ten years later, he would open his huge circulating library, which operated until 1894. Mudie’s records show close to a million volumes purchased between 1853-62, of which almost half were fiction.⁸² He charged half the subscription of his competitors: a guinea a year. He advertised, he set up branches, and he offered a van pickup and delivery service. Mudie’s was a very successful business, but it did not monopolise the market. In London alone as early as 1820 there was a reported twenty-eight circulating libraries.⁸³ Concurrently, “legislation of 1850 gave local councils the right to levy one penny in local taxation to finance library facilities.”⁸⁴ This gave Great Britain its distinctively decentralised public library system, which flourished in the latter decades of the century.

⁷⁹ Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users*, 205.

⁸⁰ Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users*, 205-06.

⁸¹ Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, 198.

⁸² Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 296.

⁸³ Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users*, 192. In 1820, Leigh’s *New Picture of London*, 4th ed. Named “twenty-eight booksellers who kept circulating libraries.”

⁸⁴ Martyn Lyons, “New Readers in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children and Workers,” in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Roger Chartier and Guglielmo Cavallo (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2003), 332.

Meanwhile, a concatenation of events occurred mid-century which connected community libraries to railway bookstalls, also a significant indicator for the shift in readership of Edgeworth's books. In the early 1860s, W. H. Smith, already selling books in railway stations across Britain, proposed to act as Mudie's lending agent at their railway bookstalls. Mudie refused, and Smith embarked upon his own book lending trade, where a train rider could borrow a book at the station of departure and return it upon arrival at any station where there was a Smith's railway bookstall. This soon rivalled Mudie's trade and ushered in yet another influential cultural practice that further altered the course of publishing and reading: railway reading.

George Routledge and the Railway Library

Education is only one social reality that mobilised a shift in readership in the nineteenth century. Two other developments profoundly expand the readership of Edgeworth's books: the advent of cheap print and the British and Irish railroad. The British railway quickly and efficiently disseminated newsprint in speeds unimaginable before this time. Innovations in steam and machine presses created more affordable books readily accessible to a growing literate population across classes. What was only affordable to members of the upper classes became widely



Figure 18: Eason's Waterford railway bookstall, October 1924. Courtesy: National Library Ireland.

available to readers of all classes now travelling by rail through railway bookstalls, the majority of which were contracted and operated by W. H. Smith at stations across Britain. Smith opened his first railway bookstall in 1848 in Euston Station in London. George Routledge quickly contracted with W. H. Smith to supply books to Smith's railway bookstalls, and books from his first cheap series, the

Railway Library, began to appear a year later in 1849.

William H. Smith bought Dublin based Johnston & Co. in 1850, just two years after he sealed his deal to run the London and North Western Railway station

bookstalls. Smith appointed the manager of his busy Victoria Street, Manchester station, to the task of running the Dublin branch. That man was Charles Eason, who moved to Dublin in 1856. The Irish railway bookstall contracts followed quickly in 1857, with the Great Southern Railway in April, the Dublin and Wicklow line in June, and the Dublin and Drogheda line in August. Later in 1868, Eason opened Smith's Belfast branch, and the Dublin and Belfast railway bookstalls were opened. In 1886 Charles Eason and his son acquired the business from W. H. Smith and an arrangement was reached that Smith's would not operate in Ireland while Eason's would not operate in Great Britain. Eason continued with railway bookstalls in Ireland until the last one was closed in Waterford in 1978 (Figure 18).⁸⁵

In 1796, Edgeworth wrote stories for the *Parent's Assistant* that had separate classes in mind. Fifty years later, by 1850, the editions in the Pollard Collection resemble cheap print sold at the railway bookstall and sold to people across classes. Most prolific were the books published by George Routledge, who competed with his fellow bastions of cheap print Thomas Tegg, Henry Bohn, William Chambers, Longman's, and Blackie & Son, among others, all of whom mass-produced titles across Britain and Ireland.⁸⁶ Routledge's *Railway Library* was hugely successful and would eventually run to one thousand titles, but he was not the only printer of cheap series of popular fiction. Many others were popping up around his *Railway Library*: Sims & McIntyre's *Parlour Library*, Constable's *Miscellany*, John Murray's *Family Library*, and Colburn's *Standard Novels*, all launched between 1827-40s.⁸⁷ Routledge had a genius for gauging popular taste and was responsive to the public's demand.⁸⁸ It seems ironic that booksellers like Routledge, working the market solely for financial gain and not motivated by philanthropy or betterment of the individual, were to democratise literature, essentially giving all classes a say in what they would read and making books affordable for all classes to purchase. This in turn helped to increase literacy rates, which contributed to the betterment of the individual. Printers like Routledge contributed to the increased purchasing and marketing

⁸⁵ L. M. Cullen, *Eason & Son: A History* (Dublin: Eason, 1989), 20-22.

⁸⁶ Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, 125.

⁸⁷ F. A. Mumby, *The House of Routledge, 1834-1934: With a History of Keegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Other Associated Firms* (London: Routledge, 1934), 34-35.

⁸⁸ Mumby, Feather, Altick, and Fyfe are among the many who write about Routledge's penchant for producing books that were popular and successful.

power of the lower classes, adroitly weaving supply and demand so that popular literature, including Edgeworth's books, were continuously in print.

Four Edgeworth titles appear in Routledge's *Railway Library*, all from *Tales from Fashionable Life*: "Ennui," "The Absentee," "Manoeuvring," and "Vivian" (Figure 19). These four are not girls' stories, nor do they have adolescent female protagonists, but neither are they the only Edgeworth titles Routledge printed "cheap." The Pollard Collection holds over thirty Edgeworth books printed by Routledge. One of Routledge's earliest imprints appears in 1840: Edgeworth's *Harry and Lucy*, third edition, a remainder printed in shares with Baldwin & Cradock.⁸⁹

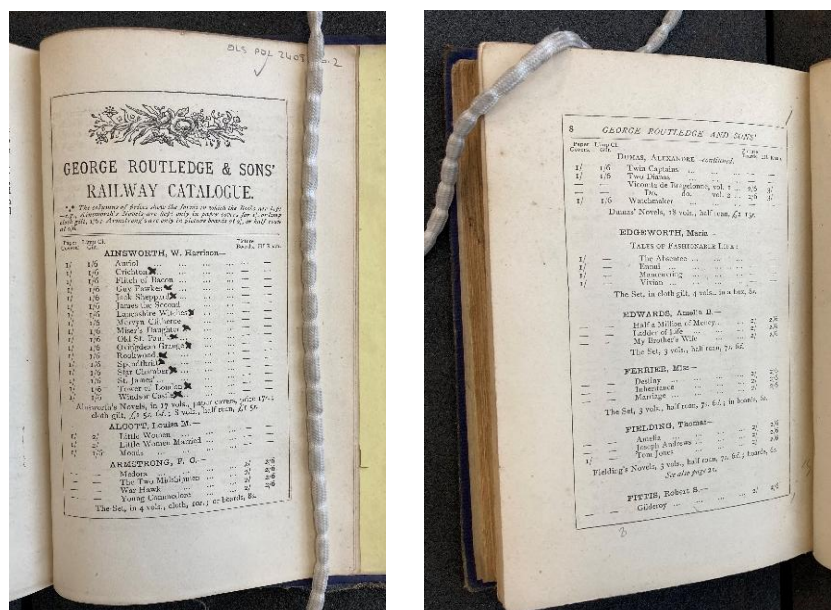


Figure 19: OLS POL 2408 no.2. Pages of Routledge's Railway Catalogue. Note the two columns for different prices based on binding.

George Routledge moved to London in 1833, where he worked at Baldwin, Cradock & Joy. In 1836 he set up his own shop where he was "first just a bookseller, but gradually he began to experiment in publishing."⁹⁰ Routledge initially dealt in share books, where multiple publishers took "shares" in a publication, and in remainders, the stock left after demand for a title ended.⁹¹ There are many examples of Edgeworth titles printed by Routledge in shares in the Pollard Collection, most notably five titles that include an 1856 edition of *Rosamond*, and four editions of

⁸⁹ Mumby, *The House of Routledge, 1834-1934*, 23.

⁹⁰ Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, 124.

⁹¹ Mumby, *The House of Routledge*, 27.

Moral Tales: two in 1850, one in 1853, and one in 1856. In all five of these titles, printed within six years, the same eleven publishers are named in shares (Figure 20). Edgeworth had died by this time (1847) and it is quite possible these are remainders, especially considering the text blocks are so similar as to have the same frontispiece (save one) and title page illustration in the *Moral Tales* books. However, the title pages are not worded the same, the bindings are publishers cloth in either green, red, or purple, and the tooling and decoration are not the same. Despite these differences, the design feels similar. The spines are shown here because the boards are so faded and shabby that it is hard to distinguish the books' features from the front covers (Figure 20).

Routledge was known for marketing to different audiences, and he excelled in offering a text in multiple formats, especially in his printed children's classics, thus making "quality" literature affordably available to a wider readership. He had a number of series of children's books, and apart from the *Railway Library*, Edgeworth is included in such varied formats as the Ruby Series of novels aimed at girl readers to the *Shilling Toy Books*, which are an oversized picture book format.⁹² Standard binding was in decorated boards for a shilling, but most volumes were also available in a cloth binding for an extra 6d, represented in the books in the above table. Routledge printed large numbers of sheets of the text and targeted specific sectors of the market by sending batches of the sheets to be bound up in different ways. He developed an even more elaborate version of this technique for the children's classics that he issued from the early 1850s, "often advertised as 'Juveniles for Young People' at 3s6d, they were also offered at 4s., 5s., 8s6d."⁹³

⁹² There is one Edgeworth title in the *Shilling Toy Books* series found in the Pollard Collection: *The Little Dog Trusty*, which is one of the stories from *The Parent's Assistant*, moved to *Early Lessons* in 1800. OLS POL X 8256.

⁹³ Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, 128.



OLS POL 6039,
Rosamond, 1850

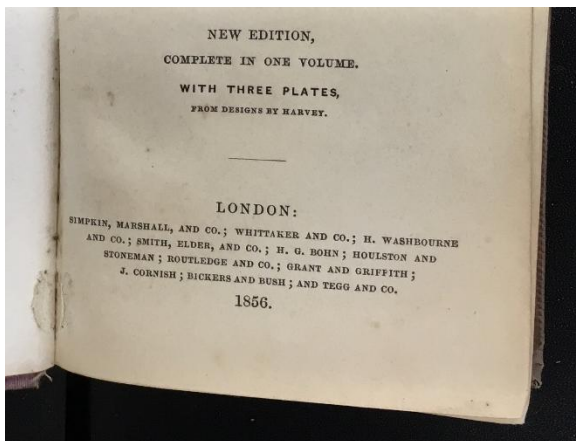
OLS POL 6051,
Moral Tales, 1850

OLS POL 6059,
Moral Tales, 1850

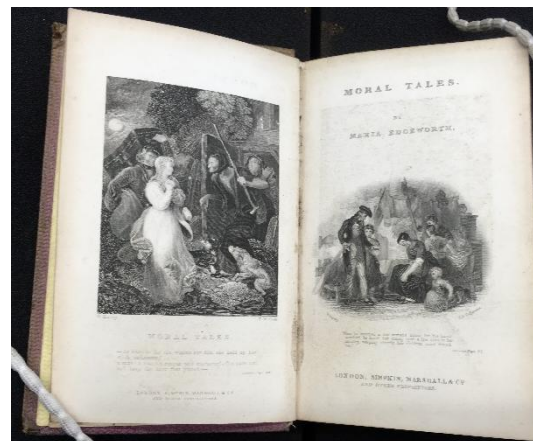
OLS POL 6056,
Moral Tales, 1853

OLS POL 6044
Moral Tales, 1856

Figure 20: Five Routledge editions in 'shares,' 1850-1856.



OLS POL 6044 list of publishers on title page



OLS POL 6044 The same frontispiece and title illustration appears in all these shown editions.

Figure 21: Title page and frontispiece is the same for all editions of Moral Tales shown in Figure 20.

The printed sheets of text were the same in each case, but the price difference lay in the amount of added decoration: gilt page edges, decorated binding, gilt decorated binding, the insertion of six or eight color printed plates, or all of the above. ... The most highly decorated editions were aimed at the school prize and Christmas gift market, and they gave Routledge more opportunities to sell the same basic item to a variety of audiences.⁹⁴

Routledge knew that new audiences could be found for previously released titles. This included child readers, too, as he increasingly printed children's books in the latter half of the century, many examples of which are in the Pollard Collection. He offered books that were previously printed in more expensive editions to a new class of reader at a much reduced "cheap" price and sold tens of thousands of copies. By the 1850s, he was issuing gift and prize editions, but his core business remained cheap literature.⁹⁵ Routledge was at the forefront of the movement to reach beyond the educated upper and middle classes into new markets catered to the emerging literate lower and working classes. The series of education acts and efforts by charitable institutions laid the tracks for the publishing industry to widen its range of reading material to meet the demand of the newly literate mass reading public. That the intentions were far surpassed is evident in every working-class member reading a novel on a train in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Routledge was considered a "cheap" printer in that he did not print for improvement but rather the reader's amusement, especially the travelling reader. Routledge and his contemporaries transformed "cheap" literature from pamphlets and religious tracts printed by religious and philanthropic societies aimed towards improving of minds, to inexpensive literature meant to amuse. Fyfe explains that by the mid-1850s Routledge and others were selling tens of thousands of copies of titles:

The enormous sales figures were a clear indication that the new forms of cheap literature had found a new generation of readers. It was no longer the case that the majority of British readers were educated and affluent. The Sunday schools and charity schools had done their work well, and their graduates were now turning with

⁹⁴ Mumby, *The House of Routledge*. These details are found scattered throughout chapters 3 and 5.

⁹⁵ Mumby, *The House of Routledge*. Again, chapters 3-5 give these details.

enthusiasm to those publishers who catered to their tastes and their pockets.⁹⁶

Routledge's "cheap" books were popular but not cheaply immoral or scandalous, as most Edgeworth titles printed by Routledge will attest. Before W. H. Smith, the railway bookstalls supplied reading matter that was "haphazard and wholly unworthy."⁹⁷ The books on offer were what Mumby describes as "unmitigated rubbish," "poisonous literature," and "mischievous trash," eventually to be cleaned up by W. H. Smith.⁹⁸ Martyn Lyons states, "in the eighteenth century, the novel was not regarded as a respectable art-form, but in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, its status was assured," and "cheap" printers like Routledge helped this shift in attitude.⁹⁹ "Cheap" used here in regard to Routledge simply means the books were affordable and held wide appeal. As more books were printed and disseminated via railway bookstalls, circulating libraries, schools, and social circles, girl readers had more and more reading material available to them; that wide appeal grew in the following decades. The circulation library system and railway bookstall network created a distribution mechanism that would create a demand never before seen.

Conclusion

With Routledge and his contemporaries producing affordable printers' editions, Edgeworth's desire to democratise reading comes to fruition. Edgeworth's girl characters become available to new sections of society. Edgeworth remains part of the discourse of what girls should and do read over a century after she first published, thanks to cheap print. But that girl changes, both the girl character and the girl reader, mostly because of social changes in Britain and in Ireland. Certainly, more and more women and children were riding the rails, and more young women were entering the workforce. Furthermore, despite Ireland lagging—primarily agriculturally—behind Britain, the growth in education in the century suggests a country invested in the politics of literacy. Cheap print changes the average reader from mid and upper class to all classes, to include the newly literate working class.

⁹⁶ Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, 130.

⁹⁷ Mumby, *The House of Routledge*, 39.

⁹⁸ Mumby, *The House of Routledge*, 40.

⁹⁹ Lyons, "New Readers in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children and Workers," 314.

Railway bookstalls were highly visible public spaces and patronised by readers of all classes. “Moreover, the railway carriage transformed reading into a public activity, thus enabling travellers to learn far more about the reading habits of their fellow citizens than ever before.”¹⁰⁰ For young women especially, reading became a public act, no longer done privately in the home. More women were working and travelling for both work and leisure via the railway, so naturally more women were reading. There is something performative about this public reading act: other travellers could see what young women were reading and vice versa. What



Figure 22: “The Irritating Gentleman” by Berthold Woltze, 1864. Courtesy: Wikipedia photographic reproduction in public domain.

was once a private, personal act became a public display of both taste and value. Rooney uses the term “alogotransiphobia,” fear of being caught on public transportation without reading material, which may help to explain why female train passengers might always have had books with them.¹⁰¹ Being seen reading certain books showed a particular social or cultural inclination, could indicate status, and could also act to ward off unwanted attention while travelling.¹⁰² Berthold Woltze’s painting offers the viewer much to ponder in terms of young females reading on the railway (Figure 22). Aside

from the young woman’s forbearance of the irritating gentleman, the image conjures questions: Is she riding alone? It would seem so if the gentleman were free to annoy her. Is she in mourning? A handkerchief, small book, teary face and dark clothing suggests so, which makes his advances all the more unwanted. Perhaps, it is instead the novel she carries, and the story is sensationally sad. Woltze’s realist painting offers a window into the realities of travelling by rail, alone but in public, left to her

¹⁰⁰ Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, 136.

¹⁰¹ Rooney, *Railway Reading and Late-Victorian Literary Series*, 11. Rooney credits the term as a “late twentieth-century American neologism coined collectively by the writer George V. Higgins, the journalist, Martin F. Nolan, and a Washington publican, Thomas Costello,” 11.

¹⁰² Anna Despotopoulou, *Women and the Railway, 1850-1915* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015, 175.

own devices while interrupted, harassed, uncomfortable on the wooden bench, yet well-clothed and warm. Who is the girl? She is young (her unpinned hair) and old (her dour clothing), both woman (annoyed) and girl (nervous or scared). She is a reader who is not reading. She is every girl who must decide how to pass the time while riding the train.

The combined logistics of the railway bookstall, along with the expectations of travellers, resulted in a substantial transformation of cheap print in Britain and Ireland, the result of which was evident in both content and appearance of the books.

Large numbers of these books were from George Routledge's various series. But although these books were in the same price bracket as Charles Knight's *Shilling Volumes*, Chambers' *People Editions*, and publications by other "improving" publishers, they were immediately identifiable at a glance.¹⁰³

The bookstall changed the market in a way that lasted until the widespread use of the internet for book sales. Immediately identifiable, the book sellers knew people would be making hurried, snap decisions in the stations. Railway publishers competed for the most dazzling and colourful cover designs, and expectations of what cheap literature ought to look like, of what a shilling should buy, had changed forever. Of the thirty or so Routledge editions of Edgeworth in the Pollard Collection, many reflect this changing trend from private bookseller to public bookstall that moved girls' reading from a solo act to a public one. The railway carriage, like the Edgeworth library, represents the cloudiness of a space not wholly public or private, not quite for girls but not restricted to adults. It is a space of its own that moves between other spaces. That the railway carriage becomes prominent during the ever-growing and evolving 1800s is itself an expression of that changing development of a social time and place not unlike the adolescent maturing of girls' and their reading habits during the long nineteenth century.

¹⁰³ Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, 139.

2.2 The Paratextual Girl



Figure 23: OLS POL 5851. Simple Susan / Told to the Children by Louey Chisholm with Pictures by Olive Allen. London: T.C. and E.C. Jack, [1908?].

This chapter looks closely at individual books and their paratexts to uncover meaning and messages sent to implied girl readers through the physical form of the book. Children's literature scholar Peter Hunt states that as readers, "we are primed by the peritext — what surrounds the printed text physically (margins, dust jackets, illustrations) — and the cultural context of the text or its reading. ... The paper, the typeface, even the smell, all speak to us."¹⁰⁴ Hunt's observation is astute. We develop a connection to the books we read: positive, negative, physical, sensorial, intellectual, and emotional. All

are ways meaning is transmitted from text to reader. Material culture studies also considers this connection in the object-subject relationship by thinking about "embodied and emotional engagements with (books as) objects that can provide more powerful alternatives or additions to textual interpretation, in enabling (readers) to understand and empathize with the stories objects may represent."¹⁰⁵ Dudley continues: "The object's materiality neither exists nor is perceived in isolation, but lies in the sum of a relationship between both the object's qualities and the embodied way in which we experience them."¹⁰⁶ Hunt's comments reflect this experience; the paper and the smell evoke a sensorial experience of books, a physicality that connects reader to text through the materiality of the book. Dudley

¹⁰⁴ Peter Hunt, "The Fundamentals of Children's Literature Criticism: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature*, eds. Julia L. Mickenberg and Lynne Vallone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 39.

¹⁰⁵ Sandra H. Dudley, *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 4.

¹⁰⁶ Dudley, *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, 5.

offers a comprehensive definition of materiality which, when considering the book as object, conveniently alludes to print culture, saying materiality

connotes the form and the materials of which an object consists, together with the techniques by which it may have been made or formed, any additions or presentational conventions which may have been added to it, and all and any traces of the passage of time and, especially, physical human interaction.¹⁰⁷

When considering the materiality of Edgeworth's books, the "techniques" Dudley mentions are understood as printing practices. Any "additional or presentational conventions" can be seen in the bindings and illustrations. Many editions of the same text account for the "passage of time." Materiality is "a summation of physical characteristics, sensory experiences, and meaning" where "material properties of the thing itself are essential to how our bodily senses detect it and thus to how we experience and formulate ideas about it."¹⁰⁸

The books I discuss here have been chosen for various reasons. They work to bridge the gap between intended and actual girl readers, showing how a material study of the books considers both readers together. The paratextual elements point to the specifically girl-reader marketing of these books, supported by the provenance that shows girls as owners and recipients of these books as gifts. There is very little marginalia drawn by children to be found in Edgeworth's books in the Pollard Collection, yet many of the books show provenance and dedicated inscriptions that indicate a large number of girl readers, discussed below. Because there are so many editions of *Early Lessons*, which include the very popular and often reproduced *Rosamond* stories, the varied bindings were of particular interest. Eponymous titles of girls' stories were chosen for that simple reason, also discussed in the Titles section below. "The Good French Governess" offers a concrete example to consider world politics and war as a "wider social context" described in the first chapter of this section. *Rosamond* is spotlighted in the discussion of prefaces and tables of contents again due to her popularity and the sheer number of examples found in the Collection. Although Genette does not mention catalogues, this

¹⁰⁷ Dudley, *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Dudley, *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, 8.

discussion would not be complete without including them, as the Pollard Collection has a huge number of texts bound with catalogues, particularly Edgeworth's books published in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Finally, I include a unique late printing of *Rosamond* in 1931 because the illustrations are unlike any others found in Edgeworth's books and because no discussion of paratexts should be without illustrations. However, a proper examination of illustrations alone in Edgeworth books warrants research of its own and is beyond the capacity of this thesis.

Chartier asserts that even a fixed text changes meaning when presented in a new way—in a new physical form.¹⁰⁹ This chapter examines books' materiality to extract how meanings of girlhood are transmitted via the reader's engagement with Edgeworth's many editions. It does this by looking specifically at paratexts as thresholds of meaning, for paratexts are textual constructions that are also material and sensorial. This hybridity allows paratexts to connect the text to the reader and to the world, showing how external agents can affect and envision different meanings for readers over time. Studying paratexts enables ways of extracting new and shifting meanings and interpretations of girlhood in the multiple, varying editions of Edgeworth's books.

Marginalia, Provenance and Prize Labels

In his article "Devotion and Defacement: Reading Children's Marginalia" (2012), Seth Lerer discusses children's marginalia as it contributes to the totality of a book's value.¹¹⁰ Scholarly approaches often disregard children's writing, or at best do what Lerer suggests when he says, "if the child's impulse is to scribble on a margin, it is an adult's impulse to read and regulate it."¹¹¹ The book's value includes children's writing that remains largely "untextured and untested: as if it were a fact of life rather than a function of history."¹¹² Children's writing holds meaning as a result of adult writing via the adult-child power dynamic, the aetionormative approach that often marginalises children's writing, especially writing found in the margins. The surge in book history scholarship has shifted this focus in that it is a study of readers

¹⁰⁹ Chartier, "Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader," 88.

¹¹⁰ Seth Lerer, "Devotion and Defacement: Reading Children's Marginalia," *Representations* 118, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 127.

¹¹¹ Lerer, "Devotion and Defacement," 148.

¹¹² Lerer, "Devotion and Defacement," 128.

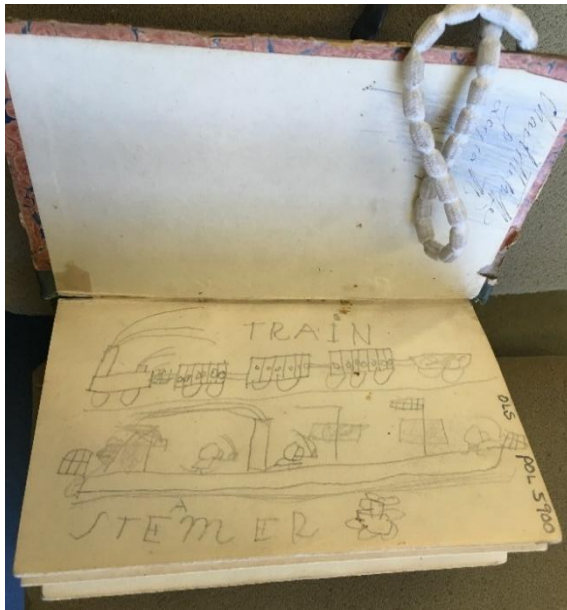


Figure 24: OLS POL 5900. A child's drawing of a steamer train on the front flyleaf of Edgeworth's *The Parent's Assistant*, Dublin: John Cumming, 1829.

as much as writers, or how the adult reads or imagines the child found in the blank spaces of children's books.

The Edgeworth books in the Pollard Collection are largely devoid of any marginalia that might be definitively attributed to child readers. The most obvious example is found in the 1829 Dublin edition of *The Parent's Assistant*, which John Cumming produced in three volumes. The third volume contains a drawing of a steamer train that fills the first flyleaf of the book (Figure 24). The artist does not sign

their work. The art and artist are entirely anonymous, but the style of the drawing indicates a child's drawing. Another clue into the readership of this particular book is the provenance seen on the opposite page, which reads "Charlotte [...] Leyrath 1843," but which is clearly not in the same hand as our train artist. There are other provenance markings in the set, inside volume one and on the back cover of volume three, which indicate the Leyrath family but are less clear. Just as the train drawing indicates a child's interaction with the book, provenance also provides clues to the identities of child readers in lieu of drawings, scribbles, and other marginalia created by child readers.

Provenance

135 books by Edgeworth in the Pollard Collection show a record of ownership, be it manuscript, book plate, pasted label, or prize label. Heather Jackson notes that ownership marks are "the commonest form of annotation" and usually occur in the few front pages of a book, which is where we find the provenance in most of Edgeworth's books.¹¹³ Of the 135 books, nine volumes are inscribed by Edgeworth herself, including one dedicated to her stepmother, Frances Edgeworth (OLS POL

¹¹³ H. J. Jackson. *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 19.

5803, *Éducation Familière*), and a set of *Tales and Novels* dedicated to Frances's sister, Louisa (OLS POL 5772-5779). The remaining 128 books provide a wide variety of provenant details and clues. Many of the inscriptions are simply initials or are abbreviated so that it is unclear who exactly was the owner or recipient. The handwriting includes both boys and girls names. Equally difficult is determining if these names indicate adult or child readers.

Take, for example, the books inscribed by Pollard herself. Pollard did not inscribe every book, but many of them show "M. Pollard" or "M. Paul Pollard." Her manuscript is heavily peppered throughout Edgeworth's books, not always with her name. Some show a date and from whom she bought the book. Yet, without knowing that Mary "Paul" Pollard is the collector, it proves difficult to determine who exactly is "M. Pollard" (OLS POL 5861) or, more elusively, "M. Paul Pollard, 1952" (OLS POL 6030, Figure 25). It is easy to conclude "Paul" is likely a man or a boy based on typical uses of the name. It is impossible to know, unless you know Pollard and her age, that this is an adult female owner. A reasonable conclusion might be that this edition of *Early Lessons* was enjoyed by all manner of boy and girl readers, based on this

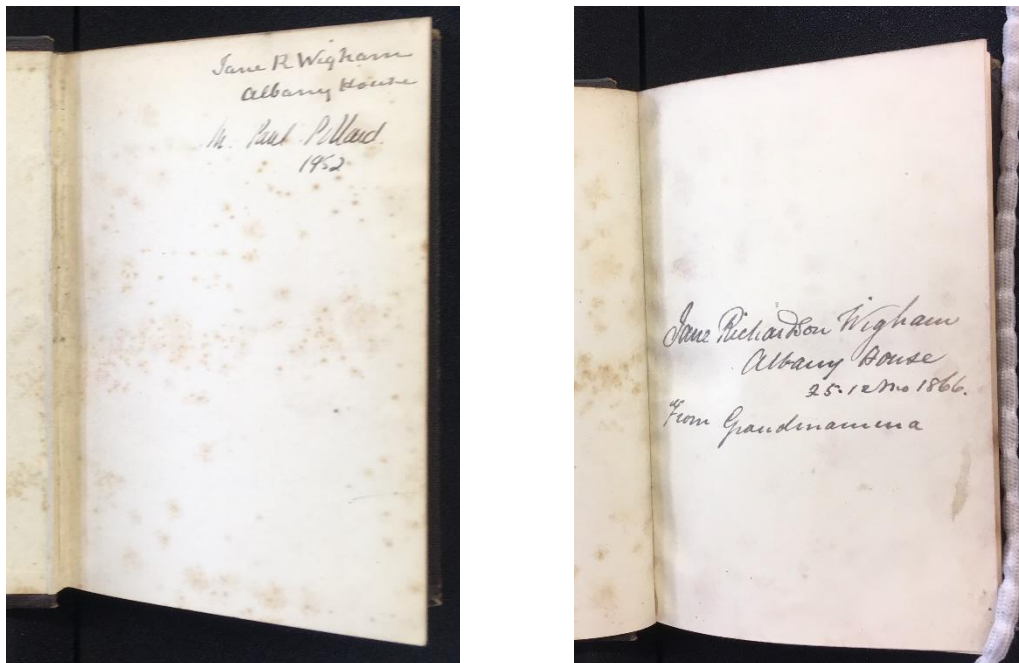


Figure 25: OLS POL 6030. *Early Lessons* by Maria Edgeworth. London: Routledge, 1866. Left, inscribed on the first flyleaf: 'Jane R Wigham Albany House'; 'M. Paul Pollard 1952'. Right, on the second leaf: 'Jane Richardson Wigham Albany House 25 [...] 1866. From Grandmamma'.

provenance. However, having insight into who “M. Paul Pollard” was, and turning a page further in the book, we can verify the owners were both female. More pointedly, the second page’s inscription offers more insight: “Jane Richardson Wigham Albany House 25 [...] 1866. From Grandmamma.” Not only were the owners female, but Jane Wigham received this book as a gift from her grandmother, an indication that Jane is a younger girl reader.

Provenance is a helpful indicator, but while it may “evoke identities behind the anonymity of scribble,” it cannot prove conclusively the actual readers of texts . It does not account for sibling readers, parents, friends, or adults with whom the book may have been shared.¹¹⁴ Marginalia does not offer proof of reading, nor is it proof of children reading. Lerer states that names inscribed in margins allow us to “trace a trajectory of naming and gift giving” and that these are “stories of possession: name, date and place.”¹¹⁵ Provenance tells a story of a book’s ownership but not necessarily of its readership. Nevertheless, it is the closest indication of Edgeworth’s readers in the Pollard Collection.

Of the aforementioned 128 books, sixty-eight of them are clearly inscribed with a name that suggests a traditionally feminine owner. Within those sixty-eight books, twenty-six of them have manuscript dedications to girls: an even more solid indication of girl readers (Figure 26). The specificity of a dedication that mentions not only the book’s intended girl owner but also details the book-giver and their relationship to the girl reader, helps to draw the connection between the implied reader and the actual girls who were gifted these books.

Prize Labels

Lauren O’Hagan, in her article “The Advertising and Marketing of the Edwardian Prize Book: Gender For Sale” (2019), contends that books for children establish a bond between two people, reinforcing a power structure between young and old in our society:

¹¹⁴ Lerer, “Devotion and Defacement,” 128.

¹¹⁵ Lerer, “Devotion and Defacement,” 128.



Figure 26: Top row shows OLS POL 5865: Mary E. R. Godfrey from her Mamma as a reward for Good Conduct. With book stamp of R. Godfrey. OLS POL 6010: Mary, Selina, Charlotte Wentworth Fitzwilliam the gift of her Aunt Ch. W. Fitzwilliam 1839. Second row shows OLS POL 5944: The gift of the Rev Doctor Enfield to E D Ralph and her sisters Novbr 22nd 1796. OLS POL 6037: Mollie Macondry from Mother Xmas 1894. Third row shows OLS POL 5846: Miss Ella Parker. A present from her Grandfather; Alice Parker Quincy Mass. With stamp of 'Warner S Parker' on lower board. OLS POL 6044: To Jissie Crofton on her birthday from her dear Mamma April 12th 1861' Bottom row shows OLS POL 5842: Simpson a present from Amy Francis Dunn. OLS POL 5826: To my darling little Bettie [?] from her affectionate friend H: [A].

This is particularly relevant to prize books, as their presentation created a relationship of mutual responsibility and keyed the child into the value system of the awarding institution. In decoding the meaning of the prize, children were inevitably compelled to try and understand their culture and the standards of the community in which they found themselves. Being the physical representation of a child's good behaviour, the book acquired value from its giver and carried the responsibility that it be preserved.¹¹⁶

In O'Hagan's research on prize book catalogues and publisher's advertising, she claims that catalogues "specifically targeted middle-class buyers who wanted to use the prize book to thrust their own ideas of moral education and social acceptability onto working-class children."¹¹⁷ Concerned with modelling appropriate behaviour, catalogues were targeted mainly toward religious institutions and schools. Buyers were attracted by the book's compatibility with their values rather than their literary merit or the interests of the children who would receive them. More specifically targeted by design to either boys or girls, religious or secular audiences, these books not only proffered certain moralistic views but aimed to help the child reader "regulate the presentation of self in everyday life."¹¹⁸

Catalogues of prize books were often labelled with series explicitly titled for boys or for girls. In addition to using the series name to indicate gender, both religious and secular publishers marked gender through the choice of book title. The name of a story's protagonist, "masculine" or "feminine" adjectives, and traditional gendered activities were all used to signal the imagined boy or girl reader.¹¹⁹ Figure 27 shows the six Edgeworth books with prize labels given to girls. These labels and inscriptions extend the intention of publishers' prize catalogues and books in a not-so-subtle articulation. The book prize is bestowed with an explanation and an expectation of the desired behaviours that were prized in the girls who received the books.

