A Genealogy of Conversation:

gender subjectivation and learning French in England.

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Abstract

Why is French perceived to be a 'female' language in British secondary schools? And why should this explain both girls' superior performance, and boys' under-achievement in the language?
My aim in this thesis is to identify, within the framework of a Foucauldian genealogy, the historical conditions for the emergence of the gender of French and of a discourse on gendered achievement in education.

Disputing the commonplace that French has always been a frivolous female accomplishment, I argue that in the eighteenth century, though males and females of rank both learned French, conversation in general and speaking French in particular were highly valued skilled for males, as they were constitutive of the gentleman. However, learning French produced contradictory positionings for the gentleman because emerging discourses on English nationalism, and anxiety about masculinity, constructed the French as an effeminate Other. Knowledge of French was problematic for females only if it positioned them in the 'social' space, a space for display, but not in the domestic space.
In the nineteenth century, the emergence of a discourse on the sexed mind provided the conditions for a shift in the techniques for the construction of the gentleman, from the cultivation of his tongue to the cultivation of his mental faculties. This entailed a derogation of the tongue, which produced the figure of the taciturn English gentleman, and transformed the learning of French. While upper class males scorned the French tongue and learned only its grammar, French conversation came to be principally associated with females and the construction of femininity. French, I argue, acquired a gender not because of its association with females, but because it was inextricably enmeshed in discourses relating to the

construction of masculinity and English national identity. Following the traces of the discourse on gendered achievement, I have shown that females have been constructed as lacking in intellect not because their abilities were ignored or explained away, but because the evidence of their superior ability served to construct their mind as inferior and lacking. Absence of ability, on the other hand, produced the mental superiority of males and their boundless potential. In conclusion, my thesis demonstrates that a genealogical analysis of conversation and of females' learning of French has implications not just for practices in the classroom today, but for studies concerning masculinity and femininity, and the history of Anglo-French relations in the eighteenth century.

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Preface

Why is French perceived to be a 'female' subject in English secondary schools? How does a language acquire a gender?

In an earlier attempt to answer this question,[1] I had traced the history of girls' learning of French in England. I had assumed that the femaleness of French must have something to do with women. But it soon became clear that reconstructing aspects of the history of women did not provide answers. Rather, it raised more questions. Women's history does not simply slot in alongside men's history, neatly complementing it, as men and women do in the metaphor of the separate spheres. The history of girls' learning of French disrupted existing knowledges, exposed contradictions, and even highlighted aspects of the history of men's learning of French ignored in conventional texts; in other words, it rendered the familiar strange. How, for instance, could the almost exclusive historical association of French with females and accomplishments be reconciled with the fact that it was the eighteenth century gentleman who, to be accomplished, had to speak French? And, if, in the nineteenth century, speaking French was a female accomplishment, even celebrated as a symbol of femininity, why was it at the same time derogated as a frivolous, showy, mindless attainment? This, even as the *Schools Inquiry Commission* noted that girls knew French better than boys? These contradictions suggested that explaining the femaleness of French required looking not just at women, but at men, and therefore at gender and the construction of difference. The organisation of the thesis reflects this aim.

The introduction establishes the problem investigated in this work, a problem in the present. The femaleness of French is of great concern in modern language teaching circles, because it is seen to be responsible for the sex imbalance in both take up of, and achievement in the subject. But if the femaleness of French 'explains' boys' underachievement, it also

explains away, and simultaneously undermines girls' superior performance. What is the relationship between girls and boys' achievement? When and how has girls' achievement been celebrated? Following the traces of this theme into history enabled me to identify fundamental contradictions in the construction of the gendered mind and gendered mental abilities, contradictions which have serious implications for present discourses on education and achievement.

Chapter 1 examines critically the story conventional histories tell about the learning of French in England. There is no question that for centuries, English upper class males and females both learned French. However, these histories' unquestioned assumption that for girls at least, it was just a frivolous accomplishment, not only contributes to the belief that French has always been a female language, but occults the rhetoric of derogation often at work where female education is concerned.

Chapter 2 takes us to seventeenth century France. My thesis is about conversation, and it was in seventeenth century France that conversation, especially women's conversation, became central in the elaboration of the virtue of *politesse* and to the construction of the ideal male, the *honnête homme*. One aim of the chapter was to analyze how the practices of conversation positioned French males and females. The other was to describe how the discourses on conversation and *politesse* were constituted in their specific historical and cultural location, to provide a perspective on the way they were represented in eighteenth century England.

The next three chapters discuss a number of problematizations around the construction of the aristocratic gentleman, problematizations related to English anxiety about masculinity. Thus, conversation, politeness and learning French - travel on the Grand Tour - produced contradictory positionings for the English gentleman because of their gender ambiguity, which, I argue, was related to representations of the French and French cultural practices. This, however, served the emerging discourse of English nationalism, which constructed the French as an effeminate Other.

Chapter 6 looks at the way French was taught in eighteenth century England and identifies a shift from the stress on the ability to converse, in the early part of the century, to the rising importance of grammar in the latter part. Most importantly, it demonstrates that learning French was, at that time, not gendered. Chapter 7 discusses the emergence of two

moral 'spaces' and examines the positionings they produced for men as well as women: the social space, dangerous because it was synonymous with display and blurred gender boundaries, and the idealised domestic space, where the virtuous English woman reigned.

Chapter 8 is concerned with the nineteenth century, when the learning of French was transformed, and became gendered. While upper class males now scorned the French tongue, French conversation had become an essential accomplishment for upper class females. This dramatic change was just one aspect of a much broader shift produced by the emergence of a discourse on gender and national difference, involving the derogation of the tongue and the silencing of women's conversation. In the end, tracing the history of the notion that French is a female language led me to consider discourses related not just to women's and men's education, but to the construction of masculinity and English national identity.

1. M. B. Cohen, 'Sexism and French Language teaching', unpublished M.A dissertation, London, 1982.

Introduction

FRENCH: A FEMALE SUBJECT?

That French is a 'female subject' and that girls do well at it is a virtual commonplace in England.[1] This success by girls has however been perceived as a problem since the 1970s, when the number of boys taking French to O'level began to decrease dramatically, while that of girls increased.[2] In his history of those years, Eric Hawkins suggested two main factors for this state of affairs. The shift from *single sex* grammar schools - where modern languages tended to be a requirement - to *mixed* [3] comprehensive schools, where it was optional; and the universities giving up the foreign language qualification for entry to degree courses in 1967-8.[4] This imbalance was also reflected in applications for PGCE courses, so that by 1979, only 29% were from men.[5] For Hawkins, this constituted a crisis, because he saw it as a major contribution to the shortage of language teachers. What Hawkins was really worried about, however, was the drop in applications by males because, he added in parentheses, as if it were commonplace knowledge, men tend to stay longer in the profession,[6] a statement for which he offered no evidence and which he quietly removed from the second revised edition of his work published only six years later.

In this section, I want to show how the argument that French is a female subject both 'explains' girls' achievement while undermining it, and produces the 'problem' of French in today's schools. It has been suggested, for example, that boys' inferior performance in French is a direct result of their perceiving languages as a 'woman's subject', because of the preponderance of female teachers.[7] Presumably, this also causes girls' superior performance. At the Symposium on Language Teaching held at St Paul's Girls' School in June 1987, discussing the motivational value of graded objectives on boys' performance in French, Michael Buckby was asked 'what about the girls?'. He replied: 'unfortunately their attainment keeps being higher'.[8] What, then, constitutes a female subject, when girls' success in it, far from being celebrated, is ignored, deplored or alleged to have sinister implications for boys' achievement?

One serious attempt to look at the issue of gender, Bob Powell's *Boys, Girls and Languages in School*, is worth noting. Powell is explicitly and

unapologetically concerned with boys. He argues that since nothing like the attention to girls' inferior performance in maths and sciences[9] has been paid to boys' inferior performance in languages, he will redress the balance. The problem is how to account for girls' superior achievement in French. Though Powell rejects innate sex differences in verbal ability, he nevertheless attributes girls' success to gender conditioning: girls are brought up to be compliant, and accept to do the repetitive and meaningless tasks which constitute present methods, but boys do not.[10] In other words, girls' achievement is no achievement, and boys' failure is merely a healthy rebellion.[11] What kinds of interventions can be implemented on the basis of this analysis?

The importance of Powell's suggestions, for my discussion, is that they reveal how the problem is constructed. Despite his own evidence that in language learning there are 'more variations within the sexes than between the sexes',[12] his solution is predicated on the existence of monolithic categories 'boy' and 'girl' with specific and fixed gendered attributes. Thus, he suggests making language learning more 'mathematical' by introducing more computer-based teaching and problem-solving exercises. This is based on the implicit assumption that problem-solving is an inherent attribute of boys. The corollary comes as no surprise. Powell cautions that because computers tend to be a male preserve,[13] girls need not only 'fair access' to the machines, but 'encouragement' to use them. But there is a further point to be made, which exposes the crucial difference in the way gendered abilities are conceived and educational practices constructed. Implicit in Powell's argument is the notion that boys' failure is due to methods having imposed something alien - female, perhaps - on their masculine mode of thinking; or conversely, that 'masculine' methods will 'bring out' their latent potential for achievement. Interventions promoting girls' take up and achievement in maths and sciences were organised as compensations for a deficit: their 'nature', their conditioning had to be altered, their subjectivity changed.[14] There is no question of boys' *deficit* in language learning. Motivating boys to take up and do well at French is a matter of changing not the boys, but the *methods*. The very terms of the educational discourse are organised so that practices have the achievement of boys as their main concern. It is neither a conspiracy, nor a deliberate attempt to discriminate against girls. This *is* how the

discourse is structured. It is also a testimony to its power that the discrimination and the oppression are concealed within it while being constitutive of it. As Michel Foucault put it, 'discourses ... conceal their own intervention'.[15] Not only do the remedies and solutions suggested not challenge this structuring, they actually reinforce it. And it is essential that the role girls might have had in producing the practices be occulted. This is why I am sceptical of research that attributes the problem of French in today's classrooms to recent developments in feminism, to a lack of attention paid to boys' achievement; to the sex of the teacher,[16] or of the language. Yet, it is on the basis of these stories that interventions are being devised.

My argument, then, is that the questions that have been asked so far have not been effective in identifying the conditions for the emergence of the problems of the present, and the answers have served only to perpetuate them. My aim, therefore, is to ask the questions occluded by other research. It is my thesis that issues concerning gender and achievement in French today cannot be understood without taking a historical perspective.[17] I do not, however, mean just any historical perspective. The history of French language learning in England has already been described in texts such as Kelly's *25 Centuries of Language Teaching*, and Watson's *The Beginnings of the Teaching of Modern Subjects in England*.[18] Hawkins too steps briefly into the past. But these histories do not provide the framework for analysing the issues that are the focus of this thesis. Indeed, as I will be arguing, they contribute instead to the construction of the problems of the present, because they aim to tell a story of the progress and evolution of language teaching, and they ignore gender. Since gender as a category is socially and historically constructed,[19] then the issue of the femaleness of French must be addressed in terms of the conditions of emergence for such a gendering. However, gender is not something that can simply be added on: it requires examining not just what men and women have done, but the relation between them and what it produced. As Joan Scott has argued, to include gender in history means rethinking and rewriting that history.[20] I found Michel Foucault's thoughts on history to provide the most appropriate framework

for this purpose. Before discussing my approach, I will first show why we need to rethink history, and will start by defining some terms.

Discourse

Discourse is a critical concept in Michel Foucault's thought. In its simplest formulation, discourse refers to a regulated set of statements which constitute and delimit an area of concern, what can and cannot be said, when and with what authority.[21] Discourses are ways of constructing knowledge, meanings, subjectivity in historically specific ways.[22] The systematic aspect of discourse, which includes not just the rules internal to it but rules of combination or articulation with other discourses, is of critical importance to my project. Understanding the structuration of discourses concerning the learning of French cannot be achieved without also identifying their complex relation to discourses concerning education, the production of masculinity, femininity and national identity. The one cannot be done without the others.

As I have argued above, the discourse on education is structured in such a way that it is predicated on a gendered conception of intellectual abilities. Boys' failure and girls' success are both attributed to something outside them, (a method, for instance), boys' success and girls' failure to something in their nature. Is this accidental, contingent on classroom pedagogy, on gender conditioning, on a particular historical moment?

Locke remarked that boys spent years learning Latin by grammar rules under duress without much to show for it at the end, whereas little girls mastered French rapidly and successfully by conversation. By attributing this difference to a mere question of method, he corrected the embarrassing 'misinterpretation' of some misguided gentlemen who had therefore thought their sons 'more dull or incapable than their Daughters'.[23] It was inconceivable to Locke, as one concerned with the construction of the gentleman,[24] that boys might be less able than girls. Yet, as I will be showing, when female superiority was acknowledged, in the late eighteenth century, this served not to confirm but to derogate their intellectual ability, and instead produce the superior mental powers of males.

I want to unmask what are in fact relations of power, and the

complex ways in which these relations are enmeshed in the a web of discourses producing the female as inferior and, in an ambiguous way, lacking. I say ambiguous because of a twist in the story, the gendered meaning of 'lack'. For, as I will be showing, lack of ability in males is taken as proof of the presence of their mental power, whereas evidence of ability in females is the testimony to lack of such power.[25]

This thesis represents an attempt to follow the traces of this theme. If I have been able to make a case that the problems of the present are not contingent, but intricately woven into the structuring of discourse since at least the eighteenth century, I will hopefully have contributed to opening up the potential for change, and done an effective 'history of the present'.

Discourse and the 'real'

Another characteristic of discourse is that it does not start out as 'a system of statements and a set of questions about 'the real'.[26] In this thesis, I will not be concerned with reconstructing the real, because, as I have just argued (in relation to gendered abilities), the real is itself discursively constituted, and is always a historical question. This has informed my strategy for research, in that I did not seek to find out whether something 'really happened' - whether, for example, boys really perfected their French while on the Grand Tour - but what was said, what statements were made about it.

The issues this raises about ways of 'doing history' are outside the concern of this thesis. The point is, as Hayden White argues, 'each approach to the study of history presupposes some model for constructing its object of study'.[27] Mine is a history 'guided by genealogy',[28] as I will explain in the next chapter.

In order to do a 'history of what has been said', it was necessary not to find texts which would provide new facts but, as Foucault put it, to 're-do...the work of expression'.[29] I took this suggestion literally by reading conventional prescriptive works, such as conduct books, advice, courtesy and educational literature, but reading them differently. It was of course crucial to use primary sources as my evidence.[30]

My starting point was the term 'conversation'. This was not an arbitrary decision. It emerged out of the research I had done for my MA dissertation,[31] when I had become intrigued by the crucial importance assigned to French conversation in the education of middle and upper class girls in the nineteenth century. Why *conversation* ? At the same time, by an accident of my own biography, I was by then aware of the importance of conversation, especially women's conversation, for the construction of the *honnête homme* in seventeenth century France. The task now was to follow the traces of this discourse from both directions into eighteenth century England. I made an initial assumption, which did not seem too *risqué* even at the time, that there were strong cultural connections between England and France in the eighteenth century. What I had not anticipated was how unexplored these were.

In the course of reading about conversation and about French in England, I realised that I was facing a number of paradoxes, contradictions and discontinuities. This was a spur to research, for, as Foucault tells us, 'contradiction...functions, throughout discourse, as the principle of its historicity'.[32] Thus, in the following chapters, I will analyze the complex and contradictory ways in which the French and their language were involved in a variety of English discourses. Conversation, I will argue, was essential to the production of the eighteenth century aristocratic gentleman as polite. Conversation required an elegant and fluent tongue in both English and French. The gentleman even travelled to France to perfect his accent and fluency. At the same time, however, the French and their language were terms of derogation in discourses that I will relate to the emergence of English nationalism and the construction of masculinity. In the nineteenth century, all the strands of eighteenth century discourses were rearranged and had entirely different meanings. Conversation and French became centrally implicated in the production of gender difference. My research shows that French was dispersed over a multiplicity of discourses and did not evince the unity and cohesiveness assumed in conventional histories of education and language learning. I will thus demonstrate why, in order to understand the conditions for the emergence of French as a female subject in today's secondary schools, it was necessary to look at discourses on the construction of the gentleman's masculinity and of his tongue. I will also argue that the problematization

of girls' achievement is not confined to the late twentieth century, nor to their learning of French. Throughout the period covered by this thesis, nearly 300 years, girls' abilities have not just been suspect, explained away, or simply ignored; they have also provided the space for the construction of males' superior - though invisible - mental powers. Finally, my thesis will show that a history of conversation, and of girls and French, two discourses conventionally associated with frivolity and superficiality, have provided powerful tools to analyze the relationship between the construction of gendered subjectivities and the emergence of national identity.

In the next chapter, I will review the way conventional histories of language teaching and of education have positioned girls in relation to their learning of French. Throughout the period I have analyzed, French, unlike most other objects of study, was learned by both sexes. It therefore provides a unique point of entry into the history of education, and a powerful means of reassessing that history from the perspective of gender.

References and footnotes

1. See Cohen, *op. cit.*, for a review of the literature. Note, for instance, the titles of two recent papers: J. Batters, 'Do Boys Really Think Languages are Just Girl-Talk?', *Modern Languages*, vol. LXVII, 1986, pp. 75-79; R. Loulidi, 'Is Language Learning Really a Female Business?', *Language Learning Journal*, No. 1, March 1990, pp. 40-43. Though other languages are offered in English schools, the preponderance of French is such that I feel justified in using the term 'French' both when I will be referring to French exclusively - in my historical discussion - and interchangeably with 'modern languages', in this introductory section.

2. E. Hawkins, *Modern Languages in the Curriculum*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 18.

3. My emphasis. Why does Hawkins highlight the gendered aspect of this change? Is it a way of alluding to the findings that fewer boys take French in mixed than in single sex schools, whereas more girls take French and achieve superior grades in mixed schools? see Loulidi, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

4. Hawkins, *op. cit.*, p. 10; B. Powell, *Boys, Girls and Languages in School*, London, 1986.

5. A trend which has gone on increasing. In 1986-87, the Modern Language PGCE at the London University Institute of Education numbered 42 students, 41 of whom were female.

6. Hawkins, *op. cit.*, p. 17; Powell, for instance, makes no mention of such a situation in his review of staffing. It is tempting to surmise that Hawkins is expressing another commonplace, the sentiment that 'there is a surfeit of female language teachers'. Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

7. D. Cross, 'Sex Differences in Achievement', *System*, vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 159-162.

8. Michael Buckby is a member of Eric Hawkins' department at the University of York, and writer of several popular French courses, for example, *Action*.

9. He is referring to the intervention of agencies such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, or the Girls into Science Group (GIST). See A. Kelly, J. Whyte and B. Smail, *Final Report of the Girls into Science and Technology Project*, Manchester, 1984.

10. Powell, *op. cit.*, pp. 48, 62. Teachers he interviewed also said they were too easily impressed by the neatness and presentation of girls' work', p. 67.

11. Is this very different from the traditional explanations that have been proffered to explain boys' inferior performance once their overall achievement could be compared with that of girls? Thus, 'the boy's breezy attitude to life ... successfully secures him from morbid concentration on the acquisition of knowledge' whereas the girl 'broods over her tasks and reproaches herself her imperfections', wrote C. Grant and N. Hodgson, *The Case for Co-education*, London, 1913; 'boys have, as a rule, a habit of healthy idleness', girls are much more consciencious, stated the Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on the Differentiation of the Curriculum for Boys and Girls Respectively in Secondary Schools*, London, 1923, p. 61. The girl's achievement pathologized her, and made her the object of a medical discourse about nervousness and overstrain.

12. Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 42. And though mathematics are associated with abstraction, boys have been said to respond better to a 'more realistic, less theoretical approach' in language teaching. Michael Buckby, *loc. cit.*

13. 'Micros may provide a useful *intrinsic* incentive to boys'. *op. cit.*, p. 62. (my emphasis).

14. See note 9 above; see also V. Walkerdine *et al.*, *Counting Girls Out*, London, 1989, for an analysis of this issue.

15. M. Foucault, quoted by J. Kenway, 'Education and the Right's discursive politics: private versus state schooling', in S.J. Ball, (ed.), *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledges*, London, 1990, p. 173.

16. Cross, for instance, recommends that future research on language learning should take account of the 'sex and image' of language teachers. *op. cit.*, p. 162.

17. As Antoinette Burton puts it, 'The belief in the necessity of history is part of the theoretical revolution undertaken by feminists in order to restructure the bases of knowledge that underpin the academic disciplines'. ' "History" is Now! Feminist Theory and the Production of Historical Feminisms', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1992, p. 26.

18. L.G. Kelly, *25 Centuries of Language Teaching: 500 BC - 1969,* Rowley, Mass, 1976; John Foster Watson, *The Beginnings of the Teaching of Modern Subjects in England,* (1909), Wakefield, 1971.

19. J. Weeks, 'Foucault for Historians', *History Workshop Journal,* 14, Autumn 1982, p. 113.

20. J.W. Scott, 'The Modern Period', *Past and Present,* No. 101, November 1983, p. 152; 'Gender: A Useful Category for Historical Analysis', *American Historical Review,* 91, November 1986, pp. 1053-1075; 'Deconstructing Equality-Versus Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism', *Feminist Studies,* 14, No. 1, Spring 1988, pp. 33-50.

21. J. Henriques *et al., Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity,* London, 1984, p. 105; S.J. Ball, 'Introducing Monsieur Foucault', in Ball (ed.), *op. cit.,* p. 2; Weeks, *op. cit.,* p. 111.

22. C. Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory,* Oxford, 1987.

23. John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education,* J.W and J.S Yolton (eds.), Oxford, 1989, p. 218. Subsequent references to Locke will be to this edition.

24. I should specify at this point that except when discussing the present, I will be referring exclusively to the nobility and the upper classes. They were the only social group for whom French was an integral part of education, and thus of the construction of self.

25. See V. Walkerdine *et al., Counting Girls Out,* London, 1989, for a discussion of this same issue in today's classrooms.

26. Henriques *et al., op. cit.,* p. 113.

27. 'New Historicism: A Comment', in H. Aram Veeser (ed.), *The New Historicism,* London, 1989, p. 296.

28. M. Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in D.F. Bouchard (ed.), Language, Counter-memory, Practice, Ithaca, 1984, p. 162.

29. M. Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge,* London, 1974, p. 121.

30. Foucault describes the work of genealogy as 'gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary', requiring 'a vast accumulation of source material', *op. cit.*, 1984, pp. 139, 140.

31. Cohen, *op. cit.*

32. Foucault, *op. cit.*, 1974, p. 151.

Chapter 1

GIRLS AND FRENCH IN HISTORY

The girl in histories of language teaching

In this section, I intend to show that by treating language learning as a discrete abstract process, histories of language teaching conceal the way the learning of French, a discourse embedded in historically specific social practices, produced gendered subjectivities. This has the effect of producing the problems of the present as a 'crisis', the product of a particular social condition - a sex imbalance - which only needs to be redressed for normal conditions to prevail.

The concept of gender in a post structuralist framework implies a number of refusals: a refusal of biological determination of masculinity and femininity; a refusal of the notion of fixed, transcendental essences of masculinity and femininity; a refusal of the binary opposition of male and female, all of which give the categories 'male' and 'female' the 'dreadful air of constancy of sexual polarity'.[1] Gender is 'a social construction that we can analyze to expose the mechanisms that produce it'.[2] Subjectivity, 'the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world',[3] in contrast to the rational, fixed and coherent subject of humanist discourses, is neither fixed, nor unified. Rather, subjectivity[4] is discursively and historically constructed. Language, defined not as an abstract but as a historically specific system 'through which meaning is constructed and cultural practices organised',[5] is therefore central to the construction of subjectivity.[6] When the connection between linguistic practice and gender identity is discussed[7] however, the language concerned is usually the mother tongue. What has not been explored is the way knowledge of a foreign language could also be implicated in the construction of gendered subjectivity.

The major histories of language teaching all focus on boys, and, with the exception of Lambley, girls are virtually absent.[8] The justification for not discussing girls - when a justification is made at

all - is that most girls learned French at home, and as such were not part of 'organised instruction'.[9] This implies that home education is of no concern to histories of education, though this has never caused aristocratic boys' private education to be ignored.[10] The most important consequence of this silence is that it erases the major break in the history of French language learning in England, the shift from French being the prerogative of males of rank which females of rank learned *as well*, in the eighteenth century, to a predominance of girls learning it in the nineteenth century.

Because histories of language teaching treat French as a unitary category, as if it existed autonomously, swings in methods of language teaching, between what can be characterized as grammar-translation and oral or direct methods, are described as swings in the pendulum, or, as Kelly puts it, 'cyclic evolution'.[11] However, though these images emblematize time, they are a-historical, implying that the movements are inevitable, internal to the teaching of French and embedded in its practice. Language learning consists of different skills and different approaches to the teaching of these skills. But what the histories of language do not account for is that a knowledge of grammar, the possession of a 'pure' accent, or a reading knowledge of the language, might each have different meanings, and produce different positionings. Thus, in the eighteenth century, speaking French with a perfect accent was essential to the construction of the aristocratic English gentleman. In the nineteenth century however, oral skills were derogated in the education of males but French conversation had become indispensable to the production of upper class girls' femininity.

As long as girls are left out, the history of French teaching can be constructed as a story of progress and evolution, marked by 'breakthroughs', and 'reforms and counter-reforms'.[12] In such a history, developments and fashions in language teaching are attributed mainly to philosophical developments, political or ideological decisions,[13] or pedagogical innovations. Bringing girls into the story disrupts the continuity, and discontinuities such as the shift at the end of the eighteenth century which resulted in the gendering in the learning of French must be accounted for.

It is my argument that this can be done only by looking beyond

'French', at discourses in which learning it was embedded. This is not to restore its 'hidden unity',[14] on the contrary. For 'discourses are not non-contradictory, uniform processes...but...complex systems of regulated differences that are intricated in ongoing struggles involving power and social relations'.[15] In the main, I will focus on the way French was implicated in discourses relating to the production of self. For the eighteenth century, this will mean looking at French as one of the components of the courtly ideal of education, along with politeness and accomplishments; for the nineteenth century, it will mean looking at French as one element in the production of gender difference. Forms of subjectivity, Weedon explains, are 'produced historically and change with shifts in the wide range of discursive fields that constitute them'.[16]

The girl in histories of education

Having shown how eloquent is girls' absence in histories of language learning, it is reasonable to turn to histories of education, to see how girls have been positioned in these more general histories. In this section, I will be arguing that when girls' education is constructed as lacking in contrast to males', French is produced as a female language.

In histories of education, if girls' education is dealt with at all, it is usually treated as a separate aspect of the history, discussed in a single separate chapter or as separate index entries.[17] Although subsumed under the broad aegis of education, girls' education is not treated as an integral part of it. It does not affect it, only confirms its 'truth' by representing what women desire. In histories of girls' education, on the other hand, boys' education does not appear, either as a separate chapter or even as an index entry. Yet, boys' education is present throughout, it suffuses, permeates the history, for unmarked education is a male discourse. Girls' education is defined implicitly or explicitly in relation to that discourse, and it gains respectability, value, status, visibility and worth insofar as it approximates to it.

There are several problems with this kind of history, which have direct impact in producing the story of girls' education. Because unmarked male education forms the backcloth on which girls' education is inscribed, it seems immutable, timeless; this has the effect of highlighting the

development of girls' education as a movement of progress towards the standard which male education represents. But *which* boys' education is being referred to ? In the eighteenth century for example, there was a proliferation of different types of 'education': grammar schools, dissenting Academies, or home tutoring for the nobility.[18] And *when* ? Contemporaneous with the girls' education being discussed, or an unspecified, therefore anachronistic present? To say that 'education' is not monolithic seems a commonplace, yet, as an implicit standard, it is treated as if it were; rarely is it envisaged, in histories of girls' education, that boys' too fell far short of what is really an ideal. These texts are produced through an implicit derogation of all that constitutes girls' education, though for corresponding time periods, serious criticisms were levelled at boys' education, often echoing those made against girls'. When this is not concealed in the histories of education,[19] it is treated as a problem of education, a failure, at this point in time or in this particular institution, to meet the ideal. It is always invisible in the histories of girls' education. 'It is also possible', notes an editorial in *History Workshop Journal*, 'to write the history of women in a way which...ignores men...or reduces [them] to...a one-dimensional first cause, omnipresent and unexplained'.[20] It is then left to the reader to fill in the silences and construct the text. The ambiguities inherent in the term 'education' allow for slippages between the various meanings, so that a text is produced in which the history of girls' education is one of gradual and protracted struggle towards reaching the goal: equal access to the same education as boys. The story is produced as a battle between the forces of reaction - who stand against an intellectual education for girls - and the forces of progress.[21] I am not arguing that girls' education in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century was in any way acceptable. I am suggesting, however, that because male education is conflated with its ideal, and the 'gap' occulted,[22] the way female education is inserted in the history of boys' education constructs it as lacking. It is a story of deficit to be made up, culminating in the progress of the present - whenever that 'present' happens to be. This neat picture of progress constitutes the official history of girls' education in documents such as the Board of Education's Report on the *Differentiation of the Curriculum for Boys and Girls*, which constructs this history in terms of three stages. The first

stage, one of 'of difference based on inequality', (before the Taunton Commission); the second, one of 'identity based on equality', (following the Taunton Commission), and the third, the ideal, now (1923), when

> it is possible to conceive an equality of the sexes which is all the truer and the richer because it is founded on mutual recognition of differences and the equal cultivation of different capacities.[23]

Such a history manages, perversely, to justify simultaneously equal access to education - in theory - and unequal access to that education - in practice.

If the history of girls' education is seen as a protracted struggle to achieve equal access to all subjects in the curriculum, then French is special: for no matter what the debate about the nature and content of upper class girls' education, they were never barred from learning it, although they were occasionally barred from learning parts of it.[24] French therefore appears different;[25] the silences are filled, and the slippage easily made that it was always an accomplishment[26] that girls of rank were deemed and doomed to acquire as a symbol of their status and femininity. There is the nub of the problem. Wresting French from its feminine association has been the implicit concern of the language teaching establishment since the end of the nineteenth century, when French was finally accepted as a curricular subject on the condition that it be 'masculinised', as it were, and taught 'rigorously' by the grammar-translation method, just like Latin.[27] Oral work retained an ambiguity rooted in its association with females' French conversation and therefore not just with ease but with lack of method and 'thoroughness'.[28] Historians of general education and of girls' education have accepted without question the French as 'female accomplishment' version of history, a story which has become so commonplace as to stand for the truth of the present. Thus, I would argue, it is only by looking at its gendered history that the conditions for the emergence of the problems of French today can be understood.

Feminist social histories of girls' education

In this section, I aim to show that because feminist social history 'subsumes women's history under received categories of analysis',[29] it cannot account for the way learning French positioned girls in opposing and competing discourses, and contributes to the belief that French was a female language.

In 'Storming the Citadel', Carol Dyhouse critises conventional history's optimistic picture of the progress of women's education, and proceeds to ask *why,* after all the years of struggle, and the rhetoric, 'women's situation remains what it is', and why 'women have not been able to *use* education to alter the basic features of their social position'.[30] Dyhouse's attempt to answer this question forms the basis of my critique of feminist social history, and highlights the need for a different framework and different questions - a need more satisfactorily met by a post structuralist approach to history. Basically, Dyhouse holds the nineteenth century women pioneers responsible for the failure of the educational revolution: their aims were limited to redefining the concept of Victorian femininity, instead of rejecting it and challenging the division of labour.[31] The main problems with this argument are that it takes for granted a fixed meaning of 'education', and assumes that because education reproduces gendered positionings, it can make *the* difference to those positionings.

Education is about generating and reinforcing difference - a point to which I will return. This is where the magnitude of Emily Davies' and Frances Buss's subversiveness can be measured. They denied *difference.* In asking for girls to have the same education as boys,[32] they questioned the power of classical education to produce the mental powers of the boy and therefore challenged the whole edifice upon which the claims of that education had been built. But, pointing out that the emperor has no clothes does not guarantee that the 'collective illusion'[33] will be dispelled. To sustain women's inferior status and their exclusion from what males claim as theirs, women have to be constituted by an absence, a lack - whether it is rationality, 5 oz of missing brain or inadequate access to their right brain hemisphere -[34] and it is precisely the presence of these features

that constitutes men's power and superiority at the corresponding historical moment. It is not access to education as such, but access to what is defined as constituting the male (or the masculine) in his *difference,* which is at the core of the debate. The discourse around education easily shifts its boundaries, like an amoeba I imagine, to accommodate whatever feeds its meaning: if learning Latin 'thoroughly' no longer produces male powers exclusively, then mathematics will do just as well. The terms of the debate only *appear* to have changed. The discourse of difference remains intact.

Of course, for nineteenth century women themselves, accomplishments and learning French were emblematic of the golden bars of their cages, and many resented being prevented access to the work that boys did.[35] Yet, if one looks at that work, it is difficult to see how dominant educational practices could maintain their claims to mental disciplining and training.[36] But the power of the discourse on education to the truth of its claims is poignantly illustrated by a passage in Middlemarch.

> It was not entirely out of devotion to her future husband that [Dorothea] wished to know Latin and Greek. These provinces of masculine knowledge seemed to her a standing-ground from which all truth would be seen more truly. As it was, she constantly doubted her own conclusions, because she felt her own ignorance... Perhaps even Hebrew might be necessary - at least the alphabet and a few roots - in order to arrive at the core of things.[37]

Fanny Burney had already realised, one hundred years earlier, that for a woman to know Greek, to have claimed entry into privileged knowledge, did nothing to alter her positioning. If anything, it was the opposite. In her diary, she recorded the following anecdote. Conversing about a Miss Streatfield who knew Greek, Dr Johnson was reported to have said: 'taking away her Greek, she was as ignorant as a butterfly'; another gentleman had declared that 'her Greek was all against her', because instead of reading useful and 'improving' literature such as Pope, Swift or the *Spectator*, she had spent all her time reading the first eight books of Homer. Still, added Mrs Thrale, 'her Greek, you must own, has made her a celebrity - you would have heard no more of her than of any other pretty girl, but for that'.[38] We must not forget that girls' access to what constituted boys' privileged

knowledge meant learning dead languages, and living ones as if they were dead. Even though the Taunton Commission noted that girls knew French better than boys, their knowledge was derogated because it had no status in the educational discourse. It was only a 'social' accomplishment.

Education is not a unitary discourse, its meaning is historically specific. It does not exist autonomously, but is embedded in other discourses and can be incorporated into existing practices to reproduce positionings. Thus the rhetoric of derogation about women's education in the nineteenth century described it as consisting of 'mere' accomplishments,[39] superficial and pretentious. These usually included French.[40] But, as I will be showing in chapter 8, French had opposite meanings in the social and the educational discourses, meanings conflated by the term 'accomplishment'.[41] Taking the derogation as if it were truth not only ignores the contradictory positionings produced by the two opposing discourses, but occults the more general fact that opposing, competing, discourses are always operating where girls' education is concerned.