¹¹⁶ Lauren O'Hagan, "The Advertising and Marketing of the Edwardian Prize Book: Gender For Sale," *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 62, no. 1 (2019): 81.

¹¹⁷ O'Hagan, "Gender For Sale," 74-75.

¹¹⁸ O'Hagan, "Gender For Sale," 75.

¹¹⁹ Examples in Edgeworth's stories include "Lazy Lawrence," "Blind Kate," "Simple Susan," "Lame Jervas," "Eton Montem," "The Bracelets," "The Little Dog Trusty: or, the Liar and the Boy of Truth," and "The Orange Man; or, the Honest Boy and the Thief."



Figure 27: Top row, left to right: OLS POL 6052: Mount Zion Sunday School presented to Gwen Davies 1907. OLS POL 5860: Convent of Our Lady of Loretto, Stephens Green, awarded to Miss Norah Ryan, 27th of July 1865. OLS POL 5833: Primitive Methodist Sunday School. Prize awarded to Lilly Hutchinson for repeating 85 Golden Texts, Christmas 1907. Bottom row left to right: OLS POL 5896: 'Portsmouth School Board, reward to Bessie Stewart, Sept 30th 1896. OLS POL 5817: School board for London prize label given for punctual regular attendance to Florence Bell[?]. OLS POL 6065: Castleknock Daily and Sunday School, presented to Mabel Bearman as a reward for superior answering in Religious Knowledge at the yearly examination of the above school held on the 1st day of March 1897. R. Sadleir D.D. Rector, and W. Hughes, D. D. Curate.

Bindings: Early Lessons

Nothing shows a shift in meaning so immediately as the book covers for Edgeworth's *Rosamond* of *Early Lessons*. Consider these different bindings shown below and the possible intended reader of each book (Figure 28). Early editions from the first half of the nineteenth century appear in plain boards or paper over boards. As the nineteenth century advanced so did new technologies in machine press steam printing and illustration, and *Rosamond* is encased in bright coloured cloth or heavily decorated covers. The first three covers are produced before 1850 and the last three after 1850 (although the Routledge dates are elusive) and 1850 is not

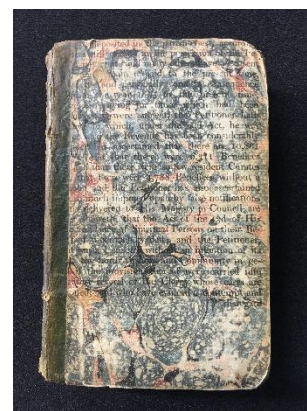
significant but simply the midpoint of the century. These covers cannot be said to follow a trajectory of printing; rather, they make Chartier's point that the books' bindings present different meanings regardless of print date or chosen format presentations. The first two books below (Fig. 28: OLS POL 6010 and OLS POL 5860b) were printed within ten years of the first edition in 1801 and appear in very small duodecimo format. These editions are only a few of many 12mo and smaller sized books in the Pollard Collection. Susan Stewart links the miniature to "nostalgic versions of childhood and history" which "presents a diminutive, and thereby manipulatable, version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination."¹²⁰ These are not miniature, but they are significantly smaller than most books in the Pollard Collection.¹²¹ Yet this size does not continue to be produced; when the first volume of *Continuation of Early Lessons* was printed in 1814, a sequel containing more stories involved the same four characters—Rosamond, Frank, Harry, and Lucy—the format is larger, and it grows larger still with later editions.



OLS POL 6010. 11.1cm.
Early Lessons pt. 3
London: J. Johnson, 1809.



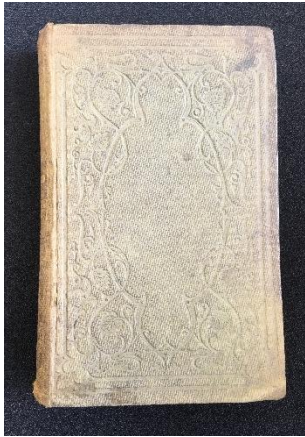
OLS POL 5860b. 10.8cm.
Early Lessons pt. 4
London: J. Johnson, 1803.



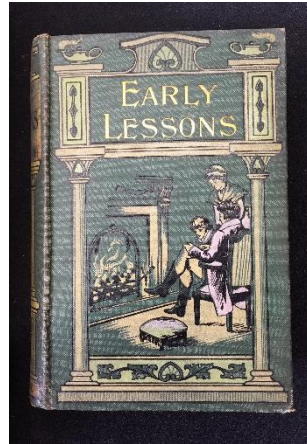
OLS POL 5968. 13.4cm.
Continuation of Early Lessons
London: J. Johnson, 1814.

¹²⁰ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, 1st paperback ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 69.

¹²¹ Newcastle University Special Collections' Collections Guide specifies that in order to be "miniature," a book cannot be bigger than 7.5cm in any direction.



*OLS POL 6039. 14.3cm.
Rosamond from Early Lessons.
London: Longman et.al. 1856.*



*OLS POL 6020. 20cm. Early
Lessons. London: George Routledge
[n.d.].*



*OLS POL 5837. 18.9cm. The
Most Unfortunate Day of my
Life. London: Cobden—
Sanderson. 1931.*

Figure 28: Covers of different editions of Edgeworth's Early Lessons. While these appear to be the same size, please note the cm. measurements in the captions to distinguish each book's size.

Aileen Douglas states it is “a sad irony that the distinctive formats of ... *Early Lessons* fell victim to the work(s) success.”¹²² Earlier editions were produced in small format to fit comfortably in a child's hands, Edgeworth herself calling them “wee-wee volumes.”¹²³ Later editions

compressed the parts and produced the works in standard sizes obliterating some of the material aspects that made the works attractive to children. Larger volumes were of course harder to hold, while the amalgamation of volumes reduced the sense, provided by reading individual parts, of distinct episodes of reading.¹²⁴

Douglas's comment suggests later editions of Edgeworth in the Pollard Collection were not printed exclusively for children. Unlike Johnson's affordable first editions, small, plain, and simple in their construction, later editions are bulky and heavily adorned with illustrations. They often have gilt edges and decorated spines beyond Johnson's typical paper label over paper spines. These later editions not only shift the implied girl reader, but they shift the implied reader altogether. These books are intended for the adult consumer who would gift these books to children, and as such,

¹²² Aileen Douglas, "Maria Edgeworth and Anna Letitia Barbauld: Print, Canons, and Female Literary Authority," *European Romantic Review* 31, no. 6 (2020): 702.

¹²³ Hare, ed., *The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth*, 175.

¹²⁴ Douglas, "Maria Edgeworth and Anna Letitia Barbauld," 702.

they represent a nostalgia-driven impetus for continued publication. Later in this chapter, I will discuss tables of contents and how these later, larger editions reorder the stories or eliminate some altogether, creating a completely different version of *Early Lessons* that genders the editions and edges out potential boy readers.

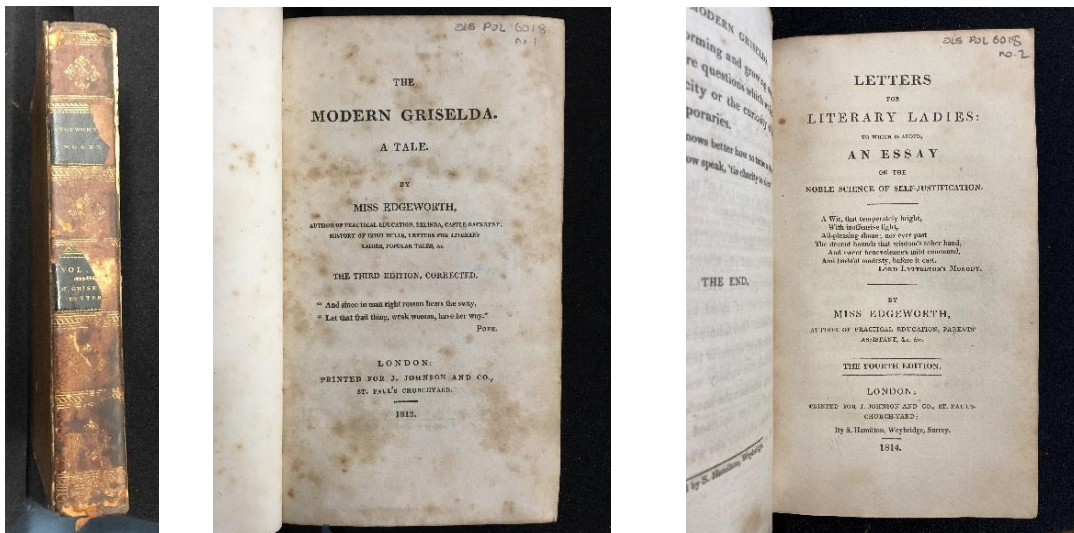
Bound together: *The Modern Griselda* and *Letters for Literary Ladies*

The Modern Griselda, A Tale.

By Miss Edgeworth. London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1813. 3rd ed. corrected.
Shelfmark: OLS POL 6018 no.1 (Figure 29b)

Letters for Literary Ladies, to which is added, an Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification

By Miss Edgeworth. London: Printed for J. Johnson & Co. 1814. 4th ed.
Shelfmark: OLS POL 6018 no.2 (Figure 29c)



Figures 29a, b, c: A rebound book that includes two separate Edgeworth texts:
The Modern Griselda, OLS POL 6018 no. 1, and Letters for Literary Ladies, OLS POL 6018 no. 2.
Note the spine label which lists both titles.

The binding of this book indicates a re-binding of two texts, *The Modern Griselda* and *Letters for Literary Ladies*. The top label on the spine says “Edgeworth’s Works” and suggests this owner likely had a set of Edgeworth’s texts to which this volume belonged. The bookplate has a coat of arms and states “J.R. Park, M.D.,” which indicates the owner was a person whose status allowed them to afford a bespoke bound library. The first collected edition of Edgeworth’s works, titled *Tales and Miscellaneous Pieces*, was printed in fourteen volumes in 1825 by R. Hunter, successor and nephew to Joseph Johnson, in shares with twelve other booksellers,

and it was offered in the Johnson/Hunter signature binding of paper over boards. There is no indication of when the two texts in this book were bound together, but this volume is not part of that original collected set of 1825.

In fact, *Letters for Literary Ladies* was not included in the first or second collections of Edgeworth's works that she herself curated (1825, 1832). The owner of this book likely curated their own collection of "Edgeworth's Works" and had them bound to their specifications. The brown calf binding with a black Morocco spine label signifies it is bespoke and is likely designed to match other volumes in a personal library. Of interest here is the choice to bind these two particular texts together. The collected works do not include any texts for children, and while the short piece "The Noble Science of Self-Justification" was printed as part of *Letters for Literary Ladies*, it *does* appear in the collected works without the *Letters*. I discussed in Section One how *Letters* is juvenilia and Edgeworth's first published book (1795). Perhaps this is why she chose to exclude it from the collected works, because she did not consider it in the same style as her novels and stories. Or perhaps she could not countenance including a text where she condemns novel reading to sit alongside all her novels. Nevertheless, *Self-Justification* and *The Modern Griselda* are both part of the canonical collected works, and *Letters for Literary Ladies* is not.

Despite the plain, if bespoke, binding, this book is an object of girlhood quite specifically Edgeworthian in construction, in that it does as a book what Edgeworth often does in her tales: present opposites to let the reader determine her own course of behaviour as a result of the reading. Edgeworth often used two characters of opposite attributes to illustrate both desirable and undesirable behaviour. In *Letters for Literary Ladies*, already discussed in Section One, the second part consists of letters between friends Julia and Caroline. Caroline is rational and thoughtful; Julia is impulsive, selfish. The result is disastrous for Julia who leaves her husband and flees to France, only to die destitute while Caroline watches on in horror, unable to influence or aid her friend. The *Modern Griselda*, on the other hand, is a story of a brand-new bride, a young and foolishly fashionable woman recently married to a man "who had not yet been long enough her husband to cease to be her lover."¹²⁵ Griselda is contrary and shows a deliberate will to argue with her husband. He, in

¹²⁵ Maria Edgeworth, *The Modern Griselda* (London: J. Johnson, 1805), 14.

turn, calls out her immaturity: "she could not bear ... that he should consider her as a child, who was not able to govern herself."¹²⁶ Her opposite appears in the character Emma Granby, who, when hearing that Griselda could not forgive her husband his sins, replies, "I would not have put it in his power to commit them."¹²⁷ Griselda is the sort of woman Edgeworth chastises as the uneducated, unsophisticated "Wife of Bath" type in *Letters*. Emma is the opposite: prudent and forbearing.

Valerie Pakenham, in her compilation of Edgeworth's personal letters, discusses how *Griselda* was a text that grew from *Letters* and was a novelised version of Edgeworth's satirical "Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification," which appears at the end of *Letters*. Binding these texts together shows a book owner's insight into Edgeworth's works beyond the published collections, or perhaps prior to 1825, as there is no indication of when this book was bound. It is a solid example of Edgeworthian girlhood in a book, the exemplary model and the cautionary tale bound together, complete with Edgeworth's humour, satire, and earnest feeling toward encouraging the happiness of young women as they cross the threshold into adulthood via marriage.

Titles: Rosamond, Helen, Leonora and more

A search of "Maria Edgeworth" in Trinity's library catalogue results in many titles which consist simply of a girl's name: *Rosamond* (1803), *Belinda* (1801), *Leonora* (1806), *Emilie de Coulanges* (1809), and *Helen* (1834), to name a few. Douglas states that Edgeworth's titles that are "named for central characters" work to "individuat(e) the protagonists and encourag(e) child readers to identify with them."¹²⁸ This appears to work not only with her story collections for younger readers but for these novels popular with adolescent and adult readers as well, and these titles are situated within a more general trend. For example, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-48) are epistolary novels that preceded Edgeworth's *Leonora* (1806). Sydney, Lady Morgan's novel simply titled *Woman; or Ida of Athens*, appears in 1809 and is soon followed by Jane Austen's

¹²⁶ Edgeworth, *The Modern Griselda*, 34.

¹²⁷ Edgeworth, *The Modern Griselda*, 61, 63.

¹²⁸ Douglas, "Maria Edgeworth and Anna Letitia Barbauld," 702.



Figure 30: OLS POL 6061.
Helen. Paris: Baudry, 1837.



Figure 31: OLS POL 6062, 6064.
Leonora. London: J. Johnson, 1806 1st ed..

Emma (1815). Franco Moretti discusses how the rapid growth of publication in the last decades of the eighteenth century prompted the necessity for shorter titles:

As more novels circulated, two things happened. ... The *Monthly* and other magazines started to publish reviews of many new novels, making title page summaries somewhat superfluous: as the literary system grew, in other words, some of its functions became more specialized, freeing titles from having to provide a detailed description. And then, as the number of new novels kept increasing, each of them had inevitably a much smaller window of visibility on the market, and it became vital for a title to catch quickly and effectively the eye of the public.¹²⁹

Moretti refers to Claude Duchet who says titles are coded messages in a market situation; he considers the title “half sign, half ad, the title is where the novel as language meets the novel as commodity.”¹³⁰ Genette agrees the title has three functions: “to designate, to indicate subject matter, to tempt the public.”¹³¹ This theory certainly supports Routledge’s idea of books catching the eye of the traveller as they hurried past the railway bookstall. Short titles are also harder to forget.

Edgeworth was an adept crossover writer, and outside of her story collections for children, she did not specify her stories’ intended readers. These

¹²⁹ Franco Moretti, "Style Inc. Reflections on Seven Thousand Titles (British novels, 1740-1850)," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 1 (2009): 139.

¹³⁰ Moretti, "Style Inc. Reflections on Seven Thousand Titles (British novels, 1740-1850)," 135.

¹³¹ Genette, *Paratexts*, 76.

novels having traditionally female names as titles reflect this wider, dual audience and hint at a story to entice both adult and adolescent reader, to be shared aloud in private, domestic company, or conversely, to be read silently, albeit in more public spaces like train carriages and tea houses. Edgeworth wrote at a time when reading aloud as a family was common daily practice, when learning to read included (a typically female) adult and child reading together, and when girls were instructed on the correct way to read aloud.¹³²



Figure 32: OLS POL 140. *The Polite Lady: Or, A Course of Female Education, In a Series of Letters From a Mother to her Daughters*. Dublin: J. Exshaw et.al. 1763. *The English Short Title Catalogue* identifies the author as Charles Allen. Note the provenance signatures of Miss Ann Johnston, Frances Barry, and Diana Ruxton. Trinity Library catalogue notes: "Bought by M. Pollard from Ruxton family, Redhill, Ardee, Co. Louth, 1969." *The County Louth Archaeological and Historical Journal* online has a short article written by Lord Fitzherbert Ruxton that shows Margaret Edgeworth Ruxton, Maria Edgeworth's aunt, in the family tree.

Recalling the earlier discussion of *Letters*, the flurry of discourse on female conduct included *Reflections Upon Marriage* by Mary Astell (1730), Catherine Macauley's *Letters on Education* (1790), Erasmus Darwin's *Plan for the Conduct of Female Education* (1797), and Hannah More's *Lady's Pocket Library* (1797). *The Polite Lady* (1763, Figure 32) is a series of letters whose third letter, "Reading," focuses on reading aloud and includes a detailed description of what manner of reading voice a young girl should adopt, including descriptions of what is not a good voice.

Douglas's idea that titles were named for central characters pins that character as the subject of the book, but Genette thinks titles may also indicate the text as an object. Genette speaks of the text as a formal or generic object, with a title

¹³² Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 192. Butler discusses the Edgeworth family habit of reading aloud together every afternoon.

that reflects the form (“Poems” or “A Tale” for example).¹³³ But in the case of Edgeworth’s titles that are girls’ names, both is true. That simple one-word title indicates the main character as the primary subject matter of the text but also as the object, namely an object of desire. These titles are not thematic; they do not explain the contents of the book. *Leonora* in no way indicates that this is a novel of espionage, intrigue, and manipulation, both personal and political. But it does centre the experience of its main character even though the reader has yet to know what that experience is. *Helen*, *Rosamond*, *Emilie de Coulanges*, *Angelina*, and *Belinda*, all do the same: they centre the girlhood of the young women protagonists, regardless of the plot of the novel. In this way, the title indicates the object of desire being desired by the reader for what it suggests: a story of a young woman, so common in novels of the time. If Genette is correct in thinking the title describes the story then a title like *Helen* suggests a girl’s story as bildungsroman, where an inevitable growing up occurs in a way that promises the reader a good story.

“The Good [French] Governess”

“The Good French Governess” in *Moral Tales for Young People*.

By Maria Edgeworth. London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1802. 3 vols. Shelfmark: OLS POL 6004

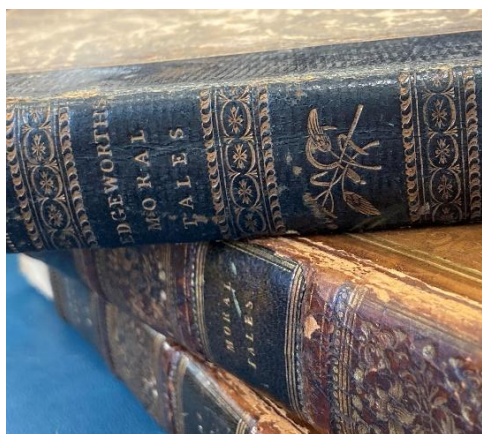


Figure 33: Spines of two editions of *Moral Tales* in the Pollard Collection.

Edgeworth’s story “The Good French Governess” was first printed in 1802 as one of the *Moral Tales*. There are more than thirty books of Edgeworth’s *Moral Tales* in the Pollard Collection, starting with an 1802 first edition through to 1896. “The Good French Governess” is the story of how one woman remedied the bad behaviour and unfavourable character of four children from a wealthy

British family. The woman is Madame de Rosier, a French woman whose husband and son were executed during the French Revolution in 1789. Madame flees to sympathetic England, but found

¹³³ Genette, *Paratexts*, 78.

she was incapable of encroaching upon the kindness of her friends. Misfortune had not extinguished the energy of her mind, and she still possessed the power of maintaining herself honourably by her own exertions. Her character and her abilities being well known, she easily procured recommendations as a preceptress. Many ladies anxiously desired to engage such a governess for their children, but Mrs. Harcourt had the good fortune to obtain the preference.¹³⁴

In contrast, Edgeworth describes the mother, Mrs. Harcourt, this way:

Mrs. Harcourt was a widow who had been a very fine woman, and continued to be a very fine lady; she had good abilities, but as she lived in a constant round of dissipation, she had not the time to cultivate her understanding, or to attend to the educations of her family; and she had satisfied her conscience by procuring for her daughters a fashionable governess and expensive masters." In other words, her lack of concern and character were barely concealed by hiring expensive but ineffective tutors.¹³⁵

It is a common practice of Edgeworth's to present two opposing characters in a story: to make obvious both the esteemed qualities of one and the deficient character in another. In "The Good French Governess," Edgeworth employs the tactic U. C. Knoepfelmacher discusses in his epilogue of *Ventures into Childland*, that "women writers oppose male constructions they target as irresponsible" by "press(ing) into service a maternal authority they impart to mature older sisters, maiden aunts, and other female tutors."¹³⁶ By starting the tale with such a favourable description of the governess Madame de Rosier, before she introduces the mother Mrs Harcourt, Edgeworth sets the French governess above the mother as the exemplary rational role model. Madame de Rosier's strength of character and exemplary self-control work not only to set her as a model for her young female charges, but also to set an example for Mrs Harcourt, who can witness firsthand how

¹³⁴ Maria Edgeworth, *Moral Tales for Young People* (London: J. Johnson, 1802), 2.

¹³⁵ Edgeworth, *Moral Tales*, 2.

¹³⁶ U. C. Knoepfelmacher, *Ventures into Childland: Victorians, Fairy Tales, and Femininity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 428. Knoepfelmacher is speaking of the marginalisation of women writers by their male counterparts in the Victorian era but further acknowledges the tradition of rational women writers like Edgeworth and her contemporaries who "influenced the shape of children's literature for an entire century" and whose stories are replete with aunts, governesses, and female role models.

Madame's steadiness and fairness works on her son. This modelling allows Mrs Harcourt to adjust her approach to her children and rediscover joy in their company. Madame effectively models both good tutoring and proper maternal qualities, which bring about a desired change in the four Harcourt children's behaviour.

Edgeworth lived and wrote in the Age of Revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century, a time of enormous social change. She was raised on the Enlightenment philosophies of her father and his friends in the Lunar Society, which included the cultivation of reason, a desire for progress, and the advancement of society through education.¹³⁷ Like many in Britain at that time, Edgeworth and her father were inspired by the French Revolution's core ideals of social equality and popular sovereignty, believing that a new era of political change had begun. With these beliefs, the Edgeworths advocated for Irish autonomy in the form of Irish landowners being allowed to govern their own country (and the Irish people) without bowing to English Parliament. They approved of challenging traditional notions of authority and political power and of the ripple effect it caused in Britain, for it aligned with the Enlightenment ideals the Lunar Society espoused. They also visited France on many occasions, resulting in an appreciation for French culture and progressivism, a French continental sensibility that is laced throughout Edgeworth's works. This sensibility is set with Edgeworth's first attempt at authorship: a translation of Madame deGenlis's *Adèle et Théodore, ou Lettres sur l'éducation* (1782) by Stéphanie-Félicité Ducrest de Saint-Auban, Comtesse de Genlis (known as Madame de Genlis). Edgeworth was set this task in 1782 by her father when she was age fourteen away at boarding school, but she abandoned the project when another translation was published. It is worth noting that Genlis was a lauded educationist who became governess to the Duke de Chartres' children during Edgeworth's time. Genlis fled to England with some of her charges in 1793

¹³⁷ Brian Simon, "Forerunners of Educational Reform," in *Studies in the History of Education, 1780-1870*, ed. Brian Simon (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960). The Lunar Society met monthly in Birmingham, England from 1765-1813 to discuss technology, science, education, and other social issues associated with the coming of industrialisation. Largely made up of Dissenters, the group included Josiah Wedgewood, Matthew Boulton, James Watt, Joseph Priestley, Erasmus Darwin, Thomas Day, and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, among others. Like Joseph Johnson's literary circle, the "Lunatics" were "striving towards a rational, secular, human morality, which would inspire men and women to usher in a more truly human era in the history of man" (44).

after her husband and the Duke were executed, much like Madame de Rosier in “The Good French Governess.”

This attitude toward France was common at the end of the eighteenth century; however, things began to turn in the first half of the nineteenth century. Britain declared war on France in 1803 and remained at war for over a decade while Napoleon attempted to destroy British trade and take control of European interests. There was a brief reprieve in England’s fear of a French invasion in the 1820s as domestic concerns trumped foreign ones. Protests were organised over high taxation, unemployment, and trade restrictions due to the Napoleonic Wars, and there was a demand to let France be free in order to end the rampant poverty and emigration of the lower classes. Later in the 1850s Napoleon III ignited the vast overseas expansion of France’s empire. By the 1860s, British public opinion was critical of Napoleon III’s oppressive authoritarianism and wary of France’s success at empire building. In the 1870s Britain found itself not only battling France, but being among the seven nations fighting for control of the African colonies in the Scramble for Africa, which also included Belgium, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Germany. By this time, British popular opinion had cooled considerably toward France as France was at the height of imperial power, posing a threat to British colonial trade and expansion. Concurrently, Paris ushered in La Belle Epoque, a philosophy of life where licentious behaviour was attributed to the artistic life, and where a French affinity for the cabaret and the burlesque cemented Victorian Britain’s scorn of France in the 1870s.¹³⁸ This attitude was a complete shift from Britain’s admiration of France seventy years prior, when Edgeworth first published *Moral Tales* in 1802.

A correlation can be drawn between these events and the thirty-plus editions of *Moral Tales* in the Pollard Collection. Most of these books include “The Good French Governess,” but in the 1870s, editions begin to appear without the word “French” in the story’s title. Genette says the title of a book is “an instigator” that

¹³⁸ To construct my brief synopsis, I consulted the British Library website, Britannica online, and The British National Trust website, particularly Daniel Norman’s article at nationaltrust.org.uk titled “How did the French Revolution affect England?” and Ruth Mather’s article “The Impact of the Napoleonic Wars in Britain” on the British Library website, bl.uk. Also, Michelle Tusan’s article in *Victorian Studies*, “War and the Victorians: Response” (2016), was consulted.

often prompts meaning by functioning as a goal the text must achieve.¹³⁹ That title might require an author to have to “deal with” his publisher and the public and oftentimes, “hesitations about the title may persist after the work is first published during the author’s lifetime and with his consent.”¹⁴⁰ These editions of “The Good French Governess” after 1870 are embodiments of that hesitation. Genette asserts that “the main agent of the titular drift is probably neither the author nor even the publisher but in fact the public, and more precisely the posthumous public” whose labour “tends toward a reduction – actually, an erosion – of the title.”¹⁴¹ But Genette insists the “social function of the title give(s) the publisher stronger rights and obligations to the title than to the ‘body’ of the text.”¹⁴² This “special relationship between the title and the publisher” drives the publisher to hold titles of books in their catalogues that are palatable, and therefore marketable, to their reading public.¹⁴³ The Pollard Collection editions reflect popular opinion of the time and the publishers’ response to that opinion. Early editions include the word “French” as long as being French remained admirable. After 1870, when the British public was wary of France not only as a military or cultural adversary, but an economic one advancing its own empire in direct competition with Britain, printers omit the word to make the work more marketable, more desirable, and less likely to offend. This “public” that publishers respond to is “an entity more far-flung than the sum of its readers,” for it can include people who do not necessarily read the book, including the publishing team, the press, agents, booksellers, critics, and “the unpaid or unwitting peddlers of reputation that we all are at one time or another.”¹⁴⁴ In other words, everyone who may contribute to the discourse surrounding the book, including, specific to this example, parents and any adults invested in what girls were reading. Most of these people function as intermediaries to get others to read what they would not necessarily read themselves, namely girls’ stories. This public also includes those who buy but do not read the book, those who read it in part, as well as the readers who do read it, as the author likely intended, in its entirety.

¹³⁹ Genette, *Paratexts*, 67.

¹⁴⁰ Genette, *Paratexts*, 68.

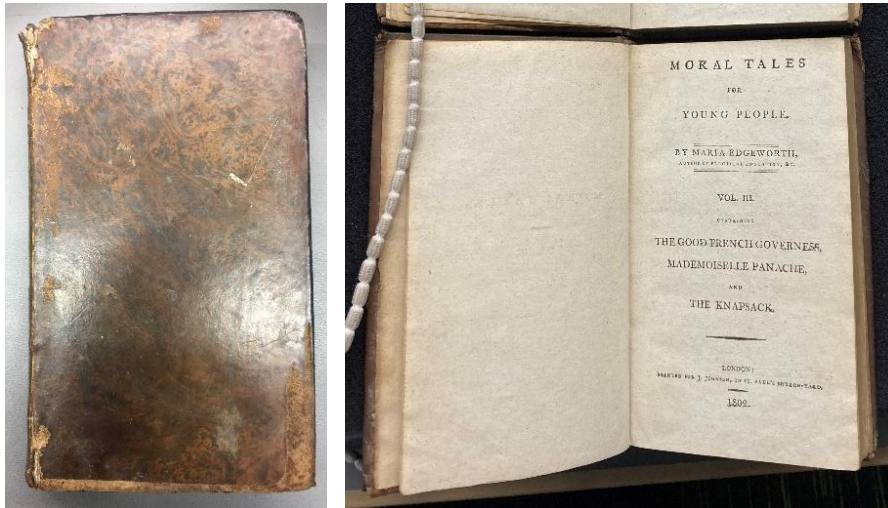
¹⁴¹ Genette, *Paratexts*, 70.

¹⁴² Genette, *Paratexts*, 74.

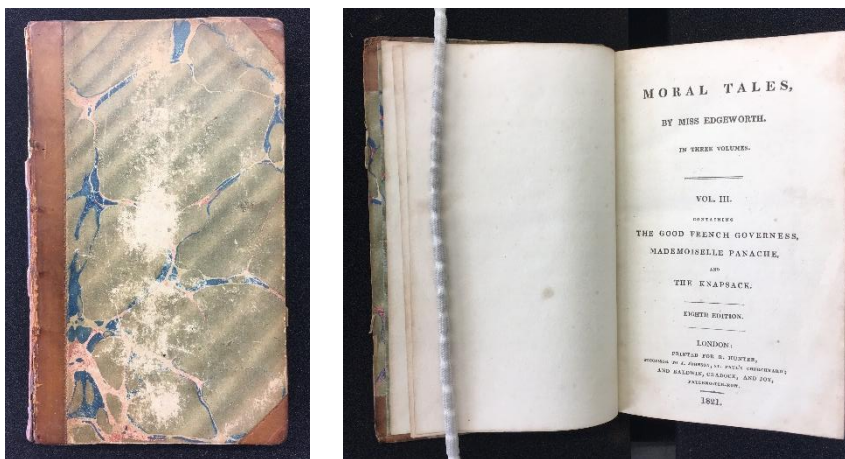
¹⁴³ Genette, *Paratexts*, 74.

¹⁴⁴ Genette, *Paratexts*, 75.

Genette summarises this to say, if the addressee of the text is the reader, the addressee of the title is the public.¹⁴⁵ What follows (Figure 34) is a sample of editions of *Moral Tales* that include “The [Good] French Governess” story, for not all editions in the Pollard Collection include the story, a fact to be discussed later when lists of contents are considered more closely.

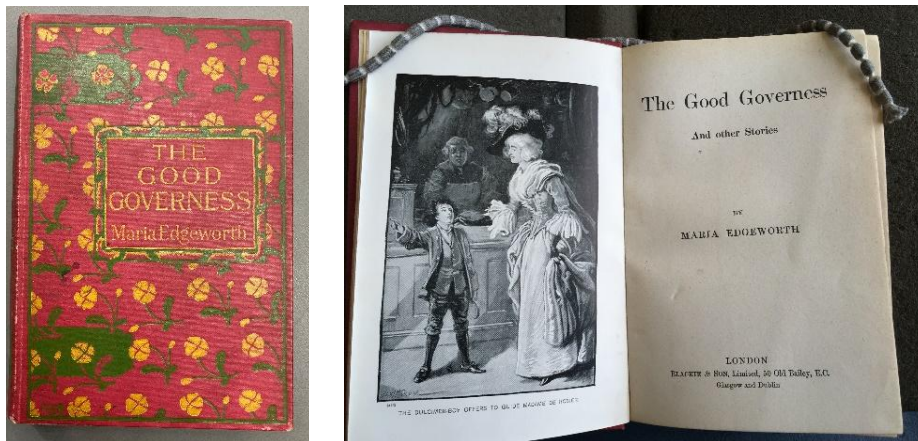


OLS POL 6004. London: J. Johnson. 1802 1st ed.

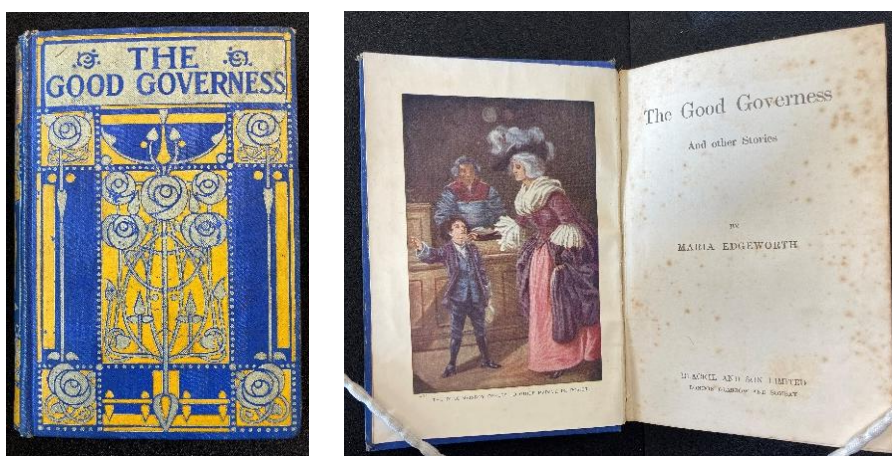


OLS POL 6006. London: R. Hunter et.al. 1821 8th ed.