Although I have criticised Carol Dyhouse, I chose her work because her contribution to the history of female education is invaluable. However, when feminist historians accept without question the commonplace that girls' learning of French was necessarily frivolous,[42] they are not rewriting history but subsuming women's history under 'received categories of analysis'.[43] The issue is not about whether women learn Greek, Latin or French, maths, sciences or ... French, but about the way they are positioned by this knowledge, as I will be arguing in chapter 7. If the educational discourse reproduces gender difference by problematizing girls' achievement, then their access to male domains of knowledge, and even - or perhaps especially - their success in these domains will do little to alter the way the discourse is constructed, and the gendered positionings produced. It is not 'education', but the structuring of discourses constituting that practice which has to be changed. For, as Weeks tells us, if the 'mechanisms of emergence and reproduction' of gendered discourses are understood to be historically constructed, then 'they are open to transformation'.[44]

French as a tool for analysis

I will now illustrate the way French can serve as an analytical tool to 'disrupt' accepted categories and ways of thinking about the history of education, and highlight the need to 'think differently'.

French has a unique position in the history of education in England. Throughout the period I am discussing, it was learned by both sexes. This may explain why girls' home education, unlike that of their brothers, is of little interest to Locke.[45] He notes that girls learn 'to speak and read French perfectly in a year or two, without any rule of grammar or anything else' except being spoken to, to praise not their intellectual ability, but the *method*, which must be responsible for their success, and which might be used to good effect to teach boys Latin.[46] A few years later, Steele too wished he could find a way of getting boys to learn Latin 'with as little difficulty or reluctance as young ladies learn to speak French'.[47] Boys' learning of French in the eighteenth century is amply documented, especially in the literature on the Grand Tour, but that evidence also suggests that their proficiency was not what it should have been. However, when girls, who did not travel, were said to speak French better than English, it was an indictment of their moral character. They were suspect because they had learned it *too well*. It was not until the Taunton Commission could compare both sexes that girls' greater eagerness to learn,[48] and their generally superior achievement had to be reckoned with.[49] Girls' historically documented achievement in French may well have been explained away and thus discounted, but it was an achievement nevertheless; nor (and this is important) was it limited to French, as the Taunton Commission discovered. However, because it was learned by both sexes, French provides a unique point of entry into the history of education. It makes it possible to disrupt fixities in that history, and 'discover the nature of the debate ... that leads to the appearance of timeless permanence'.[50]

Histories of education tell us that change comes from 'struggles for reform', from the ideas of the great men (and occasionally women) who have inspired them; of progress and innovation.[51] In this perspective, the progress of girls' education is measured by its approximation to boys', the

'powerless' follow the 'powerful'. But what if the suspicion is raised that 'the direction of change is not necessarily one way'?[52] Though girls tend to be positioned as passive in educational discourse, could their achievement be a condition of possibility for the emergence of educational practices? The argument I am suggesting goes like this. Boys' failure and girls' achievement are constructed as resulting from something in the *method*, whereas boys' achievement and girls' failure results from something in *them*. Change in practices would emerge on the assumption either that a method must be good, since it causes girls to do well, (Locke's observation), or that a method must be bad, since it causes boys to badly. (Powell's more recent analysis).[53] The glaring omission is the possibility that girls' achievement might be due to their intellectual ability, by something in them; this is never brought into the discourse because it would call boys' ability into question, and that is never done.[54] According to this hypothesis, then, girls' achievement would be implicated in change in educational practice, but because this achievement is treated ambiguously, the mechanism of change is not clear. One example of this is Hawkins' remark that teachers have developed ways of helping boys to compensate for the 'unfairness of having to compete in verbal learning tasks with girls'.[55] Raising the suspicion that the direction of change is not necessarily one way means re-examining the taken-for-granted assumption that the direction of the exclusion - and thus the formation of the discourse - is not only girls being excluded from what boys have access to, but boys being removed from, prised away in a sense, from what girls do. The ambivalence of the discourse also becomes clear, exposing the way the boy is the main focus of concern.

With these questions in mind, I want to trace the history of a specific educational problem of the present: the status of oral work in French. One outcome of the Royal Commissions on education of the 1860s, the Clarendon and the Taunton Commissions, was the inclusion of French as a subject in the curriculum, on the condition that it be taught grammatically, like Latin. Oral work was explicitly excluded.[56] Why? In a recent article, Susan Bayley's answer to this vexing question is that the low priority given to 'the oral component' was a result of the 'obsession' of the educational establishment with the classical methods and values

which characterized the liberal education of the *élite*. Thus, she concludes, the history of any subject must be inserted into 'its ideological framework',[57] in this case class. But what history is produced if gender is excised? The terms in which the debate about the teaching of French were articulated, in the nineteenth century, show that this is not an idle question. For it is not just that grammar and translation alone were said to impart 'rigour' and mental discipline but that oral work, described as 'merely empirical' and lacking in method represented the opposite. Though these terms are not explicitly about gender, they rely on references to it, as Scott puts it, on a 'gendered "coding" to establish their meanings'.[58] Rigour and discipline were emblematic of male education, lack of it characterized female education.

Since the problem of French in today's schools is articulated around gender, and since gender is implicated in the major shift in the early nineteenth century, when from constructing the gentleman in the eighteenth century French became essential to the construction of femininity, there needs to be a historical framework which can account at the same time for discontinuities in the past, problems of the present, and the centrality of gender. Such a framework can be found in Michel Foucault's approach to history.

Archaeology and Genealogy

In this section, I will be discussing why Foucault's approach to history is more suited to the story I want to tell than the approaches I have just reviewed. Foucault's reluctance to be committed to a theoretical position, however, has meant that he did not elaborate a particular methodology. This has been at the source of much debate.[59]

For the present discussion, the most relevant differences between conventional history, what Foucault calls 'total' history, and Foucauldian history, archaeology and genealogy, have to do with what counts as evidence, and with the notion of discontinuity.[60] According to Foucault, total history aims to 'reconstitute the overall form of a civilisation, the principle ...of a society, the significance common to all phenomena of the period, the law that accounts for their cohesion'.[61] As such it privileges continuity, because of the necessity to define relations of

causality for example, underneath the surface of isolated events. In this history, discontinuity is 'the stigma of temporal dislocation that it was the historian's task to remove from history'.[62] In Foucauldian history, on the other hand, there are no '*monuments*' of the past to be transformed into '*documents*'. What counts as evidence has to be established and depends on 'a theoretical decision on the part of the historian, which in turn is governed by the type of problem being posed'.[63] Crucially, the criterion of selection is not 'the past' but the analysis which groups events together. As a result, 'one is led to the project of a pure description of discursive events'. In this history, Foucault writes, discontinuity is 'one of the basis elements of historical analysis', though it is paradoxical because it is 'both an instrument and an object of research'.[64]

As its title indicates, this thesis is intended as a genealogy. Most commentaries on Foucault's work point to the difficulty of deducing a clear method from either archaeology or genealogy, but there is evidence that Foucault regarded them to be complementary.[65] They also have different emphases. Genealogy offers 'a processual perspective on the web of discourse', and is concerned with 'practices and technologies of power'; archaeology, on the other 'provides us with a snapshot, a slice through the discursive nexus'.[66] If archaeology is 'an abandonment of the history of ideas ... an attempt to practise a different history of what men have said', genealogy is an attempt to find in the past not 'origins', but the traces of the present in their dispersions. 'What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin, it is ... disparity'.[67]

What attracted me to the Foucauldian approach to history was the space archaeology and genealogy opened up for exploring contradictions and paradoxes without having to explain them away, a space to explore discontinuities and map out the uneven terrain of discourse, of the spoken and the silenced, the voiced and the voiceless. The history of French language teaching in England is marked by contradictions and discontinuities, something its main historians were not unaware of. Thus, Kelly was concerned not just to write an account of teaching ideas, but to explain, in terms of their social and intellectual context, 'why at various times in the last two and a half thousand years, some ideas were preferred

to others'. For Kelly, it is ideas that generate change in 'matter, method and media'.[68] Foucault was critical of approaches to history that 'ascribed a causal role to wider socio-economic developments' or 'ideologies'. He did not deny, as Richard Jones comments, 'that this wider dimension existed but he did deny that it provided the main basis for historical explanation'.[69]

Thus, I reject the idea that there is some sort of conflict between ideas, where one wins and gains hegemony over the others and new methods are derived from it, instead of these being the result of a complex and elusive process. I would argue, for example, that the problematics of the present show that it is not aims or new ideas which govern changes in language teaching methodology, but practices, and most importantly, practices *external* to French itself. Presently, gender is identified as the main problem; at the turn of the century, it was class.

When discontinuities are seen as obstacles to explain away, the expectation is that, once explained away, they will, once and for all, be silent. But some discontinuities elude the resolution that will finalize their problematic, and reappear, perhaps in a different guise. The persistence of the oral as a problem is thus intriguing, and provides a point of entry into more complex processes. By following its traces in the past, my aim is to identify the conditions of its emergence as a problem, for in drawing attention to conditions of emergence, 'genealogy ... disrupts the confidence of the usual reforming solutions'.[70] As I have pointed out earlier, my main concern is the present and a genealogy is precisely a history of the present, in the sense that 'it finds its points of departure in problems relevant to current issues, and ... its point of arrival and its usefulness in what it can bring for the analysis of the present'.[71]

Within the post structuralist framework I have just outlined, gender will be, to use Joan Scott's phrase, my main 'analytical category'.[72] Gender is integral to all the discourses I will be describing, in that the very terms in which they were articulated are gendered. In the eighteenth century, knowledge of French was the site in which arguments about 'Frenchness' and 'Englishness' were deployed and articulated, explicitly and implicitly, in gendered terms. References to gender could be explicit, when for instance English - as against French - was described as a male language; or they relied on gendered coding, as when a 'nervous style' was

construed as a 'masculine type of muscular and sinewy *English* prose'.[73] The political history of Anglo-French relations can also be said to have been 'enacted on the field of gender'.[74] An 'archaeo-genealogy'[75] of the emergence of discourses on nationalism and national identity in these terms should yield a different perspective on old questions, and make us rethink such stereotypes as the 'xenophobic'[76] Englishman who cannot speak French.

The next chapter takes us to seventeenth century France, where my story begins. It introduces one of the major themes of this thesis, conversation, and the positionings it produced for men and women in the social space of the aristocratic *salon*. It examines in particular the complex ways in which women were at once central to and mere instruments in the construction of the *honnête homme*. It was also particularly important to describe how *honnêteté* and *politesse* were produced in their specific historical and cultural location, because of the way these discourses served, in eighteenth century England, to construct the French as an effeminate Other.

As both Lawrence Klein and Peter France have pointed out,[77] France was regarded by contemporaries as the most civilised, the most polite nation in Europe. There is no shortage of evidence concerning the cultural influence of France on England, especially as regards politeness and conversation.[78] English ambivalence towards the French has also been noted.[79] What has not been explored, however, is the way *politesse* and *honnêteté* became involved in the production of English discourses, such as the attempt to produce an English politeness and the construction of a masculine national character. I had assumed, when I started my research, that cultural patterns travelling over the Channel would not be mere translations, whatever the 'text'. This assumption was to be amply justified.

References and footnotes

1. D. Riley quoted in Scott, *op. cit.*, 1986, p. 1064.

2. S.J. Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 142.

3. Weedon, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

4. It is outside the scope of this thesis to discuss the complex arguments around subjectivity. For my discussion, I have relied on the clear exposition of Weedon, *op. cit.*, and on Hekman's comprehensive survey of feminism and postmodern theories, *op. cit.*

5. Scott, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 35.

6. Weedon, *op. cit.*; Hekman, *op. cit.*, p. 31;

7. See Hekman, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

8. Hawkins, *op. cit.*; L.G. Kelly, *25 Centuries of Language Teaching: 500 BC - 1969*, Rowley, Mass., 1976; K. Lambley, *The Teaching and Cultivation of the French Language in England during Tudor and Stuart Times*, Manchester, 1920; John Foster Watson, *The Beginnings of the Teaching of Modern Languages in England*, (1909), Wakefield, 1971.

9. Watson, *op. cit.*; W.F. Mackey, *Language Teaching Analysis*, London, 1965.

10. For instance, John Locke, *op. cit.*

11. Kelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 396-8.

12. Hawkins, *op. cit.*, chs. 4 and 5.

13. Kelly, *op. cit.*; See also S. Bayley, 'Modern Languages as Emerging Curricular Subjects in England, 1864-1918', *Bulletin of the History of Education Society*, No. 47, Spring 1991, pp. 23-31.

14. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

15. Henriques *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

16. Weedon, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

17. See R. O'Day, *Education and Society 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain*, London, 1982; H.C. Barnard, *A History of English Education from 1760*, London, 1969; N. Hans, *New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1966; J.W. Adamson, *English Education 1789-1902*, Cambridge, 1930, has one chapter on females, entitled 'women and other working folk'; B. Simon's *Studies in the History of Education 1780-1870*, London, 1969, does not discuss women.

18. R.S. Tompson, *Classics or Charity?: The Dilemma of the 18th Century Grammar School*, Manchester, 1971, and Hans, *op. cit.*

19. See Barnard, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 20.

20. *History Workshop Journal*, No. 19, 1985.

21. J. Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History*, London, 1965. Reading Kamm's chapters on this, however, one gets the impression that there was not much difference betweeen the two. Maybe this is an artifact produced by the imposition of analytical categories of the present onto the past, resulting in confusion.

22. As A. Grafton and L. Jardine have shown, there is a gap between the 'ideal' and the corresponding pedagogical practices. The argument is that the practices of civic humanism, as practices, cannot engender the qualities to which the ideal refers. *From Humanism to the Humanities*, London, 1986. This is also what Sophia Jex-Blake referred to when she said: 'I do not by any means intend to say that I desire to see the education of all women made identical with that at present given to men. It must first be proved that that education is, in truth, the best and most desirable for the human being, before we can wish to make it universal'. Quoted in M. Todd, *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, London, 1918, pp. 549-550.

23. Board of Education, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

24. In the nineteenth century, girls were taught the grammar rules of French like a catechism. They did not learn grammar as boys did, 'thoroughly', by parsing and logical analysis. Such grammar was thought 'unfeminine'. Cohen, *op. cit.*

25. This is the argument used by the Board of Education's *Report* to explain girls' superior achievement in French, especially oral French: not only their special aptitude for languages, their 'better ear and mimetic ability' but 'tradition'. *op. cit.*, pp. 101, 102.

26. To cite one example among many, Edward Abbott Parry, an editor of Dorothy Osborne's *Letters*, comments that Dorothy's mother had been 'remarkably careful of her education in all such lighter matters as dancing, music and the learning of the French tongue'. *Letters from Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple 1652-54*, London, ca1888, p. 96. This is a nineteenth, not a seventeenth century perspective of those accomplishments, as I will show later in the thesis. See also Bailey, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

27. See Max Müller, Taylorian Professor of Modern Languages and Literature at Oxford, *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the revenues and management of certain colleges and schools and the studies pursued and instruction given therein*, London, 1864, vol. 4. See also Charles Cassal, Professor of French Language and Literature at University College, London, Report from the Commissioners, *The Schools Inquiry Commission*, London, 1867-68, vol. 5. Both Reports are often referred to by the name of their chairmen, Lord Clarendon and Lord Taunton respectively. See Adamson, *op. cit.*, and Barnard, *op. cit.* I will follow this convention, and they will henceforth be referred to as the Clarendon Commission and the Taunton Commission.

28. See the explanations offered in such official documents as the Department of Education, *Curricular Differences for Boys and Girls*, Education Survey 21, London, 1975.

29. Scott, *op. cit.*, 1983, p. 152.

30. In S. Acker and W. Piper, (eds.), *Is Higher Education Fair to Women?* London, 1984, p. 52.

31. See also S. Delamont and L. Duffin (eds.), *The Nineteenth Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*, London, 1978; P. Levine argues on the other hand that the question of the radicalism of the pioneers has been a 'source of contention among historians'. *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900*, London, 1987, p. 30.

32. The interrogating Lords reiterated the question again and again. Taunton Commission, vol. 5, Emily Davies' evidence, QQ.11,390, 11,421, 11,422; Frances Mary Buss's evidence, QQ.11,470, 11,471; Miss Beale's evidence, Q.16,164, pp. 240, 251, 254, 734.

33. A term used by Bourdieu, quoted in Scott, *op. cit.*, 1986, p. 1069.

34. George Romanes, 'Mental Differences between Men and Women', *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 21, Jan-June 1887, pp. 654-672; J. Sherman, *Sex-related Cognitive Differences*, Springfield, Ill., 1978.

35. Miss Beale's experience of learning French was frustrating precisely for that reason: 'we were instructed in ...languages without understanding principles, and were given lists of prepositions to learn by heart to save [us] from the trouble of thinking', quoted in A.C. Percival, *The English Miss To-day and Yesterday*, London, 1939, p. 129.

36. See for example the devastating critique of educational practices in the *Westminster Review*, Jan. 1824, quoted in Simon, *op. cit.*, p. 100. In case this were read as mere polemic, see the descriptions of classroom work in the Clarendon Commission, vol. 3, Eton evidence especially.

37. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, (1871), London, 1965, p. 88.

38. *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, edited by her niece, London, 1854, vol. 1, Sunday June 13, 1779, pp. 186-187.

39. See C. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, London, 1981.

40. See Cohen, *op. cit.*

41. It is interesting to note in this respect that Fearon, an assistant commissioner for the Taunton Commission, called French a 'solid subject', whereas Bryce, another assistant commissioner, called it an 'accomplishment'. Taunton Commission, vol. 7, p. 392, vol. 9, p. 800. Be it confusion or slippage, I believe this makes my case.

42. See for example N. Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Oxford, 1991; J. Purvis, *A History of Women's Education in England*, Milton Keynes, 1991.

43. Scott, *op. cit.*

44. Weeks, *op. cit.*

45. B. Kowaleski-Wallace, "Milton's daughters': The Education of Eighteenth Century Women Writers', *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Summer 1986, pp. 275-293.

46. *op. cit.*, p. 218.

47. *The Spectator* No. 230.

48. This did not serve them well, as it was a condition for the emergence of the great fear of 'overstrain' in girls, and, in the twentieth century, of the derogated figure of the 'good little worker'. On the fear of overstrain, see for example the Taunton Commission, vol. 5, Miss Beale's evidence, and Board of Education, *op. cit.* On the figure of the 'good little worker', see Walkerdine, *op. cit.*, 1989.

49. Assistant commissioner Fitch put it most emphatically: 'up to twelve years of age, I find the knowledge and intelligence in the best ladies

schools, superior to that observable in boys' schools of similar standing'. Taunton Commission, vol. 9, p. 287.

50. Scott, *op. cit.*, 1986, p. 1068.

51. See for example Simon, *op. cit.*

52. Scott, *op. cit.*, 1986, p. 1067.

53. Powell, *op. cit.*; Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

54. See Walkerdine, *op. cit.*, 1989.

55. *op. cit.*, p. 221.

56. Max Müller was categorical: 'fluency in conversation' should not be attempted in public schools. Clarendon Commission, vol. 4, p. 77.

57. Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

58. Scott, *op. cit.*, 1986, p. 1073.

59. See Hekman, *op. cit.*; Foucault's 'elusiveness', his 'playfulness' is something he himself warned about early on in the last paragraphs of the introduction to the *Archaeology of Knowledge*: 'Are you going to change again, shift your position according to the questions that are put to you..? I'm not where you are lying in wait for me, but over here, laughing at you', *op. cit.*, p. 17.

60. Although Foucault 'repudiated' *the Archaeology of Knowledge*, he did not abandon the notion of archaeology. As late as 1984, (when *L'Histoire de la Sexualité*, vol. 2, was published), he was writing about doing an 'archaeology of problematizations and a genealogy of practices', the *History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, London, 1985, p. 13. Cousins and Hussain argue that the *Archaeology of Knowledge* is a 'curiously unexploited text', A. Cousins and A. Hussain, *Michel Foucault*, London, 1985, p. 97; J.D. Marshall, reviewing debates on this issue, suggests that most Foucauldian-type research have been archeologies, 'Foucault and educational research', in Ball (ed.), *op. cit.*

61. Foucault, *op. cit.*, 1974, pp. 7, 9-10; A. Sheridan, *Foucault: The Will to Truth*, London, 1980, p. 92.

62. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

63. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 7; Cousins and Hussain, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

64. Foucault, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 27.

65. There has also been some debate about the exact relation between archaeology and genealogy. See Marshall, *op. cit.*

66. P. Bevis, M. Cohen and G. Kendall, 'Archaeologizing genealogy: Michel Foucault and the economy of austerity', *Economy and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 3, August 1989, p. 324; see also K. Hoskin, 'Foucault under examination: the crypto-educationalist unmasked', in Ball (ed.), *op. cit.*

67. Foucault, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 142; Sheridan, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

68. Kelly, *op. cit.*, pp. ix, 3.

69. R. Jones, 'Educational Practices and Scientific Knowledge: A genealogical reinterpretation of the emergence of physiology in post-Revolutionary France', in Ball (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 94.

70. Cousins and Hussain, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

71. Henriques *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

72. For the following discussion I have relied on the insights in Scott's seminal paper, *op. cit.*, 1986, pp. 1053-1075.

73. My emphasis; G.S. Rousseau 'Towards a Semiotic of the Nerve: The Social History of Language in a New Key' in P. Burke and R. Porter (eds.), *Language, Self and Society: A Social History of Language*, Oxford, 1991, p. 224; the gendered coding of 'sinew' has been discussed by N. Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought*, Cambridge, 1985; see also D. Outram, '*Le Langage mâle de la vertu:* Women and the discourse of the French Revolution' in P. Burke and R. Porter (eds.), *The Social History of Language*, Cambridge, 1987.

74. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 1074.

75. A term coined by P. Bevis, M. Cohen and G. Kendall, to 'reaffirm the complementarity and indissolubility of archaeology and genealogy'. *The Essential Foucault,* unpublished paper presented at the Annual Conference of the British Sociological Association, Edinburgh, 1988, p. 18.

76. See for example J. Black, *The British and the Grand Tour 1713-1793,* London, 1985; G. Avery, *The Best Type of Girl: A History of Girls' Independent Schools*, London, 1991.

77. L.S. Klein, 'The Rise of "Politeness" in England 1660-1715', unpublished Ph.D thesis, Baltimore, 1984; P. France, *Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture*, Cambridge, 1992.

78. France notes, for example, that David Hume, after studying in France, 'made it his business to bring the benefits of *politesse* to his native Scotland'. *op. cit.*, p. 54.

79. *ibid.*; see also D. Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth*, London, 1986.

Chapter 2

CONVERSATION IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

Just as there is a specific social context for the sermon or the funeral oration, so too with conversation: it requires a context that is both historically and socially specific, thereby ordering a social space which can become its own. In seventeenth century France, the *salon* was that space. This space for conversation was a space, moreover, which was quintessentially female, around the *ruelle* of an aristocratic lady's 'bedroom'.[1] Here gathered not only aristocratic men but also men from a variety of other backgrounds who had become men of letters, such as Voiture,[2] while other men of letters were sons of the *noblesse de robe*, like Corneille.

More importantly, though, in this lady's *ruelle*, there were ladies of rank. The social, linguistic and aesthetic ideals which were developed in the seventeenth century centered around notions of politesse,[3] and the presence of aristocratic women was crucial for its elaboration. The most consummate expression of *politesse* was in conversation. Women of rank were seen as the natural means to the achievement of this ideal because of their refined and delicate manners, 'women have a natural aversion to coarseness',[4] and, according to Vaugelas, their language represented a model of pure French because it had not been contaminated by Latin, which they did not study.[5]

Women were central to cultural and social developments of the seventeenth century, not merely because they reigned over the space of the salon, nor because they were also the arbiters of taste,[6] so much as because polite conversation, and most crucially, *honnêteté*, could not be achieved without them. To achieve *honnêteté*, wrote Méré, it is necessary to seek the company of *honnêtes gens*,[7] and particularly females, for 'les entretiens des Dames, dont les grâces font penser aux bienséances sont encore plus nécessaires pour s'achever dans l'honnêteté.[8]

In interpreting the positioning of the women of the *salon*, however, we need to exercise some caution if we are not to fall prey to anachronistic conclusions about their status or their 'feminism'. While they clearly had a crucial role, bearing in important ways on the cultural life and manners of the nobles and the ways these were produced and regulated,

we should not allow the importance of the role to obscure its nature: it was oriented not to the woman's production of her self, but to the production of the self-perfecting man, the *honnête homme*. Similarly, while their 'freedom' may have been greater than that of noble women in Italy or Spain in the same period, whatever value we might put upon such cross-cultural comparison should not obscure the character of the practices which made up that 'greater freedom', what they were 'free' to do: these women's conversation, though securing for themselves the privilege of their class, was ultimately productive of gender difference, not power, for women of the *salon*. Their status was elevated commensurably with their vital role in refining the conversation of the noble, but it must be said that ultimately it was the noble man who benefitted. Women's 'power' was no greater, while noble men did achieve *honnêteté*. My primary concern, then, is with the way conversation relates to gender on the one hand and to language on the other. This concern therefore leads me directly to consider the ideal of the *honnête homme*. Since this was so centrally important, we will need now to examine in more detail the discourse of *honnêteté*.

What was *honnêteté*?

While there are many different definitions of *honnêteté*, that 'elusive concept',[9] they nevertheless share certain features. First of all, *honnêteté* entails a notion of sociability. On *honnêteté* depends 'le plus parfait et le plus aimable commerce du monde'.[10] This sociability also maintained a complex relation to notions of *urbanitas*[11] and *politesse*. Secondly, *honnêteté* is about seductiveness, about developing an *art de plaire* as a part of an aesthetic of the self. The art de plaire itself has a number of aspects: to please, a man must be agreeable to all, accommodate everyone's whims and moods,[12] and suffer in silence if wronged:

> La colère nous porte à nous venger, et l'honnêteté s'y oppose; renonçons à la douceur de la vengeance; et pardonnons d'un visage riant et d'un coeur sincère.[13]

He must say neither too much nor too little, since verbal excess might lead to failure in the *art de plaire* endeavour.[14]

How was *honnêteté* produced?

Honnêteté is not learned in books and cannot be taught.[15] Rather, it is acquired by conversing with other *honnêtes gens*, especially women, because it is precisely in their company, and in the desire to please them, that men refine themselves and may become *honnêtes*. Because *honnêteté* is an ideal of self perfection, the *honnête homme* must excel in all the virtues, 'en tous les avantages du coeur et de l'esprit', including 'les agrémens et les bienséances de la vie'.[16] He must cultivate a certain penetration, an *esprit de finesse* which allows him to guess and preempt the secret, innermost thoughts of his interlocutors: this skill is indispensable to the *honnête homme*, and no conversation can take place without it.[17] Despite all these specifications and definitions, *honnêteté* escapes all rules, and is ultimately, a *je ne sais quoi*.[18]

The sources of *honnêteté* have been discussed in detail by Maurice Magendie, who identified Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* as one of its most important sources.[19] One of the first major theorisations of *honnêteté*, Nicolas Faret's *L'honnête homme ou l'Art de Plaire à la Cour*,[20] is, according to Magendie, the best known of the French works influenced by Castiglione. Though many treatises on *honnêteté* were published in the seventeenth century, its 'foremost exponent and most profound theoretician'[21] is the Chevalier de Méré, whose work was published between 1668 and 1677. One of the most important differences between Faret and Méré is usually held to be that Faret's conception of *honnêteté* was a bourgeois one, and Méré's was aristocratic and *mondain*.[22] But there is a further, more crucial difference between them. Whereas Faret's *honnêteté* is aimed at constructing a code of manners and behaviour for the courtesan at Court, Méré's *honnêteté* is a means for men to perfect themselves, what Foucault called 'a technology of self. As Foucault himself explains, this concept refers to

> an *art of existence* or, rather, a *technique of life* ...a question of knowing how to govern one's own life in order to give it the most beautiful possible form (in the eyes of others, of oneself)... a practice of self whose aim was to constitute oneself as the worker of the beauty of one's own life.[23]

Honnêteté was above all an *art de plaire*, and one of the main means

of achieving it was love, in the tradition of courtly love established in the first decade of the seventeenth century by L'Astrée.[24] Women were central to this art of seduction, not as the objects of love so much as the instruments whereby the man might produce himself as *honnête*. When the *honnête homme* Mérigène is asked who made him so accomplished, he answers that

> il doit tout ce qu'il a de bon à l'amour, Que sans lui il ne serait point ce qu'il est, et que s'il a les qualités d'un honnête homme il les doit à une belle femme qui mit dans son coeur le désir de plaire et le dessein de mériter son affection.[25]

This passage is very significant because of the way the woman is positioned in relation to the love she elicits. Mérigène makes it clear: it is to love, not to that particular woman, that he owes his *honnêteté*. Women's beauty and refinement are important not for their own perfection, but to enable men to perfect themselves. For love fills men's hearts and minds with noble thoughts. As Méré explains,

> il est certain que quand on aime une personne d'un mérite exquis, cet amour remplit d'honnêteté le coeur et l'esprit et donne toujours de plus nobles pensées que l'affection qu'on a pour une personne ordinaire.[26]

Men are usually all of a piece, blunt, rigid even, without manners or graces. When they are not used to women, they become speechless in their presence, they lose their tongue, they are impotent. 'Ceux qui ne sont pas faits à leur manière délicate et mystérieuse, ne savent bien souvent que leur dire'. The desire to be attractive to women changes a man, makes him other and he, (his tongue), becomes 'insinuant'.[27] The discourse of *honnêteté*, then, appears to have an erotic character.[28] But this insinuation, which Horowitz calls a discourse of erotic domination,[29] is precisely not concerned with possession of the object of love.[30] Through language, love is 'de-sensualized',[31] and represents an indispensable stage in the construction of the self-as-art, a technique for the ethical and aesthetic perfection of the self, *honnêteté*. As Foucault put it,

> technologies of the self ...permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct,

> and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.[32]

The question is, where does this leave women? When Moriarty asks 'to what extent did the discourse of *honnêteté* contribute to the improvement in the image, and maybe the actual condition of women',[33] he hints that the answer will be affirmative. But, one must first ask, which women?

Conversation

Most major writers of the seventeenth century - Faret, Du Bosc, Méré, Vaumorières, Scudéry, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Bellegarde, Bordelon - wrote about conversation.[34] Such was its importance that in all the written portraits of the time, conduct in conversation is always included, and is often the first feature mentioned in the portrait.[35] Yet, as Strosetzki remarks, the history of conversation stands out as one of the few cases in literature where as large a number of primary texts is matched by so few critical publications.[36] Conversation comes up so frequently and holds such an important place in seventeenth century writing, that it is not possible to ignore it. What, then, accounts for the relative silence on the subject? One explanation can be suggested by the theme of this study: conversation is ignored because it is frivolous, and cannot be considered a serious subject of study. I would argue that this is a legacy of the nineteenth century's attitude to conversation, an attitude that is diametrically opposed to that of the seventeenth century in France, and most of the eighteenth in England. This thesis is an attempt to identify the conditions of possibility for this shift.

The importance of the skill of conversation for a courtier had been described in great detail by Castiglione, and Faret, in elaborating the code of conduct of the courtier, also stressed its centrality, as well as the difference between the conversation of men and that of women.[37] The conversation that is of interest here however, is the verbal commerce of the salons, that 'most exquisite and delicate pleasure'.[38] Every author had something to say about what conversation ought to be, and many of the treatises on the art were themselves written in the form of conversations. For Madeleine de Scudéry, whose voluminous *oeuvre* includes treatises on

conversation, it represents a social and moral relation. It is

> le lien de la société de tous les hommes ... le moyen le plus ordinaire d'introduire non seulement la politesse dans le monde, mais encore la morale la plus pure.[39]

For Vaumorières, it is one of the most important aspects of social life.[40] It was Méré, however, who first theorised its principles. For Méré, conversation is primarily communication, but it is not just talk. It is also about how to behave.[41] Conversation must be easy, 'natural',[42] free of constraints and of specialist jargon; above all, it must please. Because women's conversation embodies these ideal features,[43] it makes men think of *bienséance* as well, it regulates their tongue and enables them to achieve *honnêteté*. For, as Morvan de Bellegarde remarks, in the company of women, men have to watch and regulate their language, and refrain from uttering uncivil words, 'de ces paroles qui blessent l'honnêteté'.[44]

The interrelation between conversation and *honnêteté,* and the centrality of women to the process should now be clear. Women's conversation, (as language and company), enables men to acquire and develop the appropriate conduct of body and tongue, the *politesse* which is the soul of *honnêteté*.[45] *Plaire* in conversation is the means of achieving *honnêteté*, and it is in conversation that the honnête homme is produced.[46] It does not matter to society whether his inner self is virtuous or not: 'l'*honnête homme est* ce qu'il *paraît*'.[47] Thus, as Dens argues, language represents an aesthetic redemption, 'le langage représente la possibilité d'un rachat au travers d'une mutation esthétique'. Conversation produces *honnêteté,* but it is the conversation of women that produces the *honnête homme*.[48]

How, then, does conversation position women ? Does it produce an *honnête femme* equivalent to the *honnête homme* ? The way *honnêteté* is theorised implies that it is a social ideal which could be attained, or at least aspired to, by both men and women. Indeed, because of their *politesse*, their grace and their delicate and pure language, women should be more likely to realise the ideal of *honnêteté* than men. Yet as Furetière's definition of *honnêteté* reveals, there is a considerable difference between what makes a man and a woman *honnête*. The *honnêteté* of women is rooted in their inner virtue, that of men reflects their public

virtue.

> L'honnêteté des femmes, c'est la chasteté, la modestie, la pudeur, la retenue. L'honnêteté des hommes est une manière d'agir juste, sincère, courtoise, obligeante, civile.[49]

Indeed, one of the main functions of *honnêteté*, writes Grenaille, is precisely to distinguish men and women.[50] What is required of the *honnête femme* are not the virtues practised by men, (though writers like Du Bosc and Grenaille concede that women are equally capable of practising them), but traditionally female ones: 'la sincérité, la douceur, la fidélité et la patience'.[51] And, asks Du Bosc, do not these virtues just happen to be the very same ones that theology attributes to humility, a primary Christian virtue for women? Thus is *honnêteté* for women inextricably bound up with religion and morality, when for men, it is a secular social ideal which does not even have to be compatible with virtue.[52] Clearly, then, *honnêteté* is a gendered discourse. And if honnêteté is gendered, then conversation too must be gendered. This issue is taken up by Scudéry in one of her *Conversations*: how differently should an honnête femme and an honnête homme speak:

> Mais, interrompit Césonie, encore voudrais-je bien savoir quelle doit être la différence qu'il faut qu'il y ait entre un Homme qui parle bien, et une femme qui parle bien. Car encore que je sache de certitude, qu'il doit y en avoir, je ne sais pas précisément en quoi elle consiste. On se sert des mêmes paroles; on parle quelques fois des mêmes choses; et l'on a même assez souvent des pensées qui se ressemblent. Cependant, comme je l'ai déjà dit, il ne faut pas qu'une honnête Femme parle toujours comme un honnête homme; et il y a certaines expressions, dont les uns peuvent se servir à propos, et qui seraient de mauvaise grâce aux autres.[53]

Even though the difference between the conversation of an *honnête homme* and an *honnête femme* is elusive, it is a matter of *bienséance* that there should be one.