¹⁴⁵ Genette, *Paratexts*, 75.



OLS POL 6053 no.1. London: Blackie & Sons. [1879-90].



OLS POL 6057. London: Blackie & Sons. [c.1896].

Figure 34: Covers and contents of Edgeworth's Moral Tales that include or feature "The Good [French]Governess."

McKenzie states that "if the demands of scholarship in literature and history require a knowledge of bibliography, then bibliography needs to consider the book as it was introduced and received by the culture in which it was presented."¹⁴⁶ The shifting cultural climate in Britain meant that "The Good [French] Governess" needed similarly to change its presentation, perhaps even its image, in order to continue selling copies. By the 1880s, it was no longer considered ideal to have a French woman of learning as your daughter's tutor. Already for girls, reading fiction was "something only to be indulged in moderation; romantic novels, in particular, carry with them a propensity to corrupt," but "French publications are the worst of all," especially if endorsed by French tutors.¹⁴⁷ Madame de Rosier, a woman of "good

¹⁴⁶ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 4.

¹⁴⁷ Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914*, 260.

family, excellent understanding, most amiable character" is no longer fit to educate British children simply because she is French. The removal of "French" from editions of "The Good French Governess" a century after it was written is a strong example of McKenzie's assertion that book history is a record of cultural change, and this change also shifted the construction of girlhood. These editions show that not only is sympathy with France a negative attribute in being British but, more so and because these are stories for girls in children's books, this cultural change shows it is antithetical to being the right sort of British girl, who must be rightly guided towards becoming the ideal British woman.

Book history illuminates how a change in the title can suggest an underlying cultural shift, which is, at its heart, a shift in girlhood and fluctuating attitudes towards girlhood. Girlhood is not only constructed through girl characters but through the women who guide and teach them. By placing the paragon of rational behaviour, the governess, at the centre, a reader easily follows the appropriate steps to achieve desired outcomes in girls' learning and moral behaviour. A desirable girlhood is reflective of the women who shape it, as Knoepfmacher discusses.¹⁴⁸ There was widespread belief about French prominence in a good education for a late eighteenth-century girl. Arden Hegele discusses how learning to speak French served as a potential means of social mobility for the fashionably educated daughters who aspired to advantageous marriages.¹⁴⁹ A French education made a more diverse literature available to women by enabling access to texts written in French, a "refined, purified and polished" tongue.¹⁵⁰ An Englishwoman's ability to speak French served a feminising social function in her adult life, as the language permitted her to display the intrinsically feminine sociability, politeness, and fashion of French culture. French came to be a defining characteristic of a well-bred woman, and Edgeworth wrote a French governess as a desirable means to achieving this ideal. Almost a century later, that ideal, well-bred British woman was someone who was *not* educated by a French governess.

¹⁴⁸ Knoepfmacher, *Ventures Into Childland*. Discussed at length in his epilogue to the book.

¹⁴⁹ Arden Hegele, "'So She Has Been Educated by a Vulgar, Silly, Conceited French Governess!' Social Anxieties, Satirical Portraits, and the Eighteenth-Century French Instructor," *Gender and Education* 23, no. 3 (2011): 334.

¹⁵⁰ Hegele, "'So She Has Been Educated by a Vulgar, Silly, Conceited French Governess,'" 333.

However, there are certain qualities of a well-bred woman to which every girl was taught to aspire and that seem to transcend time. Moruzi, in her analysis of girls' periodicals in the late Victorian Era, discusses how "the importance of purity and virtue to the editors and contributors of the magazines, and to the girls themselves, provides a degree of stability to the changing nature of girlhood during this period."¹⁵¹ Why purity and virtue are so closely linked to girlhood is important here, for their meaning colours every definition of girlhood represented during the span of Edgeworth's books in the Pollard Collection: Enlightenment, Evangelical, Victorian, Edwardian. Yet these historical delineations are merely different shades of the colour of a virtuous and pure girlhood that we paint with a modern brush. It is easy to look back on these times and imagine what girls with these qualities looked like or how they lived. But like girlhood itself, this looking back is not admittedly authentic, merely a projection. Like the concept of girlhood itself, virtue and purity are nuanced and subject to change. Even so, there is a sometimes subtle, sometimes pervasive insistence on young women being virtuous and pure throughout the long nineteenth century, an insistence that still leaves traces today. The Oxford Dictionary online defines purity as "freedom from contamination or from immorality, particularly sexual" and uses synonyms: "goodness, morality, piety, honesty, integrity, decency, physical chastity, virginity." Virtue is defined as "goodness, righteousness, morality, ethicalness" and gives an archaic definition reminiscent of the 1800s: "chastity, honour, modesty, self-restraint, self-regulation, virginity of a woman." These close-cousin adjectives pair nicely to set high expectations for girls' behaviour. Moruzi looks at periodicals, but her point works with books, and so it will be discussed below in regard to series. The degree of stability she speaks of is that continuous expectation of purity and virtue, regardless of one's training. After all, the good French governess remains good far longer than she remains French, as she assimilates into and accepts her new country. French governess or no French governess, this ideology was implicit throughout the nineteenth century, starting with Edgeworth and continuing, as Moruzi says: "these qualities may well infect our understanding of girlhood today."¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Moruzi, *Constructing Girlhood Through the Periodical Press*, 15.

¹⁵² Moruzi, *Constructing Girlhood Through the Periodical Press*, 15.

Edgeworth enters this discourse by writing both “The Good French Governess” and “Mademoiselle Panache.” Both are included in her original *Moral Tales*. In a habit of writing points and counterpoints with two opposing characters, Edgeworth leaves no doubt about which character a young reader should emulate. Mademoiselle Panache is everything Madame de Rosier is not. She is lewd, underqualified, and only concerned with accomplishments. As such, Edgeworth explores the dangers of entrusting a daughter’s education to such a woman in “Mademoiselle Panache.” Both are French, yet one is unfit. Panache is fashionable and flighty and teaches her charges to be the same, something Edgeworth consistently wrote against in all her tales for girls. These editions of *Moral Tales* each spotlight a different approach to Edgeworth’s original stories and work to either reinforce or reinvent her intended girl reader by including or removing words from titles, and by including or removing stories from the tables of contents. Examining the titles of these editions puts this particular paratext to work tracking changes in expectations of implied girl readers and following shifting assumptions about what suitably virtuous qualities girl readers might internalise when reading these books.

Intertitles: Tables of Contents

Genette uses the term “intertitle” to mean a title of a section of a book, internal to the book. Intertitles differ from general titles because they do not address the public, and they make sense only to those readers and browsers “already involved in reading the text.”¹⁵³ Genette goes on to describe how titles of sections of books, which make up tables of contents, are put together, managed, and presented by an author, who by doing so not only marks herself the writer, but also the editor, or presenter of the text.¹⁵⁴ Genette would have us believe that the best intertitle is “perhaps the one that goes unnoticed,” but he concedes that titling shows an author taking a “demonstrative – indeed, insistent – stance” toward her work.¹⁵⁵ The *Good French Governess* examples above show how the editor’s role can be stripped from the author when general titles are changed. The same happens with intertitles, in tables of contents, as seen in the next example, a later edition of *The Good Governess*.

¹⁵³ Genette, *Paratexts*, 294.

¹⁵⁴ Genette, *Paratexts*, 302.

¹⁵⁵ Genette, *Paratexts*, 315, 316.

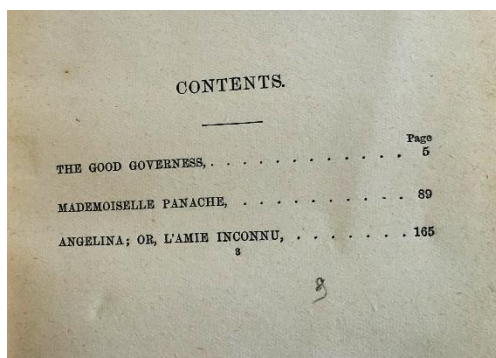
More “Good [French] Governess”

The Good Governess and Other Stories.

By Maria Edgeworth. London: Blackie & Sons [1879-90].

Shelfmark: OLS POL 6053 no. 1 (Figure 35)

The table of contents in Blackie’s late Victorian editions of *The Good Governess and Other Stories*, of which there are three in the Pollard Collection, lists only three of the original seven *Moral Tales*: “The Good Governess,” “Mademoiselle Panache,” and “Angelina, or l’amie inconnu.” Tom Mole, Director of the Edinburgh Centre for the History of the Book, states that what is missing from the shelves is as significant as what is on the shelves in terms of constructing identity.¹⁵⁶ The same is true in tables of contents, which function as a veritable shelf list of the book. Genette tells us that tables of contents at the front of books serve as reminders of what the title promises, but also, they are a positioning, and they create an effect. He warns that tables of contents are not always faithful, as is the case in this book.¹⁵⁷ The inclusion of the “Angelina” story in this book intends to show the reader what kind of girl results from an education received by the likes of Mademoiselle Panache. Angelina is frivolous, emotional, influenced by fashion, obsessed with the wrong sort of novels,



	Page
THE GOOD GOVERNESS, ...	6
MADEMOISELLE PANACHE, ...	89
ANGELINA; OR, L'AMIE INCONNU, ...	165

Figure 35: OLS POL 6053 no. 1. *The Good Governess and Other Stories*. London: Blackie’s {1879-90}. Cover and title page in Figure 34.

and is encouraged in all this by her older female friend and correspondent, a Panache-esque character with whom she runs away. The combination of these three stories designates this book’s intended reader as exclusively female, something the original *Moral Tales* did not clearly designate. The three stories show in order the benefits of a proper education, a governess’s bad

influence, and a fictional account of what happens when a young, orphaned girl without a mother’s guidance, or an aunt’s good will, or a governess’s careful instruction, devotes herself to a Panache-like figure.

¹⁵⁶ Tom Mole, *The Secret Life of Books: Why They Mean More Than Words* (London: Elliott and Thompson Limited, 2019), 56.

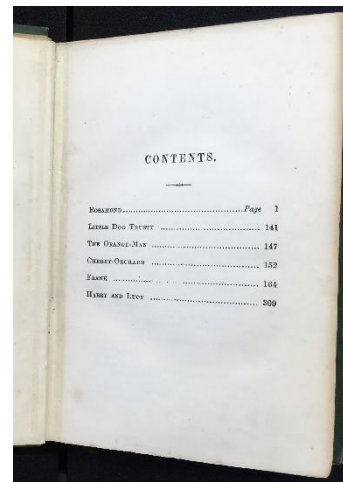
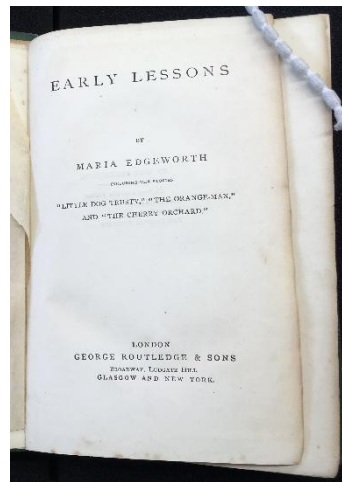
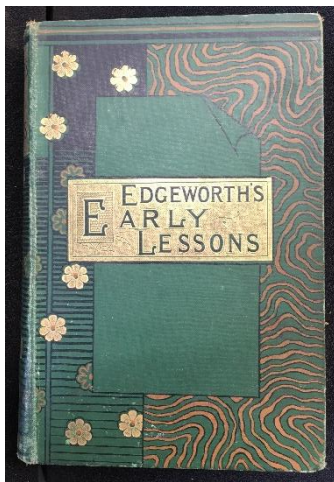
¹⁵⁷ Genette, *Paratexts*, 317.

Blackie has merely emphasised in this edition what the original *Moral Tales* implies: of the seven stories, three involve male protagonists, although one of them is titled “The Good Aunt,” where the orphaned hero relies on his aunt’s excellent influence to reach his potential. “The Prussian Vase” details the story of a young, pretty, and talented female artist enslaved by the King of Prussia. “The Knapsack” opens with a kind and industrious young woman seated at her spinning wheel. Only “Forester” is titled with the name of its boy hero. Blackie’s later editions create yet another book of Edgeworthian girlhood, much like the rebound *Griselda* and *Letters* above. They extract the most relevant stories from the collection designed to sell well to a young British female readership. The result is these unique late-Victorian abridged Blackie editions of *Moral Tales*. Reading the intertitles allows the table of contents to work as a paratext to frame the text, or in this case reframe it for a specifically female readership. From a book history perspective, the value in tables of contents and intertitles lies in providing a better understanding of the presentation of the book, hinting at what a reader can expect from the text, and indicating when a title may be “unfaithful,” as Genette deems it, particularly as the framing and expectations shift with different editions.

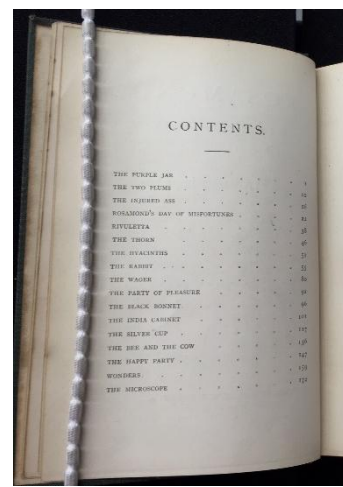
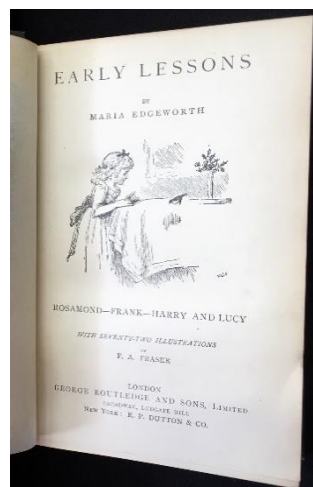
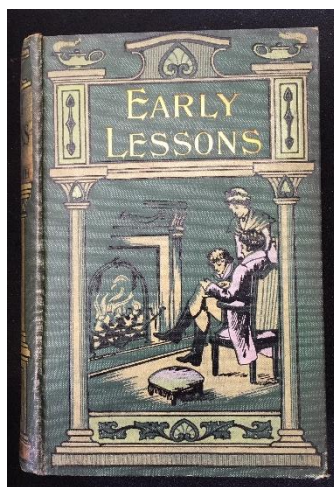
Rosamond in *Early Lessons*

Textual scholar Jerome McGann discusses the number of works whose authors “demonstrated a number of different wishes and intentions about what text they wanted to be presented to the public, and that these differences reflect accommodations to changed circumstances, and sometimes to changed publics.”¹⁵⁸ This is true of printers as well, not just authors, and is easily demonstrated when examining the Rosamond stories in the many editions of *Early Lessons* in the Pollard Collection. Here are three Routledge editions of Edgeworth’s *Early Lessons* (Figure 36):

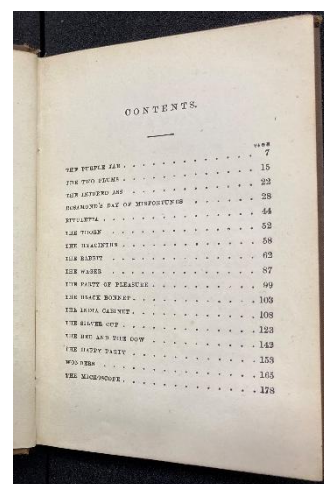
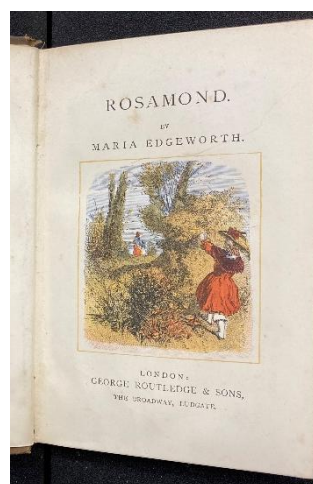
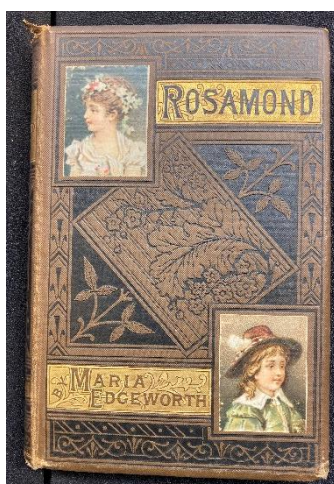
¹⁵⁸ Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 32.



OLS POL 6037. Rosamond listed before Frank, [n.d.].



OLS POL 6020. Rosamond, Frank, Harry & Lucy included on title page, but only Rosamond in the contents, 1855.



OLS POL 6049. A whole book of Rosamond, [1879].

Figure 36: Three Routledge editions of *Early Lessons*, a collection of stories that feature the boy Frank, the girl Rosamond, and brother and sister Harry and Lucy.

The Pollard Collection has a copy of almost every edition of *Early Lessons*. For sixteen editions spanning thirty-five years, no contents are listed, and "Frank" always comes

before "Rosamond." Contents begin to be listed in the 1850s, coinciding with the advent of railway bookstalls and cheap print, when George Routledge's printing and bookselling business began to flourish. Routledge begins producing *Early Lessons* in one volume, more affordable and more convenient for railway reading rather than the four volumes of earlier editions.



Figure 37: OLS POL 6039. *Rosamond* by Maria Edgeworth. London: Simpkin & Marshall, and other proprietors. 1856.

With these single-volume editions come tables of contents. Tables of contents are what Marie Maclean describes as a frame to the text.¹⁵⁹ These editions show that the frame changes when the table of contents changes. Maclean says the frame leads the eye into the picture; changing the order of contents shifts the picture and changes the relationship between text and context.¹⁶⁰ I have shown how omitting stories can shift the focus of the book: tables of contents can also create a hierarchy of stories, often putting the most popular or the most likely to engage readers first in the list, which acts as another way to shift the focus of a book. By the mid-nineteenth

century, *Rosamond* was undoubtedly Edgeworth's most loved, most endearing character.¹⁶¹ Subsequent editions' tables of contents reflect this shift in popularity, and *Rosamond*'s many vignettes and stories, each with a title of its own, begin to appear before Frank's one continuous narrative. Eventually, whole books were dedicated to only her stories; no Frank, Harry, or Lucy were included in the book. The Pollard Collection is dotted with "new" editions, books simply titled "*Rosamond*" that include a selection of stories from the original, the *Continuation*, and the *Sequel*. The earliest of these is dated 1856 by Simpkin & Marshall (Figure 37). The result shows not only how Edgeworth's *Rosamond* remained both relevant and marketable through decades, aimed at new generations of readers, but how

¹⁵⁹ Marie Maclean, "Pretexts and Paratexts: The Art of the Peripheral," *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 (1991): 273-74.

¹⁶⁰ Maclean, "Pretexts and Paratexts: The Art of the Peripheral," 273.

¹⁶¹ Mitzi Myers, "Socializing *Rosamond*: Eduactional Ideology and Fictional Form," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1989): 52-53. See Myers and Butler for extensive commentary on *Rosamond*.

Rosamond keeps girlhood centred in the Pollard Collection, evidenced in the many editions held there.

Prefaces: Rosamond

Rosamond A Sequel to Early Lessons.

By Maria Edgeworth. London: R. Hunter, 1821 1st ed.

Shelfmark: OLS POL 5790 (Figure 39)

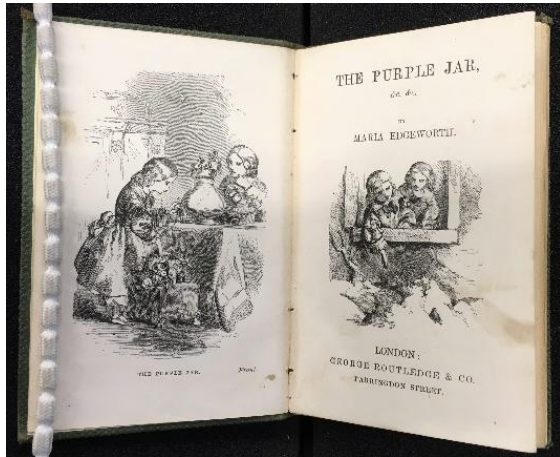


Figure 38: OLS POL 5997. *The Purple Jar and Other Tales* by Maria Edgeworth. London: George Routledge, 1860.

The first Rosamond story, “The Purple Jar,” appears in Edgeworth’s first collection of stories for children, *The Parent’s Assistant* (1796). The opening line reads: “Rosamond, a little girl about seven years old, was walking with her mother in the streets of London.”¹⁶² Four years later, Edgeworth would pull “The Purple Jar” from the third edition of *The Parent’s Assistant* (1800) and move it to her new collection of stories for younger readers, *Early Lessons* (1809). What followed was the subsequent printing of seventeen Rosamond stories: eight in *Early Lessons* and nine more in *The Continuation of Early Lessons* (1814), comprising the eventual four volumes of *Early Lessons* in total. There are twenty-eight editions in the Pollard Collection that include Rosamond stories, and there are far more if the twenty-four editions of the *Parent’s Assistant* that include “The Purple Jar” or “The Birthday Present” are counted. In all these editions, Rosamond starts her adventures as a seven-year-old girl. “The Purple Jar” holds the distinction of being the first story both chronologically and textually. Twelve years later, when *Early Lessons* was at least in its seventh edition (1821), Edgeworth produced the “Sequels” to *Early Lessons*: stories of Frank and Rosamond as adolescents.¹⁶³ There are five intact editions of *Rosamond, a Sequel to Early Lessons* in the Pollard Collection: a first

¹⁶² Maria Edgeworth, *The Parent’s Assistant; or Stories for Children, Part II, Vol. 1* (London: J. Johnson, 1796), [n.p.].

¹⁶³ I say ‘at least’ because it is hard to determine exactly when each edition was printed. The Pollard Collection does not have a copy of every edition, but it does have examples spanning seventy years, from the first to the sixteenth edition of *Early Lessons* (1809-1879) and a much later edition from 1931.

edition (1821), second edition (1822), a third edition in 1830, a fourth edition in 1842 and a fifth edition (1850).

Genette uses the term “preface” to “designate every type of introductory (preludial or postludial) text, authorial or allographic, consisting of a discourse produced on the subject of the text that follows or precedes it.”¹⁶⁴ He gives a lively recounting of a Walter Scott postscript, which says: “a postscript. ... Which should have been a preface ... but people rarely read prefaces and often begin a book at the end. As a result, for those readers, this postscript will serve as a preface.”¹⁶⁵ Scott is having fun with this postscript to *Waverly* (1814) where he also expresses his wishes to emulate Edgeworth’s Irish writing:

It has been my object to describe these persons, not by a caricatured and exaggerated use of the national dialect, but by their habits, manners, and feelings, so as in some distant degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth.¹⁶⁶

Genette uses Scott’s “preface” to discuss didactic texts as almost always having a preface or a postscript, to explain or make more earnest the author’s intentions.¹⁶⁷ This intention to make clear the text’s motivations means the preface is also a text, one that can be read much like the text it introduces. Readers will glean meaning from the preface just as they will from the text. Edgeworth is no exception, and the prefaces to her texts should thus be treated as texts themselves. Unique to Edgeworth’s texts is the fact that the preface was rarely authorial and usually allographic (written by her father), stripping Edgeworth of the authority to frame her own texts in the manner she chose. This writing practice mimics Edgeworth’s lived experience, where she deferred to him in all aspects of her writing profession. After visiting with the Edgeworths, poet Joanna Baillie described in a letter to Sir Walter Scott how Edgeworth was not allowed to finish her own stories and was kept in the background by her father.¹⁶⁸ His arrogance was such that there would be no confusion about the hierarchies of the texts: his words should absolutely be read

¹⁶⁴ Genette, *Paratexts*, 161.

¹⁶⁵ Genette, *Paratexts*, 172. See Scott’s last chapter of *Waverly*, Ch. 72.

¹⁶⁶ Walter Scott, *Waverly* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1814), Ch. 72.

¹⁶⁷ Genette, *Paratexts*. Genette discusses didactic texts and their prefaces throughout chapter 8, starting on page 161.

¹⁶⁸ Lawless, *Maria Edgeworth*, 124.

before any of his daughter's words. Early Edgeworth biographers paint her father as an autocrat, one who, according to Emily Lawless, "put himself upon a pedestal, and surrounded himself with servants, children and unmarried sisters of his wives."¹⁶⁹ Lawless claims Edgeworth's didacticism and utilitarianism are all at her father's insistence, emphasised in his prefaces "in which the obvious is explained and the evident made clear, with all his usual elaborate and pitiless exactitude."¹⁷⁰ Richard Lovell Edgeworth wishes to make it plain that he is the expert. All his many prefaces are directed at other experts: parents. He bombastically begins his first preface of *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) with a quote from Aristotle that ends, "The fate of empires depends on the education of youth," setting the tone for discourse amongst adults, after which he offers four pages describing his educational philosophy before discussing the text, all without mentioning his daughter.¹⁷¹ When he does turn to the text, his first order of business is to mark distinction between the classes. He starts "the following tales are divided into two parts, as they have been designed for different classes of children."¹⁷² He continues:

It is necessary that the education of different ranks should, in some respects, be different. They have few ideas, few habits in common. Their peculiar vices and virtues do not arise from the same causes, and their ambition is to be directed to different objects.¹⁷³

He does it again in *Popular Tales* (1804), where he wishes to avoid an association with popular literature, yet he hopes this collection will appeal to the new (lower) class of readers in the expanding reading public:

The title "Popular Tales" has been chosen not as a presumptuous and premature claim to popularity, but from a wish that they may be current beyond circles which are sometimes exclusively considered polite.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Lawless, *Maria Edgeworth*, 38.

¹⁷⁰ Lawless, *Maria Edgeworth*, 129. Lawless is referring to *Moral Tales* here, but the description is apt for all his prefacing of his daughter's works.

¹⁷¹ Maria Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant, or Stories for Children. The third edition* (London: J. Johnson, 1800), i.

¹⁷² Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant*, vii.

¹⁷³ Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant*, vii.

¹⁷⁴ Edgeworth, *Popular Tales*, iii.

In fact, within eleven pages of preface in *The Parent's Assistant*, Richard Edgeworth only alludes to Edgeworth once, by stating "(the notes of observation) have been a great advantage to the writer of the following Stories, and will probably, at some future time, be laid before the public." Not only does he hint at controlling when other stories might be published, this is all he hints at Edgeworth's authorship. The first edition of the *Parent's Assistant* has "By E. M." as the author statement on the title page. The second edition omits her name and anonymises her completely: Not until the definitive third edition in 1800 does her name appear on the book. In writing eleven pages of preface in her first collection of stories, where he barely refers to her at all, he sets himself up as the expert. Eventually, he begrudgingly recognises her efforts, albeit in reference to "his" treatise on education, *Practical Education* (1801, largely written by Edgeworth) as seen in his preface to *Moral Tales* (1802):

These tales have been written to illustrate the opinions delivered in "Practical Education." As their truth has appeared to me to be confirmed by increasing experience, I sat down with pleasure to write this preface for my daughter.¹⁷⁵

Interspersed with his sidestepping around the author are quotations from male philosophers, educationists, and literary figures: Hippocrates, Locke, Rousseau, Johnson, and Burke. It takes pages before a reader gets to read what he thinks the point of each story is, and he spells it out to leave no doubt. He uses a didactic approach to introduce didactic texts. These prefaces would bore a girl reader silly, even more so today. Here are snippets from *Moral Tales*:

The *Prussian Vase* is a lesson on imprudence. ... *Forester* is a young man who might, by improper management, become a fanatic and a criminal. ... With the romantic eccentricities of *Angelina* are contrasted faults of a more common and despicable sort. ... *The Good Governess* is a lesson to teach the art of giving lessons.¹⁷⁶

However, by the time *Rosamond, A Sequel* was published, Richard Lovell Edgeworth had died. There is no evidence that he wrote the preface to the sequel

¹⁷⁵ Edgeworth, *Moral Tales*, x.

¹⁷⁶ Edgeworth, *Moral Tales*, viii-x.

before his death, and Edgeworth has initialled and dated the first edition's preface "M.E. January 1821." Edgeworth's preface, like her stories, is cross written and infers a double readership. Unlike her father's prefaces, it is less clear that the preface is intended for parents, because mixed with a concern for age-appropriate readers is a directive to an implied girl reader on desired behaviour. In essence, it reads adolescent, just as the *Sequel's* stories do, discussed below. Edgeworth is true to her plural audience, even in paratext. Biographer Constance Hill quotes Edgeworth in a letter to a friend who has asked for writing advice:

My general principles about prefaces are— that they should above all things be clear and simple— that the reader should not be perplexed, or have an idea of difficulty or labour at first setting out— therefore no fine writing, no twisted sentences— ¹⁷⁷

This sounds as though it came directly from her father's pen, or mouth, as he preferred plain writing over too much description or flowery language.¹⁷⁸ It describes her father's writing style, one evident in all the prefaces he had previously written. Edgeworth continues to comment in a voice more her own style:

As to modesty, as much as you please— but it must be graceful, not awkward modesty— the reader likes a bow, as low as you can make it— to show submission and respect, but it must not be an unpractised bow— it must show that the maker is a gentleman, who has learned to dance.¹⁷⁹

The preface to *Rosamond, a Sequel* is not modest; Edgeworth goes to great lengths to explain how Rosamond has grown, and who exactly should read the *Sequel*. She makes it plain that because Rosamond herself is older than when she appeared in *Early Lessons*, its readers must be older than the readers of *Early Lessons*:

Rosamond, when we last saw her ... was, we believe, about nine or ten years old. This Sequel to her history comprises about three years, from ten to thirteen. Her biographer mentions this to prevent

¹⁷⁷ Constance Hill, *Maria Edgeworth and Her Circle in the Days of Buonaparte and Bourbon* (London: John Lane, 1910), v. Hill quotes Edgeworth's comments on prefaces in her own preface.

¹⁷⁸ Hawthorne, *Doubt and Dogma in Maria Edgeworth*, 7-8.

¹⁷⁹ Hill, *Maria Edgeworth and her Circle*, v-vi.

mistakes, and to ensure the advice, the entreaty, that this book may not be read at an earlier age.¹⁸⁰

She describes the adolescent Rosamond and then makes clear that readers should be of the same age:

The same principles will here be found as in all the preceding Early Lessons, but applied to those new views of character, new thoughts, feelings, and objects, which present themselves at this time of life. The young readers will see in Rosamond's less childish, but ever fluctuating mind, an image of their own.¹⁸¹

Edgeworth titles her preface "To Parents," but she warns all her readers, including girl readers, about the age-appropriateness of the *Sequel*, in an address to a plural audience. Barbara Wall's idea of the "double audience" describes how Edgeworth assumes both parent and girl will be reading her preface, but the audience of Edgeworth's work is not so binary as "double audience" indicates. Because her own girlhood and her girl characters come from that boggy place, her audience is amorphous and shifting, one that challenges the stable and polarised categories of "child" and "adult." By addressing any and all readers in a blending that constitutes her implied reader, she "oscillates between child and adult narratee."¹⁸² Edgeworth wrote in a time of shared reading and reading aloud, practices which facilitated her writing girls' stories in an "adult narrative voice which exhibited strong consciousness of the presence of adult readers."¹⁸³ But Rosamond, at twelve years old in the *Sequel*, is at the edge of the scope of Wall's research, which caps child readers at twelve. This preface reads differently than those for Edgeworth's earlier collections, written to prepare parents to read the stories along with their children. Rather, Edgeworth is aware that Rosamond and her girl readers were on the cusp of adulthood, yet she could not know if girls would be reading with their parents or privately. Edgeworth was a narrator "who was always addressing someone," but Wall would attempt with difficulty "to decide whether that someone is a child, or an

¹⁸⁰ Maria Edgeworth, *Rosamond, a Sequel to Early Lessons* (London: R. Hunter, 1821), lii.

¹⁸¹ Edgeworth, *Rosamond, a Sequel to Early Lessons*, iv.

¹⁸² Wall, *The Narrator's Voice*, 22.

¹⁸³ Wall, *The Narrator's Voice*, 9.



Figure 39: OLS POL 5790. Rosamond: A Sequel to Early Lessons by Maria Edgeworth. London: R. Hunter, 1821 1st ed.

adult.”¹⁸⁴ That “someone” Edgeworth addresses is “neither one nor the other specifically, or neither one nor the other consistently,” but is the girl: the complex figure who floats back and forth across the boundary between childhood and adulthood.¹⁸⁵

To make her intention to address girls clear, she later says, “the following little volumes are not intended for young children.”¹⁸⁶ Edgeworth acknowledges the adolescence of her readers; they are no longer children, they are not quite adults, but they are “young people.” “People” can be understood here as “girls.” Edgeworth positions girl readers between childhood and adulthood and gives readers a Rosamond who is a bit older but not fully grown. She has been sent away under the tutelage of Mrs. Egerton, a friend of her mother’s, but she is not ready to leave the home. Edgeworth explains that beyond moral and religious principles, she desires to give readers “knowledge and control of their own minds in seeming trifles” and continues: “This knowledge, and this self-command ... is in the power of all to attain, even before they are called into the active scenes of life.”¹⁸⁷ Here is another vague reference to the earlier discussed notions of virtue and purity in the form of Oxford Dictionary’s “careful correctness” and self-discipline. Here also is an expectation of an adolescent: learn to control yourself and your mind now in trivial, or perhaps childish, matters, and you will learn to master yourself in more important adult matters later. This intimates that an Edgeworthian adolescence is prefatory to adulthood, and that the *Sequel*’s stories allude to what comes next. As a tool in the training ground for adulthood, Rosamund’s journey toward maturity offers to girl readers guidance and a sense of expectation for the future.

Edgeworth paints the adolescent Rosamond with warmth and affection. Because Rosamond is Edgeworth’s most autobiographical character, as discussed in

¹⁸⁴ Wall, *The Narrator’s Voice*, 22.

¹⁸⁵ Wall, *The Narrator’s Voice*, 22.

¹⁸⁶ Edgeworth, *Rosamond, a Sequel to Early Lessons*, v, vi. Here is where Edgeworth uses the term “young people.”

¹⁸⁷ Edgeworth, *Rosamond, a Sequel to Early Lessons*, vi.

Section One, it is significant that Edgeworth performs the reconstruction of her girlhood that Hollindale discusses, not just in the stories but in the preface. She creates a character reminiscent of her childhood experience in both text and paratext.¹⁸⁸ She frames the fictional Rosamond by alluding to herself and her readers who act like Rosamond, giving her character her lived experience. Edgeworth, at forty years old, recreates the girl Rosamond in her likeness, based on memories of her girlhood. Here is her description of Rosamond in the preface:

Few may have her infinite variety of faults, follies, and foibles; but some of her youthful errors will probably fall to the share of each, and some passing likeness will be continually caught by the young, or imputed by the old. May all, who are at any time conscious of resembling Rosamond, or reproached with being like her, imitate her constant candour, and follow her example in that ardent, active desire to improve, by which she was characterised in childhood, still more in youth, which made her the darling of her own family, and which will, we hope, influence generous strangers in her favour.¹⁸⁹

This description is particularly Edgeworthian: an adolescent girl who strives to do better, be better, be of use, please her elders. Edgeworth is letting readers know that she understands they are still young but hopes they will grow and “improve.”¹⁹⁰ Hollindale discusses how childhood is “constantly interacting with empowered adulthood” and clarifies that “the chemistry of that interaction determines the success or failure of adult-child relations.”¹⁹¹ This interaction is evident in the clearly defined expectations, but more so, in the border-space of the preface which in turn defines the liminality of adolescence. At least, it shows how the adolescent girl reader of Edgeworth’s texts must negotiate an older girlhood while entering adulthood at the same instant, simply by reading *Rosamond, a Sequel*.

¹⁸⁸ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 71. Here is where Hollindale discusses childhood as a construction based on experience and memory.

¹⁸⁹ Edgeworth, *Rosamond, a Sequel to Early Lessons*, v.

¹⁹⁰ Edgeworth, *Rosamond, a Sequel to Early Lessons*, v.

¹⁹¹ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 76.

Prefacing Prefaces

In later editions of the Rosamond stories, as well as later editions of *Moral Tales* and *Popular Tales* held in the Pollard Collection, original prefaces are either prefaced or replaced with publisher's prefaces. Sometimes these replacements are brief and only a few lines. Others are longer despite being an edited version of the original preface. In many editions, the original preface is included albeit abridged, and the publisher prefaces this with an "advertisement." These advertisements typically laud Edgeworth's staying power as a relevant children's author after many decades, a practice that shows printers felt the need to update the frame of Edgeworth's texts in the latter half of the nineteenth century to repackage old material and attract a

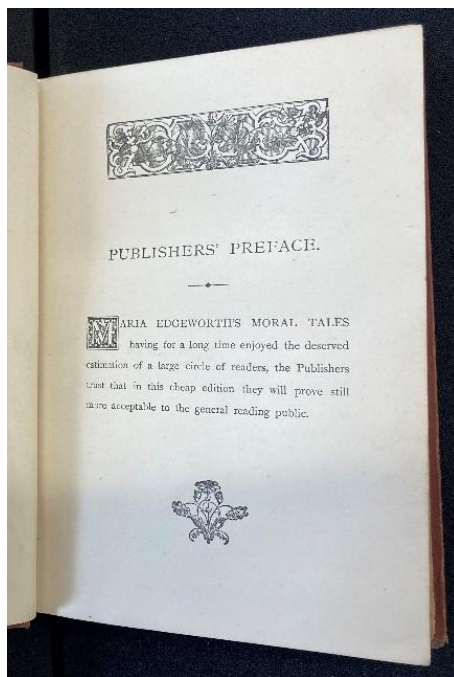


Figure 40: OLS POL 6055 no.1. Maria Edgeworth's Moral Tales... by Maria Edgeworth. London: Frederick Warne, 1875. Preface reads: Maria Edgeworth's Moral Tales having for a long time enjoyed the deserved estimation of a large circle of readers, the Publishers trust that in this cheap edition they will prove still more acceptable to the general reading public.

new buyer. Waller discusses how the latter half of the century "saw an increase in publication of new editions and reissues, many of which are packaged in ways that might be considered both nostalgic and gendered."¹⁹² These altered prefaces speak to the changed reading public. No longer did thoughts on different stories for different classes of children make sense. No longer could Richard Edgeworth's comment that *Popular Tales* "be current beyond circles which are sometimes exclusively considered as polite" be seen as anything but an elitist comment on reading and readers, as it still appeared in print long out of context.¹⁹³ Publishers chose instead to preface Edgeworth's works with platitudes for her excellent children's writing, to gloss over what might appear dated while suggesting the work has stood the test of time. In some cases,

¹⁹² Alison Waller, "'Girls Like It Most': Challenging Gendered Canons and Paracanons in the Case of *The Secret Garden*," in *Canon Constitution and Canon Change in Children's Literature*, eds. A. Muller and B. Kuemmerling-Meibauer (New York: Routledge, 2017), 4.

¹⁹³ Maria Edgeworth, *Popular Tales* (London: George Routledge and Sons, [n.d.]), iii. Trinity has offered a possible range of dates for publication: 1860-1908. OLS POL 5838.

like some Routledge editions, the publisher prefaced the original preface, and both are included. Here is what Routledge has to say in a preface to *Popular Tales*:

Her captivating tales for the juvenile portion of the community have been the means of diffusing a general taste for moral truth, while they succeed in arresting the attention and captivating the fancy of the young.”¹⁹⁴

The Routledge edition of *Rosamond*, discussed earlier (OLS POL 6049), says:

Miss Edgeworth possessed the happy art of making things clear and intelligible to children. Hence her writings have a charm that time cannot efface, and are as valuable now as when they first appeared. The publishers have spared neither labour nor expense, in order to produce an edition of this gifted lady’s works, in as cheap and in as commodious a form as possible.¹⁹⁵

In any case, there can be no doubt that a preface, as Genette says cheekily, has two purposes: to get the book read, and to get the book read properly.¹⁹⁶ For a girl to read a book “properly,” she must not only understand the motives behind the text, but she must also take to heart the intentions of both author and publisher.

Despite appearing before the text in print, prefaces are usually written after the text, giving the writer the advantage of hindsight to make clear any intentions. In the case of prefacing the preface, as Warne does in Figure 40, the aim is to obscure an earlier, out-of-date intention by the Edgeworths. Edgeworth’s preface shows not only her thoughts on *Rosamond* but on adolescence, particularly a female one. Half a century later, Frederick Warne would preface this preface to pre-empt Edgeworth’s original, outmoded thoughts on the text. What transpires in the prefaces of all the Pollard editions is a layered construction of both girlhood and the implied girl reader: first defined by Edgeworth’s father, then finessed by Edgeworth—retold and remade in her own image—and finally overlaid with a publisher’s thoughts decades later. These efforts show girlhood to be a moving target at which writers and publishers are always taking aim, because girlhood is a

¹⁹⁴ Maria Edgeworth, *Popular Tales*, vi.

¹⁹⁵ Maria Edgeworth, *Rosamond: a Series of Tales* (London and New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1879), 2. OLS POL 6049 no. 1.

¹⁹⁶ Genette, *Paratexts*, 197.

shifting, inconstant concept manipulated by cultural and societal interpretation. When publishers opt to recycle the early versions of the preface as part of a cheap reprint or a remainder, the original girl, the adolescent Rosamond, stays eleven to twelve years old. She remains foolish and continues to be her family's darling, so all is forgiven because she will always be earnest and try hard. She is forever immortalized in the prefaces and pages of *Early Lessons*, where each new generation of girl readers can meet her, relate to her, and learn from her. But what each girl reader will learn is unique to her, for the preface's function to show us how "to read the text properly" is not so clear. The preface is a text in itself, and as such its meanings are derived from each reader who encounters it, just as each reader extrapolates a unique meaning from the stories. Because girlhood shifts with time and culture, so, too, do the texts and prefaces that reflect that girlhood

Catalogues and Covers: The Lily Series

Publisher's catalogues are important paratexts in the construction of a bibliographic girlhood, although Genette does not consider publisher's catalogues within his analysis of paratexts. This is likely because catalogues were separate entities altogether and not always created apropos of the text. Genette is concerned with Texts. Catalogues are added to books. This is a distinction that places publishers' catalogues in the purview of book historians more than textual scholars. Catalogues work to frame the text in much the same way that other paratextual materials do and so should be considered among them as another way to understand the construction of girlhood through the book object. Many of Edgeworth's books in the Pollard Collection have publishers' catalogues bound with the text. Publishers created series with specific readership in mind and often bound relevant listings with texts. Maclean states, "the paratextual may seem to be addressed to one particular group of receivers or readers while actually being intended for, and received by, quite a different group."¹⁹⁷ This describes publishers' catalogues perfectly. Whether intended for the purchaser who gifts the book to the reader, or whether reader and purchaser are one and the same, there are strong messages printed in a publisher's catalogue for multiple implied readers.

¹⁹⁷ Maclean, "Pretexts and Paratexts," 273.

Covers in *The Lily Series*

The text in the *Lily Series* catalogue is the main focus of this discussion about catalogues, but the book covers must be mentioned as well. They are effective paratexts for the catalogue—essentially paratexts of a paratext—showing again the layered construction of girlhood in books. Figure 41 shows some of Edgeworth's books from the *Lily Series* by Ward Locke & Co, the covers adorned with white lilies. These liliated covers bring the phrase "lily white" to mind. Merriam-Webster online finds the first use of the term in the fourteenth century, to mean unblemished, lacking fault, and as white as a lily flower. In *The Language of Flowers* (1884), white lilies denote purity and sweetness. Closely related, lily of the valley denotes the return of happiness, white lilacs signify youthful innocence, and a white rose says "I am worthy of you."¹⁹⁸ We see all of these flowers on covers of Edgeworth's books, symbols that go beyond Edgeworth's enlightened ideal of moral understanding—honesty, integrity, empathy—to imply a purity and sweetness expected of the implied girl reader.

The Pollard Collection has an 1884 edition of *The Language of Flowers* illustrated by Kate Greenaway, with her full colour illustrations, and printed by Edmund Evans for Routledge, a collaboration of three powerhouse names in late Victorian children's literature. The popularity of both *The Language of Flowers* and the *Lily Series* gives a strong indication of the books' appeal to the implied reader. This brief focus on cover design highlights how heavily intertwined paratexts and their meanings become for the girl reader; it also highlights the influence of



Figure 41: OLS POL 6011, 6042. *Moral Tales* [both before 1879, date suggested by Pollard], OLS POL 5888 *Popular Tales* [1870?] and OLS POL 6065 *Helen* [1897?] in Ward Locke & Co.'s *Lily Series*

¹⁹⁸ Kate Greenaway, *The Language of Flowers* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1884), 27, 37. The idea behind the book originates with Lady Mary Worley Montagu, who wrote letters home to England in 1716 while living in Turkey, where she compiled her knowledge of the cultural meanings of flowers.

intertextuality in the construction of girlhood. Messages are marketed visually through book covers, where a quick glance at a shelf in a railway bookstall forces the consumer to essentially judge a book by its cover. Horne notes that Victorian girls were expected to be “pure, gentle, self- sacrificing, free of anger and hostility.”¹⁹⁹ Recalling Maclean’s paratextual frame to the text, these covers both lead the reader into the text and encourage her to look outward to intertextual contexts. Because the *Lily Series* book covers frame both the catalogue and the text, they are powerful tools as visual and physical aspects used by Ward & Locke, Greenaway, Evans, and Routledge, working together here to amalgamate a specifically constructed pure and virtuous implied Victorian girl reader.

The Lily Series catalogue

The *Lily Series* catalogue description wastes no time in identifying the intended reader for this series: “Forming Admiral Volumes for School Prizes and Presents to Young Ladies ... who look upon books as upon their friends ... only worthy to be received into the Family Circle because of their good qualities and excellent characters.” The publisher’s catalogue imposes a girlhood onto the reader, one that emulates the qualities found in the *Lily Series* books. Any description of the *Lily Series* found in the Pollard Collection uses the word “pure” to describe both the books and their authors’ intentions and to insinuate the reader will be equally pure of heart. As discussed earlier, the idea that purity and virtue should delimit girlhood is fraught with worry over whether girls are “good.” Virtue is described by the Cambridge dictionary online as “something morally good or desirous in a person, as in ‘purity is a virtue.’” Purity is described as a naturalness and “freedom from foreign elements” which translates here to freedom from corrupting influences.²⁰⁰ Ward’s description below hints at this anxiety by assuring buyers (not necessarily girl readers) that these books have been carefully curated to pass muster and be included in the list. This apparent selection process then makes the books pure as well, for if the girl reader must not be corrupted, then both text and book must remain free from contamination. White lilies signify this purity: of the book, of the

¹⁹⁹ Horne, *History and the Construction of the Child in Early British Children's Literature*, 80.

²⁰⁰ The Cambridge Dictionary was last accessed on 11/02/2024 at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

text, and by extension, of the girl reader. Here is the full description as seen in print in Figure 42:

The design of this series is to include no books except such as are peculiarly adapted, by their high tone, pure taste, and thorough principle, to be read by those persons young and old, who look upon books as upon their friends — only worthy to be received into the Family Circle for their good qualities and excellent characters. So many volumes now issue from the press low in tone and lax in morality that it is especially incumbent upon all who would avoid the taint of such hurtful matter to select carefully the books they would themselves read or introduce to their households. In view of this design, no author whose name is not a guarantee of the real worth and purity of his or her work, or whose book has not been subjected to a rigid examination, will be admitted into 'The Lily Series.'²⁰¹

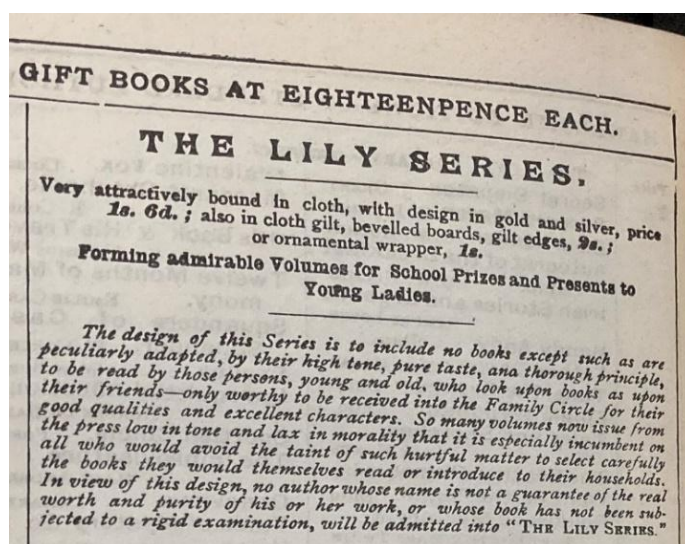


Figure 42: First page of the catalogue for The Lily Series in Edgeworth's *Helen*. London: Ward, Locke & Co., [n.d.].

This series was enormously popular. The list eventually included over one hundred books.

²⁰¹ Maria Edgeworth, *Helen* (London: Ward, Locke & Co., [n.d.]).

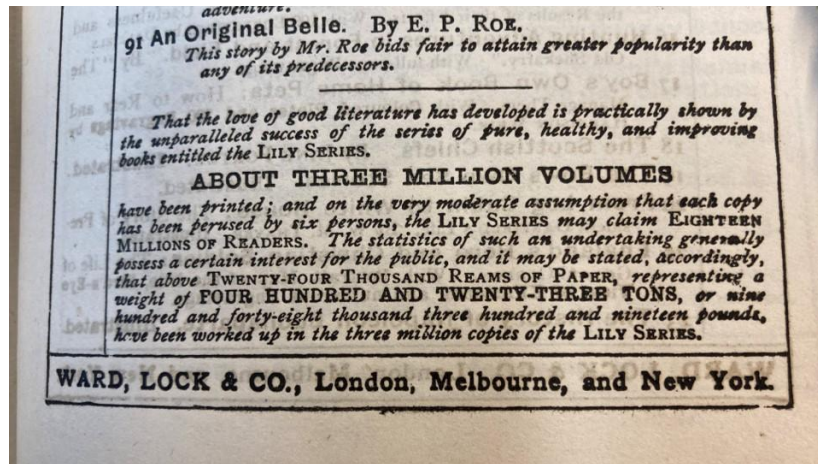


Figure 43: Ward, Locke & Co. emphasising how popular the series is.

Ward, Locke & Co. boast the printing and circulation of the *Lily Series* is in the millions (Figure 43). They market the series perfectly to an apparently discerning consumer who would not hesitate to buy a book from such a high standard, popular series. Its popularity alone can convince a buyer that this wholesome series of books is perfect for the ideal Victorian girl reader. No paratext supports the catalogue's insistence on purity like the use of the lily flower to adorn its covers.

Illustrations: Rosamond

The most unfortunate day of my life and other stories.

By Maria Edgeworth. London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1931

Shelfmark: OLS POL 5837 (Figure 44)

This edition is utterly unique (Figure 44). It looks nothing like any other Edgeworth editions found in the Pollard Collection, and its eponymous first story is not found in other editions. Many editions were illustrated in the second half of the nineteenth century; illustrators represented in the Pollard Collection include Myles Birket Foster, John Absolon, Paul Hardy, William Harvey, F.A. Fraser, Frances Ann Beaufort, Olive Allen, Lancelot Speed, Bernard Plockhorst, Louis LaSalle, W. and A.K. Johnston, and Christine Hammond. There are fifteen engravers. Notably, the Dalziel Brothers' engravings appear in sixteen books, most of them for Routledge. Illustrations are reused across editions produced by certain publishers, especially those done by Fraser, Harvey, Allen, and Hammond. Hammond is associated with Macmillan, Fraser with Routledge, and Harvey, working in the middle of the nineteenth century,

appears in editions published in shares, with as many as 18 different publishers listed on the title page.

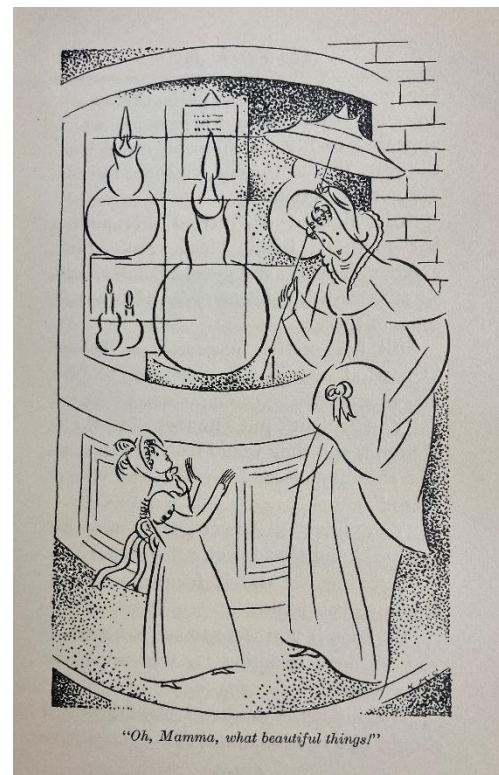
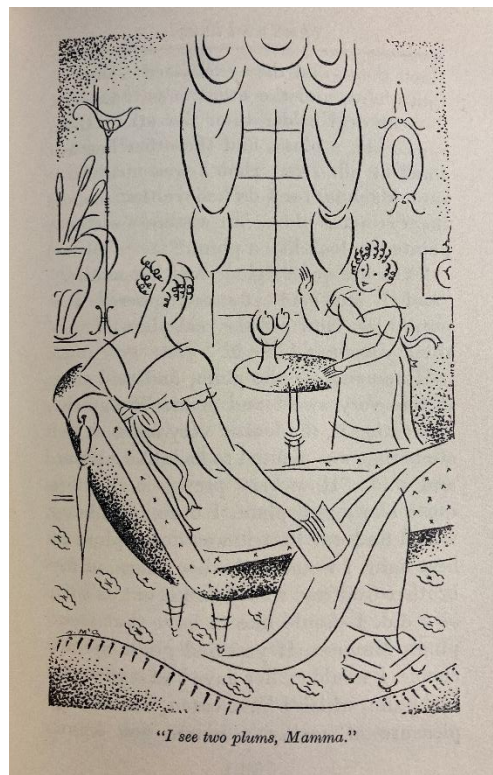
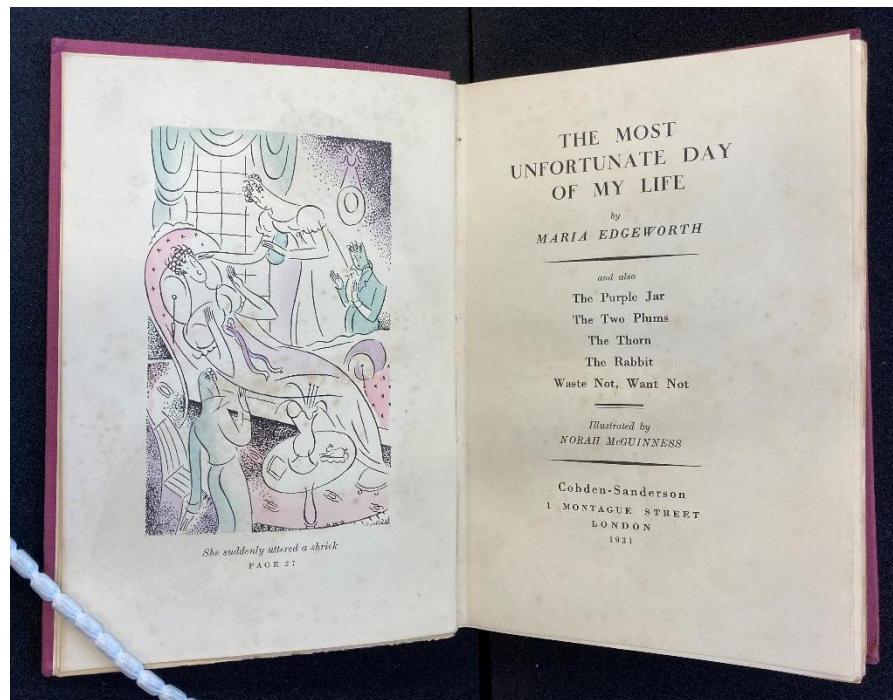


Figure 44: OLS POL 5837. *The Most Unfortunate Day of My Life and Other Stories* by Maria Edgeworth. London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1931. The frontispiece is from the titular story. Bottom left image is from "The Two Plums" and bottom right is from "The Purple Jar."



OLS POL 5989: *Rosamond*. London: Allman and Son, 1857. Illus. John Absolon.



OLS POL 5997: *The Purple Jar and Other Tales*. Routledge, 1860. Engr. Dalziel Bros.



OLS POL 6039: *Rosamond*. London: Longman, Brown et. al., 1856. Illus. John Buckley.

Figure 45: Frontispieces from three different publishers' editions of *Rosamond*. Note 6039 is illustrated by Chris Hammond, but the frontispiece is done by Buckley.

The sampling above (Figure 45) has subtleties and variations this thesis cannot take time to explore, yet the images work together to highlight the vast differences in style between nineteenth- and twentieth-century illustrations. The Norah McGuinness illustrated edition I will discuss shortly is preceded by another twentieth-century edition, illustrated by a fellow Irish artist, Hugh Thomson (1860-1920) in 1903 (Figure 46). While this edition moves the illustrations into a more modern interpretation, the images feel old-fashioned when held up to the McGuinness edition.



Figure 46: OLS POL 5831. *Tales from Maria Edgeworth*. London: Wells, Gardner Darton, 1903.

The images at the beginning of this section in Figure 44 show Rosamond as illustrated in 1931 by Irish painter and illustrator Norah McGuinness (1901-1980). Many books in the Pollard Collection include various combinations of Edgeworth's stories, and most of them have *Rosamond* stories, but this is the only book that includes the story "The Most Unfortunate Day of My Life." Bertha Coolidge Slade does not mention the story in her bibliography. There is no other paratextual (or

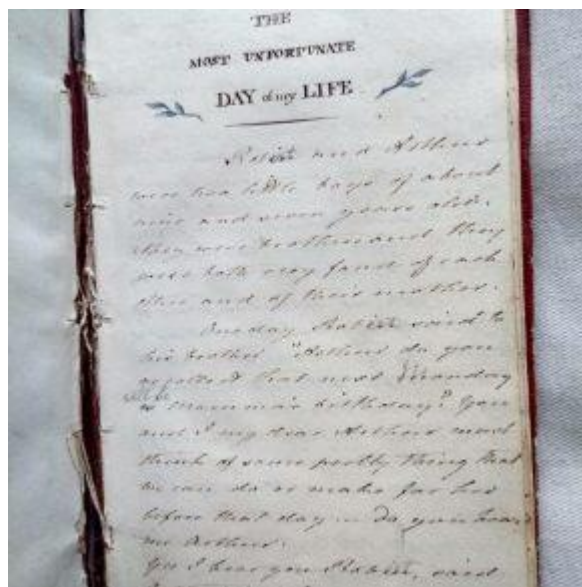


Figure 47: Manuscript edition of Edgeworth's "Most Unfortunate Day of my Life" (1819) in the Benjamin Iveagh Library at Farmleigh House. By permission of the Governors and Guardians of Marsh's Library © Marsh's Library.

textual) evidence of the story, and it is not listed in contents or on title pages. Trinity Library has only one other entry in the catalogue, a record for another copy of the same edition, held in the general sequence in Early Printed Books. The National Library of Ireland holds a copy, but internet searches result mainly in copies of this edition for sale by rare and used books dealers. The only apparent evidence outside of this edition is a blog post by Dr Nora Moroney detailing her research at Farmleigh House on Irish

women writers in the Benjamin Iveagh Library.²⁰² Moroney highlights the manuscript copy of "Most Unfortunate Day" and dates it 1819 (Figure 47). This is a full 112 years earlier than the 1931 edition in the Pollard Collection. This leaves many unanswered questions: was the 1931 edition the only time the story appeared in print? Marsh's Library thinks not, for when I asked for permission to use the image, they indicated the copyright lies with the family due to it being unpublished. Clearly, it is published, but why is Marsh's Library unaware of this if they hold the manuscript? Was the story lost to time and rediscovered? Who or what prompted McGuinness to illustrate this edition a century later?

²⁰² Moroney's blog post is not dated on the Farmleigh site, but she and I were in residence together in the Trinity Long Room Hub while she held her postdoctoral position at Farmleigh and completed this research, in the academic year 2021-2022. The blog post can be found here: <https://www.farmleigh.ie/women-writers-in-the-benjamin-iveagh-collection/>

The story is not a girls' story per se. It concerns the activities of two brothers who are trying to make their mother a birthday present. This makes McGuinness's choice of frontispiece curious. It depicts a woman in some distress reclining on a divan. Another woman fawns over her, while the two boys appear startled and distraught. McGuinness's treatment of the subject thus shifts the focus from the boy protagonists to the mother on the divan. At this point in the story, she has pierced her arm with a pair of scissors the boys neglected, that is poking out from the sofa. The caption reads "She suddenly uttered a shriek." By drawing this image for the frontispiece, tinted in purple, pink and teal, McGuinness is asserting the femininity of the book, and relegating this story of boyhood to stand behind its mother's skirts, as it were.

The book's other illustrations show that, clearly, McGuinness's Rosamond and her mother are of a more contemporary time. The highly stylised line drawings evoke the modernist style McGuinness worked in while living and studying in Ireland in the 1920s, before she went to France to study cubism. My interest here is not in the specific style of art, but rather how McGuinness portrays Rosamond in the two illustrations above. Keira Vaclavik encourages us to "look at what dress can tell us about specific texts and characters."²⁰³ These images of Rosamond paint a fresh, updated version of the character readers have loved for a century. "The Two Plums" is the story that appears right after "The Purple Jar" in the first edition of *Early Lessons*, 1801. It depicts Rosamond as a young girl around age eight, as mentioned in the preface. Notice in this edition that McGuinness gives Rosamond a bust in her drawing of "The Two Plums," ageing her by many years. This adulting of Rosamond serves to make her appear more stylishly modern and less old-fashioned, perhaps to compensate for the age of the text itself. In their introduction to *Styling Texts*, Cynthia Kuhn and Cindy Carlson note that "attention to literary fashioning can contribute to a significantly deeper understanding of texts, their contexts, and their innovations – even challenging, in some cases, traditional reading."²⁰⁴ McGuinness's

²⁰³ Keira Vaclavik, "The Dress of the Book: Children's Literature, Fashion and Fancy Dress," in *Beyond the Book: Transforming Children's Literature, Papers from the British IBBY/NCRL MA conference held at Roehampton University, UK on 11 November 2012.*, eds. Bridget Carrington and Jennifer Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 63, 68.

²⁰⁴ Cynthia G. Kuhn and Cindy L. Carlson, *Styling Texts: Dress and Fashion in Literature* (Youngstown, N.Y.: Cambria Press, 2007), 3.

illustrations do seem to challenge traditional readings of Rosamond, but they also function to illustrate the concept I have been describing throughout this thesis: the girlhood depicted in this edition is malleable, shifting, sometimes appearing older, as in “The Two Plums,” and sometimes younger, as in “The Purple Jar.” The image of Rosamond in “The Two Plums” appears on the older side of adolescence with a full bust and hair curled and styled “up,” but this works to make her appear sophisticated, not old. The reader knows she is a girl, but McGuinness draws her as stylish, polished, even suave, as she appears in conversation with a cultured mother, reclining and reading on a chaise longue in an opulent drawing room. Social bibliography allows for an understanding of the passage of time here and for the publisher’s need to update an outdated text to be relevant to 1931. The book history



Figure 48: OLS POL 6020. F. A. Fraser's illustration of “The Purple Jar” in a Routledge edition of *Early Lessons* (London, [n.d.]).

study of where this unique edition fits into the long line of editions makes clear this book is an outlier compared to the other editions in the Pollard Collection. This is not the bumbling, mistake-prone, earnest girl Edgeworth alluded to in her preface of 1821. This is a new-century girl, remade in a likeness more in keeping with the era during which the book was printed.

The Rosamond in “The Purple Jar” illustration looks more like a stylized doll than a little girl, and she appears much younger than in the “Two Plums” image. She does not have a bust, and she is tiny in size compared with her mother, something less clear in “The Two

Plums” illustration where she appears to be more of an equal companion. In “The Purple Jar” illustration, Rosamond is looking up to her mother for guidance and with admiration. McGuinness evokes older illustrations with this drawing, particularly one by F. A. Fraser (1846-1924) which is reused often and appears in many editions of “The Purple Jar” (Figure 48). Fraser was widely known, and he illustrated many famous Victorian authors’ works, including Dickens, Collins, Twain, and Craik. Consider how Rosamond’s mother holds a muff in both the Fraser and McGuinness illustrations, showing that Rosamond was affluent long before McGuinness drew her

so. Also, Rosamond looks up to her mother similarly in both drawings. Despite McGuinness's nod to tradition, she attempts to keep Rosamond viable as a contemporary girl, and her drawings exhibit Vaclavik's "vital role of the visual as well as or instead of the textual" by making the drawings more significant than the text.²⁰⁵ Her edition is aesthetically pleasing, artistic with little concern for how the illustrations relate to or remind the reader of the text they represent. McGuinness is a famous Irish artist, and this edition bound in pink Moire cloth, that includes stories of one of the most beloved girl characters of the past many generations, makes a gorgeous gift for any girl reader, even a century after "The Most Unfortunate Day" was written.

Conclusion: Uncut leaves

The Parent's Assistant; or, Stories for Children

By Maria Edgeworth. London: Routledge, Warne & Routledge, 1863.

Shelfmark: OLS POL 5849 (Figure 49)

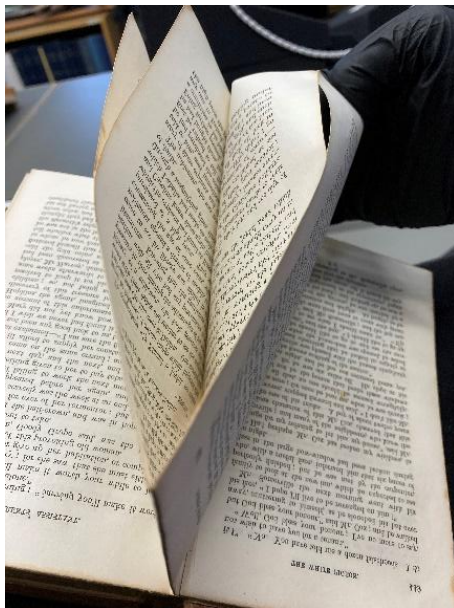


Figure 49: OLS POL 5849. Uncut leaves of *The Parent's Assistant* by Maria Edgeworth. London: Routledge, Warne & Routledge, 1863.

Donald McKenzie insists that bibliography must consider the symbolic meaning of a book because it must allow for the influence of "human agents" when considering the history of a book.²⁰⁶ Here is a copy of *The Parent's Assistant* that does not appear to have been read cover to cover, as many leaves remain uncut. (Figure 49). The uncut leaves show the "influence of human agents" having a reverse impact, one of unuse rather than use which challenges McKenzie's point, but there is symbolic meaning in this book. Uncut leaves have implications for attempting to understand who is the implied or the actual child reader of this book, or more to the point, who is the unreader, the "person who is not inclined to read" and did not

²⁰⁵ Vaclavik, "The Dress of the Book: Children's Literature, Fashion and Fancy Dress," 63.