But there is a paradox. When women's conversation is deemed indispensable to the regulation of young aristocratic males entering the world,[54] the delicacy and *politesse* of their language are highlighted and praised. When women's conversation *as such* is discussed, however, it is derogated: it is always undisciplined, unregulated, or simply 'too much'. All

the major texts on conversation provide interesting illustrations of this paradoxical, profoundly ambiguous attitude to women's conversation. Du Bosc spends a whole chapter in *L'Honnête Femme* describing the vices of women's conversation; he eventually recommends that women should model themselves on the Virgin Mary, who spoke only five times in her lifetime.[55] Vaumorières' chapter 'Contre les Grands Parleurs' is about women's talk, not men's. Madeleine de Scudéry is even more critical of women's conversation, which she compares unfavourably with men's: 'Je dis, à la grande honte de notre sexe, que les hommes ont un grand avantage sur nous pour la conversation'.[56] Thus, Césonie claims that when women talk too much, it is much worse than when men do, because their conversation is a torrent of trifling words, tedious to any reasonable mind.[57]

How can women's conversation, women's talk, be praised and derogated at the same time? How can their conversation and their silence be invited simultaneously ? How can these contradictory attitudes be accounted for and what do they tell us about women's social positionings ?

As it concerns women, conversation is a double discourse. Women's *voice* produces on the one hand conversation and on the other what I shall call 'tongue'. Women's conversation is civilised and civilising, polite and pleasing, even when talking about trifling matters.[58] All these qualities are necessary to, and constitute the conversation that produces the honnête homme. But women's voice also produces tongue: undisciplined, unregulated talk about *bagatelles*, and malicious gossip.[59] An instance of 'tongue' which recurs in various texts, is that women talk without listening to each other, or all at the same time. It is not a conversation, but a contest.

> C'est le défaut ordinaire des femmes ...elles crient toutes ensemble et ne veulent point s'écouter; il semble qu'elles ne parlent que pour parler. Celle qui fait le plus de bruit l'emporte toujours, et les autres sont contraintes de lui céder à la fin.[60]

The seriousness of such a criticism becomes clear when it is counterposed to the ideal conversational behaviour of the *honnête homme* : listening to one's interlocutors so as to bring them out, rather than imposing oneself. Many of the virtues of *honnêteté* - such as 'souplesse', the capacity to

accommodate oneself to others by guessing their needs - all derive directly from this conduct.

Conversation and Tongue

Women's conversation, then, is but a disciplined, a contained 'tongue'. But what disciplines women's tongue? Though mixed company and conversation constitute the effective social body, men conversing on their own are said to get on better than women without men. Men talk about serious matters. Women on their own are boring, and go on endlessly about trivial domestic matters or their babies' babble.[61] Once again, Scudéry's lively pen provides the best illustration. She describes arriving in a room full of women chatting; the conversation is tedious, lacking in that indispensable quality of *divertissement*. Enters a man and everything changes:

> La conversation changea tout d'un coup, et devint plus réglée, plus spirituelle, et plus agréable, quoi qu'il n'y eut nul changement à la compagnie, sinon qu'il y était arrivé un homme qui ne parla pas même beaucoup,[62]

And, adds Scudéry ironically, he was not even a remarkable man, 'un de ces esprits élevés qu'on trouve si rarement'. Yet his mere presence brings order in the conversation. Thus while women's conversation regulates males, the presence of a man disciplines women's tongue. Women may have all the perfections necessary for conversation, even 'esprit', but they do not know how to manage them.

> On reconnoitrait bien à la confusion et à l'inégalité de leurs discours, encore même qu'elles disent d'assez bonnes choses, que ce n'est point assez d'avoir du marbre et du porphyre pour faire des Palais, si on n'est Architecte,[63]

The architectural metaphor does not just derogate women's conversation, it also suggests a way in which the 'femaleness'[64] of the discourse of *honnêteté* can be rescued from its association with women. Even though, as Strosetzki points out, *'l' honnête homme* is modelled on women,[65] men differentiate themselves from women by the self management and organisation which women lack, as their conversation reveals. While women have a necessary maieutic role, the *honnête homme* is wrested from this

relation in that, once produced, he is self-perfecting. The *paraître* of the *honnête homme*, his social persona, his insinuating manners may appear feminine, but his *être*,[65] his hidden, profound self is male because of his 'boundless potential' and his penetrating mental powers.[67] Women's talents for conversation can be recognized and exploited by men for their own refinement and self-perfection, but it is solely in men that these talents take on a status unavailable to women, the status of *honnêteté*. The beauty of the marble and the porphyry is brought out when it is polished and ordered. Women's tongue is like these unworked, (though precious), materials: unpolished, 'uncivilised'. The un(res)trained tongue always lurks beneath the veneer, the polish, the disciplined mask of *politesse*. A few women are exceptional; they have no need to be disciplined, they have no 'tongue'. La Marquise de Rambouillet, or Arténice, as Madeleine de Scudéry called her, was one.[68]

The *Précieuses*

But there are women who refuse the disciplining of their tongue. Symbolic of this attitude is their refusal of the necessary verbal commerce of the salon: they yawn, and remain silent until others of their kind have arrived,[69] thereby transgressing the most fundamental rule of *politesse*. Because their 'jargon' cannot be understood,[70] they talk in such a way that no conversation is possible. Thus they reject the refining function that other women take on when conversing (and restraining their tongue). These women are all tongue. They are the *Précieuses*.

In seventeenth century France, the discourse of conversation produced two positionings for women. One, idealised in the shape of the *honnête femme*, was characterised by the virtues of 'discretion, silence, modesty'.[71] The other, the incarnation of all the female defects of the time,[72] the embodiment of unbridled, undisciplined, unregulated tongue, was the *précieuse*. The figure of the *précieuse* has several avatars: the femme savante, the précieuse ridicule, the prude, Mme de Rambouillet, all women of wit who claim to be literary critics, *coquettes* and old maids.[73]

As *femme savante*, the *précieuse* emasculates men; as *précieuse ridicule*, she exposes her lack of taste, her gullibility, her lack of discernment - she cannot tell the difference between good and bad verse,

true and false poets, real noblemen or valets disguised as ones.[74] As Mme de Rambouillet, she represents the model of a pure perfect aristocratic *précieuse*, in comparison to whom all emulations are but degenerate imitations.[75] As prude,[76] the *précieuse* is said to reject sexuality, to sublimate it into the sort of pure love described in the *Carte de Tendre*.[77] This latter characteristic is also related to the original definition of the term *précieuse* which, Pelous points out, was produced by a semantic association between the idea of refusing sexual relations and valuing oneself highly.[78] The *précieuses'* rejection of sex, however, is also said to result from their being old-maids.[79] Finally, in De Pure's *La Précieuse*, it is the institution of marriage, but not gallantry, that the *précieuses* find intolerable.

With so many faces, one may well ask who were the *Précieuses*? This question has been asked for long enough, (well over a century), to produce a substantial literature which defines who they were, what they stood for, and their true essence.[80] Some literatures attempt to absorb them into the broader discourse of *préciosité* and *le précieux*.[81] Others attempt to rescue them by inserting them into a 'feminist' discourse, such that their critique of the institution of marriage and their demands for education constitute a 'movement' related to their position in the *salons*.[82] There is however another way to tell the story of the *précieuses*. Pelous and Stanton have argued convincingly that the notion of the *précieuse* is a representation, a figure, a composite body, not a reality. 'la *Précieuse* n'existe que par le jugement et le regard d'autrui', she is the Other.[83]

All attempts to justify the idea of the *précieuses* by the existence of real *précieuses*, argues Pelous, end up in incoherences and paradoxes.[84] Evidence of the existence of the *précieuse* has been based mostly on Baudeau de Somaize's *Grand Dictionnaire des Précieuses*, and Michel de Pure's *La Précieuse*; the latter has also been said to represent a feminist apologia.[85] A close look at the texts however, reveals enough contradictions to support the proposition that they were nothing other than satiric in intent.[86] This deserves to be explored in greater depth than is possible here, but it should be noted at least that modern historians agree that the language attributed to the *précieuses* is a

caricature, 'la langue des précieuses n'a jamais été parlée dans aucun salon et qu'il s'agit d'une satire caricaturale'.[87] A point which has not been taken up by modern writers, is that no one knew who the *précieuses* were at the time either. What both de Pure and Somaize promise is disclosure, as the titles and subtitles of their works indicate: who the 'real' *précieuses* are, the 'key' to their language, entry into the 'mystery' of the *Ruelles*, even a history of the customs and a geography of the countries of these exotic beings. If the *précieuse* 'exists only through the prism of comic degradation',[88] why was she invented?

In order to answer this question, we have to go back to the discourses of *honnêteté* and conversation. With their focus on the *art de plaire* and the art of conversation modelled on that of women, the virtues of *honnêteté* can be said to be 'female virtues'. But what are 'female' virtues? In their ambiguity and historical specificity, they have no name, just a marking indicating that the norm is male.[89] Once appropriated by the *honnête homme*, they acquire a name and become a mode of being. The *honnête homme*, then, has appropriated female discourse as a means of redeeming and perfecting himself in language and conversation. But *honnêteté* is a gendered discourse, and *honnêtes femmes* are produced not in conversation but in modesty and in silence. The way the conversation of the *précieuse* is described, on the other hand, shows that their conversation cannot produce *honnêteté*, because theirs is only unregulated tongue. Conversation, all writers insist, is primarily an exchange, a delightful commerce in which all *agrémens* and *bienséances* converge. By contrast, the 'belles conversations' (meant ironically) of the *précieuses*, De Pure reveals, are nothing but contests and harangues. Whereas the conversation of the *honnête homme* has taken on all the seductive qualities of the feminine, that of the *précieuses* conveys all the aggression usually attributed to the masculine. The real threat of the *précieuses* is their desire to arrogate to themselves the property of males, the power of naming. The possibility that women might claim the power to generate language rather than babies, Adam's power, is a transgression of such magnitude that it threatens the social order, the 'natural order',[90] as in Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes*. Satire, on the other hand, can disarm the *précieuses*, showing that they are capable of generating only monstrous, bizarre, incomprehensible gibberish, turning France into Babel.[91] Women

who claim access to male discourse[92] are an aberration; this transgression traditionally makes them vulnerable to accusations of sexual deviancy.[93] In an age of sexual libertinism, when seduction and desire were indispensable elements in the construction of the ideal male self,[94] it is not surprising that the *précieuses* were constructed as refusing sexuality.[95]

Though *préciosité* has been read as 'the negative pole of the ideal of *honnêteté*',[96] both are produced in the discourse of conversation. Moreover, it is not the case that *précieuses* are simply counterposed to the exemplary women who 'initiate' young men into the 'nuances of *politesse*, *galanterie*, and above all, conversation'.[97] The *Précieuse* is every woman. In every woman lurks the potential for an unbridled, undisciplined tongue, for control of language and sexuality. Women's civilizing conversation is a tongue momentarily disciplined by males, to service their ends, and produce them as *honnêtes*.[98] The *précieuses*, then, constitute a warning to women that their place as the initiators and regulators of social life and polite language in the *salon* is not a license to intrude in the Logos.

In seventeenth century French society, conversation was the measure of worth.[99] It positioned *élite* men as self-perfecting, but not women. Though women's language evinced all the qualities required for the achievement of *honnêteté*, women served merely as instruments - though indispensable ones - for men to attain that ideal. These qualities were in fact highlighted only in relation to that function. Nevertheless a space was opened up for women's voice, a space that undeniably represents a break, a shift in respect of the traditional discourse on women's talk.[100] However, because women were represented both as a civilizing, refining influence, and as chatterers whose tongue needed disciplining and even silencing, conversation can be said to have produced contradictory positionings for them. Though a space was opened up for their voice, the traditional discourse on women's tongue remained intact.

One final point must be made, concerning the association of the French language and French conversation with refinement. This notion was taken up and assimilated into existing and emerging discourses in

eighteenth century England, but in complex and even contradictory ways. This should caution us against assuming that French cultural patterns were ever simply carried over, or 'translated' into English. This is why I have thought it necessary to describe the complex discourse of *honnêteté* in its specific historical and cultural location. It provides a critical vantage point from which to understand the deployment of English discourses about the French. Describing the emergence of conversation has shed some light on the way the discourse was constituted in France. Its traces will now be followed into eighteenth century England, where, I will argue, conversation produced contradictory positionings not only for women, but for men as well, because of the anxiety about masculinity.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the emergence, in early eighteenth century England, of two interrelated concerns. One was the concern over the constitution of the authoritative voice and polite conversation of the gentleman; the other was over the regulation of the English language. The conversation of women was intricated in these both discourses, because, on the one hand, it was thought necessary to polish the gentleman's conversation, and on the other, it was feared to be effeminating.

References and footnotes

1. C. Dulong notes: 'les hôtesses recevaient dans des *chambres*, qui n'étaient pas nécessairement des chambres à coucher, le mot ayant un sens plus large qu'aujourd'hui'. *La Vie Quotidienne des Femmes au Grand Siècle*, Paris, 1984, p. 132. See also J. Fowler and J. Cornforth, *English Decoration in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1978.

2. His father was a wine merchant.

3. It is crucial to my thesis that *politesse* be distinguished from French politeness, as will become clear later.

4. Chalesme, cited in D.C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art*, New York, 1980, p. 139.

5. 'Que dans les doutes de la langue, il vaut mieux, pour l'ordinaire, consulter les femmes et ceux qui n'ont point étudié que ceux qui sont bien savants en la langue grecque et en la latine', declared Claude Favre de Vaugelas, *Remarques sur la Langue Française*, (1647), R. Lagane (ed.), Paris, 1975, p. 23; see also W. Ayres-Bennett, *Vaugelas and the Development of the French Language*, London, 1987, pp. 14, 198-199.

6. J-P. Dens, *L' Honnête Homme et la Critique du Goût: Esthétique et Société au XVIIe Siècle*, Lexington, Ky., 1981, p. 46; Jean-Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde, *Modèles de Conversation pour les Personnes Polies*, (1697), La Haye, 1719, p. 23.

7. The word *honnête* has no English equivalent, and cannot be translated as 'honest'. It suggests civility and gentlemanliness. Eighteenth century French language teaching grammars such as Chambaud's *The Art of Speaking*, noted the idiomatic uses of the term. See also Klein's note on this in *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

8. Antoine Gombauld, Chevalier de Méré, *Oeuvres Complètes*, (1668-1677), Charles H. Boudhors (ed.), 3 vols., Paris, 1930, III, p. 75. All further references to Méré are from this edition, and will include just volume number and page number.

9. T.E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris*, London, 1985, p. 67; M. Moriarty, *Taste and Ideology in Seventeenth Century France*, Cambridge, 1988.

10. Méré, III, p. 70.

11. 'L'Urbanité ... est un assemblage de plusieurs manières aisées et délicates, que l'on sent mieux que l'on ne les peut expliquer, et qui est directement opposé à la rusticité'. Antoine Renaud, *Manière de Parler*, Paris, 1697, p. 144; see also Méré, III, p. 121.

12. 'La grande règle pour plaire, c'est de s'accommoder aux gens, d'étudier leur goût et leurs inclinations, et de prendre toutes les figures selon les différentes dispositions de leurs esprits'. Morvan de Bellegarde, *Réflexions sur ce qui peut plaire ou déplaire dans le commerce du monde*, Paris, 1690, p. 281.

13. Méré, III, p. 88.

14. *ibid.*, I, p. 21; see L.K. Horowitz, *Love and Language: A Study of the Classical French Moralist Writers*, Columbus, Ohio, 1977, p. 25.

15. 'Pour se rendre capable de dire d'excellentes choses, d'un tout agréable et galant, ce n'est pas assez que d'étudier de certains Livres ... ni d'acquérir de la science et de l'érudition'. Méré, III, p. 121.

16. *ibid.*, pp. 70, 78. *Agrémens* are charming qualities that can be associated with persons or with conversation; *Bienséance* refers broadly to social propriety or appropriateness. See Moriarty, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

17. Méré, III, p. 72.

18. Bouhours's 'entretien' on the meaning of the *je ne sais quoi* illustrates what Moriarty terms 'the deliberate vagueness of the dominant cultural discourse'. The *Je ne sais quoi*, Bouhours argues 'ne serait plus un *je ne sais quoi* si l'on savait ce que c'est'. Père Dominique Bouhours, *Entretiens d'Ariste et Eugène*, Amsterdam, 1671, p. 247; Moriarty, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

19. Maurice Magendie, *La Politesse Mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté en France de 1600 à 1660*, (1925), Geneva, 1970.

20. Paris, 1630.

21. Stanton, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

22. *ibid.*; Moriarty, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

23. 'The Concern for Truth', in L.D. Kritzman (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews & other writings of Michel Foucault 1977-1984*, London, 1988, p. 259. For a different perspective on the same question, see S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago, 1980. Greenblatt notes that 'self-fashioning is always, though not exclusively, in language'. p. 9.