²⁰⁶ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 8.

read this book.²⁰⁷ Steedman says, “if we find nothing, we will find nothing in a place; and then ... an absence is not *nothing*, but is rather the space left by what has gone.” the emptiness indicates how it was once filled and animated.²⁰⁸ Steedman’s absence is the missing reader of this book, who has left traces of a partially filled reading space occupied by book and reader together.

Encountering books within a collection that appear to have remained unread for over a century begs the question: how much do Edgeworth’s texts inform the identity construction of the Pollard Collection? Seen on its own, this book may appear insignificant, but when paired with or seen in relation to the other thirty-four editions held in the Collection, its unique value rises considerably as an obviously unread book that was worth the price Pollard paid for it and the space it would occupy on the shelf, despite an indication that it was not read. It does offer other interesting paratextual details; stories appear completely out of the original order with the stories set in Ireland coming at the end, and there are the illustrations by Phiz to consider. Perhaps this one copy of this singular edition was not read through to the end, showing little use value, but its value lies in its materiality due to the famous illustrator and the nice binding, suitable for a gift. Further, it belongs to a large group of editions and refers to its cousins in the collection. It remains significant from the social bibliographical standpoint, as it offers a glimpse and a glitch in the long line of editions held in the Pollard Collection.

Determining the reader of this edition of *The Parent’s Assistant* is an exercise in what Steedman calls “looking for and finding what was not there.”²⁰⁹ Edgeworth was wildly popular in her day, over fifty years before this printing. The text has not changed. It is not abridged, so Edgeworth’s intended reader is intact. It may be Routledge who miscalculated who the reader would be, by printing this edition half a century after the book’s decline in popularity, not considering a mid-century Victorian child might lose interest. But more likely, it was the purchaser with an

²⁰⁷ “Unreader” is my word, based on the adjective “unreading,” which the Oxford English Dictionary online dates to 1728 and defines as “Not literate; not inclined to read; not reading. Also as n.”

²⁰⁸ Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 11. Emphasis in original.

²⁰⁹ Steedman, *Dust*, 5.

intended reader in mind, though misjudged: either because of their reading preference, ability, or desire to read all 472 pages of this edition. The book has a manuscript inscription: 'Muiner Lieban Adele [...] In Cannstatt 1863 Sophie Lassig'. This can be translated roughly to: "My dear Adele ... in Cannstatt 1863 [from] Sophie Lassig." (Figure 50) The written language is German, and Cannstatt is a historical neighbourhood in the city of Stuttgart. So, this English-language Routledge edition was given to a girl reader, one who likely spoke German and lived in Stuttgart. The provenance offers yet another indication of why this book has uncut leaves. But the provenance is dated 1863, the same year the book was published in London. Was it sent to Adele from England? Brought back to Germany from time abroad? Was Adele learning to speak and read English, or was she English living in Germany? What of the readers who may have encountered the book after Adele? Did none of them read

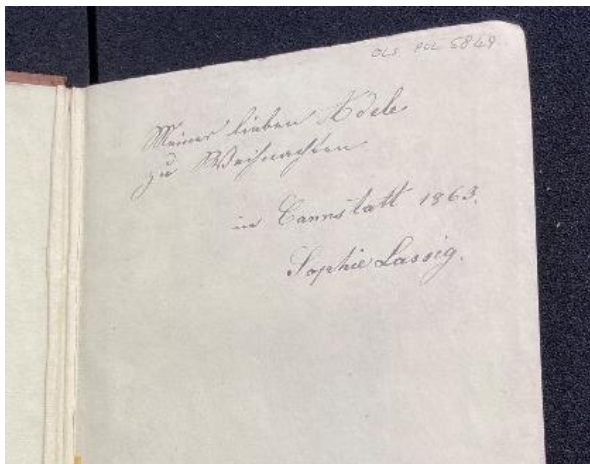


Figure 50: OLS POL 5849. Manuscript provenance in *The Parent's Assistant* by Maria Edgeworth, London: Routledge, Warne & Routledge, 1863 reads: Muiner Lieban Adele [...] In Cannstatt 1863 Sophie Lassig.

the entire book? Perhaps the book stayed with Adele into her adulthood, and there were no other possible readers. Perhaps Adele kept the book as a souvenir of her girlhood. Despite these unanswered questions, we still see through this provenance in this book a temporal, shifting girlhood visible here. This speculation helps to look for and find what is not there, to try and pinpoint the reader and piece together the puzzle of the uncut pages.

Each of the books discussed here exhibit qualities that illuminate the shifting, temporal nature of girlhood and a changing readership. Book history and social bibliography invaluable help develop an understanding of these book objects and their role in preserving and promoting a constructed Edgeworthian girlhood, even decades after the original texts' publication. The next section moves away from individual books to a broader scope of understanding the collection: considering Edgeworth's books in relation to each other and to the books in the larger collection.

3. Collecting Girlhood

Woe be to me, if I pretended to misprize Miss Edgeworth!¹

¹ Letter from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford, 8 Mar 1843 in Meredith B. Raymond (ed.) *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford 1836-1854*, (Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University, The Browning Institute, Wedgestone Press and Wellesley College, 1983).

3.1 The Personal Collection

The uncut leaves of *The Parent's Assistant* shown in the last chapter are a strong indication that children never read the book. An unread book in a children's literature special collection serves as a reminder that what is dissected through research does not always reflect the actual reading lives of children. However, while the text may not have been accessed, the physical book still has a place within the special collection. This book is an object of history. It is a paratextual specimen, a reminder that Pollard collected books, not just texts. The other physical features of the book are as significant as the unread leaves. When discussing collection theory, Susan Pearce states that the act of collecting is "a desire to grasp the past."² This desire can be recognised as a longing or a yearning, one that drove Pollard to collect specific types of books—girls' stories that were historical publications, holding the power to remind her of her own girlhood. As such, the books she collected are objects of history, and as objects, they function as souvenirs of the past. I discuss how children's books function as souvenirs of childhood, acting as remembrances of the past. *The Parent's Assistant*, even unread, is such a souvenir.

This chapter explores the collection first as a personal space and argues that the collection functions as an object of history, as a souvenir that connects the collector to past girlhood. It considers how Edgeworth's titles help define the collection and how her stories might influence the collection as a whole. It considers Pollard's motives for collecting plain titles and instilling value in the ordinary, undecorated books that make up most of the collection. It considers the collection an arbiter of girlhood particularly through Maria Edgeworth's books.

The Pollard Collection is a special collection of children's literature, yet it is also technically an archive because, along with the books, Pollard bequeathed her notes and notebooks, records of purchases, letters, and thoughts on the books themselves. Her papers are primary sources that provide evidence and a historical record of her collection-building practices. She intended to write about her collection in retirement but died before any work was published. Despite the fact

² Susan M. Pearce, *The Collector's Voice: Critical Readings in the Practice of Collecting. Early Voices.*, eds. Susan M. Pearce and Ken Arnold, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2016), xxii.

that her notes, notebooks, and catalogue cards entered the collection with her, the notebooks were non-circulating at the time this thesis was being written. Early Printed Books staff related the story that in 2005 when the collection was brought in from Pollard's apartment after her death, staff shook out contents from between the pages of some books and collected any ephemera in a box. An Early Printed Books Librarian corrected that story to say the ephemera was noted with which book it came from. Noted or not, that box of ephemera is inaccessible for research. A card catalogue exists but remains untouched on a window ledge in the Long Room Gallery. The archival material was transferred to Manuscripts & Archives in 2015, where it remains uncatalogued as a low priority. After years of asking, my thesis supervisor appealed to the Head of Research Collections in the Library as a member of staff who regularly teaches and researches the Pollard Collection, and with two doctoral candidates specifically researching the collection under her supervision, to obtain access to the archival material Pollard bequeathed.

It was not until recently that we received permission granted by the Manuscripts and Archives department.³ They did a preliminary listing of the archival material, designating it as TCD MS 11518 and sent the four-page list to my supervisor. Included were twenty-nine boxes containing personal correspondence, ephemera, pamphlets, articles, broadsides, notes regarding her research on the Dublin book trade, toys, chapbooks, artwork, family letters, and photographs. Because this list was shared, we excitedly believed we would be able to access everything listed. After my supervisor, the other PhD student and I consulted the list, we asked for three boxes, nos. 2, 28 and 29. Box 2 included the purchasing notebooks. Box 28 included toys, cards, family photos, watercolours, and press cuttings related to comics. Box 29 is the famed box Charles Benson started, filled with the "ephemera which was found in the Pollard printed books as they were being catalogued in EPB."⁴ The box Charles Benson began filling became standard practice for the collection's cataloguers, and few of Pollard's slips remain in the books today. Manuscripts & Archives responded to our request stating we were only permitted to consult the purchasing notebooks, which numbered many small,

³ This time lapse is partly, though not completely, attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting closure of the Manuscripts & Archives Department for most of the following eighteen months.

⁴ Jane Maxwell's description of Box 29 in the unofficial word document she sent to Jane Carroll.

purse-sized diaries filled by Pollard with details about sellers, auctions and book fairs. With the exception of our request, Pollard's archive remains inaccessible for research today. If the remainder becomes accessible to future researchers, the material will provide invaluable expansion on the work presented in this thesis; however, there is currently no plan to make this material available.

In his accession diary for 4 February 1965, Peter Opie makes this claim for the person who wishes to be a "good collector:"

A collector . . . must believe that he appreciates the things he collects more than does anybody else; . . . Most of all, he knows what the grand object is of his collection, what it is that he is trying to create with his collection, or find out, or demonstrate, with his collection ... Which is sometimes when institutions fall down, for after the original impetus of their founder, their collections may tend just to come about & they cannot know all the purposes to which their collection will be put. The collections of the institute almost inevitably lag behind those in the dedicated private collection in any special field in discrimination, in detail, in condition, in novelty, & in love.⁵

This is true for Trinity, who cannot know all the purposes for which the Pollard Collection will be used. They have catalogued the books but have not processed any archival material not protected by privacy laws. Nevertheless, Pollard demonstrated astute, perhaps uncanny foresight regarding an academic pursuit that only came to fruition years after her death: a focus on children's literature, with specialist academics appointed to teach not just modules but full master's programmes and supervise PhD theses, placing children's literature on par with other disciplines within the School of English. Kenneth Kidd notes, "the archive valorises research, adds academic value to children's materials. The children's literature archive is at once a particular place (Trinity Library) ... and a broader institution/discourse for the preservation and elevation of children's materials."⁶ This thesis can attest to Kidd's assertion.

⁵ Peter Opie, Accession diary 1962-1967, 1965, Box 606143755, Archive of Iona and Peter Opie, MS. Opie 315, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 2.

⁶ Kenneth Kidd, "The Child, the Scholar, and the Children's Literature Archive," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 35, no. 1 (2011): 2

Pollard's gift to Trinity is an unparalleled resource—over ten thousand children's books in one complete, unaltered, undivided collection. Toby Burrows and Cynthia Johnston contend that if a collector's collection is divided and scattered upon their death, it has less cultural impact. This reality envelopes Maria Edgeworth's letters, which are scattered throughout various collections, including the Bodleian and the National Library of Ireland, Trinity College Dublin, The British Library, and various private collections.⁷ The Pollard Collection does what Kidd suggests. It "promises coherence and totality, reinforces the idea of a literary heritage."⁸ It exemplifies the significance of children's literature as a viable and worthy academic pursuit.

Mary "Paul" Pollard's Personal Collection

Susan Stewart says, "when objects are defined by the collection, the environment is personal. It moves the objects inward, allowing for introspection."⁹ This personal environment effectively captures Pollard and her collection, even though collections are inherently always in flux—a continuous work in progress. Pollard lived in a four-room flat at Marsh's Library in Dublin. She continued to live there for decades, long after she had left Marsh's for Trinity; she never felt the need to move. She cultivated a wildflower garden that still blooms with her plantings¹⁰

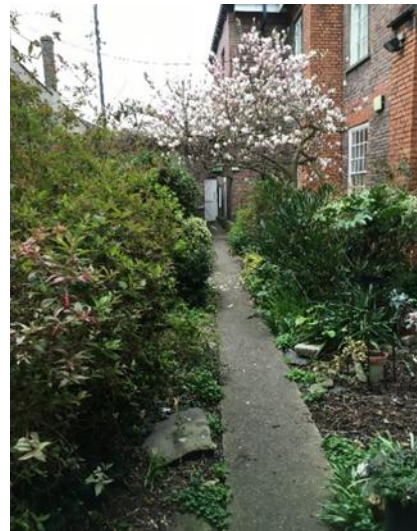


Figure 51: The garden at Marsh's Library, with private gate to enter Pollard's flat, and her shrubs and perennials still blooming.

⁷ Toby Burrows and Cynthia Johnston, "Collecting the Past: Manuscript and Book Collecting in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Collecting the Past; British Collectors and Their Collections from the 18th to the 20th centuries*, eds. Toby Burrows and Cynthia Johnston (London: Routledge, 2019), 2. There is currently a (stalled) project underway on Zooniverse called "Maria Edgeworth Letters," that is an attempt to consolidate, transcribe and digitise letters from various locations. As of 03 March 2023, the project listed 29 contributing institutions who made available the letters in their holdings. Trinity is one of the participants. The project can be found here: <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/mariaedgeworthletters/maria-edgeworth-letters>.

⁸ Burrows and Johnston, "Collecting the Past: Manuscript and Book Collecting in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries," 2.

⁹ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, 1st paperback ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 162.

¹⁰ Dr Jason McElligott, Marsh's Librarian, mentioned this to me when I was visiting there, walking through the garden and took this photo.

(Figure 51). Cosily ensconced, she collected children's books for over fifty years. Her purchasing notebooks show records dating from 1956 to 1997, but books in the Pollard Collection have her manuscript notes dated as late as 2005, months before she died. Furthermore, she purchased many books from other personal environments and private spaces such as nurseries and home libraries. She brought them home to a domestic space that was not only private but personal to her.

She stacked the books high along the walls in the four rooms of her "frigidly cold" flat.¹¹ It may be that the books provided a layer of insulation on the ground floor of the old eighteenth-century stone building. It is more likely that her collection grew so large that she had no choice but to stack them on the floor, outgrowing any



Figure 52: The hallway to the rooms of what was once Pollard's Librarian's apartment at Marsh's Library..

bookcases she might have had. Dr John Gillis, Senior Conservator in Trinity Library's Preservation & Conservation department, recalls going to Pollard's apartment after she died to collect the books for Trinity. He claims the books were taking over her apartment, over ten thousand of them in four rooms¹² (Figure 52). Shane Mawe, Assistant Librarian in Early Printed Books, also helped move the books to Trinity and noted the shelves were affixed over doors and went to the ceiling, all walls covered. In any case, the books were close to hand, allowing her to live amongst them. They were not

tucked away or boxed up, but rather a part of her daily life as she moved through her rooms. She intended to research them during her retirement, and she was retired for half the time she lived at Marsh's, having taken early retirement in 1983 to devote herself to her *Dictionary of the Members of the Dublin Book Trade, 1550-1800* (2000). Thus, it appears she preferred to have them ready for her next project after the *Dictionary*. Whether she considered them decorative or proof of a great project in the works, stacking them so implies they were a great comfort to her, her

¹¹ Barnard, "Paul Pollard: Historian of the Dublin Book Trade."

¹² Dr Gillis told me this in a conversation we had in February 2023, while I was working on the Old Library Redevelopment Project in Trinity Library. I discussed moving the books with Mr Mawe in January 2024. In my chat in December 2023 with Felicity O'Mahony, Assistant Librarian in Manuscripts & Archives at Trinity, she remarked the books were "floor to ceiling. She was obsessed."



Figure 53: Pollard in her doctoral regalia when she was conferred with an honorary doctorate from Trinity College Dublin.

companions, or even her housemates. She had a personal connection with these domestic tales and girls' stories she collected. The definition of "personal" revolves around exclusive belonging, specifically belonging *to* someone.¹³ The collection holds a large quantity of stories for girls, along with schoolbooks, Irish imprints, and Irish authors. It may include books that were read to Pollard as a child or books she never forgot. All these reasons are personal and have particular significance, importance, or meaning for her. Kidd notices "the personal dimension is quite evident in and around the children's literature archive, in the stories of its founders, sponsors and patrons."¹⁴

Pollard's collection was so personal that she lived quite literally amongst the books.

Because this project is focused on the construction of girlhood in the Pollard Collection, Pollard's personal history is significant when considering what the books in her collection represent. She was a physician's daughter, expected to follow in her father's footsteps. She was highly educated and eventually trained to be a librarian. She moved to Dublin as a young professional woman and remained there all her life. Pollard's affinity for Edgeworth suggests she identified with her in some way. Like Edgeworth, Pollard never married, which was a situation that offered both women some advantage. Edgeworth could continue collaborating with her father and observing and teaching her younger siblings. Pollard could build her career and become the esteemed bibliographer she is known as today, a feat she could not have achieved had she married, given that Ireland's marriage bar only ended in 1973, ten years before Pollard retired.¹⁵ Both were "literary ladies" motivated personally and professionally by texts and books. Pollard's parents were Irish and lived in England, mirroring Edgeworth's English parents residing in Ireland. Both women spent their

¹³ The Oxford English Dictionary online defines "personal" this way.

¹⁴ Kidd, "The Child, the Scholar, and the Children's Literature Archive," 3.

¹⁵ From 1924 to 1973, women working in the Irish civil service were legally required to retire from employment after marriage. See Deirdre Foley's article "'Their proper place:' women, work and the marriage bar in independent Ireland, c. 1924–1973," *Social History* 47, no. 1 (2022), for history and context of the marriage bar.

girlhoods in England and their adulthoods in Ireland, suggesting that Pollard perceived a connection to Edgeworth through a shared Anglo-Irish hybrid identity. Her life's work as a librarian was in a role defined as a support service and often relegated to women.¹⁶ Her initial title stated she was "Assistant Librarian" of Older Printed Books, as the post of Librarian to the College was reserved for a male academic.¹⁷ In this way, she resembled Edgeworth, whose literary achievements were complemented by her efforts to support others.

Edgeworth worked as her father's business agent, a teacher of his children, and a writer of his philosophies and treatises on education. Pollard's work was equally distinctive. As a bibliographer of the Dublin book trade, she published the definitive edition on the subject, *Dictionary of the Dublin Book Trade*.¹⁸ While there is little doubt today that Pollard earned distinction among her peers, being conferred with an honorary doctorate long after she retired, she never pursued doctoral studies herself, preferring work that supported others' research (Figure 53).

Reflecting on her literary preferences can provide insight into her process of self-identification. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal consider personal collections as a way to assert one's independent identity. Elsner posits:

In the light of the social perspectives of containment and regulation, one's identity as an individual may depend on the difference between one's personal collection and that of one's parents, or of anyone else. As one becomes conscious of one's self, one becomes a conscious collector of identity, projecting one's being onto the objects one chooses to live with.¹⁹

¹⁶ Nicole Pagowsky and Miriam Rigby, *The Librarian Stereotype: Deconstructing Perceptions and Presentations of Information Work* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, A division of the American Library Association, 2014). This is just one of many books (American Libraries Magazine, Annie Downey and Dee Garrison are good sources, too) in the exhaustive discourse on the history of women in librarianship, particularly in North America. For a European focus consider, Mary Greenshields, "Thinking About Librarianship and Women" (March 2023) at the EUI Library blog: <https://blogs.eui.eu/library/thinking-about-librarianship-women/> whose list of sources at the end offer further exploration of the subject.

¹⁷ *That Woman! Studies in Irish Bibliography: a Festschrift for Mary "Paul" Pollard*. ix. Much of the information on Pollard's professional life comes from this book's introduction as stated by her long-time friend and colleague, Charles Benson.

¹⁸ Mary Pollard, *A Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade, 1550-1800*: based on the records of the Guild of St Luke the Evangelist, Dublin (London: Bibliographical Society, 2000).

¹⁹ John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, introduction to *The Cultures of Collecting*, eds. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion, 1994), 3.

Choosing to live amongst books largely considered worthless implies that Pollard was attracted to these objects "because they come with special, personal emotional attachments" and had unique qualities that only she could perceive.²⁰ Whatever these personal reasons for Pollard, her collection can be seen as "the extended self," where she considers her collection a part of her physical self, an embodiment of her person and her personality.²¹ There are also traces of C. B. Macpherson's classic analysis of Western "possessive individualism" that originated in the seventeenth century: of an ideal self as owner, the individual surrounded by accumulated property and goods.²² Russell Belk and Melanie Wallendorf explain a collector's identity formation this way:

Some of the identity work that goes on through collections involves striving for personal completion and perfection. Completing the collection, in a sense, completes the individual; the person who has a whole collection feels more like a whole person. Similarly, a representative collection confers on the collector a sense of being well-rounded. In striving for perfection in a collection, the collector also strives for an ideal self. Generally, collectors try to upgrade their collections, based on a philosophy that only the best will do. If someone can bequeath a collection and if it remains intact and is identified with the collector, that collector is immortalized.²³

Belk and Wallendorf say collectors also seek acclaim through the achievement of building their collections, so it may be fair to say that such a vast collection as the Pollard Collection signifies the pursuit of perfection.²⁴ It is difficult to know if this aptly describes Pollard, as I have had difficulty finding anyone who knew her well. However, I doubt Belk and Wallendorf's theory reflects Pollard's motivations. Trinity Map Librarian Paul Ferguson attests to Pollard's formidable demeanour and her demand for excellence. Although he was only in the library a year or so before

²⁰ Pearce, *On Collecting: an Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, 175.

²¹ Pearce, *On Collecting: an Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, 175. Pearce refers to Russell Belk here, and he discusses further in the article cited in footnote 24.

²² J. Clifford, "Collecting Ourselves," in *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, ed. Susan M. Pearce (London: Routledge, 1994), 259. Clifford refers to Macpherson's book, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism. Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, 1962).

²³ Russell W. Belk and Melanie Wallendorf, "Of Mice and Men: Gender Identity in Collecting," in *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, ed. Susan M. Pearce (London: Routledge, 1994), 240.

²⁴ Belk and Wallendorf, "Of Mice and Men," 241.

she retired, he recalls she was a force to be reckoned with, the stereotypical shushing librarian who students feared and colleagues did not dare question.²⁵ Such an ultra-professional persona at work somehow contrasts the image of the thousands of sweetly reminiscent children's books filling her home, showing how a collection allows the collector to play with multiple images of the self. Pollard's collection was personal and private and reflected a persona she did not wear at work in her high-profile, public-facing position. Collecting children's books allowed her a softness she did not allow herself at work. Thus, collecting is a means of achieving and expressing identity outside personal or professional history. In this way, we catch glimpses of a more complex person, someone not only feared by students in the library or respected by peers for her bibliographic prowess, but also, we see a more private, softer side of Pollard, someone who may have subscribed to Walter Benjamin's idea of collecting as a "child-like mode of acquisition."²⁶ In other words, someone who appears to have collected for delight and enjoyment as much as for formal reasons. Her collection, like the private domestic space she housed it in, reflects and reinforces herself as a collector of girlhood stories.²⁷

A Souvenir of Girlhood

What Pollard collected and the books she gathered can be understood as souvenirs of girlhood. "Souvenir" is defined as something that is given or kept as a reminder of a person, place, or event.²⁸ The event, in this case, is girlhood. Stewart discusses the book as a souvenir in her work *On Longing*, where she insists that souvenirs have the capacity "to serve as traces of authentic experience." Yet, she concedes it is a "now-distanced experience."²⁹ Souvenirs remind us of "events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative."³⁰ Children's books do this by inserting their materiality in that space vacated by

²⁵ Mr Ferguson told this to me in a conversation we had when I first started working with him in July 2023.

²⁶ Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library: a Talk about Book Collecting," in *Illuminations* (London: Pimlico, 1999).

²⁷ Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library: a Talk about Book Collecting," 63.

²⁸ This is from the Oxford English Dictionary online.

²⁹ Stewart, *On Longing*, 135, 136.

³⁰ Stewart, *On Longing*, 135.

girlhood. Their narratives allow readers to experience the stories vicariously through the representations in the book.

Stewart considers the children's book as a "source of personal narrative-making, for the construction of memories that keep alive cultural practices no longer able to be maintained or even gone."³¹ Pollard's books are both generators and carriers of memory, whose power lies in the process of evocation, or the ability to manifest "the presence of the past in the present, literally embodying the suite of emotions" attached to the nostalgia or the trip down memory lane.³² Peter Hollindale agrees when he says that we cannot construct girlhood but merely reconstruct it, and we do this through a constant dialogue between experience and memory, in which both elements are unstable.³³ Pollard's books address this instability because, unlike Stewart's assumption that souvenirs create a longing for the authentic past the books also embody a shared experience of reading and being read by girls—one continuously being sought out by researchers in the collection centuries later. This embodiment occurs through the materiality of the books. It is a lived experience, not simply one longed for, and it holds personal, emotional attachments. The lived experience is validated through the affective quality of the souvenir, which evokes an emotional response. Children's literature scholar Kenneth Kidd supports this when he states the children's literature archive's value is in the emotional and the scholarly, in how the stories collected resonate on a personal level or work through memory.³⁴ Memory is triggered when stories reflect the personal experiences of the reader, or, in this case, the collector.

In a complex process, the book as a souvenir may have represented its child owner at one time, but once it is bought by the collector, Paul Pollard, the collection shifts this representation: the books in the special collection are objects of history, souvenirs of girlhood, but they do not represent the reader so much as the collector. Andrea Witcomb seems to agree with Stewart when she says, "souvenirs help us to create narratives about experiences outside everyday life," but this should be challenged and is subverted by Pollard when she collects her books because the

³¹ Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration," 43. Witcomb is paraphrasing Stewart here.

³² Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration," 43.

³³ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 71.

³⁴ Kidd, "The Child, the Scholar, and the Children's Literature Archive," 9.

Pollard books help create narratives that capture the ordinary, domestic experience of everyday girlhood.³⁵ In contrast, when scholars return to these books, there is something out of the ordinary in recovering that lost girlhood hidden in the stacks. In this way, Pollard can both subvert and confirm the narratives of girlhood experience. Because souvenirs help build a narrative between their everyday domestic environment and the location of their purchase (or where they were when they read the book), Stewart argues that souvenirs generate narratives that look backwards and inwards due to the connection to the domestic, rather than outwards and towards the future. Here, Stewart makes the important distinction that rather than representing an event or a place, the souvenir represents its owner.³⁶ But collecting these books turns the focus outward from that inward, personal space, illuminating that there can be many owners in the life of a children's book.

Carolyn Steedman paraphrases Jacques Derrida and muses that "no storehouse ... holds the records of an original experience to which we may return."³⁷ Perhaps this is what Pollard attempted to do when she amassed ten thousand children's books in her four-room flat at Marsh's library. It was her attempt to not only reconstruct a girlhood based on her memories but also contain it within her collection and preserve it. Pollard's collection is a souvenir, not just a collection of souvenirs.³⁸ It is a vehicle for bringing back the stories to act as a replacement for the nostalgia for her childhood books.

In *The Material Culture of Everyday Life*, Judy Attfield discusses an ecology of personal possessions and the negotiation that occurs with the objects. As the ecology of personal possessions occurs squarely in the domestic at home, a parallel can be drawn to the special collection, where we find an ecology of books.³⁹ If these books are Stewart's souvenirs of girlhood, and Attfield highlights the "ecology of personal possessions" where they "can always be traced back to the everyday world of lived experience" by the reader or the collector, then this is where "the domestic world has largely been a woman's domain and from which the stereotype draws its

³⁵ Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration," 41.

³⁶ Stewart, *On Longing*, 135.

³⁷ Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 7.

³⁸ Kidd, "The Child, the Scholar, and the Children's Literature Archive," 17.

³⁹ Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*, 144-45.

power and its meaning in the first place.”⁴⁰ So, in collection terms, this collection is a space that contains material constructions of girlhood, just as the home contains a materiality of personal identity. If the home contains objects that represent the materiality of personal identity, then the books Pollard obtained from private nurseries and estate sales are recommodified into objects that represent the materiality of girlhood.

Pollard considered the book as a souvenir of print culture and book history as much as of girlhood. As a distinguished bibliographer, her professional motivations for collecting books as souvenirs of girlhood complement her personal motivations. Focusing on materiality and the embodiment of girlhood in the books as physical objects enhances our understanding of that girlhood. Stewart says, “the souvenir as bibelot or curiosity has little if any value attached to its materiality,” but Pollard’s collection practices refute this.⁴¹ As a book historian, it is precisely the materiality that recalls the locations and experiences of printing Edgeworth’s books. This is seen in her collecting many editions that show the narrative of the paratexts, not necessarily the text. Pollard expands Stewart’s claim that the souvenir provides a narrative of origins, namely of the possessor, by adding variants of the same text to the collection and by showing that the possessor does not simply refer to the reader but, in this case, the printer and bookseller, even the collector.⁴² Furthermore, Stewart declares, “such a narrative cannot be generalized to encompass the experience of anyone; it pertains only to the possessor of the object.”⁴³ This holds true when considering the “ok” as an idea or text but not when considering the book as an object within the collection. The term “possessor” is used loosely here to account for the specific time a person might engage with the book for their own purpose. This long chain of possessors is evident in Pollard’s collection, the provenance, and the marginalia drawn in many of the books. Heather Jackson states that “marginalia can be used to construct and monitor identity,” be that of the owner, reader, or collector.⁴⁴ In this way, the collection does shift the point of origin

⁴⁰ Attfield, *Wild Things*, 145.

⁴¹ Stewart, *On Longing*, 136. Pollard is not unique; many collections hold souvenirs distinctly for their materiality. The British Museum’s ostrich eggs come to mind.

⁴² Stewart, *On Longing*, 136.

⁴³ Stewart, *On Longing*, 136.

⁴⁴ Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books*, 91.

for the book's narrative, but it must be understood that a book tells many stories, including the story of how it came to be physically, and why its physicality matters to our understanding of girlhood preserved in the special collection. The Pollard books work as souvenirs of book history as much as of girlhood.

A Tradition of Female Collectors

Paul Pollard, being a female collector, both encourages and subverts traditional stereotypes about the construction of a collector's identity. Her collection starts domestically and moves to a quasi-public space, never becoming fully public, but one that remains protected and whose access is regulated. Belk and Wallendorf state, "we can examine collections not just statically in terms of the objects contained in the collection, but also dynamically in terms of the collector's interaction with these objects."⁴⁵ With hindsight, the Pollard Collection can be seen as a personal collection intended to be an institutional one eventually. Belk and Wallendorf also make the distinction that women were considered merely consumers of objects, but men were collectors.⁴⁶ This perspective shows how Pollard participated in what Belk and Wallendorf would consider the feminine world of consumption while simultaneously upholding what they considered the masculine world of production.

Lori Loeb discusses how nineteenth-century advertisements were aimed primarily at women, particularly in a growing economy of domestic goods that were the result of innovation, mechanisation, and industrialisation. These domestic goods were intended to make a woman's life easier, promise material wealth, give her the "illusion of the perfect lady," and aid in the middle-class pursuit of leisure.⁴⁷ Loeb identifies the "perfect lady" as "a beacon of Victorian affluence" who acquired objects to create the appearance of a middle-class domestic environment.⁴⁸ Books were historically a man's collection, while women were seen to collect more domestic decorative objects.⁴⁹ The items that men collected were for display to the

⁴⁵ Belk and Wallendorf, "Of Mice and Men," 246.

⁴⁶ Belk and Wallendorf, "Of Mice and Men," 241.

⁴⁷ Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8-11.

⁴⁸ Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women*, 10.

⁴⁹ Belk and Wallendorf, "Of Mice and Men," 242-43.

outside world, whereas a woman's collections reflected a more traditionally gendered "female" pursuit and were aimed at enhancing both intended herself and her home. Books fell into the former. Libraries consisted of books and manuscripts on history, geography, philosophy, classics, and travel. Books were considered worldly. Pollard collected books in a twentieth-century evolution of Victorian book-collecting practices. Because these are children's books, they fall into the domestic sphere of the nursery or schoolroom. The fact that the books were housed in her private domestic space secures the connection between these particular books and the feminine domestic. Also, the collection might be gendered by its use, and here again, is a more complex reality: the feminine construction of children's books collected from the nursery by a woman but used for research in an academic library, a more traditionally male use of the collection.⁵⁰

Here is collector Mary "Paul" Pollard, challenging longstanding assumptions about collections and collecting that were established decades before her time. This collection focuses on the private, amateur, domestic, and inexpensive. But even if these books were expensive or used in public or professional spaces, Pollard's collection would be a woman's collection simply because she collected it. Her practice of collecting children's books reflects the Victorian ideas just mentioned and gives a traditional, domestic, feminised understanding of the collection, helped by the sheer number of books printed in the nineteenth century. Yet Pollard disrupts expectations by bequeathing these seemingly insignificant books in a moment that establishes an institutional collection, which is historically more often associated with male collectors, as it is now viewed as a professional, public-facing, and valuable collection. Furthermore, Paul Pollard asserted Maria Edgeworth's significance by deliberately acquiring her texts and more of her works than any other author. The resulting number of Edgeworth titles helps to define the collection as one of women, by women, for women, collected by a woman, and often researched by women.

While book collection has been associated with men (In 1928, Dorothy Sayers called it a "manly pursuit"), Pollard's collecting emerges from an established female tradition. It reflects the context of the longer history of children's book

⁵⁰ Belk and Wallendorf, "Of Mice and Men," 241.

collections and librarianship in the United States and Britain.⁵¹ The drive to build special collections of children's books was spearheaded by professionals, and the establishment of collections of books for young readers, along with programming and outreach, was part of the progressive social reform movements of the late nineteenth century. Beginning with Minerva Sanders (1837-1912) in 1877 and her colleagues who began challenging traditional ideas of children's books only being in schools, and continuing with Caroline Hewins (1846-1926), who created the first bibliography of children's literature in 1882, and Anne Carroll Moore (1871-1961), who was the first to speak about children's books as art and literature; these women opened the floodgates and rushed the tide of advocacy and campaigning for library services to children.⁵² These early efforts by Moore and her colleagues hoped to raise children's literature to the level of respect that other adult literary forms enjoyed. The results of these efforts "reveal the agency of female librarians in making book history, women's history, too long overlooked by diminished status associated with working with children."⁵³ Despite the reality that women in libraries remained overlooked professionally for at least another century, this "diminished status" and women's "perceived affinity for children" led to the profession offering women some autonomy. By capitalising on their work with children, women librarians were afforded some professional self-expression not previously available.⁵⁴

Pollard's collection may superficially resemble those earlier collections assembled by Hewins and Moore, but her efforts diverge from these female children's librarians' practices. Working with children's books was her hobby.

⁵¹ Dorothy L. Sayers, *A Treasury of Sayers Stories* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1961), 271. From her 1928 story, "The Learned Adventure of the Dragon's Head" in *Lord Peter Views the Body*. The full quote: "Lord Peter gave it as his opinion that book-collecting could be a perfectly manly pursuit. Girls, he said, practically never took it up, because it meant so much learning about dates and type-faces and other technicalities which called for a masculine brain."

⁵² Anne H. Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature: Beyond Library Walls and Ivory Towers* (New York: Routledge, 2004). Lundin gives an excellent synopsis here in the first section titled "Best Books: The Librarian." Anne Carroll Moore worked as head of children's library services at NYPL from 1906-1941, organising programs, compiling reading lists and developing training for children's librarians. Caroline Hewins was in Hartford, Connecticut, Lutie Stearns was in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I should mention that Mary Wright Pratt designed the first architectural space, and John Cotton Dana established children's services in Denver, Colorado in 1894, which occurred amidst the discourse happening at ALA and in the profession at large, as brought to attention by the women mentioned here, among others.

⁵³ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 20.

⁵⁴ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 20.

Working as a rare book specialist and book historian of the Dublin book trade was her bailiwick. She intended to do bibliographical research into the children's books she collected in her retirement, not as part of her job. The only article she wrote regarding the collection was about the first edition of *The Parent's Assistant*.⁵⁵ In this article, she discusses how no known copy of the first edition survived until she stumbled upon one in an English bookseller's shop. She explains how she scoured both book reviews and Edgeworth's correspondence for details about the book's first printing. She also describes bibliographic detail and differences between the first and second editions (there were known copies of the second edition at that time). Nevertheless, Pollard's efforts to reinsert femininity within the profession meant not just books for children but books for, by, and about women were and are important, as are the efforts of the professional and academic women who work with them. Pollard takes a step to rectify the slight to women in libraries that Victorian children's librarians worked so hard to address by collecting girl stories and female authors, with Edgeworth at the core, and posthumously manages to redress this imbalance by institutionalising the Collection through bequeathal.

Pollard's collection differs from the professional collections assembled decades earlier by Hewins and Moore et al. because of the kinds of books she collected. She collected inclusively, perhaps excessively or obsessively, as seen in the vast numbers of editions of Edgeworth's works. As Ferguson suggests, if she intended to collect Irish imprints, books written by female authors, and girl stories, she also cut a wide swath across the literary landscape of children's books. Many titles are not well known, including some of Edgeworth's lesser-known texts, written sixty years before the Golden Age of Children's Books (1865-1926) were ushered in by Lewis Carroll.⁵⁶ Hewins, Moore, and their contemporaries were interested in determining what children should read, and assigning value to their heavily curated and specific lists: their bibliographies have an eye on canon formation. Hewins created the first bibliography of children's books to counter the reliance on popular literature like Horatio Alger's works, which she considered

⁵⁵ Mary Pollard, "The First Irish Edition of Maria Edgeworth's *Parent's Assistant*," *Irish Book 1* (1962).

⁵⁶ Many scholars discuss this era, but a good place to start would be with Peter Hunt, *Children's Literature, an Illustrated History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

inappropriate for children.⁵⁷ Hewins and Moore ascertained that their future roles would assert authority, determine quality, and offer advice to adults for children.⁵⁸ They set the imperative to be "list-making as a cultural prerogative and professional paradigm" for selecting materials for children.⁵⁹ This work was about starting and building collections inserted with their strict advice on purchasing more than any other library service to children. Hewins provided what she considered best practice for curating a children's collection for the library and for advising parents on what to purchase for their children at home, spanning public and private libraries. She was interested in what should not be included in these collections, censoring books she considered poor representatives of good books for children. Pollard diverges from this illustrious tradition by collecting widely and indiscriminately. She collects because she enjoys gathering items that broadly reflect a childhood reading experience rather than focusing on titles approved by adults. The books she collects are what Benjamin describes as "lonely and abandoned on the marketplace:" many and various, pulpy and popular, used and abused, tatty and foxed and dogeared, broken spined, broken bindings.⁶⁰ Her collection highlights a culture of childhood, one where readers were actively engaging with the books and showing that the reading culture of Irish children involved British and American publications, not only Irish imprints. The Collection depicts a varied and random childhood reading experience rather than a curated list of aesthetically pleasing children's literature as determined by adults. Furthermore, the over-collecting of Edgeworth editions works to highlight the shifting, temporal, and material construction of girlhood over the long nineteenth century without interference from the stakeholders motivated to compete with literature for adults. Pollard does not engage in the pre-censoring practices of her predecessors.

Pollard began collecting children's books in the 1950s, which offers context to understand the importance she placed on collecting Edgeworth's books for adults. It was only in the 1970s that Francelia Butler at the University of Connecticut inaugurated what is now called the Children's Literature Association Quarterly,

⁵⁷ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 23.

⁵⁸ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 23.

⁵⁹ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 23.

⁶⁰ Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library," 65-66.

relaying “the sad state of children’s literature” in academia.⁶¹ At this organisation’s annual conference in 1980, a committee was formed, and a panel discussion was held to address the state of children’s literature scholarship and to develop a canon. The idea of a children’s literature canon grew from feminist and New Historicist scholarship’s roles in challenging and reshaping traditional concepts of canonicity and the process of canon-making in the 1970s and 1980s. New Historicists such as Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose eschewed New Criticism’s analysis of texts in isolation that disregarded broader cultural influences. Feminist scholars like Elaine Showalter and Susan Gubar criticised the patriarchal bias in canon-making that ignored the contributions of women writers. Both schools sought to include works by marginalised voices and destabilise concepts of “best” while expanding the literary canon. Thus, the way was paved for children’s literature scholarship in the 1990s to destabilise aetnormative biases in evaluating “good” literature. One definition of “canon” is a principle by which something is judged.⁶² Lundin defines canon as “a framework within which to operate” and refers to Perry Nodelman’s response to the committee’s work when she acknowledges the subjectivity of such an endeavour.⁶³ Nevertheless, canon was established, and a list of sixty-three “touchstones” was created, “touchstone” being Matthew Arnold’s term for works depicting poetic (literary) quality.⁶⁴ Nodelman uses the term when editing the literary criticism of the sixty-three chosen titles: *Touchstones: a list of distinguished children’s books* (1985-89). Meanwhile, Pollard begins to acquire children’s books, and her collection grows alongside the field of children’s literature scholarship.

The initial academic canon of children’s literature was being formed in North America at the same time Pollard was avidly collecting children’s books. This makes Pollard appear ahead of her time by a few decades. In fact, Irish academic interest in children’s literature did not get started until the 1990s. This early timing may indicate why Pollard sought to collect Edgeworth’s adult titles that were already considered significant and possessed some cultural capital, if not canonical. Pollard made sure the Edgeworth canon included her texts for children alongside her

⁶¹ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 65.

⁶² The Oxford Dictionary online uses this definition.

⁶³ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 65, 66.

⁶⁴ Matthew Arnold, “The Study of Poetry,” in *Essays in Criticism: First and Second series*, Everyman's Library (New York: Dutton, 1964), 241-42.

“serious novel(s) ... unread by children” that aspired toward “highbrow distinction” to give the children’s books the respectability she thought they deserved.⁶⁵ In this way, Pollard does what Lundin describes as “bolster(ing) the “popularity” of these books, thereby establishing more firmly their place in future canons.”⁶⁶ While Lundin sees the work of building lists and creating a canon of children’s literature as an attempt to turn children’s books into “something else - from “book” to “literature,” Pollard inadvertently does this by collecting.⁶⁷ Pollard considers Edgeworth significant enough to collect, so while she was not building canon per se, she did so anyway by singling out Edgeworth, giving Edgeworth’s stories for children an elevated status simply because they have been collected. It is not Pollard’s intention but rather the institutionalisation of the Pollard Collection that imbues its texts with canonicity. As literature scholars, being with literature “demands making some judgments about texts.”⁶⁸ So, when children’s books are evaluated with the same standards as adult books, a tradition that started at the turn of the twentieth century by Hewins, Moore, et al., then the process of distinguishing children’s books “reflects on the institution and its practitioners.”⁶⁹ Pollard unwittingly achieved the same goal through collecting, which not only helps to hold the books in the Pollard Collection in higher regard but also projects that regard onto Trinity College Library. She laid the groundwork for future considerations and, in a transformative moment, bequeathed the collection to Trinity, ensuring its status as a Special Collection. This transformative action allows the Collection to be considered both paracanonical and canonical, concluding that Pollard may have subverted her intentions when she left her collection to Trinity. Canon is the unintended consequence of bequeathal.

Paracanon

Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer states, “a canon of literature is a selection of well-known texts, which are considered valuable, are used in education, and serve as a

⁶⁵ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 58.

⁶⁶ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 68.

⁶⁷ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 141.

⁶⁸ Stimpson, "Reading for Love: Canons, Paracanons and Whistling Jo March," 957.

⁶⁹ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 141.

framework of reference for literary critics."⁷⁰ She continues: "We typically mean those texts that are said to have an enduring quality by virtue of their universal themes, literary craft, and/or significant meaning."⁷¹ The books in the Pollard Collection certainly have an enduring quality, but they endure as a result of Pollard's collecting them as much as any implicit or inherent meaning derived therein:

The inclusion or exclusion of an author or group of authors from the canon is the result of a variety of factors. These factors include tradition, the literary knowledge of those who contribute to the canonizing process, the availability of literary works, awareness of the works, and sociocultural forces such as elitism and bias.⁷²

Pollard was collecting her girls' stories when children's literature was not considered canonical, and Butler, Nodelman, and colleagues were working to shift the perception of literary value in children's literature. Her efforts, alongside notable collectors, librarians, and scholars eventually helped a children's literature canon materialise to shape the discourse around quality children's literature. If "canons do not appear as a result of spontaneous choice," and if "they are engendered by institutions and by cultural phenomena," then this is what Pollard was unknowingly helping to create: some semblance of canon that conferred significance on the books she collected.⁷³ It only resembles canon because the Collection includes non-canonical texts which litter the collection and outnumber the canonical texts, functioning more like a paracanonical.

The Pollard Collection challenges the idea of a canon by holding both well-known and unknown titles. Catharine Stimpson explores the concept of a paracanonical, declaring that a paracanonical "recognizes our need for some cultural shelter, a tidy site."⁷⁴ The collection provides this cultural shelter.

No matter how difficult or accessible, how "high" or "low," any text is eligible for inclusion in paracanonical if it is beloved ... Being loved is

⁷⁰ Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Crosswriting as a Criteria for Canonicity: the Case of Erich Kastner," in *Transcending Boundaries: Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults*, ed. Sandra L. Beckett (New York: Routledge, 1999), 13.

⁷¹ Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Crosswriting as a Criteria for Canonicity," 13.

⁷² Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Crosswriting as a Criteria for Canonicity," 13.

⁷³ Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Crosswriting as a Criteria for Canonicity," 13.

⁷⁴ Stimpson, "Reading for Love," 957.

the way into a paracanon of the present, having been loved the way into those of the past. A paracanonical work may or may not have “literary value,” however critics define that term. Its worth exists in its capacity to inspire love. The paracanon asks that we systematically expand our theoretical investigations of “the good” to include “the lovable.”⁷⁵

Pollard’s collection is a manifestation of Stimpson’s claims that to enter into the paracanon, “a text should have a number of loving readers.”⁷⁶ Books do not have to be commercially popular to be paracanonical. Still, evidence of many editions of texts, like Edgeworth’s in the Pollard, help to ensure the paracanon is not simply a list of individual readers’ preferences, but rather something that works to “enhance the relationship between a text ... and a specific community of readers.”⁷⁷ The Pollard holds innumerable books loved by girl readers and appreciated by academics. It is that cultural shelter, that space where the community’s love for the books ensures their survival in the Collection, and in turn, the books sustain the Collection’s identity, in this case, as a collection of literary girlhood.

By holding pristine rare gems of books alongside battered copies of more obscure titles, the Pollard Collection functions more as paracanon than canon, diversifying and expanding the definition of canon by offering up the cultural equivalent of a lived childhood reading experience through books that children loved. Pollard did not discriminate when she bought children’s books, as noted in her 1969 purchasing notebook. There is a note towards the back of the book: “Bought from Mr & Mrs Chetwode Hamilton, Roundwood, Mountrath, Laignse — August. Nearly all in terrible condition.”⁷⁸ She purchased thirty-nine titles for a total of £12.10s. Four Edgeworth titles are listed; the rest are schoolbooks and obscure titles. While there are some exquisite editions in the collection, most of the books are mouldy unknowns, suggesting both well-loved and long-neglected stories. The same is true for the Edgeworth books: some are pristine, and some are falling apart. Pollard’s manuscript is found on many inside covers noting a purchase price and

⁷⁵ Stimpson, “Reading for Love,” 958.

⁷⁶ Stimpson, “Reading for Love,” 959.

⁷⁷ Stimpson, “Reading for Love,” 959.

⁷⁸ Mary Pollard, Purchasing Notebook, 1969, MS 11518 Box 2/1/1-16, Manuscripts & Archives, Trinity College Dublin.

source, and these numbers are rarely above £20.⁷⁹ Pollard has collected something authentic in the books children likely read. Her collection is not a collection of academics and librarians' best books of highbrow distinction for children. It is primarily comprised of books that are not necessarily canonical or literary.⁸⁰ If the books in the Pollard are seen as souvenirs of childhood, then the Pollard Collection offers the world something special, like a more organic collection. The Pollard Collection closes the gap between books considered culturally valuable and culturally accessible and, therefore, relatable.

The Pollard Collection challenges how scholars approach the idea of a canon simply by shifting the container of value from a list of titles selected from a group to the whole group. Remembering Section One's earlier assertion that girlhood is dynamic, temporal, negotiated, and cultural, the Pollard Collection shows that as the canon shifts, so do constructions of girlhood because the collection allows all versions of girlhood to exist simultaneously. Cliona Ó Gallchoir discusses how scholars such as Susan Manly and Mitzi Myers attempt to re-frame childhood beyond the framework of the Romantic poets of Edgeworth's time. Ó Gallchoir argues that children's writing should be considered within the context of the women writers of the Romantic era who offered a more realistic perspective than their male counterparts, like Wordsworth, who remain highly influential in our contemporary understanding of childhood.⁸¹ Scholars like Manly and Myers can re-frame girlhood because of collections like the Pollard Collection, which encompass more than Lundin's Touchstones. Here again is the circular construction: the collection imposes themes onto the books, while the books, in turn, define the collection's themes. Collections inform canon by functioning as paracanons, which present a wider scope of books for consideration in the discourse around girls' stories and children's literature.

Alison Waller enforces the idea that the collection is a paracanon of beloved children's books when she suggests that the process of rereading enhances canon formation and that "books encountered in youth have equal intrinsic value to those

⁷⁹ This refers to the Irish Pound, which was in currency until 2002, three years before Pollard died.

⁸⁰ Kidd, "The Child, the Scholar, and the Children's Literature Archive," 9.

⁸¹ Cliona Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth* [2021] (Brighton: Edward Everett Root, 2020), 35.

met later in life” because they are reread, or read differently, or both.⁸² She declares “it is the adult act of rereading that consecrates the masterpieces for children.”⁸³

Perhaps it is this double reading, by two distant, different but identical readers that affords a depth and a resonance to the best of children’s literature, that sets them apart from works written for and read by adults alone. In this sense, the idea seems to be that classics or canonical works for children are those books that do not only appeal to children, but also have an underlying depth of meaning that is satisfying to a mature sensibility.⁸⁴

This is how personal memories of reading feed into the discourse of canonisation by giving the books personal value.⁸⁵ Waller references more formal, less personal canon formation, but this applies to all the books in the Pollard Collection and, therefore, to the creation of paracanon. Here are the books as souvenirs. Waller considers how adult readers might have “remembered them, reimagined them” or “revisited them on multiple occasions into adulthood,” but returning to childhood books has its limitations in terms of what can be remembered fully and what “ideological assumption might be carried by adults about their younger selves.”⁸⁶ The relationship between a reader and the book as an object changes with time and place, and despite rereading a text that has not changed at all, the circumstances around reading have changed. The context shifts, and new meanings, new revelations, and new reactions are to be expected. Peter Hollindale describes this as a reconstruction of encounters with childhood texts, that therefore reconstructs childhood itself.⁸⁷ Even so, Waller states rereading can be a “catalyst for recovering earlier memories ... of lived experiences and textual encounters.”⁸⁸

Adults recall snippets of poetry and prose read to them when they were little; they remember when and where they learnt to read words for themselves; they can sometimes recollect the way that children’s picture books and novels they consumed in their youth

⁸² Alison Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books: A Poetics* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 11.

⁸³ Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books: A Poetics*, 14.

⁸⁴ Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books: A Poetics*, 14.

⁸⁵ Alison Waller, “‘Girls Like It Most’: Challenging Gendered Canons and Paracanons,” 157.

⁸⁶ Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books*, 12.

⁸⁷ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 29.

⁸⁸ Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books*, 14.

made them feel, and the meanings that characters, episodes and the general atmosphere of texts held for them as readers.⁸⁹

The use of descriptors in this quote, like “emotional,” “made them feel,” and “atmosphere of texts,” offers a process that relies on the recollection of a personal, sentimental connection to childhood books. This is Susan Stewart’s *souvenir*, which is the object that conjures opaque feelings and memories of engaging with childhood texts. In this way, the paracanon of children’s literature is formed with an understanding that children’s books are *souvenirs* of childhood. “Remembering and rereading are imaginative processes for reclaiming the private relationships that child selves once had with these texts.”⁹⁰ The books continue to have a dual readership: the children and their parents who once read them together, and the adults who reread them and conjure memories of reading them as children. Waller also notes that remembering and rereading can be practical and professional acts for adults interested in children’s literature, namely librarians and scholars, of which Pollard and this researcher are both.

Waller offers further insight into the process of canon formation in children’s literature when she discusses both personal and proper canons being formed within “a matrix of literary, historical and socio-cultural contexts” where private or personal canons may “run parallel” or “diverge and challenge” proper, public canons.⁹¹ The Pollard Collection embodies this matrix, and because its contents include Touchstones and unknowns, private and public canons are not only encompassed but entwined in the collection. This matrix of contexts is the environment where this dynamic, shifting, temporal girlhood is shaped in Edgeworth’s many editions in the Pollard Collection, offering the Edgeworthian girl character as representative of the kinds of literary constructions found within the collection. This matrix allows more obscure books to be considered alongside canonical texts. This matrix embodied in the Collection is where canon, understood as public, and paracanon, formed privately, meet and mix. And because paracanon can be understood to surround or envelope canon, just as paratexts do about a text, this helps to define the Pollard Collection as a paracanon.

⁸⁹ Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books*, 9.

⁹⁰ Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books*, 10.

⁹¹ Waller, “Girls Like It Most,” 155.

Waller continues with an important distinction when she states that she is “not convinced that canonical texts represent the only material worth probing.”⁹² In her work, adults often cited “popular, marginalized and ephemeral fiction as a significant part of their early experiences with books” and that Enid Blyton was mentioned more than any other author.⁹³ Waller is interested in paracanonical texts like those that populate the Pollard Collection. Citing Italo Calvino’s concept of “peculiar influence,” Waller expands that influence to books beyond the classics, or beyond critical opinion, and beyond what Stimpson calls “beloved” to include “texts that have been and remain meaningful in all kinds of ways, not all of them positive.”⁹⁴ This is an important consideration when scrutinising Edgeworth’s girl’s stories, for not everyone agrees the texts are worth preserving; that their didactic and overt proselytising are not only off-putting to modern young readers, but the writing style is aesthetically unpleasing and outdated. Nonetheless, Edgeworth’s texts are worth preserving for their peculiar influence for exactly these reasons: to understand the socio-historical context of these eighteenth- and nineteenth-century examples of girlhood stories and the girlhood they promulgate, and to understand them in the context of reading them as adult scholars, where Calvino’s peculiar influence does not allow these books to be lost to time. It is not only the classics that offer some insight into girl readers, implied or otherwise, but the books collected from nurseries and schoolrooms, provincial or independent booksellers that are worth considering for their significance, however obscure we consider these books today.

Anti-canon

Stimpson’s paracanon of beloved books does not fully define the collection. It applies to the Pollard Collection because so many of these books’ provenance is traced to private and domestic spaces based on Pollard’s inscriptions and notes. The condition of the books suggests that many were well-loved, as several contain a child’s manuscripts or drawings within them. But Stimpson’s beloveds paint only

⁹² Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books*, 11.

⁹³ Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books*, 11.

⁹⁴ Waller, “Girls Like It Most,” 156. “Peculiar influence” is discussed in Italo Calvino’s *Why Read the Classics*, trans. Martin McLoughlin (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999), 4).

part of the picture. Nodelman's touchstones and canonical classics also contribute a small percentage, but the collection is full of Waller's "popular, marginalised and ephemeral" books more than anything else, taking an antithetical stance regarding canon, or prizing, or even the value of the books.⁹⁵ There are both prized and neglected books; some remain in print today, next to books that were lost to time and have been out of print for centuries. Because of this, I maintain the Pollard Collection resembles an anti-canon as an extension of the idea of paracanon.

Consider the idea of an anti-hero in literature, defined as "a protagonist of a drama or narrative who is notably lacking in heroic qualities."⁹⁶ The anti-hero is often depicted as ordinary, not unusual, not heroic or loyal, not exhibiting any qualities that might be associated with a hero. Sometimes, an anti-hero can show oppositional qualities: lying, untrustworthiness, immorality, or other questionable behavioural traits. In this light, the Pollard Collection could be seen as an anti-canon of unproven books: not canonical or classic, in some cases not necessarily loved, as the uncut pages at the end of Section Two show. Its books are notably lacking in canonical features. They are not quality, offer suspect ideologies, and appear counter to what is considered appropriate today. They are the marginalised, no-longer-popular books that make the Pollard a collection of children's culture more than quality literature. While some scholars recognise their historical significance, which is enough to sustain the books' cultural value today, there's little doubt that the Pollard Collection offers an anti-canon as part of its paracanonical features.

Just as the anti-hero is best understood in opposition to the hero, the anti-canon can only be comprehended relative to the definition of canon. If the canon is regarded as holding authority or conferring value on certain books, then one can only grasp the concept of anti-canon by understanding what defines value. Where a paracanon embraces "lovable" books that readers actually read, anti-canon includes books with no canonical qualities. It often works in opposition to canon formation, in that books like Edgeworth's, not taught in school, no longer loved or read by children, without "notions of literary quality or ideological fitness" but still prized

⁹⁵ Waller, *Rereading Childhood Books*, 11.

⁹⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Antihero," by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/art/antihero>. <https://www.britannica.com/art/anti-hero>.

for their historical impact, hold value.⁹⁷ This value is evoked despite not being written by the most lauded authors, or not considered part of the Golden Age of Children's literature (which mostly consists of later nineteenth-century male authors of fantasy and adventure stories, and eschews female realists), or despite their complete lack of illustration and adornment. The Pollard Collection, as anti-canon, moves against traditional Western canon, which is predominantly male. It centralises female writers and stories about girlhood and a key part of the Collection is Edgeworth. Slade muses that "Miss Edgeworth had unquestionably great talent. If she had had genius, she would have broken through these domestic bonds."⁹⁸ Slade implies that what Edgeworth wrote held her back, that her domestic tales were not enough to mark her as an author of distinction. This idea speaks to Edgeworth's ordinariness and her anti-canonical persona as a writer and a talent: nothing out of the ordinary, nothing special. Pollard shines a light on Edgeworth, who focuses on girlhood and the domestic, as seen in Section One. By collecting a wide variety of her works: for adults, for children, essays, educational theories, fine editions, and pulpy copies, Pollard makes Edgeworth the anti-canonical hero of her collection.

This housing of opposites in the Pollard Collection allows this collection to serve as a souvenir of girlhood in all its historical, cultural, and socially constructed forms. The multiplicity and complexity of the collection are key factors in enabling researchers to understand girlhood in the Pollard Collection in opposition to the boyhood found there. Girlhood as an Enlightenment construct might be held up to the light of late Victorian or post-industrial Edwardian constructions to distinguish between the ideologies presented during each time and understand how distinct historical periods influence or challenge current understandings of girlhood. However, these different sociohistorical contexts preclude research from making canonical assumptions or asserting the value of girls' stories belonging to any particular age, genre, or period. No single reading or research session produces a definitive answer to the questions of the collection's theme, significance, or relevance. The fact that the Pollard Collection can be seen to represent themes in addition to girlhood is why it is anti-canonical and germane to the discussion of girlhood in the collection.

⁹⁷ Waller, "Girls Like It Most," 158.

⁹⁸ Slade, *Maria Edgeworth, 1767-1849. A Bibliographical Tribute*, xx.

In this light, the books function like Susan Digby's "salvaged" souvenirs, for Edgeworth's books were essentially "salvaged" by Pollard, who rescued them from obscure estate sales and back rooms of book shops. Digby explains the salvaged souvenir: "Collections of salvaged-object souvenirs ... together with practices associated with them, serve to reproduce knowledge and constitute identities."⁹⁹ She continues:

Souvenirs are not generally objects of need, but items gathered, signified or created in response to nostalgia for other and past places ... souvenirs are metonyms for places and events ... Through them, places and actions can be revisited. Salvaged-object souvenirs, in particular, are souvenirs that generally lack material value; they are "picked up" rather than bought, they are the part of the detritus of living, saved perhaps by the attached memories ... or even audience appeal.¹⁰⁰

To consider Edgeworth's books as salvaged souvenirs is suggestive because her books are no longer in print. The salvaged book souvenir works on both the paracanonical and the anti-canonical level in that Pollard rescues a reading experience that would be lost to time, one that shows what girls read, as opposed to what girls were told to read. Pollard saved the beloved books, and she saved the lost books. By saving lesser-known girls' stories alongside more classic or canonical titles, Pollard reinforces the significance of a paracanon or even an anti-canon of children's literature by salvaging somewhat obscure and less-than-pristine books. And while Digby says the salvaged souvenir was not bought, Pollard's books were purchased but often "picked up" cheaply. Digby's assertion that no material value should be understood here as monetary value, for books are quite valuable in their materiality. They have been salvaged from long-disused nurseries and estates. They represent Jack Zipes's idea of exchange value: an intrinsic and private value embodied in books meant to instruct, influence and entertain young girl readers.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Susan Digby, "The Casket of Magic: Home and Identity from Salvaged Objects," *Home cultures* 3, no. 2 (2006): 171.

¹⁰⁰ Digby, "The Casket of Magic: Home and Identity from Salvaged Objects," 171.

¹⁰¹ Jack Zipes, *Sticks and Stones: the Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Zipes' discussion about "value" begins on pg. 62.

A materiality that signifies the personal for Pollard, both as specimens of girlhood and book history.

Conclusion

Pollard had the insight to acquire materials that others considered insignificant, in what Bradford calls “a desire to protect works unappreciated by others.”¹⁰² Even Edgeworth’s father did not catalogue the children’s books he bought. Perhaps he considered them ephemeral or insignificant because they were children’s books. In this way, Pollard was able “to resist the criteria inculcated by one’s generation and class, and to collect against the grain- to wriggle out of belonging to an established set. Sometimes, one collects so as not to submit to social expectations, or to ‘belong.’”¹⁰³ Burrows and Johnston insist that collecting was a way to demonstrate taste, wealth, and social standing. This is not true of Pollard. Collecting children’s materials meant gathering forgotten books in old houses and discarded items. It was a subversive way to challenge structures and concepts of collecting. Her collection does not reflect “taste,” defined as the intellectual discernment of an object’s artistic merit, but rather, it shows her taste for the undistinguished ordinary. Collecting commonly involves an aesthetic motivation to collect beautiful works of art or the desire to accumulate objects whose uniqueness increases their worth. Collectors look to compile collections whose scope is delimited, where order is brought to the disorder of the “chaos of memories,” as Benjamin says, and there is no question of what will be found within.¹⁰⁴ Pollard collected things discarded in nurseries and gave them importance by collecting them and bequeathing the collection to Trinity.

This offers insight into Pollard, who collected “against the grain” by collecting girls’ stories and rescuing children’s books from oblivion. Elsner continues: “Collecting can also attempt to challenge the norm, and cock a snook at the accepted patterns of knowledge into whose regulative frame the interests and energies of the world have been corralled.”¹⁰⁵ The result is that Pollard’s taste for the unexceptional

¹⁰² Clare Bradford, “(Re)Constructing Australian Childhood: The Pound Collection at the State Library of Victoria, Australia,” 22, no. 3 (1998): 328.

¹⁰³ Elsner and Cardinal, introduction to *The Cultures of Collecting*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library,” 62.

¹⁰⁵ Elsner and Cardinal, introduction to *The Cultures of Collecting*, 3.

shapes the quasi-public collection at Trinity. Pollard's actions affirm that those stories she purchased were important enough to be preserved. She shows that these stories, while considered insignificant, not "real literature" by contemporaries of their publications, are, in fact, more significant to the discourse of not only what children were reading but who was promoting them, buying them, and teaching them to children at home. In this way, Pollard collects against the grain, relying on the collection becoming important through its bequeathal, largely due to the abovementioned concepts. Pollard decided what children's books were worth keeping and, therefore, worth remembering and continuing to receive our endorsement all these years later. In effect, what Pollard collected determined what was good enough or beautiful enough to be collected, and these objects create importance and cultural and historical significance.

The effects of Pollard's prizing of placing a social value on books that may not have much intrinsic worth have many layers. As discussed in the previous section, collecting and bequeathing instilled value in the books Pollard acquired. Having so many Edgeworth editions gives these books additional value even though many are not in prize condition. Many show a combination of being both well-read and neglected over the centuries. As a major theme of the collection, girlhood stands next to other important literary concerns of class, race, gender, and representation in children's literature. The question of canon is important to Maria Edgeworth's discourse and the construction of girlhood because it provides a social context for meaning-making. This collection gives Edgeworth no small amount of authority in the historical representation of girlhood. Because Pollard collected so many Edgeworth titles, and there are many editions of the same titles, an Edgeworthian girlhood significantly influences the scholar's understanding of what an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century girlhood looked like.

By choosing to leave her collection to Trinity, Pollard reclaims an Irish context for Edgeworth in the Collection and asserts that Edgeworth is significant to the study of Irish children's literature by holding space for the books that Anglo-Irish children read. While it has been noted that many Irish imprints and Irish authors are found in the Pollard, most books are British publications. However, Irish children's literature may be defined by the books Irish children read, not by who printed them. This differs from looking at Edgeworth's work in the British Library

or the Bodleian at Oxford, which would seem to isolate Edgeworth's texts in a British context. By spotlighting an Irish significance for Edgeworth via Trinity College Dublin, Pollard ensures that Edgeworth remains, consciously or subconsciously, in the purview of Irish children's literature research.

Pollard surely understood that within the literature she was collecting, many of the books she acquired would have been shared with families and read aloud. The novel as family reading was prolific in the long nineteenth century, and the "rampant Romanticism of a crossover literature" became something modernists like Henry James wished to separate themselves from.¹⁰⁶ She was preserving the books and the crossover writing tradition that Edgeworth and her nineteenth-century contemporaries wrote within. This is how Edgeworth, as a cross-writer, remains on the periphery of the canon without disappearing completely. Her didactic texts were meant to instruct children who have lost their cultural imperative since the Golden Age of Children's Literature made, first and foremost, the distinction that children's texts should be enjoyed for pleasure, not just consumed for education. Yet her books offer a depth of meaning when considered in their historical context, exerting Calvino's peculiar influence, refusing to be forgotten. The Pollard Collection allows Edgeworth's books to offer socio-historical literary significance. It gives them value as tools to articulate the connections between historical texts, current fiction, ideologies of gender and power, and readership and ownership. Furthermore, and more specifically, by including titles like *Leonora*, *Helen*, and *Letters for Literary Ladies*, Pollard imbues Edgeworth with some authority on the subject of young women, and the Collection reflects this by holding titles read by both children and adults.

By collecting many of Edgeworth's novels and essays, not just her children's story collections, Pollard asserts Edgeworth's significance as an Irish writer whose works for children are equally as important as her texts for adults (Figure 54). Under the umbrella of Trinity's Early Printed Books and Special Collections, the Pollard

¹⁰⁶ Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*, 58. Lundin is referring to Felicity Hughes, who noted crossover novels for family reading were not considered distinct, that "a serious novel would be one unread by children." Felicity Hughes, "Children's Literature: Theory and Practice," *English Literary History* 45, no. 3 (1978): 542-61.

Collection holds ten of the twenty copies of *Castle Rackrent*, including a first edition of Edgeworth's best-known novel.



Figure 54: *Castle Rackrent*, *An Essay on Irish Bulls* and *The Parent's Assistant* together in an archival box from the Pollard Collection.

One of three copies of the first edition of *Leonora* is in the Pollard Collection. Four out of seven editions of *Helen* are in the Pollard, including a first edition in three volumes. An incomplete edition of *Patronage*, the first edition, is also held there. The Pollard Collection holds six of Trinity's ten editions of *Essays on Irish Bulls*, Edgeworth's philosophic attempt to show the witty talent of the Irish lower classes. Only two of her texts considered "adult" do not appear in the Pollard Collection: *Practical Education* and *Belinda*, of which there are two and three copies, respectively, in Early Printed Books.