24. 'Avez-vous bonne opinion qu'il faille nécessairement aimer pour être honnête homme?' 'Oui madame, parce que pour être aimé il faut être aimable et ce qui rend aimable est cela même qui rend honnête homme'. Honoré D'Urfé, *L'Astrée*, quoted in Dulong, *op. cit.*, p. 128. G. Genette notes that for half a century, *L'Astrée* was, both at Court and in Town, 'le bréviaire des sentiments et des bonnes manières', 'Le Serpent dans la Bergerie', *Figures I*, Paris, 1966, p. 109. See also Magendie, *op. cit.*

25. Madeleine de Scudéry, *Clélie, Histoire Romaine*, Paris, 1658-66, Book II, part 3, pp. 1381-82.

26. Méré, II, p. 81.

27. Man in his 'natural' state is the antithesis of *honnêteté*, which is about flexibility, grace, *politesse*. Méré, III, pp. 74-5.

28. Moriarty, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

29. *op. cit.*, p. 26.

30. This is what was misunderstood in England. See Chapter 4 below.

31. This explains Act III Scene 1 in Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes*, where the expectation of Trissotin's words sends Philaminte, Bélise and Armande, the three femmes savantes, into an erotic paroxysm which results in symbolic consummation, fecundation and the 'birth' of his poem. It is because they have misunderstood the relation between love and language that they prove themselves incapable of attaining the ideal of *honnêteté*.

32. See also M. Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in L. Martin *et al.* (eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, London, 1988, p. 18.

33. *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100. Moriarty writes that he did not tackle this question because of lack of space.

34. Faret, *op. cit.*; Méré, *op. cit.*; François de La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes et Réflexions*, (1662), Paris, 1965; Madeleine de Scudéry, *Les Conversations sur Divers Sujets*, Amsterdam, 1686; Jean de La Bruyère, *Les Caractères ou les moeurs de ce siècle*, (1688), Paris 1839; Pierre Ortigue de Vaumorières, *L'Art de la Conversation*, Paris, 1690.

35. See Stanton, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

36. C. Strosetzki, *Rhétorique de la Conversation: sa dimension littéraire et linguistique dans la société française du XVIIe siècle*, Paris, 1984. Dens and Strosetzki have both noted how little has been written on conversation. J-P. Dens, (1973) 'L'Art de la Conversation au Dix-Septième Siècle', *Les Lettres Romanes*, vol. 27, 1973; Strosetzki, *op. cit.* There is one recent exception, E. Goldsmith, *«Exclusive Conversations» : The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth Century France*, Philadelphia, 1988. However, she does not situate conversation in its discursive context and makes no mention of *honnêteté*.

37. *The Book of the Courtier*, Harmondsworth, 1967, pp. 76-81, 213-214; Faret, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

38. Morvan de Bellegarde, *op. cit.*, 1719, p. 3.

39. 'De la Conversation', *op. cit.*

40. *op. cit.*; see also Dens, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

41. 'Il ... faut ... bien dire and bien faire pour être *honnête homme*'. Méré, I, p. 46. Dens writes: 'l'*honnête homme* s'actualise dans "le dire et le faire" ', *op. cit.*, 1981, p. 47.

42. On the concept of the natural see M. Bouvier, 'Le Naturel', *Le XVIIe Siècle*, vol. 156, No. 3, Juillet-Septembre 1987.

43. 'Il n'y a rien de plus juste, de plus propre et de plus naturel que le langage de la plupart des Françaises'. Bouhours, *op. cit.*, 1920, p. 57; see also Vaugelas, *op. cit.*

44. *op. cit.*, p. 225; Méré, III, p. 74.

45. See Bouhours, *op. cit.*, 1920, p. 145; Stanton, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-2.

46. *'L'honnêteté* se mesure à la faculté de converser'. Méré, cited in Strosetzki, p. 81; 'Ce n'est que dans la conversation que le vrai visage de l'honnête homme apparaît', François de Fenne, *ibid.*

47. Dens, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

48. All the *auteurs mondains* agreed that women were central to the process, notes Dens, *op. cit.*, 1973, p. 142; See also Stanton, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-33; P. France, *Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 56.

49. Antoine Furetière, quoted by R. Duchêne, 'Honnêteté et Sexualité', in Y-M. Bercé (ed.), *Destins et Enjeux du XVIIième Siècle*, Paris, 1985, p. 120.

50. François de Grenaille, quoted in Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature 1610-1652*, Oxford, 1977, p. 125.

51. Jacques Du Bosc, *L'Honneste Femme*, Lyon, 1665, part 3, p. 376.

52. Strosetzki, *op. cit.*; Dens, *op. cit.*, 1981.

53. 'De parler trop ou trop peu et comment il faut parler', P.J. Wolfe (ed.), *Choix de Conversations de Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, Ravenna, 1977, p. 36.

54. 'Le commerce des honnêtes femmes est un bon remède pour retenir les jeunes gens ... pour leur inspirer de bons sentiments ... pour leur donner de l'horreur du vice et de la débauche'. Morvan de Bellegarde, *op. cit.*, 1719, p. 223.

55. Du Bosc, *op. cit.*, p. 35. This, from a man who has been taken to represent the 'feminist' tendency in the seventeenth century, principally because of his support for women's education. See C. Lougée, *Le Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France*, Princeton, 1979; Maclean, *op. cit.*

56. Scudéry, *op. cit.*, 1686, p. 6.

57. 'Quand les femmes parlent trop, leur conversation n'est qu'un torrent de bagatelles et de paroles superflues, qui ennuyent fort ceux qui ont l'esprit un peu raisonnable'. Wolfe (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 28. It is interesting to note that Poullain de la Barre pointed out that men too talk a lot and that if men's tongue was as loose as women's it would be impossible to shut them up. François Poullain de la Barre, *De l'égalité des deux sexes*, Paris, 1673, p. 155.

58. Morvan de Bellegarde, *op. cit.*, 1719, p. 230 ; see also Faret, *op. cit.*

59. The notion of *bagatelles* illustrates the profound ambiguity concerning women's conversation: the ability to talk agreeably about the most trifling topics is the essence of *honnêteté* and a testimony to the achievement of the *honnête homme*. But women's talk about *bagatelles* just proves their shallowness and ignorance. See also the discussion on male and female abilities, in chapter 8 below.

60. Morvan de Bellegarde, *op. cit.*, 1690, p. 280. See also pp. 348, 362.

61. Scudéry, *op. cit.*, 1686; Morvan de Bellegarde, *op. cit.*; Faret, *op. cit.*; Du Bosc, *op. cit.*;

62. *op. cit.*, 1686, p. 7.

63. Du Bosc, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

64. Stanton, *op. cit.*, notes the 'female' principle at work in the system of esthetic seductiveness', p. 139.

65. *op. cit.*, p. 144; see also Morvan de Bellegarde, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

66. The gap betwen *être* and *paraître* concerned Méré and most other seventeenth century authors, but it is beyond the scope of this chapter to do more than mention it. It was considered to be 'the central and most obsessive problem in *honnêteté*'. Stanton, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 187. See also Dens, *op. cit.*, 1981.

67. Stanton, *op. cit.*, p. 96; One of the qualities indispensable to *honnêteté* was 'ce génie qui pénètre ce qui se passe de plus secret'. Méré,

III, p. 72 and *passim*. The (male) terms 'genius, and penetration', used again and again by Méré illustrate Joan Scott's concept of gendered coding, *op. cit.*, 1986.

68. See Scudéry's portrait of Arténice in *Célinte, Nouvelle Première*, (1661), A. Niderst (ed.), Paris, 1979, p. 53.

69. Méré, III, p. 79; Édouard de Barthelémy (ed.), *La Galerie des Portraits de Melle de Montpensier*, Paris, 1860, pp. 515-519.

70. See Stanton, 'The Fiction of *Préciosité* and the Fear of Women', *Yale French Studies*, vol. 62, 1981, p. 127.

71. Du Bosc, *op. cit.*, p. 30. Their opposite are vices, especially *babil*, i.e. chatter.

72. J.M. Pelous, *Amour précieux, amour galant 1654-1675*, Paris, 1980, p. 355.

73. Les femmes 'qui ont de l'esprit et se mêlent d'écrire et de corriger ce que les autres écrivent', Antoine Baudeau de Somaize, *Le Grand Dictionnaire des Précieuses*, (1661), Charles-L. Livet (ed.), Paris 1856, p. 23; Somaize defines 'une Précieuse véritable' as 'Une vieille fille qui a de l'esprit', and 'une Précieuse ridicule' as 'une fille coquette et qui veut passer pour un bel esprit', in *Le Grand Dictionnaire des PRÉCIEUSES ou la clef de la langue des Ruelles*, Paris, 1660, p. 29. The association of *précieuses* with old age has echoes in the early satires of the modern women's movement: only older women, women whom men no longer want, could possibly wish to join female groups.

74. See Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes*, 1672, and *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, 1662; Somaize, *Les Véritables Précieuses*, in G. Mongrédien (ed.), *Comédies et Pamphlets sur Molière*, Paris, 1986.

75. 'Mme de Rambouillet est le type le plus pur et le plus élevé de la vraie précieuses dans le meilleur sens du mot', declared Livet, *Précieux et Précieuses: caractères et moeurs littéraires du XVIIe siècle*, Paris, 1895, pp. xxxiv; Stanton argues however that the 'binary model' of the *précieuses* has the 'rhetorical function of underscoring the rarity of the pure and the overwhelming predominance of the ridiculous *précieuse*'. *op. cit.*, p. 111.

76. Abbé Michel De Pure, for example, considered that the new term 'précieuse' was only a substitute for the old term prude. *La Précieuse ou le mystère des ruelles*, (1656-58), Paris, 1938.

77. La Carte de Tendre is an allegorical map of the itinerary of the affections. Madeleine de Scudéry is believed to have created the *genre*. See N. Aronson, *Mademoiselle de Scudéry ou le voyage au Pays de Tendre*, Paris, 1986; D. Mc Dougall, *Madeleine de Scudéry*, London, 1938.

78. In Pelous's words, 'le refus de se donner et le 'prix' qu'une femme est censée attribuer à sa personne', *op. cit.*, p. 311.

79. They are referred to as 'des vieilles pucelles', literally old virgins, in 'La Déroute des Précieuses', in V. Fournel (ed.), *Les Contemporains de Molière: recueil de comédies rares ou peu connues jouées de 1650 à 1680*, Paris, 1863, Vol. 1, p. 505.

80. Livet, *op. cit.*, 1856; Aronson, *op. cit.*; R. Lathuillère, *La Préciosité: Etude historique et linguistique*, Geneva, 1966; E. Avigdor, *Coquettes et Précieuses*, Paris, 1982, to cite just a few.

81. Y. Fukui, *Raffinement Précieux dans la Poésie Française du XVIIe Siècle*, Paris, 1964; R. Bray, *La Préciosité et les Précieux*, Paris, 1968; Stanton makes the fascinating observation that in literary history the *précieux* becomes 'masculinized and progressively valorized as a poetic tendency effacing the "female specificity" of *la Précieuse*'. *op. cit.*, 1981, p. 110.

82. This is made possible because of the conflation of *précieuse* with one of its representations, the *femme savante*, as Pelous also notes, p. 353; see Lougée, *op. cit.*, Maclean, *op. cit.*; Dulong, *op. cit.*

83. Pelous, *op. cit.*, pp. 362, 366, 373.

84. *ibid.*, p. 376; see also Stanton, *op. cit.*

85. Maclean believes that the utterances of the *précieuses* were 'faithfully recorded' by de Pure, op. cit., p. 118.

86. See Stanton, *op. cit.*, 1981, p. 113.

87. Mongrédien *op. cit.*, 1986, p. 22. Even if one ignored the derogation of *précieuse* as 'vieille fille', Somaize's entry concerning the ampersand - or rather its absence, abolished by the *précieuse* because they refuse any 'conjunction', an allusion to their sexual prudery - should be sufficient to make one wonder how the *Grand Dictionnaire des Précieuses* could possibly have been treated as a serious record. This is also the position taken by Stanton, *op. cit.*, 1981, p. 114.

88. Stanton, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

89. In the seventeenth century, according to the Aristotelian model of generation, the primary body was male. Anything female was derived from the male by analogy and was less perfect.

90. Stanton, *op. cit.*, pp. 127, 129.

91. See Stanton, *op. cit.* Derogation and ridicule were held to have been so powerful that a century later, John Andrews claimed that Molière's 'satirical comedies, the *Femmes Savantes* and the *Précieuses Ridicules* drew so faithful and striking portrait of that species of foible, that a general correction was almost instantaneously effected by them'. *Remarks on the French and English Ladies*, London, 1783, p. 26.

92. What Lougée describes as their wanting 'the traditional prerogatives of the aristocratic male', *op. cit.*, p. 25.

93. See for example the story of Isotta Nogarola, in Grafton and Jardine, *op. cit.*, ch. 2.

94. The *honnête homme* must always be desirable and desired: he must be 'souhaité partout'. Méré, III, p. 74.

95. See however the story of the seventeenth century courtesan, Ninon de Lenclos, who earned the honour of being called an *honnête homme*, in Duchêne, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

96. Stanton, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

97. Méré, II, 75.

98. The analogy between women's tongue and her sexuality has been noted by L. Jardine in *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*, Sussex, 1983. The unbridled tongue evokes women's rapacious and unbridled sexuality, one of the 'major sexual myths traceable in many medical handbooks', points out P-G. Boucé, 'Some sexual beliefs and myths in eighteenth century Britain', in P-G Boucé (ed.), *Sexuality in eighteenth century Britain*, Manchester, 1982, pp. 41-42. Stanton's discussion of women's participation in the *Fronde* and the notion of female intrusion into male domains is also very illuminating.

99. See France, *op. cit.*, ch. 4.

100. For an incisive discussion on women's (scolding) tongue, see Jardine, *op. cit.*, ch. 4. A vicious example is provided in Somaize's *Les Véritables Précieuses*. Lusse-tu-cru complains that he is being persecuted by 'La femme acariâtre' et 'sa langue maudite et empestée', in the play-within-the play 'La mort de Lusse-tu-cru lapidé par les femmes'. An extra dimension to the story is provided by a gruesome illustration: Lusse-tu-cru is a man to whom husbands bring their wives' head which they want reformed. This he does with a hammer, on an anvil. The workshop of the *opérateur céphalique* is full of decapitated women's heads. Paris, 1660, pp. 32-3.

Chapter 3

THE PROBLEMATIZATION OF THE ENGLISH GENTLEMAN AND HIS TONGUE.

For a long time, and certainly in Norman England, one language had predominated in the Courts of the the Royal families of Europe. It was not the language of the indigenous population, not the language of the peasantry, nor even of the local nobility. The language of the Courts and the language of diplomacy had for centuries been French. In this, England was no exception: English Courts and diplomatic envoys used French - James I, for example, spoke French and used French in his letters; similarly, a century later, George the Prince Regent and his Consort preferred French to their own English or German. French was, for a long time, to remain the language of diplomacy. At the same time throughout this extensive period, paradoxically, the compulsion to derogate the indigenous language was rarely felt. Equally, and equally paradoxically, it is hard to find any attempt to raise it up. In England, the indigenous language seemingly needed neither protection nor improvement.

Suddenly, in the last decades of the seventeenth and the early decades of the eighteenth century, everything changed. The English gentleman and his tongue became the focus of a series of problematizations in a way that was quite new. It is this turn of events that I shall attempt to describe and analyze in the chapter that follows. Why was it that these crucial changes took place? Why did they happen when they did, in the late seventeenth early eighteenth century?