In collecting Edgeworth, Pollard manages to conflate the texts for children and adults, elevating the status of the children's texts in the Edgeworth canon, giving them equal importance by collecting them alongside well-known and widely studied texts like *Castle Rackrent*. This blurs the lines around the readers but also around childhood and girlhood, and acquiring these titles suggests Pollard felt strongly about Edgeworth as a representative of the type of collection she was building.¹⁰⁷ It reflects Edgeworth's cross-writing, as collecting all and any Edgeworth not only gives Edgeworth significance but enforces the point made in Section One that Edgeworth often wrote with a dual audience in mind, or at the very least, did not discriminate between the ages of her readers. Neither does Pollard make that distinction. She collected not just tokens but multiple editions of *Rackrents* and *Irish Bulls* and *Letters for Literary Ladies* for her children's collection. It may be that she simply loved Edgeworth and hoped to increase her significance by collecting anything she could find. Indeed, acquiring the books for adults helps to hold Edgeworth up in the company of other Trinity Special Collections, such as the Fagel Collection, which holds some of the same Edgeworth titles found in the Pollard.

¹⁰⁷ Lydia Ferguson and Charles Benson each state Pollard's propensity to collect Edgeworth.

When comparing Pollard to other British and Irish book collectors, Pollard aligns with the northern industrialists in Britain, who collected with an educational purpose “as a means of developing the cultural and educational environment of growing towns.”¹⁰⁸ Alfred Chester Beatty and J. P. Morgan “worked to turn their collections into public institutions as well as personal memorials,” but Pollard was not interested in a personal memorial. Others like R. E. Hart in Lancashire “used their collections to enhance the civic value and importance of their native town,” but Pollard’s interest appears academic.¹⁰⁹ Pollard ensures her legacy by bequeathing the collection in its entirety to Trinity, ensuring it gets used as a research collection and stays relevant for generations. But like these collectors, Pollard’s “animating factor behind (her) ceaseless aggregation of (her) collection” was “securing and transmitting knowledge for the future.”¹¹⁰ Burrows and Johnston assert that for collectors like Thomas Phillips, there was “an awareness that the evidence for the past — both distant and contemporary — was slipping away and in danger of being lost forever.”¹¹¹ Pollard’s collecting practices are also linked with antiquarianism, a desire to preserve the past, preserve as much historical material as possible, and preserve or illuminate the childhoods and the reading lives of Irish children in former centuries. This motivated Pollard, but the book history element would have also held significance for her. In any case, there would be a sense of doing important work for posterity. Pollard could be seen in a similar light with Sir Hans Sloane and Thomas Phillips, who collected anything that might offer cultural significance, with little regard for strict parameters on what to collect. It appears her hunting and gathering were not so selective, and her goal was to cut as broad a swath across Irish reading childhood as she could. Because it was a private collection, she could choose to emphasise Edgeworth along with any of her favourites by collecting more of them. But because it is no longer personal, albeit protected, these titles ask questions of theme and focus within the collection and whether that was intentional. Literary scholarship understands that all meaning is constructed. Indeed, the meaning of girlhood is socially constructed, as is the meaning of children’s literature or the

¹⁰⁸ Burrows and Johnston, “Collecting the Past,” 6.

¹⁰⁹ Burrows and Johnston, “Collecting the Past,” 2.

¹¹⁰ Burrows and Johnston, “Collecting the Past,” 6.

¹¹¹ Burrows and Johnston, “Collecting the Past,” 6.

special collection. As such, the Pollard Collection derives meaning as a special collection of children's literature, laden with childhood texts for girls. What did Pollard hope would come of it all?

3.2 The Institutional Collection

Pollard's impact on Trinity Library, its systems, and organisation was profound. Pollard's insistence on detailing catalogue records for early printed books, including collations, printing, publication, illustrations, paper, bindings, provenance, and indexes, became standard cataloguing procedures at Trinity Library. She also instigated teaching historical bibliography to postgraduate students, what we now call book history.¹¹² She normalised best practices for cataloguing descriptions of rare books. This penchant for analytical bibliographic description was Pollard's legacy that researchers working in Early Printed Books still benefit from today. While bibliographic description was neither revolutionary nor new, it was not standardised, consistent, or even expected at Trinity until Pollard insisted on a uniform practice. This legacy would prove useful to future researchers willing to spend time with the books in the Pollard Collection, as the catalogue records would have more detail than ever before and offer researchers a glimpse at the items' materiality and textual contents before they even called up the book.

Only an experienced librarian like Pollard, with expertise working in special collections, could understand the significance of acquiring and collecting multiple editions of the same title for an institutional collection. Clare Bradford notes that collecting as many variants of a title as possible can mitigate any unintentional censorship by the collector: "Only a private collector could have conceived of such an aim and devoted to it the obsessive attention with which Pound searched for material."¹¹³ Bradford is writing about Australian book collector Ken Pound, whose collection, comprising almost 25,000 items, was purchased in 1994 by the State Library of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia. Still, the same can be said for Pollard. The Pollard Collection, too, is a book historian's project, not a literary scholar's or a teacher's. The Pollard Collection results from a professional insight into how a text changes based simply on the materiality of the book surrounding it. What is unclear is whether Pollard set out to collect any children's book she could afford or if she had something specific in mind. Did she always have a future research collection in

¹¹² Pollard, *That Woman! Studies in Irish Bibliography*, x.

¹¹³ Bradford, "(Re)Constructing Australian Childhood: The Pound Collection at the State Library of Victoria, Australia," 326.

mind and plan to leave it to Trinity? Or was her approach to collecting more serendipitously influenced by her mood or available funds? The collection is described earlier in this thesis as being predominantly made up of Irish imprints, Irish writers, and girls' stories, representing not just girlhood but Irish, Anglo-Irish, and British children's culture. Pollard collected remnants of her own girlhood: schoolbooks, Irish publications, female authors, and girls' stories. It is easy to assume this was a conscious decision on Pollard's part to collect books comprehensively. Ultimately, it matters less what kinds of girlhoods are portrayed in the stories, what the author's intentions were, or why the prizes were awarded; it is more significant that the book souvenirs were collected by Pollard at all. Pollard emphasises the materiality of the collection when collecting books and making that collection personal. Her work as a librarian developing best practices for the catalogue also helped cultivate the taste of the researchers who worked with that catalogue and those materials. She began instilling an appreciation for book history, the materiality and physicality of the books, and an awareness of the book as a souvenir and object. Today, her collection preserves the spatial, physical, and material importance of her efforts and these book objects.

The Books in Relation to One Another

If anti-canonical books do not embody the qualities that make them canonical, how can their value be analysed? Certainly, Pollard's creation of a collection and eventual bequeathing is a process that participates in the production of value. Collection building gives value to the otherwise neglected, no longer rendering them irrelevant. The collection allows for "the shifting positions that social and educational groups take" at different times, reinvigorating obsolete or irrelevant books that might present an archaic girlhood.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, by virtue of the collected Pollard books, the fact that they are all part of the same collection brings each book value. The relation between these canonical and anti-canonical books gives the Pollard Collection and its books their value.

Defining a collection can be difficult, for it is often done after it has been amassed. Pollard collected books that interested her and spoke to her

¹¹⁴ Zipes, *Sticks and Stones: the Troublesome Success of Children's Literature*, 67.

understanding or experience of girlhood. Eventually, the collection's themes were revealed only when there were enough books to see patterns in the purchasing. Thus, the process of defining the collection becomes self-reflexive: the themes of the books define the collection, while the collection itself imposes a history on the books. The themes of the collection are the net that holds the individual books in the collection together. The books relate to each other in the collection and illuminate a collected girlhood and a collected girl character expressed in the many texts and paratexts found there. Thus, both the collection as a whole and the individual books within it function as souvenirs.

This relationship can be understood through Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood's work in *The World of Goods* (1996), where they posit that because goods are neutral and their uses social, their value is in relation to one another; nothing has value by itself.¹¹⁵ This suggests that the meanings of Edgeworth's books can only be understood when held up to other books in the collection. They clarify that one physical object has no meaning by itself. So the question of why it is valued has no meaning either: "The meaning is in the relation between all the goods, just as music is in the relations marked out by the sounds and not in any one note."¹¹⁶ This describes perfectly the alchemy that occurs in the Pollard Collection, where the value of each Edgeworth book is insignificant, but the value of the collection as a whole is priceless. Whether the books are considered canonical or anti-canonical, obsolete or relevant, precious or worthless, pristine or falling apart, the fact that they comprise a collected childhood experience suggests "the meaning of each is in relation to the whole."¹¹⁷ Edgeworth's books have meaning because they are related within the collection, particularly as there are many editions of the same titles. Their meanings are reflected, compared, and understood in connection with other books. They provide meaning to one another, which reflects significance in each book, and in turn imparts meaning to the Collection.

Assemblage Theory offers a useful description of the ways in which the Pollard books relate to one another and derive meaning. Miguel DeLanda posits that assemblage consists of parts that are somehow fitted together to establish a

¹¹⁵ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, xv, xxii.

¹¹⁶ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 49.

¹¹⁷ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, xiii.

relationship between them, but these parts are not uniform in origin or nature.¹¹⁸ These relations can have an interiority or an exteriority to them, or they can be intrinsically or extrinsically related. The Pollard books have both. They share the interiority described as girlhood's personal, biological identity, a "social role defined by convention." At the same time, they are also connected by exteriority as simple as "the air that exists between them, transmitting influences that connect them but do not constitute them."¹¹⁹ Sometimes, it is the work of opposing one another that objects within an assemblage will connote meaning. This is discussed later when considering other themes in the Pollard Collection as they relate to the girlhood found there.

The Pollard books are material possessions that "make and maintain social relationships."¹²⁰ This means that Edgeworth's books in the Pollard have a double role: to educate girl readers, as they were intended to do by the author and printer, but also to draw lines in social relationships and between classes, and in this way, illuminate power structures inherent between adult author and girl reader. If, as Douglas and Isherwood claim, commodities are good for thinking, then these books work to transmit their messages to the reader and, because of their production, may transmit certain kinds of messages depending on their physical construction and are thus imbued with meaning.¹²¹ The books connect the author and printer to the reader as commodities, items passed from one person to another that cannot mean anything without the human connection. Edgeworth's books are just a portion, albeit a large one in the Pollard, of the commodities that are good for thinking and allow meaning to be inferred, even internalised. They are what Douglas and Isherwood call "a nonverbal medium for the human creative faculty."¹²² Put simply, Edgeworth's books are a conduit that socialise the reader and spark an internalisation process that allows the reader to derive personal meaning through her interaction with the book.

¹¹⁸ Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Speculative Realism) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 2.

¹¹⁹ DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 2.

¹²⁰ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 39.

¹²¹ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 39.

¹²² Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 41.

The Pollard Collection offers myriad ways to understand the process and reprocessing of consumption. Consumption says something about the reader, as mentioned, but about the individual more generally. In a collection, there are many individuals who encounter the book objects. The previous chapter considered how Pollard interacted with the books outside of purchasing and what her consumption (collecting, annotating, bequeathing) says about herself within the time and space of that consumption. Pollard “need(ed) compliant fellows if (s)he (was) to succeed in changing the public categories ... and making the universe more intelligible.”¹²³ She needed the Trinity community, librarians, and scholars to buy into her collection’s significance and to recognise its scholarly and cultural significance. By accepting her bequest, Trinity also validated her redefinition, not just Douglas and Isherwood’s traditional event, collecting, but also conventional views on collections and girlhood. Indeed, she redefined views of Edgeworth, whose historical impact is not disputed but whose relevance is not appreciated without a fair amount of nuance. Pollard confers value on Edgeworth by acts of consumption, simply by collecting and bequeathing her books to Trinity.

The Pollard Collection demonstrates girlhood through the relation of the books to one another, which means the construction of girlhood can be seen in relation to the construction of the collection. Librarian and independent researcher Valerie Coghlan discussed how sometimes a collection as a whole can say more than the books themselves. I had a series of conversations with Valerie about collections in Ireland. Her colleague Susan Parks at the Church of Ireland College of Education once suggested they buy a collection that had just come up for auction by the family of Robert John Fynne, an education professor and Education Department Chair at Trinity College Dublin in the first half of the twentieth century. Coghlan questioned if there was a justification for purchasing Fynne’s collection. Parks agreed that the books were not worth much on their own, but when considered together as a complete entity, they offered insight into his educational theory and how the program at Trinity was structured. Fynne’s book “Montessori and her Inspirers” was published in 1924 (Montessori published her method in 1909). In a review of the book found in *The Journal of Education*, the reviewer states Fynne liked that

¹²³ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 45.

Montessori used scientists, not educationalists, to base her theory upon because “She did not worship Rousseau or his disciples—Pestalozzi, Herbart, or Froebel—but chose physicians—Itard and Sequin—instead of educational theorists.”¹²⁴ There is very little published about Fynne, and this collection is the only representation of his educational theory and the ways in which he may have shaped what is taught in Trinity’s School of Education. Pollard is similar in that there is little about her work or life and even less about why she collected what she did. That her collection was bequeathed intact in its entirety helps to understand what philosophy and ideologies directed her collecting. The worth of the books as individual titles may be inconsequential, but as a collection, they offer a unique insight regarding the valuing of both Edgeworth and Anglo-Irish literature when examining the construction of girlhood in the collection, shedding light on girlhood at the time Edgeworth wrote and during the years Pollard collected.

The Many Meanings of the Pollard Collection

It is this act of consumption, of reading Edgeworth’s books in the Pollard Collection, that allows for both public and private meanings of the books to be understood, what Jennifer Walklate describes as “how the public and the private, the tangible object and its value-laden meanings, interconnect in display and how, therefore, identities and experiences are represented and made sense of for selves and others.”¹²⁵ Similar to how Alison Waller describes the forming of private and public canons, so are private and public meanings derived from encounters with the book objects in the Pollard Collection. Walklate explains how “elements of human culture, stories, concepts and ideas, are often thought through things,” in this case, books.¹²⁶ She furthers this thought: “The interconnectedness of people and things ... taps into cultural knowledge and feelings,” it is a “complex and deeply embedded interconnectedness” where emotions are connected to objects that represent events or experiences.¹²⁷ This mingling of private and public meaning through book objects

¹²⁴ Fynne Robert John, “*Inspirers of Montessori* by Robert John Fynne [review],” research-article, *The Journal of Education* 101, no. 7 (2517) (1925).

¹²⁵ Jennifer Walklate, “Introduction: the Mutuality Between Objects and Persons,” in *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories*, ed. Sandra H. Dudley et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 14.

¹²⁶ Walklate, “Introduction: the Mutuality Between Objects and Persons,” 14.

¹²⁷ Walklate, “Introduction: the Mutuality Between Objects and Persons,” 14.

“connote layers of meaning which are intangible, based upon the attribution to them of various symbolic political, social and personal values.”¹²⁸ Edgeworth’s books become traces of stories, not only the texts but the stories of the owners of books. The consumption of Pollard books occurs at Walklate’s “sites of action in the present, which communicate or at times recreate, the past.”¹²⁹ Here again is Susan Stewart’s souvenir of one’s own lived experience as a reader, as a person consuming thoughts and ideas that the culture of their girlhood presented to them. The book souvenir is “a window into a specific past event and memory.”¹³⁰ Now, the books remain souvenirs indefinitely, conjuring memories and experiences for every reader who engages with them while working together to depict a culture of girlhood in the collection.

Stewart says souvenirs provide a way to capture an authentic experience beyond consumer culture’s mediation and abstraction.¹³¹ Edgeworth’s books are abstracted in the Pollard Collection in that they are neutral or only confer meaning when involved in a social interaction, in this case, with a reader who finds personal value in it. The current culture places them high on a shelf that is out of reach of any contemporary experience. As souvenirs, these books embody the lost world of girlhood, which can only be recaptured by calling up the books and taking them off the shelf. They sit in timeless space until they are read, re-read and narrativised. The books “occupy not only an intersection between the private and the public, the intangible and the material, but also the past, present and the future.”¹³² They remind us of something old; they may inspire us to something new. Waller may disagree with this by insisting rereading can generate new meaning, but I think Witcomb correctly embraces both sides of this argument when she declares, “souvenirs feed the nostalgic impulse and are always necessarily incomplete objects, expressing a desire for something which cannot be grasped.”¹³³ It is not that the Pollard Collection is incomplete per se, but rather, Edgeworth’s books in the Pollard are incomplete in their meaning, only ascertained by each reader who encounters

¹²⁸ Walklate, "Introduction: the Mutuality Between Objects and Persons," 14.

¹²⁹ Walklate, "Introduction: the Mutuality Between Objects and Persons," 14.

¹³⁰ Walklate, "Introduction: the Mutuality Between Objects and Persons," 15.

¹³¹ Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration," 41. Witcomb discusses and paraphrases Stewart throughout her article, but much of what I refer to here is found on pg. 41.

¹³² Stewart, *On Longing*, 151.

¹³³ Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration," 41.

them. This collection of incomplete objects allows for a malleable, changeable, negotiated, and dynamic girlhood defined only through the act of consumption performed by different readers.

Stewart and Digby assume that souvenirs enable the production of meaning through narrative.¹³⁴ The story in the Pollard Collection is an actual reading experience, not an aspirational one. Pollard has salvaged material symbols of a historical girls' reading experience: she preserves the original exchange value between book and girl reader for scholars while creating a new type of commodity in the primary source. She gives the books a different kind of public value that "refer to an everyday life that was lived and experienced, but which can no longer be practised."¹³⁵

Because every reader, girl or scholar, construes a different meaning from the books they read, the books in the Pollard can be seen as resistant to interpretation, somehow pushing against the idea of narrative as a key to unlocking their meanings.¹³⁶ The books also form meaning in their physicality, and it is that particular narrative, that object biography, that contributes to the layers of meaning found in the Pollard Collection. The texts tell their stories, but the books tell other stories. It is what allows the Pollard to represent many girlhoods all at once. The collected books can be just what they are: books. They do not have to represent their former lives. Indeed, Hollindale would say they cannot do so, for we cannot construct girlhood but merely reconstruct it.¹³⁷ The books reflect "a flattening of the difference between souvenirs, family heirlooms and traditional objects."¹³⁸ Books are both souvenirs of girlhood and traditional objects. They have a life of their own besides the stories they contain, a physical meaning, despite any meaning only made manifest by the user. If all meaning is socially constructed, then the meaning is latent in the books because readers can derive different meanings from the same book. Books can also have value without implicit meaning attributed simply by being collected. The Collection gives meaning to the books as collected objects, as pieces

¹³⁴ Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration," 44.

¹³⁵ Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration," 43.

¹³⁶ Witcomb, Digby, and Stewart all address narrative as meaning making in one form or another, and these discussions can be found in all the pages footnoted in this section.

¹³⁷ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 29.

¹³⁸ Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration," 43.

of the collection. This is how little-known titles alongside more famous stories perform the same function: to express or represent girlhood, to allow readers to find meaning within their pages.

The Pollard Collection as Cultural Capital

With all these considerations of value and meaning, as well as canons, paracanons, and anti-canons, Edgeworth's books' influence should also be considered objects of what Pierre Bourdieu calls cultural capital. The Pollard books hold cultural capital in their "objectified state" as objects or "cultural goods."¹³⁹ Bourdieu contends that cultural capital is also accumulated in "the embodied state," which is personal and must incorporate the self, reflected in the reader as a personal investment of self-improvement, resulting in becoming "cultured."¹⁴⁰ Moreover, this cultural capital functions as a symbolic capital, not necessarily a practical one. Having cultural capital means having an advantage or power over other objects and other people, being in the know, and being better able to compete in school (Bourdieu's specific concern) or, more widely, in society. Bourdieu states that capital and power are the same thing, so if Edgeworth's books function as cultural tokens within the collection, what is their value in terms of cultural capital?¹⁴¹

Jack Zipes discusses how "we in academic institutions ... comport ourselves to distinguish ourselves in power relations ... in which we use our accumulated knowledge of children's literature as cultural capital."¹⁴² This cultural capital is commodified in that the commodity takes the form of a book that children use and is used with children, all intended to provide instruction, pleasure, and a means for self-improvement.¹⁴³ These books as commodities have an exchange value that depends upon the circumstances of how the book is used, which include reinforcing ideology, enhancing literacy, and changing a social situation. The value of these uses is private, in how a reader might identify or empathise with a character or how they might learn about the world, find hope, or better understand themselves. Zipes

¹³⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*, ed. John G. Richardson (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), 282.

¹⁴⁰ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 283.

¹⁴¹ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 281.

¹⁴² Zipes, *Sticks and Stones*, 67.

¹⁴³ Zipes, *Sticks and Stones*, 65-66.

further positions scholarly readers to find material, scholarly, and personal value in children's books and girls' stories.

Edgeworth's books as cultural tokens in the Pollard collection hold power over the collection in the sheer number of them, which works to define the collection simply by the fact that there are more of them than any other author's work. I have shown that Pollard did not purchase expensive children's books, including Edgeworth's books, as a rule. The value in the Pollard books is not in books' monetary worth but in their symbolic value, their cultural value: in what they represent or preserve, what history they keep alive, and how the books continue to be relevant today. There is also Zipes's exchange value for individual and private use here. It is a transactional value in that the social or cultural value of Edgeworth's books lies in the books' ability to offer something to the reader and the readers' ability to pull something substantial from the book. That "something" is subjective based on the reader, and the reader, in this instance, is the researcher. Bourdieu explains that "the social world is accumulated history" and that it is impossible to understand the social world "unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms."¹⁴⁴ There are layers of social interaction, of systematic rules and relationships, of cultural production in The Pollard Collection as it reintroduces, or perhaps reinvigorates, old musty books with cultural capital through a reinterpretation of Bourdieu's "economy of practices:" not his monetary exchange, but an exchange of the "long-lasting dispositions of the mind" through the acts of reading and researching.¹⁴⁵ It is not just the exchange of ideas but the combined embodied and objectified states of cultural capital in the Pollard Collection, with its many Edgeworth books, that imbue it with cultural significance. Bourdieu states that

cultural capital manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition. Because the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital, it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 280.

¹⁴⁵ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 282.

¹⁴⁶ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 283.

As a repository of knowledge of girlhood, childhood, children's literature, books and book history, the Pollard Collection possesses cultural capital that is "transmissible in its materiality" through the material objects that are children's books.¹⁴⁷ Bourdieu frames his argument in the context of hereditary transmission and accumulation, a social transmission from parent to child or from educated to uneducated. This parallels what happens when Trinity, as an academic institution with its scholars and teachers, embarks upon a transaction of cultural capital with its students, made possible through Pollard's donation of the Collection. Bourdieu mentions an "economy of generosity and the gift" where he speaks of hereditary gifts of time and money to offer children the best advantage in education and learning. However, this can also be understood in institutional terms, such as gifting resources and collections.¹⁴⁸ The Pollard Collection holds books as objects that house texts as ideas. The Collection contains cultural capital in embodied and objectified forms, waiting to be shared with, or in Bourdieu's words, transmitted to, the uninitiated, the uneducated, to students.

The Collection's Personality or The Space of Girlhood

I have demonstrated that the Pollard Collection holds souvenirs of girlhood and that these souvenirs represent "the social space of the book" that marks distinct events and stories in the collection's historical range.¹⁴⁹ More broadly, instead of a physical space, the Pollard Collection harbours a social space where varying girlhoods commingle. This symbolic space provides a landscape for encountering myriad themes and characteristics that determine its personality. As a souvenir, the book tells a story that looks behind, spiralling inward, to create a continuous and personal narrative of the past.¹⁵⁰ The books, in relation to one another, also create a place of renewal, which gives the souvenir a new function. The collection changes the souvenir's direction, sending it outward toward the future, renewing its purpose and redefining its use. Drawing on Stewart again, the Pollard Collection can be described as a space that holds nostalgia and memory, which works as viable

¹⁴⁷ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 285.

¹⁴⁸ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 284.

¹⁴⁹ Stewart, *On Longing*, 41.

¹⁵⁰ Stewart, *On Longing*, 135.

motivation for collecting these books as souvenirs.¹⁵¹ In being a space for memory and nostalgia along with a place that allows scholars to challenge these motivations, the Pollard Collection offers past and future places for texts and books.¹⁵² This, in turn, creates a space that allows for both preserving and challenging ideas of girlhood found in the Pollard's souvenir books. Each book in the collection is representative of what the collection stands for. Certain types of books illustrate certain types of girls. Every book in the collection creates its version of the girl, and all work to represent the Pollard Collection as a metaphor for girlhood.

Because the Pollard Collection holds mostly nineteenth-century editions, it offers real insight into a girlhood spanning over 100 years. The girlhood Edgeworth constructs or represents in her stories is not the only iteration in the Pollard Collection, but because she is so well represented in the collection, her constructions colour the collection with what may appear today to be a more traditional girlhood, however unconventional it was at the time of her writing. Edgeworth wrote many girl characters in many different stories and intended for her stories to be printed as collections. The Edgeworthian girl is not simply an Anglo-Irish girl of the Ascendancy or middle class. This girl was undoubtedly an intended reader of Edgeworth's books when she wrote, but the girl characters she created were more varied. At the heart of her characterisations depicted in this thesis are universal qualities: the girls are inquisitive, useful, loyal, demure, self-sufficient, grounded and self-possessed, not flighty or fashionable. This girl appears in some form in every story, collection, and book of Edgeworth's in the Pollard Collection. The Edgeworthian girl is a collected girl: the product of a collection of texts that influences girlhood in the collection overall. It is the ability to study these books in respect to one another: different editions of the same title; works by other authors who wrote during the same period; girls' stories as compared to boys' stories; books by female authors at each different era represented; that brings value of the collection. Looking at these books side by side, and examining their materiality, scholars can pull out certain girls and girlhoods from within the collection. The Pollard Collection illuminates a collected girlhood, a space where all girls exist.

¹⁵¹ Stewart, *On Longing*, xii, 135-6, 171.

¹⁵² Steedman, *Dust*, 7. My thought echoes Steedman's who claims, "the archive is a record of the past, at the same time as it points to the future."

Kenneth Kidd describes the special collections reading room as a “threshold of imagination and transformation,” stating, “you are about to enter a magical place.”¹⁵³ That magical place, to Kidd, is childhood. And while the reading room is certainly the physical space where this magic happens, it is the collection that fills a symbolic space with all the contradictions and confusions that accompany girlhood. The Pollard Collection is a threshold into the past, into historical girlhood, textual girlhood, bibliographical girlhood, and remembrance of personal girlhood. It embodies that unclear, undefined, uninhibited exploration that the scholar encounters when engaging with childhood texts. The reading room is a gateway into this space, but the space is filled with the collection, the books, and the stories they



Figure 55: The Pollard Collection books housed together in archival boxes in the Colonnades of the Old Library. The "OLS" in the shelfmark indicates Old Library Stacks and "POL" indicates the Pollard Collection.

contain. It is not the stacks; no magical stacks are filled with Pollard books. The books are tucked away in storage, unable to provide that serendipitous discovery layer of access to readers, only brought to life by the call slip for retrieval and use. Despite being out of sight and not occupying an obvious physical place seen by readers, the Pollard Collection is housed together in storage, not broken up or stored in various places (Figure 55). It is intentionally held together and contains its themes within a demarcated space. As an unseen space, the books delineate the boundaries of the collection.

When the books were being catalogued, the librarians created a handwritten logbook of the titles and grouped similar titles in storage boxes wherever possible. So, when a researcher opens a box that holds their requested book, they might discover more editions of the same title. The logbook functions as a physical manifestation of what cannot be seen on the shelves, assigning consecutive shelfmarks where possible to create groups that make it more cohesive. Because the collection is hidden from sight, the reading room becomes even more significant to discovering girlhood.

¹⁵³ Kidd, "The Child, the Scholar, and the Children's Literature Archive," 2.

Judy Attfield sees thresholds as transition spaces between personal and public spaces, as “areas of containment or places of negotiation,” and as places that negotiate different gazes.¹⁵⁴ The Early Printed Books reading room at Trinity is a transitional place and a personal and shared space. Steedman agrees when she posits, “no one historian’s archive is ever like another’s.”¹⁵⁵ She continues that each researcher’s account of their experience within the archive “will always produce counter narratives, of different kinds of discomfort.”¹⁵⁶ If the collection is the place where girlhood lies latent, secretly holding its many forms and iterations, the reading room is where expressions of girlhood are brought to life through the scholars’ interpretations. The Pollard Collection holds the possibility of finding any girlhood that the reader might seek: nostalgic, familiar, subversive, or controversial. It begs the reader to unlock its riches and uncover its philosophies. It is an earnest and energetic collection, ripe with discovery and steeped in tradition. It is as nuanced and multi-dimensional as girlhood itself, and the Early Printed Books reading room opens the door to the complexities that are the Pollard Collection.

Pádraic Whyte and Keith O’Sullivan state that “collections are always in a process of becoming” in a somewhat spiritual explanation of the fact that collections have the power to be continually reinterpreted.¹⁵⁷ In truth, the Pollard Collection as a bequeathed collection appears quite static: books are not acquired to add to the collection; bequeathed collections are not altered, and Trinity College Library considers them as complete and finite entities.¹⁵⁸ The Pollard Collection looks, at first glance, perhaps less “becoming” and more “already is.” It could be argued that only actively managed collections, with regular weeding and scheduled acquisitions, are always becoming. A better word for these collections might be “evolving.” But Whyte knows the Pollard Collection is more than it appears to be and offers a deeper

¹⁵⁴ Attfield, *Wild Things*, 155.

¹⁵⁵ Steedman, *Dust*, 9.

¹⁵⁶ Steedman, *Dust*, 9.

¹⁵⁷ Pádraic Whyte and Keith O’Sullivan, “Beyond Traditional Hierarchies: Creating Space for Children’s Literature Collections,” *Jahrbuch Der Gesellschaft Für Kinder- Und Jugendliteraturforschung GKJL* (2022): 168.

¹⁵⁸ I learned from Lydia Ferguson, the Head of Early Printed Books, that bequeathed collections are generally left intact. All items are included and catalogued, except for books that are in questionable condition or usability. Trinity Library continues to add historically significant children’s books to Special Collections, but these additions are not directly made to the Pollard Collection. The shelfmarks indicate this distinction.

insight with the word “becoming,” for the Collection becomes whatever the reader pulls from it and that something changes continually despite its static state. The reader determines what that identity or personality is and what it looks like. Right now, this researcher is pulling girlhood straight out of it, but it will become something different with the next bout of research, and it becomes something different with each person we ask to describe the collection. Readers can redefine the Pollard Collection because of the infinite possibilities for making connections between the books. And despite the fact that the Pollard Collection, like most Special Collections, has a beginning (the first book Pollard bought, or perhaps the earliest publication. This too is open for interpretation.) and an end (the last book purchased before she died, or the most recent publication date), the Pollard is always “becoming” something new, and the possibilities are endless.

All collections have a creation or invention point that the collector manipulates, but once that collection becomes institutional, it is often seen chronologically. As an endpoint, Pollard’s collection has comparatively few books published after 1914; those that are of a later date have a direct connection to other books in the collection, for example, Edgeworth’s 1931 edition illustrated by Nora McGuinness. It is easy to see the Pollard Collection as moving toward the twentieth century, especially when examining Edgeworth’s many editions. Pollard may have assumed the early twentieth century to be an appropriate stopping place, for it is when children’s literature becomes more firmly defined and where the market and readership are clearer and more distinct from adult markets. Production is also impacted by world war. It is important to remember there is no endpoint to girlhood, and the collection must push against these implied finish lines. Each book is of its time, unique to the time it was produced, acting as a beacon of girlhood, spotlighting the embodied “sensory engagement” with the book and experiencing “involuntary memories,” which evokes an intense sensory experience and a “collapsing of chronological time.”¹⁵⁹ The only time that matters is the moment of engagement with the book. Whyte’s “becoming” is crucial to resisting that endpoint and challenging the idea that the end is the goal. “Becoming” implies reinvention and recreation, both of which offer continuity, a circular or multi-directional weaving of

¹⁵⁹ Witcomb, “Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration,” 45.

the identity and personality of the collection. To avoid that sense of an ending, as Frank Kermode would have it, the Pollard Collection “is.” It continues just to be as it strives toward ever becoming.

Kermode warns against rectilinear rather than cyclical views of literature, which also translates to discussions of collections of literature.¹⁶⁰ Because collections must be organised and sense needs to be made, pushing against an ordered series of events, in this case, publication dates in the Pollard Collection, becomes imperative to preserve the integrity of both the girlhood and the girls’ stories found there. Girlhood texts are not ordered, and they do not end. Girls’ stories continue to be written, published and collected. They relate or refer to other girls’ stories, contemporary and historical. To find value in girls’ stories only as they relate to an outcome or an accomplishment—one that is imposed onto girl readers by the adults who construct the texts and books—is to compare the time during which they were written to an ideal end time. This end could be a public moment in publishing history but is more likely to be that private moment of crossing into womanhood. If the purpose of girls’ stories in the special collection is to help readers achieve adulthood, the value of girlhood within the pages is diminished as merely a step in a bigger process, not important enough in its own stage, reduced to insignificance and lost to history. To see Edgeworth’s books as working toward a specific construction of girlhood in the late Victorian period at the turn of the twentieth century, the time usually recognised as the birth of young adult literature for girls, is to risk reducing the prehistory and development of adolescent girls’ literature only to dismiss how these books relate or reflect their own time. Seeing girlhood texts this way means a child’s value lies only in who they turn out to be, not in who they are. Equally, the books’ value becomes singular, specific to the time they were written, and they become less valuable compared to books written in what many consider to be the Golden Age or the advent of Young Adult literature. The research collection avoids the eschatological conundrum Kermode warns about. Kermode is concerned with plots and their ends and states, “all such plotting presupposes and requires that an end will bestow upon the whole duration and meaning.”¹⁶¹ It is

¹⁶⁰ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction: With a New Epilogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5.

¹⁶¹ Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, 45.

important to note here that Kermode says an end to the plot is necessary and important, whereas this chapter refutes the necessity of an end to the collection. Kermode believes that the plot's ending gives meaning to the in-between time. But when he suggests the interval that the end defines "must be purged of simple chronicity," what he calls "humanly uninteresting successiveness," he describes the character of time in the special collection.¹⁶² Literary girlhood should not be reduced to a timeline that moves in a single linear fashion. Kermode wants the space of time within the plot to be filled with "Kairos," which he defines as "a point in time filled with significance" and "charged with meaning."¹⁶³ He prefers Kairos's "fulfilling of time" to Chronos's "passing time" or "waiting time ... time that shall be no more."¹⁶⁴ Notice how Kermode inadvertently describes what time is like in the collection, and by doing so, he releases the Pollard Collection from the finite:

It has to be ... 'temporal integration', our way of bundling together perception of the present, memory of the past, and expectation of the future, in a common organization. What was Chronos becomes Kairos.¹⁶⁵

That a critic so wholly unconcerned with collections of children's books could so beautifully sum up the time experienced in the Pollard Collection is remarkable and reinforces the need to refrain from giving girlhood an end time or a finish line to cross. Time is more cyclical, circular or multi-directional in the collection, as is an understanding of girlhood within the time that fills the Pollard Collection. It may ebb or flow. It allows all girls to coexist there with little concern for who they turn out to be, how they might grow up. The Pollard Collection remains shifting and changing, growing and morphing. Even though the publication dates end around 1914, the Collection does not allow that time to be the final product or definition of literary girlhood, because the Pollard Collection simply "is" and continues to just be. It stands within and outside time simultaneously, and research will grow and develop within the space and time of the Collection. Every new generation's research is a reinvention of the concept of girlhood, already alive in the collection. Every new

¹⁶² Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 45.

¹⁶³ Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 47.

¹⁶⁴ Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 47.

¹⁶⁵ Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 46.

theory offers a rebirth. The collection is a regenerative space and this sense of time and space with the books that fill it are what keeps the Pollard Collection eternally young and earnest. Like an Edgeworthian girl, the Pollard Collection resists fashion and stands grounded in self-possession. Like and Edgeworthian education, it is full of potential, a place of enquiry and self-directed learning where curiosity will always be rewarded.

Researching the Collection

The processes described above are a function of consumption by the reader. Returning to Douglas and Isherwood, consumption is a social process. They define consumption as “a use of material possessions that is beyond commerce,” such as a reader consuming books.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, they contend that books are objects that have “first and second effects” and develop meaning after they are read.¹⁶⁷ They see consumption as “an active process in which all the social categories are being continually redefined.”¹⁶⁸ In the case of the Pollard Collection, it is girlhood that is being redefined through the commodification of Edgeworth’s books as commodities of research, no longer commodities of girlhood. A redefinition occurs by placing them in a special collection and bequeathing them. Their meaning has changed because the time and place in which they are consumed by readers (who do not buy them) has changed. Reading Edgeworth’s books as adult scholars changes their meaning, as we cannot understand them as a girl reader might. Often unstable, we can only guess or rely on memory to call up what meaning we, as girls, would have construed from the books’ pages.

Books as commodities have a public value as well, one that Zipes calls “acculturative” in that books are used to “train and cultivate taste, to help children see distinctions and distinguish themselves;” the sociohistorical context must be considered to understand how and why books are evaluated.¹⁶⁹ Pairing Zipes’s thoughts with Donald McKenzie’s, a holistic approach to conferring value appears. While McKenzie worked to evaluate books bibliographically, Zipes wishes to

¹⁶⁶ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 37.

¹⁶⁷ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 49.

¹⁶⁸ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, 45.

¹⁶⁹ Zipes, *Sticks and Stones*, 47, 66-67.

understand the social implications of why certain books are valued and others not. Where McKenzie is concerned primarily with the book object, Zipes's first concern is the text. Both methods work together to illuminate how value is derived regarding child readers, but it is important to note this same process applies when these books are given a second life in the Pollard Collection. The exchange value lies in how scholars use accumulated knowledge of children's literature to determine what the books in this collection represent or how valuable they are to answering the research questions by reading them for research. Scholars distinguish themselves from other readers in this way: by researching books they have determined already hold value, which is decided differently for each reader.

These are the books scholars seek to learn from to determine how the books might inform girlhood as we know it today. The books connect different places and times in the lives of their owners, but they also connect different places and times within the collection. In this way, scholars like Stewart and Digby understand that souvenirs enable meaning to be assembled through a narrative, an object biography of the book's life as its girl readers may have encountered it.¹⁷⁰

Conclusion

The personal is not only found in the creating and maintaining of a collection. It is found in the researchers who come looking for a certain type of girlhood. Those who come looking to either support their thesis or find one. In the case of this project, the personal dimension includes discovering forerunners of girls' stories much loved as a young girl reader and understanding the books that came before and influenced these beloved twentieth century classics. The books that act as souvenirs of this researcher's girlhood are what Stewart calls allusions to childhood.¹⁷¹ Those beloved books of my girlhood are significant because of the narrative I've written around them, around reading them: the when, where, and why of reading them that explains their significance. Researching the Pollard books extends this as the Pollard books "create a continuous and personal narrative of the past" by giving my girlhood reading life a history.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Witcomb, "Using Souvenirs to Rethink How We Tell Histories of Migration," 43.

¹⁷¹ Stewart, *On Longing*, 136.

¹⁷² Stewart, *On Longing*, 136.

Sigmund Freud was preoccupied with beginnings and the start of things, claiming that to create an archive is to “recover moments of inception; to find and possess all sorts of beginnings.”¹⁷³ If Pollard was motivated in this way, to discover and preserve an origin point by collecting historical children’s texts, she was constantly looking back to a beginning before her time, to a point at which all suppositions about childhood or, more specifically for this thesis, girlhood may have originated. Pollard’s desire to make a children’s literature collection, Derrida says, is to want to “*repeat*,” and Hollindale, Steedman, Waller, Rose and others quoted in this thesis have shown why repeating childhood is near impossible.¹⁷⁴ Steedman quotes Derrida when she declares “an archive in process taking place at the moment forces a beginning,” but she is quick to refute Derrida when she sympathises with Antoinette Burton, who says “the history of the archive is a history of loss” which itself implies an ending.¹⁷⁵ However time is different in the special collection. Encounters with the books held there bring movement in time and meaning to the space, but mostly, time stands still in a Collection that holds the past, present and future within its space. The “stuff just sits there until it is read, and used, and narrativized,” making girlhood timeless.¹⁷⁶ The Pollard Collection’s beginning is different from the beginning of Pollard’s understanding of girlhood, and the moment of inception is not evident once the collection is bequeathed as a complete whole. That point of origin shifted from her private motivation to acquire so many books and build cultural capital as an investment in girlhood, to a new beginning after her death, a new point of origin when Trinity presents this collection for research. Steedman insists that “nothing starts in the Archive, nothing, ever at all, though things certainly end up there. You find nothing in the Archive but stories caught halfway through the middle of things; discontinuities.”¹⁷⁷ Similarly, in the special collection of children’s books, researchers are forever entering girls’ stories already in progress, which contributes to a revolving continuum and opposes a linear trajectory of time. Books and literature might be one of the only concrete ways to collect girlhood. The Pollard Collection allows scholars to parody an attempt to

¹⁷³ Steedman, *Dust*, 5.

¹⁷⁴ Steedman, *Dust*, 6. Emphasis in original.

¹⁷⁵ Steedman, *Dust*, 5.

¹⁷⁶ Steedman, *Dust*, 68.

¹⁷⁷ Steedman, *Dust*, 45.

collect a lived girlhood experience, provided they understand that girlhood looks different every time they open a book.

The Pollard Collection started as a private collection, without the rules and policies that guide a public or institutional collection. This allowed Pollard to collect books that interested her, and that spoke to her understanding or experience of girlhood. In this way, Pollard collected her own girlhood; one that valued education and modelled a version of ideal behavior. By collecting versions of her own girlhood, Pollard made girlhood part of her adult, professional life. Pollard was concerned with creating worth for her collection and did so by bequeathing it to Trinity. However, it is not just the act of bequeathing that gives it worth, but Trinity deciding

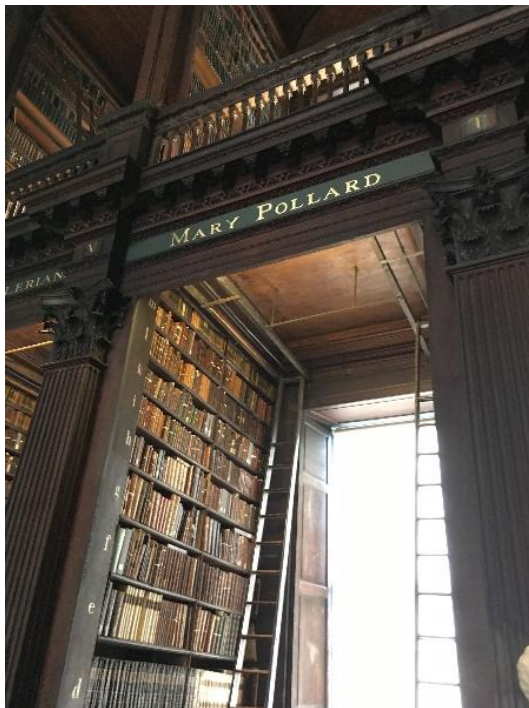


Figure 56: Pollard's name appears with names of other major benefactors in the Long Room of the Old Library. A decision was made by Trinity College Librarian Helen Shenton to use "Mary" as a way to redress the gender balance in the represented donors (relayed to me in conversation with Miss Shenton).

her collection was important. Once Pollard bequeathed the collection, its narrative origin shifted to Trinity, from the personal to the quasi-public. These books no longer refer to their owners but to the collection, and less to Pollard but more to the researcher. The collection becomes the point of origin for what each book represents. It is the point of origin for the girlhoods contained in its pages. Additionally, Pollard makes Edgeworth significant simply by adding so many titles. Not only did she add the children's stories, but the Collection holds many editions of Edgeworth's adult titles, which lend the collection additional authority on Edgeworth.

The Pollard Collection of children's books is not for child readers, that much is clear. Trinity College Dublin is not a public library with a historical collection where girls can check out the books and read them. And where adults in the public library "wield enormous power in the choice of what is written, published and selected for the child reader," the collector and the researcher hold a similar power in the special collection by determining which texts are significant both culturally

and historically.¹⁷⁸ We attempt to understand a historical girlhood, to see more clearly which patterns led to our current understanding of girlhood and how it is reflected in the Pollard Collection, and we choose which books get illuminated, singled out of the thousands of books held there. Pollard ultimately decided which books were worthy of keeping girlhood alive in the archive, which was an acknowledgment on her part that girlhood is not past, but is still within us, symbolically, spiritually, but was also a controlled, curated endeavour to craft that girlhood in the collection. She intended the collection be used by adult researchers.

Trinity Library qualifies the Pollard Collection with authority by including it in its Research Collections and by inscribing the Collection's namesake indelibly in the Long Room of the Old Library, next to other highly esteemed donors over the centuries (Figure 56). Thus, the Library is able to show "the performative magic of the power of instituting, the power to show forth and secure belief or, in a word, to impose recognition."¹⁷⁹ Bourdieu is speaking of academic qualifications of the individual, where the individual is the agent, but I refer to the collection as agent. Trinity gives a name to this collection, and as a named collection it has clout, it stands above the "regular sequence" in Early Printed Books and above the modern library collections. The naming and placing of it within the hugely symbolic Long Room of the Old Library imbue the Pollard Collection with a vast amount of cultural capital, whose currency buys both reputation and relevance to bolster the significance of children's literature research in Ireland.

Dudley considers "how objects and collectors themselves narrate and indeed create lives and meanings as they move through time and space." She explores the stories told about objects and who collects them, and suggests there is a shared history of certain people and certain objects, in this case girls and the Pollard books, and how the books "become imbued with specific meanings and associations."¹⁸⁰ Dudley, like Stewart, gives weight to the role nostalgia and longing plays in girls' books representing "a longed-for past time, prior to a rupture."¹⁸¹ The "rupture" can

¹⁷⁸ Marian Therese Keyes and Aine McGillicuddy, *Politics and Ideology in Children's Literature* (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 2014), 9.

¹⁷⁹ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 285.

¹⁸⁰ Dudley, "Objects, Collectors and Representations," 1.

¹⁸¹ Dudley, "Objects, Collectors and Representations," 3.

be understood simply as growing up, as puberty or the onset of adulthood. The rupture means that the readers change drastically and so “shifts the context of meanings enacted in the mutual relationships of objects and human beings,” leading Dudley to declare that “the engagement of humanity with its artefacts is manifold, complex and continually shifting.”¹⁸² Dudley is describing the process that the Pollard Collection contains or embodies: the malleable, dynamic, temporal, social and shifting construction of girlhood. The books have a sociohistorical trajectory: they “construct, acquire and change meanings and values” based on when and by whom the books are called up from the stacks. Their material culture is embedded in social relationships, the books and their users “constitute and express each other.”¹⁸³ In this way the materiality of the books describes the social relationships of the times during which they were produced, read, and later researched. The physicality of the books holds meaning as seen in these relationships, in the interaction between book and reader. Because they are held in the Pollard Collection their ability to communicate social identity continues long after their original use value ended. The books “take on new meanings in their life stories,” making the Pollard Collection a place of active reimagining, where many versions of girlhood are woven into the very fabric of the collection.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Dudley, “Objects, Collectors and Representations,” 15.

¹⁸³ Dudley, “Objects, Collectors and Representations,” 3, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Julia Petrov, “Object Meanings in Context,” in *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories: Essays in Honour of Professor Susan M. Pearce*, ed. Sandra H. Dudley et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 55.

Conclusion



Figure 57: OLS POL 5873. *Lazy Lawrence and Simple Susan* by Maria Edgeworth. London: Houlston & Wright, 1868. Frontispiece: *Simple Susan* coming from the garden to meet her friends: "Susan opened the garden wicket, and at this signal the crowd divided; and the first thing that Susan saw was little smiling Mary, with the guinea-hen in her arms."—Page 95.

Of all Edgeworth's characters, Susan, the eponymous hero of the tale "Simple Susan" (1800), is perhaps the most exemplary of Edgeworth's girl characters, for she is significant to text, book, and collection. While she embodies the qualities and characteristics I have been discussing throughout this thesis, it is not just Susan's "ethic of simplicity and generosity," her loyalty, her industriousness, or her kindness (although these descriptions mark her as an Edgeworthian girl), but also where and when she appears in print that marks her as significant.¹

In 1800, Edgeworth produced an expanded edition of her first collection of children's stories, *The Parent's Assistant*, which included eight new stories: "Simple Susan" was one of them. It is no coincidence that this story, written in 1798, appeared in print at this time, in this edition, in this collection. 1800 was a significant year: the Act of Union had been passed, the United Irishmen were punished for their 1798 rebellion, and martial law was enforced in Ireland in the wake of a dismantled

¹ Susan Manly, "'Take a 'Poon, Pig': Property, Class and Common Culture in Maria Edgeworth's 'Simple Susan,'" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2012): 319.

Irish Parliament. As a political story in the 1800 third edition, “Simple Susan” is what Manly calls “a tale preoccupied with the ideas of boundaries and borders.”² Manly describes how the tale is set in the Welsh Marches—the imprecisely defined Anglo-Welsh border—and she notes the First of May, May Day, as the precise time the tale takes place, a boundary day between Spring and Summer with traditional and cultural importance.³ “Simple Susan” allows the Act of Union to be viewed through the lens of a temporal, liminal girlhood, as a shifting moment when boundaries are renegotiated, and questions of power, vulnerability, and autonomy are raised. Susan’s story illustrates both the acquiescence and resistance to what an Act of Union meant for Ireland and, as such, is reflective of Edgeworth’s views on the matter: her wish for a more peaceful, more prosperous Ireland. Not all of Edgeworth’s stories are about girlhood specifically, but the ambiguities of girlhood allow Edgeworth to use the girl figure as the vehicle to express complicated and complex realities like the Act of Union. Edgeworth uses girlhood as an arena for playing with the political, the social, and the communal. It is a space rich enough to contain these larger concepts she wishes her readers to explore.

Susan is an exemplar of adolescent girlhood. She is virtuous and industrious, obedient yet independent. She is too old for the maypole yet young enough to be bullied by the older and wealthier Barbara. She is a child in her family home, yet she bears the financial responsibility to care for her ailing mother and save her father from military conscription. Susan’s liminality is heightened because she is associated with physical thresholds and boundary spaces, both within the story and *The Parent’s Assistant*. Susan moves from nonexistent in the first edition of *The Parent’s Assistant* to prominent in the third edition. Finally, she is symbolically representative in later editions, as seen in illustrations and frontispieces of editions where “Simple Susan” is the only story (Figure 23), or one of a few select stories in the book (Figure 57). Her story is a turning point; it appears in the middle of the collection, in an edition printed in a pivotal year, amid years of Edgeworth’s editing and rewriting activity. Printed as part of the dynamic third edition of *The Parent’s Assistant*, its new political stories work as a project for creating and rewriting girl characters.

² Manly, “‘Take a ‘Poon, Pig,’” 307.

³ Manly, “‘Take a ‘Poon, Pig,’” 309-10.

This examination of girlhood in the Pollard Collection has shown the importance of moving beyond text to consider the materiality of the book and its place in the collection, allowing me to explore ideas of writing, reading, and collecting girlhood. Through the combined study of social bibliography, collection studies, and children's literature criticism, I have highlighted a nuanced, literary girlhood evidenced in the texts by Maria Edgeworth held in the Pollard Collection of Children's Books. This literary girlhood stems from Edgeworth's lived experience and is made manifest in the many editions of her texts held in the Pollard Collection. These editions show a shifting, temporal girlhood across the long nineteenth century, and in turn, through the study of their paratexts, help to identify the unfolding implied girl reader. I refer back to Finkelstein's quotation mentioned in the Introduction as having inspired this thesis, which succinctly sums up the study of writing, printing, reading, and collecting girlhood:

Book history attempts to integrate understanding of the individual act of reading, how (the reader) create(s) meaning from these symbols in ink that (the writer has) written and the publisher has chosen to present in this format ... and why you bought or borrowed this book, who you are, where and when you are reading this, often aggregated with details of other readers to create a social profile of readership.⁴

I have shown that girlhood is liminal, social, temporal, shifting, and malleable. It is manipulated by the adults who had a hand in constructing girlhood based on cultural, societal, and their own ideologies of what a girl should be. Studying Edgeworth and her texts through children's literature, book history, and collection studies shows that conceptions and ideologies of girlhood are found in unlikely places: that girlhood is pervasive, subtle, and engrained in all aspects of culture, not just in texts but in prefaces, titles and intertitles, frontispieces and bindings. It is not just the younger children's stories that exhibit Edgeworth's kind of girlhood, but also the texts that appeal to an older readership, including those that have cross-written appeal that influence adolescent girl readers.

⁴ Finkelstein and McCleery, *An Introduction to Book History*, 117.

Edgeworth wrote girl characters living girlhoods that were collected and combined within her story collections, novels, and nonfiction. Her adept crossover writing was an extension of her lived experience, one where she often crossed borders as a successful writer, dependent daughter, teacher, sister, guardian, provider, companion to her stepmother, and steward to the estate. She negotiated many of these roles adeptly and comfortably from her home in County Longford, Ireland. Edgeworth's girlhood and her understanding of it have been examined together here in order to comprehend the nuanced writing of girlhood in her texts. Gubar's assertion that "no one moment" moves a person from girl to woman—that girlhood is a "messy unpredictable continuum"—helps to explain this amorphous girlhood Edgeworth lived and wrote. Edgeworth's adolescent experience is reflected in her girl characters, showing that while childhood ends, girlhood does not end; it transitions.

I have demonstrated that the best way to understand girlhood is through networks that allow for a multiplicity of meanings which commingle and intersect to form the concept of girlhood. I have highlighted Edgeworth's "lively community of gifted women that included Edgeworth's stepmothers and many sisters," who offered feedback and helped edit her texts.⁵ I have highlighted how print culture and the cheap print network, as evidenced in the W. H. Smith and Eason bookstalls and Routledge publications, disseminated texts and created new readers who reshaped what girlhood looked like. I have considered the wider social context of education, booksellers, libraries, and related bookish arenas that influenced the ingestion of Edgeworth's texts for girls by girl readers. I have conveyed how this network of books creates further meanings as they relate to one another within the collection. A network of critical approaches, drawing from children's literature, girlhood studies, book history, library science, and collection studies, allows new ways to open up and engage with ideas of girlhood in Edgeworth's work. Girlhood is evident within and among these networks: shifting, malleable, social, interactive, and understood within text, book, and collection.

⁵ Manly and Wharton, "Introduction: Worlds of Maria Edgeworth," 657.

A Hauntology of Girlhood

Because the experiences of communal and collected girlhoods “take the form of the narratives we use in telling about them,” these narratives reflect not just our experience of girlhood but also our construction of it and our hope for it. These experiences are held in the Pollard Collection, which is also a space for revisiting girlhood.⁶ The children’s literature special collection can be seen as Humphrey Carpenter’s “elusive Good Place” in children’s literature.⁷ While Carpenter’s good place is in the texts, the Pollard Collection is the “Good Place” where these books are housed in relation to one another. Carpenter declares, “all children’s books are about ideals. Adult fiction sets out to present the world as it really is; books for children present it as it should be.”⁸ Although arguably misguided, there is a Romantic nostalgia behind this sentiment that sees worlds in children’s books as good places. Because books function as souvenirs, as nostalgic trinkets, this nostalgia compels us to pull the books out of the flow of everyday time, to pull them out of Chronos and into Kairos, and move them to a special set-aside place. The Pollard Collection is filled with books which allow us “to capture and control time, bringing the past back to life ... allowing us to revisit it at our leisure.”⁹ Crossing the threshold into the reading room is akin to entering Kidd’s special place, childhood.¹⁰ In this sense, the reading room acts as a Foucauldian heterotopia; both a physical place and a space that holds other places and times concurrently within the textual and material narratives of the books.¹¹

Just as the special collection allows Edgeworth to be all parts of her identity at once—Anglo-Irish, daughter, teacher, writer, sister, etc.—so too does the girl in the Pollard Collection appear organic, changing, and growing, adapting to the needs of the researcher, the reader, or the period in history that defines her. Myriad expressions of girlhood are allowed to coexist in the Pollard Collection. Not all books

⁶ Jerome Bruner, “The Narrative Construction of Reality,” *Critical Enquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 5.

⁷ Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (London: Unwin paperbacks, 1987, 1985), 13.

⁸ Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, 1.

⁹ Coverley, *Hauntology*, 12.

¹⁰ Kenneth Kidd, “The Child, the Scholar, and the Children's Literature Archive,” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 35, no. 1 (2011): 2

¹¹ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” *Architecture/Movement/Continuite*, (Oct 1984), 4.

in the collection could be considered touchstones or exemplars: as Lundin reminds us, collections contain “less-than-literary texts and less-than-pristine editions” where “traditions deconstruct, canons reform, and the old makes new.”¹² If the reading room is a heterotopia, the collection itself must also be considered as a rich space that supports multiple, complex, and intersecting forms of girlhood. The collection functions much like the ecosystem of the bog: its nutrients are not always evident and may live below the surface. It has an anaerobic quality that preserves the books, suspending them in time. Its books may appear dank or unappealing, but it is lush and organic, providing nourishment through layers of meanings, allowing for a new ecosystemic expression of a communal, collected, negotiated, and dynamic girlhood.

The deep layers of the bog remind us that the Collection is not only a confluence of space but also of time: a convergence that illuminates the Pollard Collection as a site of hauntology of girlhood.¹³ The past is not gone, but persists and gives shape to the present. Its enduring legacy is not always obvious in the present moment, a way “in which the past returns to haunt the present.”¹⁴ Merlin Coverley explains hauntology:

The very idea of the ghost as that which comes from the past to manifest itself in the present and yet which belongs to neither, simultaneously both absent and present, challenges our belief in the unbroken progression of linear time.¹⁵

Coverley refers to Jacques Derrida and Mark Fisher in his exploration of hauntology, and he skilfully finds similarity where both “see history as one characterised by repetition and disruption, as the past recurrently irrupts into the present, forcing us to reconsider events and ideas we might have regarded as safely consigned to the past.”¹⁶ This happens in the Pollard Collection, where the spectre of girlhood returns to disrupt the present and to remind us of another possible future, what Fisher

¹² Anne Lundin, H., “A ‘Dukedom Large Enough,’” 310.

¹³ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction: With a New Epilogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 47.

¹⁴ Merlin Coverley, *Hauntology* (Harpenden: Oldcastle Books, 2020), 7.

¹⁵ Coverley, *Hauntology*, 11.

¹⁶ Coverley, *Hauntology*, 11-12.

would see as a tension between the *no longer* and the *not yet*.¹⁷ As Katy Shaw suggests, the “unheard voices and unspoken perspectives” from the past inform future readings of girlhood.¹⁸

Hollindale says, “a literature of youth can show us the significant experiences which both consummate our early life and enable us to leave it.”¹⁹ Why else do we study children’s literature if not to understand ourselves and the texts that created us, the cultural productions that brought us to this moment? The children’s literature special collection shows how past constructions inform current understandings of girlhood and how value is reinforced through the researcher’s concepts and definitions of preserved girlhood. To look at cultural constructions of the self, I can turn to the collection to understand both the girl reader and the self that was. In this way, what motivated Edgeworth and women writers of the long nineteenth century parallels my motivations for studying Edgeworth’s books today. Looking back to childhood can seem to simplify girlhood, but it may complicate the discourse further: my girlhood and adult construction of girlhood influence how I approach historical texts. I recall the past, scouring the ideas in the books and studying the narratives that construct or reconstruct girlhood and its complexities, in order to define it. I could change a book’s story when I place it within the context of my research, but my research in the historical collection of children’s books also affects my understanding of my own story, helping me to identify the influences that shaped my ideology of girlhood. The girl reader that I was, and the girl I once was, have led me to this research and prompted me to ask: how are my ideas shaped by family, education, daughterhood, motherhood, and librarianship? Here, again, I see the spectre of hauntology: the Pollard Collection contains a range of historical ideas about girlhood, shadows from the social or cultural past, that influence the present in ways that might not be obvious.

¹⁷ Mark Fisher, “What is Hauntology?,” *Film Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2012): 19. Emphasis in original.

¹⁸ Katy Shaw, *Hauntology: the Presence of the Past in Twenty-First Century English Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 16.

¹⁹ Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, 61.

Why This Matters Today

In Norma Clarke's review of William McCarthy's 2009 biography of Anna Letitia Barbauld, Edgeworth's friend and contemporary, she states, "like all good historical biographers, he has one eye on his own times."²⁰ This thesis, combining biography with bibliography, similarly has an eye on our own times. This thesis works to give a history of these books, their author, and the concept of girlhood, with a view to why this matters today. I have mentioned how the study of past constructions informs current understandings of girlhood. Lissa Paul insists children today are:

Increasingly configured in terms of their ability to connect with and participate in the world. That provides them with a family resemblance to Enlightenment children, who were encouraged, in that time of emerging democratic states, to see themselves as citizens, as participants in the world.²¹

Anna Mae Duane agrees that "the figure we now recognize as a child was created in tandem with forms of modernity that the Enlightenment generated and that the humanities are now working to rethink."²² Examining Edgeworth, her texts, and her times offers perspective on what society expects from girls, then and now. Studying historical girlhood and children's and young adult literature enables us to better understand girls today, to identify patterns and initiations into ideologies, both pervasive and subversive, that shape girlhood in the twenty-first century.

For Future Study

A renewed interest in girlhood studies in the arts & humanities and archival studies bodes well for future research in the Pollard Collection and beyond. The Pollard Collection is only one of several significant children's book collections on the island of Ireland, including the National Collection of Children's Books, which aggregates catalogues from major children's literature collections, and Dublin City University's

²⁰ Norma Clarke, "What Anna Did," *Times Literary Supplement* (May 2009): 9. This review sits behind a paywall, but I found Clarke's review referenced in Liss Paul's *Children's Book Business* (2011, 2).

²¹ Lissa Paul, *The children's Book Business: Lessons from the Long Eighteenth Century*, Children's Literature and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2011), 3.

²² Anna Mae Duane, *The Children's Table: Childhood Studies and the Humanities* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 3.

modern collection and archive of Children's Books Ireland.²³ There is still much work to be done on these collections. The Pollard Collection has only been catalogued and made available for research since 2018. Many items that were donated along with the collection, including Pollard's notebooks, collections of ephemera, and toys have not yet been catalogued and are not available for consultation. The potential richness of untapped material in the collection opens a wide possibility for research beyond the Edgeworthian construction of girlhood. While there are some obvious areas for future study, such as illustrations and seriality, the collection has limitless potential because we can never be sure what the interaction of reader and text, or their responses to those interactions, will look like. Research within the collection offers a chance to explore textual analysis, book history, and print culture. The possibility to investigate, uncover, and tell myriad stories about childhood reinforces the notion that childhood is nuanced, negotiated, recreated, organic, shifting, unnoticed, overt, classic, and queer.

This thesis offers a basis for future research in a few key areas related to children's literature studies. There is ample room for research on gender and identity within the Pollard Collection. Elizabeth Marshall, in *Keywords for Children's Literature* (2021), claims gender representations in children's literature "reflect and produce a politics about bodies, power and socialisation that extends beyond its pages."²⁴ The vast Pollard Collection can easily sustain critical examinations of girlhood as well as boyhood and nonconforming genders, represented both in Edgeworth's texts and through various other titles spanning four centuries. Even within Edgeworth studies, there is potential for gendered and queer readings of her work beyond those briefly examined in relation to "Angelina" and *Belinda*. I align with Tison Pugh, who sees queerness as "a descriptor of disruptions to prevailing cultural codes of sexual and gender normativity."²⁵ I mentioned in Section One that Edgeworth voiced her gracious deference and willingness to be guided by her father in all matters. Yet, the study of her life will show she also took on the role of a father

²³ The NCCB is currently defunct as a result of its platform becoming obsolete. However, Trinity College librarian Christoph Supprian-Schmidt, head of Content Management, is currently looking for a way Trinity might be able to assume the hosting of this catalogue.

²⁴ Elizabeth Marshall, "Gender," in *Keywords for Children's Literature*, ed. Philip Nel, Lissa Paul, and Nina Christensen (New York: New York University Press, 2021), 81.

²⁵ Tison Pugh, *Innocence, Heterosexuality, and the Queerness of Children's Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 292-93.

figure in her own right, escorting much younger sisters abroad, managing their marriage plans, and saving the estate from financial ruin when her brother, the heir apparent, nearly lost everything. While she wrote tales rooted in the domestic, she remained unmarried. She moved within a vast international network of scientists, reformists, and intellectuals, reflected in her writing where she often “assumed the dress of a masculine political life.”²⁶ Within her amorphous identity, we might position Edgeworth within the nonbinary spectrum from a gender perspective as well as the other liminalities I have discussed in this thesis.²⁷ Postmodernism’s contention that we are equally defined and not defined by all elements of our identity offers another critical path to understanding Edgeworth.²⁸ We see her as a perpetual intermediary, living comfortably within the ambiguities of adolescence, but also understand that she is neither mother, wife nor daughter; neither woman nor girl, neither masculine nor feminine. She lives at home but makes her own living. She is not head of the family but saves the family estate from financial ruin. Edgeworth was comfortable within her lived hybridity, but there is instability within that diversity of her experience as well that enables potential queer readings of her and her work.

Edgeworth’s Anglo-Irish identity hints at larger questions of identity within the Pollard Collection. The Pollard Collection holds the distinction of being the largest and most significant historical collection of children’s books in Ireland. Yet it is heavily peppered with imprints from Canada, the US, and Britain, and dotted with foreign language titles. Its Irish identity needs to be brought to the forefront through closer examination. Emer O’Sullivan discusses the effects of colonialisation on the Irish children’s literature market, noting that before the 1980s, children’s literature was almost exclusively imported into the Republic and belonged to “a literary system that was predominantly British.”²⁹ Since O’Sullivan’s study in 1996, the book trade in Ireland has changed significantly. There are Irish imprints, divisions of

²⁶ Susan Manly, “Maria Edgeworth’s Political Lives,” in *European Romantic Review* 31, no. 6 (2020): 772.

²⁷ In a similar fashion, Paul Pollard also challenged gendered binaries. She was the first woman appointed Keeper of Early Printed Books. She never married or had children, and she used a masculine name in her everyday life.

²⁸ Philip Nel, “Postmodernism,” in *Keywords for Children’s Literature*, ed. Philip Nel, Lissa Paul, and Nina Christensen (New York: New York University Press, 2021), 159.

²⁹ Emer O’Sullivan, “The Development of Modern Children’s Literature in Late Twentieth-Century Ireland,” in *Signal* 81 (1996): 192.

publishing houses, children's literary awards, and the advocacy group Children's Books Ireland. There are courses on children's literature in many Irish universities, all of which work to assert Irish children's literature's significance at home and abroad. Yet this distinguished collection is largely British, held in a university that is a product of British empirical expansion, now considered the premier Irish academic institution. There are concurrent doctoral projects happening alongside mine in the Pollard Collection that attempt to address these questions of Irish identity within the collection, including a project on provenance and children's marginalia, and a project on Irish-American immigrant identities within the collection. But, as I discussed above, there is plenty of room for further study.

While I stand by this thesis's assertion that the Pollard Collection houses girlhood, I acknowledge and hope that the collection does much more. The collection stands as a metaphor for girlhood, but that is not the only meaning to be derived therein. The act of collection was ongoing at the time of Pollard's death suggesting she intended for the collection to continue to grow and change, much like the childhood held within. Linda Kaufmann says, "since none of us is a coherent subject, we are always beside ourselves, in multiple senses."³⁰ Multiple constructions, definitions, and ideologies coexist in the Pollard Collection. The Collection offers a space to explore girlhoods, boyhoods, religious influences, political motivations, families, orphans, work, and play, and much more. Steedman sums it up nicely when she says, "historical practice has changed, and women have set out on their own campaigns to release "those many princesses, possibly beautiful;" the princesses are "the languishing (books) awaiting their rescuer."³¹ I wholeheartedly agree, for it is more than S. R. Ranganathan's third law of library science: "every book its reader," it is also "every book its time."³² Now is the time. So many as yet undiscovered and unexplored books in the Pollard Collection are just waiting for someone to cross that threshold of discovery.

³⁰ Linda Kaufmann, *Gender and Theory: Dialogues on Feminist Criticism* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 1989).

³¹ Steedman, *Dust*, 10. Steedman refers to Bonnie Smith's "princesses" in her book *The Gender of History. Men, Women and Historical Practice* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1998).

³² S. R. Ranganathan, *The Five Laws of Library Science* (Madras: Madras Library Association; London: Edward Goldston, 1931), [n.p.].

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