Languages had for a long time been central to the construction of the English gentleman: not just French, which gentlemen's children were taught 'from the time that they [were] rocked in their cradles',[1] but Latin, which the legacy of humanist education had made central to the education of males. '*Latin*, I look upon as absolutely necessary to a Gentleman', wrote Locke.[2] In the late seventeenth century, however, dissatisfaction with educational practices and institutions seems to have developed.[3] Part of the disenchantment was expressed in dissatisfaction with the way Latin was taught, not just with the widespread use of corporal punishment,[4] but with the methods themselves. In particular, it seemed absurd that boys should learn Latin grammar in Latin, in a language which they have not yet mastered. This was held to account for the slow

progress and meagre results achieved after many years spent on the subject.[5] However, the most important criticism, causing the most concern, was that instruction in Latin subverted the tongue of the gentleman. Instead of being educated to be able to speak well, and to the purpose, on any subject and on any occasion, wrote Locke, young gentlemen who are forced to learn the grammars of foreign and dead languages are not taught the grammar of their own tongue and '[shock] the ears ... with solicisms and offensive irregularities'.[6] Locke was concerned that the gentleman speak accurate English not just because 'want of Propriety' was unbecoming to his rank, but because incorrect English indicated 'Lower Breeding and Worse company than suits his quality.[7]

Why was the tongue of the gentleman problematised at that specific historical moment? Foucault's notion of 'problematization' can help clarify the question I am posing. A problematization does not mean the 'representation of a pre-existing object, nor the creation by discourse of an object that doesn't exist'. It is rather that at a specific moment, 'an object is constituted for thought'.[8] Lawrence Klein has argued that in the late seventeenth century, two discourses, both initially the products of renaissance humanism, converged for the first time on the 'the same population', namely gentlemen. These two discourses were, on the one hand, the 'language of civic humanism', characterised by its emphasis on virtuous manners and on the notion of liberty, and, on the other, the language of courtly behaviour and refinement, the discourse of politeness.[9] The emergence of both these discourses had to do with the shift away from the court as a locus of both political power and status, as a result of the Glorious Revolution. It is in this context that the problematisation of the gentleman and his tongue can be situated. In an absolute monarchy, the King's voice represents the sole authority. The shift of political power from the Court to the forum of the aristocracy, Parliament, made unprecedented demands on the nobleman, and required him to have the ability to speak for the whole of society, with the voice of authority. How could that authoritative voice be constituted in English, when that was a language initially acquired at the mother's lap, and, as a vernacular, was also the language of the 'Illiterate Vulgar'?[10] Grammar could provide that authority, argued Daniel Lane, making the point that without it, the speaker of any language, even Latin in Roman times, is illiterate.[11] But,

to be persuasive, the tongue of the gentleman must be distinguished not merely by its grammatical correctness, but by its graceful manner, and its polish. 'To Write and Speak correctly gives a Grace, and gains favourable Attention to what one has to say', commented Locke, and since 'tis *English*, that an *English* Gent. will have constant use of', he should polish and perfect his style in it.[12] By the end of the seventeenth century, birth was no longer thought sufficient to produce the gentleman. Though he may have good qualities, 'tis good Breeding sets them off'.[13] Breeding enables men to become civil, and civility is expressed in conversation. It is a 'disposition of Mind ... a care not to shew any slighting, or contempt, of any one in Conversation'.[14]

Just as in France, then, we can find a concern over the regulation of the tongue of the gentleman and his conversation in the vernacular. In France, the language of the Court, theorised by Vaugelas and regulated by the *Académie Française,* constituted a standard of correctness which the English envied. In England however, there were no Academies and not even, Dryden complained, a dictionary, and because of the complex relations between the Court, the Town and the Country,[15] there was no locus for the elaboration of such a standard. The court of Charles II was, on the contrary, held to have corrupted both manners and language. Since the constitution of the authoritative voice of the gentleman nevertheless required that he use correct and polite English, and that he speak it fluently, and eloquently,[16] the aim of this chapter is to describe how this was to be achieved.

As we have seen, women in seventeenth century France were at the centre of cultural production, in the social space of the *salon*, where their conversation was the necessary maieutic for the production of the *honnête homme*. Although there were attempts to import the idea of the *salon* into England, copies of the 'Parisian prototype' in both its external aspects of lavish decoration and its function of literary discussion and patronage, the salon as a space for mixed conversation does not seem to have materialised in England.[17] A contemporary even remarked that the success of mixed assemblies in Paris, which 'it would be idle to contest that they altogether eclipsed ours', must have something to do with 'the National character of the French'.[18]

Yet, the notion that women's conversation is necessary to polish men's appears again and again throughout the century. In 'Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation', Swift goes so far as to attribute the present 'Degeneracy of Conversation' to the custom of excluding women from the society of men. Harking back to a golden age of politeness, when men and women met to converse on 'agreeable subjects', he concludes:

> If there were no other Use in the Conversation of Ladies, it is sufficient that it would lay a Restraint upon those odious Topicks of Immodesty and Indecencies, into which the Rudeness of our Northern Genius, is so apt to fall .[19]

Swift was not alone in suggesting this role for women's conversation. From the anonymous author of *An Essay in Defense of the Female Sex* (henceforth *An Essay*), to the Rev. James Fordyce, women's conversation was vaunted as a means of regulating men's tongue and polishing their conversation.[20] It would thus appear that in eighteenth century England, women's conversation was constructed in the same way as it had been in seventeenth century France. But there were differences, which underline the complexity of the subject and make us aware that caution must be exercised when describing the play of cultural 'influences' between England and France.

One reason why women's conversation had been so important in France was that their language had been erected into a model of purity, delicacy and *politesse*. What was said about women's language in England?

The language of women

If criticisms of the gentleman's English were unanimous, opinions about women's language were somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, women were observed to speak English with 'Elegancy and Politeness' without even knowing any grammar rules.[21] On the other, they were accused of 'false English', of making grammatical errors,[22] though Mary Astell pointed out mischievously that such errors were neither 'as common as is pretended', nor were women the only ones to make them.[23] Whereas Astell minimizes the defects of women's language, for Mary Wray, they reflect on women's moral conduct: 'the more trivial these Faults appear,

the greater Shame for such as cannot correct them'. Even though the lady readers of her *Ladies Library* were told that they had a natural talent for 'speaking and writing [their native tongue] with more Grace than even the Men themselves', they must still learn the grammar of their native language, 'not ... tediously by Rule, as Boys do Latin', but enough to learn to express their thoughts clearly and correctly. To recommend improvement in English is not as strange as it may seem, adds Wray, for 'our Native Language will not come to us by Inspiration, and we shall write and speak with Rudeness and Affectation, if we know no more of it than we are bred with'.[24] Why is there a difference between mother tongue and native language? Why does the mother tongue need improving?

Grammar and the language of women

A large number of the practical English grammars[25] published in the first half of the eighteenth century particularly address women. James Greenwood recommends the study of grammar to young Ladies, (as well as Gentlemen), not just to avoid the opprobrium of 'Blameable Spelling or false Syntax', but to remedy an area of neglect in the education of the 'Fair Sex'. Women should be better educated in general and in grammar in particular, because they bring up sons.[26] Similarly, Gildon and Brightland enjoin women - who, not learning Latin, know no grammar - to learn the grammar of English because they are among the 'most numerous Teachers of it'.[27] Thomas Wilson goes so far as to assert that the improvement of the nation depends on mothers' knowledge of grammatical English.[28] This is necesssary not just because teaching their children to speak correctly will help them towards their 'Good Fortune', but, Wilson warns, if children's 'Tongues and Ears' are set wrong, this 'fundamental Error' is almost irretrievable. For Wilson, it is precisely because women's 'Voice, Ear and Tongue' are more elegant than men's, that it their moral duty to learn grammar. Women must harness their 'natural talents to good purpose', like the mother of the Gracchi, who 'contributed very much to the forming of the eloquence of her sons'.[29] Men learn their *mother tongue* at their mother's lap; it is therefore mothers' responsibility to redeem their language from its unregulated femaleness by means of the rationality of grammar, to prepare their sons for service in the *polis* and thus ensure

the future success of the nation. Eloquence and an authoritative voice are the conditions for the gentleman's role in public service. But they are not sufficient. That voice also needs to be masculine. This points to a crucial difference between the *honnête homme* and the English gentleman. In France, males could model their language on that of the women of the *salon* because masculinity, the organising principle, was already in them.[30] In England, masculinity was not a 'given'. It was incumbent on mothers to render *their* language masculine through grammar. Thus, regulating the tongue of the male positioned French and English women completely differently. In France, it engaged women and men in an erotic discourse, whereas in England, it also positioned women as teachers of language to their sons. This role appears less dangerous because it strips women of their sexuality. However, it held its own perils, as will soon become clear.

Conversation and tongue

We have already seen that women's conversation was deemed necessary to polish men's conversation: 'our sex is not able to support [politeness] without the company of women, who never fail to lead us into the right way, and there to keep us', asserted Swift.[31] For the author of *An Essay*, conversing with women serves as the necessary finish and polish to men's education.

> Almost all men that have had a liberal, and good education, know what is due to good Manners, and civil company. But till they have been use'd a little to our society, their Modesty fits like Constraint upon 'em, and looks like a forc'd complaisance to uneasie Rules, and forms of Civility. Conversing frequently with us makes 'em familiar, to 'Men, and when they are convinced of its ease and necessity they are soon reconciled to the Practice.[32]

Mary Wray is more concerned with women's conduct in conversation. This requires special vigilance because of their 'quick and pleasant Imagination', and 'fluency of Speech'. Qualities these may be, but because they are not usually accompanied by 'sense', they become 'contemptible'.[33] The focus here is the discipline of the female tongue, for 'a Woman's Tongue should be like the imaginary Musick of the Spheres, sweet and charming, but not to be heard at a distance.[34] Surprisingly, in describing

ideal women's talk, Wray has conflated the voice and the tongue. The tongue cannot *sound* like music, only the voice can. What has to be contained is the tongue, that 'slippery Member', which both sexes find so difficult to control.[35] Whereas in France, many pages were lavished on praising women's language,[36] in England, it is women's tongue, and the havoc it wreaks unless restrained, that is given prominence. Without education, clamours Defoe, woman is all tongue: her wit makes her 'Impertinent and Talkative'; if bad-tempered, she is 'Insolent and Loud'; if 'Passionate', it makes her a 'Scold'.[37] It is the incapacity to keep a secret, however, that deserves the severest censure. This disease of the tongue, emblematic of its lack of control, is so disgusting that its diagnosis requires scatological terminology. It is a

> babbling Humour, being a symptom of a loose Impotent Soul, a kind of Incontinence of the Mind, that can retain nothing committed to it; but as if that also had its diabetick Passion, perpetually and insensibly evacuating all.[38]

Though Wray affects to specify that this affliction is not due to sex but to an 'ill constitution of the Mind', and that men too are prey to it, her comment only serves to highlight the problem as women's. For to have the self-control necessary to keep a secret is 'a piece of daring Manliness, which women may affect without breach of Modesty'.[39] The unrestrained tongue is inescapably female, and female propriety alone, in the form of modesty, can discipline and control it. Not only does modesty prescribe the measure and manner of speaking, refine the language, 'modulate[s] the Voice and Accent' and 'admit[s] no unhandsome Earnestness and Lewdness of Discourse', but it restrains excessive talk. But how much talk is 'too much' talk? Even if talkativeness is not just a 'Feminine Vice', it is women that are said to talk too much because they should talk little.[40] How can women be expected both to 'talk little', and to converse? Is all women's talk excessive? How can women's conversation be valued and derogated at the same time? Just as in seventeenth century France, the discourse on woman's voice is paradoxical. Occasionally, because of its function in relation to males', it is redeemed, idealized, even earning the epithet 'heavenly'.[41]

But it is women's tongue that is the dominant concern in England, to

the extent that some female writers even exploit the stereotype to score 'tongue in cheek' points. Bathsua Makin, promoting a new pedagogy of language teaching to young ladies, plays on the image of female talkativeness to support her argument that women should learn languages: 'It is objected against women...that they have too much Tongue: but it's no crime that they have too many Tongues'.[42] The fundamental problem of women's tongue is not excess but danger. The tongue is after all the 'only weapon women have to defend themselves with, and they need to use it dextrously'.[43] Woman's tongue may be her power, but that power is measured in relation not to her autonomy, but to its effect on men. It is not surprising, then, to find that young ladies are instructed on the importance of restraining the passion of anger for the stability and happiness of their future married life: 'First Bridle the Tongue, and seal up your Lips'.[44]

So far, there are as many similarities as differences between the attitude to women's conversation in France and England. But one question remains. How can the recommendations to converse with women have been taken up in England, when one of the dominant features of English society was the segregation of the sexes?[45] Even though women such as Fanny Burney, Mrs Thrale, and Mrs Montague conversed with men, they were exceptions. Mostly, men and women spent their time separately, whether in the same or in different spaces. Travellers to England were struck enough to comment, as Grosley did, that when men and women met to converse, 'the women, generally speaking, place themselves near the door, and leave the upper hand and the conversation to the men'. It wasn't just Frenchmen who remarked on this. An American governor likened the separate female groupings to 'battalions on the opposite side of the room'.[46] The decoration and use of rooms in houses reflected these social relations. Whereas in France, the *salon* was a feminine space for mixed conversation, in England the drawing room was a feminine space for women alone. The dining room, a space shared for eating, was, by a custom already well established by the early eighteenth century, a masculine space: soon after meals, women would retire, leaving men to drink, smoke and converse. Yet, it was the dining room, where men spent a good deal of their time, that

was considered 'the apartment of conversation', and was lavishly decorated, unlike its equivalent in France.[47]

Men and conversation

In his 'Letter on Conversation', Samuel Parker discusses the difficulty men have in achieving social intercourse, and wonders why they do not seek to imitate women's conversation , with its 'Vivacity of Imagination', its 'Acuteness of Wit', and its unselfconscious elegance. But, he points out, not only is women's conversation undervalued, ' 'Tis called Effeminacy to seek it'.[48] That is the danger. The author of *An Essay* was well aware of this, and unequivocally located the problem in men. After describing in detail the many intellectual pleasures and refinements afforded to men when conversing with women, she warns that not all men can benefit from women's conversation, only those who, by nature have an 'Improvable Stock of wit and good sense'. The others, men who lack the penetration and discernment to reflect upon the deeper reasons for women's 'peculiar Graces and Ornaments', just end up aping the most visible and superficial female traits, and

> fall to licking, sprucing and dressing their Campaign Faces, and ill-contrived Bodies,,, like Foolish Imitatours, and out-powder, out-patch and out-paint the Vainest and most extravagant of our Sex at those Follies, and are perpetually Cocking, Brustling, Twiring, and making Grimaces, as if they expected we should make Addresses to 'em in a short time.

It is not women's conversation that effeminates these men, argues the author; women cannot 'alter Nature', only polish it. But, while affirming that the problem is located in the men, she realizes that it is the social activity, conversation with women - and by extension women's conversation itself - that is constituted as dangerous. Yet, she points out, travel is not brought into disrepute just because 'it is observ'd that those who go abroad Fools return Fops'.[49] This analogy is particularly relevant to this discussion, since a major aim of travel - as Grand Tour - was identical to that of female conversation: to polish the gentleman's conversation.

Mixed conversation is dangerous, then, because it fosters the transgression of gender boundaries. Men 'fall into the Effeminacy and

Delicay of Women', and women 'take up the Confidence and Boldness of Men' in their manners and their language. Men become slaves to women who have no 'scruple' about being visited and served by men 'even in their Bedchambers'.[50] These transgressions of sexual propriety are carried out 'under a notion of Good-breeding' in imitation of the French, who have not only blurred the boundaries of sexual propriety, but perverted the meaning of Freedom. For the freedom of the French is merely sexual license; they are but slaves in everything else.[51]

Thus a picture of the problem is beginning to emerge. Though the English gentleman's tongue must be regulated and polished, the process is fraught with dangers. On the one hand, the indispensable agency of women brings with it anxiety about effeminacy, on the other, because mixed conversation is necessarily modelled on the French, it brings with it an excessive and unregulated sexuality, and thus the threat of degeneracy into foppishness.

English as a masculine tongue

The history of the eighteenth century is inextricably bound up with language. This has been noted by eminent literary historians such as Pat Rogers and John Barrell,[52] as well as historians of language.[53] The question is why the 'interest' in language suddenly developed, why English became problematized. Conventional accounts such as Baugh's, belong to the tradition of the history of ideas criticized by Foucault. Baugh's story is framed by his need to explain 'effects' by 'causes'. This is how he tells it. The concern over English began when the 'adventurous individualism' of the seventeenth century was replaced by a 'rationalist spirit', and a 'desire for system and regularity' based on reason. Essayists, poets, theologians, and grammarians all looked at their language and found it wanting. They then set out to 'standardize, refine and fix' it. In the process, they turned 'for inspiration' to Italy and France, whose language had already been regulated and fixed by Academies and Dictionaries. Eventually, regulation was achieved while remaining true to the British spirit of Freedom, without resort to the 'artificial restraints and the repressive influence of an academy'.[54] Baugh's story appears like the gradual unfolding of a carefully managed programme culminating in the

achievement of what gave it its initial impulse, the rationalism of the Enlightenment. This is unsatisfactory not just because it is teleological, but because the account is constructed within a progressive framework invoking reifications such as the 'British spirit of Freedom' to ensure coherence and continuity. But the most problematic aspect of Baugh's account is that it underplays the role of France in the problematisation of the English language. It is my argument, and one to which I will return, that the role of France in the production of English discourses has generally been underestimated,[55] and needs to be reassessed. I would therefore like to tell a different story.

By the late seventeenth century, the French language, spoken in all European Courts, and with a flourishing literature, was reckoned to be a 'universal' language.[56] French had attained such status, the English believed, because it had been refined and polished by the *Académie Française*, and many in England felt the need for an English Academy which would equally 'encourage Polite Learning, to polish and refine the *English* Tongue'.[57] The status of French led inevitably to linguistic borrowing. But what is curious is the attendant fear that the 'importation' of too many French words would 'enervate and spoil' English.[58] It was not borrowing as such that was a problem, since Addison, who complained that French 'coin' was debasing 'English Currency', remarked on the 'innumerable Elegancies and Improvements' that the English tongue has received from an 'Infusion of *Hebraisms*'.[59]

What was it about the French language that made it a problem for English? The terms in which French was described should give us a clue: 'airy', musical, soft, a language with a 'melting tone', a language which had been so refined, purified and polished that it had lost its strength and 'sinews'.[60] These terms suggest that in England, French was constructed as feminine, or at least as not-masculine. In contrast, many grammarians, especially in the early eighteenth century, were keen to assert that English was and always had been a strong and masculine tongue.[61] The reason why English borrowed French words, they explained, was not because it lacked any,[62] but because English has been seduced. Borrowing was a consequence of an illicit, immoral intimacy with French's 'Adulterous Charms', which would eventually 'Debase, not Advance, our Native and Masculine Tongue'.[63] Crucially, however, for English to consort with

French was a danger to its masculinity, because prolonged contact with females was effeminating. This is what Stackhouse insinuates when he warns that the 'freedom' English has taken with French through 'too close a Commerce' with that language might impair its 'Strength and Sinews'. English must be saved from debilitation as if by excessive sexual indulgence.[64] This was critical because of an idea, prevalent in the early part of the century, that the character of a people determines the shape of its language and that the language, therefore, reveals this national character.

Language and national character

In *Spectator* No. 135, Addison muses on how wonderfully matched are the English and their language. Taciturnity, he claims, is the foremost English national trait, and the English language, 'abounding in Monosyllables', is perfectly suited to speakers wishing to utter their thoughts quickly and frugally. The recent 'corruptions' and 'false Refinements' which Swift criticises,[65] are in fact advantageous to the language because they do away with 'superfluous Syllables'. Loquacity is the 'Enemy'. What does he think this reveals about the English national character?

> I have only considered our Language as it shows the Genius and natural Temper of the *English*, which is modest, thoughtful and sincere, and which perhaps may recommend the People, though it has spoiled the tongue. We might perhaps carry the same Thought into other languages, and deduce a greater Part of what is peculiar to them from the Genius of the People who speak them. It is certain, the light talkative Humour of the *French* has not a little infected their Tongue, which might be shown by many Instances.[66]

Thomas Wilson too noted English taciturnity, but unlike Addison, he was not prepared to treat the 'Clog upon our Tongue' indulgently. Because 'Words come slow and with Difficulty', conversation, though enjoyed, is less pleasant to the English, they resort to solitude and silence, and the Spleen[67] gains ground. Taciturnity is no national trait, just national 'Laziness, Folly and Mismanagement' in our conduct towards our own tongue. And it is this, Wilson warns, that will be taken to reflect the English

national character:

> a good Language is,,, (both) an Honour ,,,(and of great use) to a Nation; and an imperfect and unimproved Tongue will for ever be a Mark either of carelessness or a low Genius of the People.[68]

Belief in the interrelation of character and language implied that changes in language were inseparable from changes in manners and morals. This was used as an argument by Lane, for instance, to promote the cultivation and enrichment of the mother tongue with good literature. This, he claimed, would not only make England 'famous for all kinds of Learning and Virtue', but, because the mother tongue easily reaches the 'minds of people', it would be 'a more effectual means to reform the Corruption of Manners, so much complain'd among us, than all the coercive and penal laws that can be devised'.[69] It was also used, as did Swift and Defoe, to propose regulating the language by setting up an Academy, 'where all our Customs and Habits, both in Speech and Behaviour, shou'd receive an Authority'.[70] Despite many calls to establish an Academy, none was ever set up. In the absence of such an authority, women remained the main means of regulating and polishing males' tongue. In England, then, politeness, the antithesis of taciturnity,[71] could not be achieved without the conversation of women, just like in France. But there was a major difference. In England, this raised profound anxiety about masculinity.[72] The nature of this anxiety is best illustrated by the character of the fop, in whom effeminacy and French manners are indissolubly linked.

The fop

The ambivalent attitude of the English towards the French[73] in the eighteenth century was, moreover, not confined to their language. On Saturday April 21 1711, Addison humourously confesses that though he wishes a safe and honourable peace with the French, he fears its consequences, not on English politics, but on English manners. 'What an Inundation of Ribbons and Brocades will break in upon us?' he moans. 'What Peals of Laughter and Impertinence shall we be exposed to?' And he wishes there were an Act of Parliament for 'Prohibiting the Importation of *French*

Fopperies'.[74] The feeling about the corruption of manners mirrors what we have already seen in relation to language, and the same prophylactic measure is suggested. Just as the French language's 'adulterous Charms' might enervate the masculinity of the English language, so might the seductiveness of French manners and fashions threaten to trivialise English seriousness, and endanger English modesty. In the first few decades of the eighteenth century, there seems then to have been an overwhelming feeling that everything French was so attractive, so powerfully seductive to the English, that unless some resistance was organised against the danger, they would be invaded, taken over, subjugated even.

A year later, having just met some ladies dressed in masculine attire, Addison is indignant:

> I must observe that this Fashion was first of all brought to us from *France*, a Country which has Infected all the Nations of *Europe* with its Levity. I speak not this in derogation of a whole People ... I shall therefore only Remark, that as Liveliness and Assurance are in a peculiar manner the Qualifications of the *French* Nation, the same Habits and Customs will not give the same Offence to that People, which they produce among those of our own Country. Modesty is our distinguishing Character, as Vivacity is theirs.[75]

What Addison is objecting to is not the French so much as the English who follow French fashions, or return 'Frenchified' from trips across the Channel. It is significant that 'Levity' and 'Vivacity', terms used here by Addison to characterise the French nation, are also used by him elsewhere to differentiate English women from English men, counterposing female vivacity and airiness to male gravity and severity.[76] It is not surprising, then, that more problematic than women aping the French are the men who do so. They are the fops.[77]

Who were the fops?

> There are a sort of men ... that may be called the beaux' antipathy, for they agree in nothing but walking upon two legs. There have brains; the beau has none. They are in love with their mistress; the beau with himself. They take care of her reputation; he's industrious to destroy it. They are decent; he's a fop. They are sound; he's rotten. They are men; he's an ass.[78]

The gentleman who has spent a great part of his life in the nursery, knows some good remedies for colds, has acquired culinary skills, a wide vocabulary about precious fashionable stuffs and entertains his mother every night with gossip of Town and Court, is also a fop.[79] Fops' fondness for dress and make up, their inordinate concern with their appearance, distinguishes them from *'English* men', who 'dress in a plain uniform manner'.[80] The term 'fop' then, is a category into which a large number of meanings can be poured, but two outstanding features characterize all fops. They sport French manners and vocabulary,[81] and charm women with their 'Pretences to Wit and Judgement'.[82] Both these traits construct them as effeminate.

The fop and the French connection

From Sir Fopling Flutter in Etheredge's the *Man of Mode,* to Lord Foppington in Vanbrugh's *The Relapse, and Witwoud in Congreve's Way of the World,* fops affect French dress, manners and expressions, and have often just returned from abroad - metonymously France. The fop's French connection simply cannot be ignored. The question is why it is there at all. Since the fop is a figure of ridicule, he may have served to derogate the French out of concern over the invasion of foreign ideas and foreign goods, a recurring theme in the *Spectator* for example. But I think something else is involved.

I would like to suggest that *honnêteté* is implicated in the construction of the fop. It is not a simple relation, not just a case of the fop, or '*superfine* Beau of Queen Anne's time' modelling himself on the 'messieurs of the time of Louis XIV', as Ashton suggests.[83] For if indeed the *honnête homme* was a model for the fop, he was turned upside down and inside out in crossing the channel.

As we saw in chapter 2, to achieve *honnêteté* and perfect the self in conversation, it was necessary for men to cultivate the company of women and the desire to please them. Ironically, because in England this is emblematic of lack of masculinity - or of effeminacy - it makes the fop an object of ridicule and derogation, and the ultimate purpose of *plaire* for the *honnête homme*, self-perfection, is erased. Fops are in fact represented as copying manners divested of meaning. They are an empty shell, lacking

the inner virtue, the essence that constitutes the gentleman, they are 'all outside, no inside'.[84] It could be argued, then, that the fop stood for the *honnête homme* emptied of its core significance: all *paraître*, no *être*, all 'show', in fact. Removing what gives *honnêteté* its meaning was not limited to the fop, nor to the early part of the century. In his book of advice to a young gentleman setting out for France, John Andrews recommends that, in preparation for French conversation, he 'furnish [his] memory with as many anecdotes as [he] can procure', because anecdotes are 'the soul of conversation' among the French.[85] This too is an 'emptying', this time of the meaning of conversation for the *honnête homme*, the ability to talk in the most polite and entertaining manner about the most trifling subjects. Andrews' intent is not satirical, but the derogation is devastating, and completely subverts the most supreme achievement of the *honnête homme*, namely conversation. The fop's French connection seems to me to have served another, though interrelated, function: asserting his *difference* from the *English* gentleman. For the fop is not so much foreign as not-English. His effeminacy, expressed precisely through his Frenchified manners and language, constructs him as a failure at being an English male.

But there is another dimension to this story, that of the theatre. There are striking similarities between the fop and another theatrical creation, the *Précieuses* in seventeenth century France. Both are most famous as products of the playwright's imagination; both transgress gender boundaries in particular discourses, and are constructed as 'monsters';[86] for both, questions are raised about their 'reality'.[87] Yet, it does not actually matter whether there were 'real' fops any more than 'real' *Précieuses*. What is involved is not a reflection of reality, but how the social is disciplined. For the writers of comedies such as Molière and the Restoration playwrights, characters can be portrayed to serve as discipline, and fops' 'Frenchification' and their effeminacy serve as a warning to the English male, just as the *Précieuses* to French women. For, as Addison implied in the *Spectator* quoted earlier, French imports may be irresistible, but they bring a serious danger: they invite the transgression of gender boundaries. According to John Dennis, the nature of comedy is precisely not 'to set us Patterns for Imitation', but to instruct, through the fear of ridicule.

> 'Tis by the Ridicule that there is in the Character of Sir *Fopling*,.., that he is so well qualify'd to please and to instruct, What true *Englishman* is there, but must be pleas'd to see this ridiculous Knight made the Jest and the Scorn of all the other Characters, for shewing, by his foolish aping foreign Customs and Manners, that he prefers another Country to his own? And of what important Instruction must it be to all our Youth who travel, to shew them, that if they so far forget the Love of their Country, as to declare by the espousing foreign Customs and Manners, that they prefer *France* or *Italy* to *Great Britain*, at their Return, they must justly expect to be the Jest and the Scorn of their Countrymen.[88]

If the fop, then, with his foreign manners and his effeminacy, is ridiculous because he fails at being not just a *man*, but an *English* man, the question is: how was he produced?

Conversation and the fop

The fops' second outstanding trait is their conversation and their pretense to wit, which men, (real ones, of course), rightly consider empty chatter and always ridicule, but which charms women.

> If we observe the Conduct of the Fair Sex, we find that they choose rather to associate themselves with a Person who resembles them in that light and volatile humour which is natural to them, than to such as are qualified to moderate and counter-ballance it. It has been an old complaint, that the Coxcomb carries it with them before the Man of Sense. When we see a fellow loud and talkative, full of insipid Life and Laughter, we may venture to pronounce him a female Favourite.[89]

This is what women's conversation produces. This is where the anxiety lies. Fops are the construction of females. From the cradle onwards, men's masculinity is vulnerable to the emasculating power and influence of female company and conversation. Unless they distance themselves from it, they will be effeminated: for it is believed that what women love is a projection of themselves, 'Self-love directed upon another Object'.[90] It is only in the company of men that masculinity can be produced. But masculinity needs to be polished, otherwise it is rough hewn and 'rustick'. Women's conversation, which can provide this polish, is too dangerous. How then is politeness to be achieved?

References and footnotes

1. R.C. Stephens, 'The Courtly Tradition in English Education', unpublished Ph.D thesis, Belfast, 1955, p. 31.

2. Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

3. William A.L. Vincent, *The Grammar Schools: Their Continuing Tradition, 1660-1714*, London, 1969, p. 57; See also Hans, *op. cit.*; R. Tompson, *op. cit.*

4. Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 207; The *Spectator*, No. 168. For a different perspective on this question, see W.J. Ong, 'Latin language study as a Renaissance puberty rite' in *Rhetoric, Romance and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture*, Ithaca, 1971.

5. John Clarke, *An Essay Upon the Education of Youth in Grammar Schools*, London, 1720, pp. 9-10.

6. Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 225; thirty years later, Daniel Defoe expressed similar concerns, although rather more vociferously. It is to the 'Scandal of our Nation', he claimed, that because young gentlemen are expected to declaim in Latin or Greek, they can 'neither express themselves fluently upon any subject or write elegantly in their mother tongue'. *The Compleat English Gentleman*, (ca1728), Karl D. Bülbring (ed.), London, 1890, pp. 198, 218, 222.

7. Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

8. Foucault, 'the Concern for Truth', in Kritzman, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

9. L. E. Klein, 'Liberty, manners, and politeness in early 18th century England', *The Historical Journal*, 32, No. 3, 1989, pp. 584-586.

10. Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

11. *A Key to the Art of Letters or English as a Learned Language*, London, 1706, p. x. The grammarians of the eighteenth century were writing to 'warn' gentlemen against 'inadvertent contamination with the language of the vulgar', noted Sterling Andrus Leonard, *The Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage*, New York, 1962, p. 169.

12. Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 226 and *passim*; p. 243.

13. Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 151. The gentleman's 'Vertue and Merit', not his 'Extraction', should raise him 'above the Commonalty', wrote Jean Gailhard in *The Compleat Gentleman or Directions for the Education of Youth as to their Breeding at Home, and Travelling Abroad*, London, 1678.

14. Locke, *op. cit.*, pp. 200, 203.

15. See Klein, *op. cit.*, 1984, for an excellent discussion of this issue.

16. Locke, *op. cit.* p. 241.

17. Chauncey Brewster Tinker, *The Salon and English Letters*, New York, 1915, p. 134.

18. Sir N. William Wraxall, *Historical Memoirs of My Own Time*, London, 1815, Part the First, from 1772 to 1780, pp. 155-60.

19. 'Hints Toward an Essay on Conversation', in Thomas Roscoe (ed.), *The Works of Jonathan Swift*, London, 1880, vol. 2, p. 294. All further references to Swift are from this edition.

20. *An Essay in Defense of the Female Sex*, London, 1690. (The authorship of the *Essay* is still disputed: according to Ruth Perry, Mary Astell's biographer, when the *Essay* was first published, it was attributed to Mary Astell, but Perry has no doubt that its author is Judith Drake; see R. Perry, *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist*, London, 1986, p. 106). The Rev. James Fordyce thought that women's conversation was the best means of polishing men's conversation, *Addresses to Young Men*, London, 1777; for the Gentlemen who wrote *An Examen of Mr Sheridan's plan for the Improvement of Education in this Country*, London, 1784, mixed conversation was a 'Golden State' which would put an end to men's interest in drink, and women's in card games, p. 40.

21. Locke, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-5.

22. [Mary Wray], *The Ladies Library*, published by Sir Richard Steele, London, 1722, vol. 1, p. 11. This was something French women, even *Précieuses*, were never accused of; see Pelous, *op. cit.*

23. Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest*, London, 1697, p. 193.

24. *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 16.

25. Since I am interested in tracing not a linguistic development, but a problematisation of language, I have looked at the introductions of a large number of grammars, where the authors declare their aims and identify their intended readers. To select my texts, I have relied mainly on R.C. Alston, *A Bibliography of the English Language from the Invention of Printing to the Year 1800*, Leeds, 1965, vol. 1.

26. *An Essay Towards a Practical English Grammar*, London, 1711.

27. Charles Gildon and John Brightland, *A Grammar of the English Tongue*, (1711), Menston 1967. It is interesting to note, in this context, that Locke had remarked that a boy's mother 'ignorant of Rhetoric and Logic' usually 'out does' a 'Country School-Master' in teaching her son to express himself 'handsomely' in English, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

28. Thomas Wilson, *The Many Advantages of a Good Language to Any Nation*, London, 1729, p. 38.

29. *ibid.*; Mary Wray, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

30. See ch. 2 above.

31. Swift, Introduction to 'A Compleat Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation' *op. cit.*, p. 328.

32. *op. cit.*, p. 144.

33. *op. cit.*, pp. 36-7.

34. *ibid.*, p. 117.

35. [Richard Allestree], *The Government of the Tongue*, Oxford, 1674, p. 10.

36. M. Fumaroli, '*Animus* et *Anima* : L'instance féminine dans l'apologétique de la langue Française au XVIIe Siècle', *XVIIe Siècle*, No. 144, Juillet-Septembre 1984, pp. 233-240.

37. Daniel Defoe, 'An Academy for Women', *Essays Upon Projects*, (1697), Menston, 1969, pp. 294-5.

38. Wray, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

39. *ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

40. Defoe, *op. cit.*, p. 73; Mary Wray, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-9.

41. Defoe, *op. cit.*, p. 294-95.

42. Bathsua Makin, *Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts and Tongues, with an Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education*, London, 1673, p. 148.

43. *ibid.*, pp. 11-12. In 'The Anatomy of a Woman's Tongue', women's tongue is divided into five parts: A Medicine, a Poison, a Serpent, Fire and Thunder, (1638), in *The Harleian Miscellany*, vol. 1, London, 1744, p. 167; see also Jardine, *op. cit.*, and ch. 2 above, note 99.

44. John Essex, *The Young Ladies Conduct, or Rules for Education*, London, 1722, pp. 12-14.

45. D. Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth*, p. 107; see also William Alexander, *The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time*, London, 1779, vol. 1.

46. C.H. Lockitt, *The Relations of French and English Society*, London, 1920, p. 33.

47. M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, London, 1978, pp. 204-5; Fowler and Cornforth, *op. cit.*

48. Samuel Parker, *Sylva, Letters Upon Occasional Subjects*, London, 1701, p. 76. Joseph Spence wrote: 'Some conversation with the ladies is necessary to smooth and sweeten the temper as well as the manners of man, but too much of it is apt to effeminate or debilitate both'. S. Klima (ed.), *Joseph Spence: Letters from the GRAND TOUR 1730-1741*, London, 1975.

49. *op. cit.*, pp. 145-6.

50. Wray, *op. cit.*, p. 123. This is a (deliberate?) misinterpretation of the *ruelle*.

51. *ibid.*, p. 122.

52. P. Rogers, 'The Writer and Society', in P. Rogers (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century*, London, 1978; J. Barrell, *English Literature in History 1730-1780: An Equal, Wide Survey*, London, 1983.

53. A. Baugh, *A History of the English Language*, London, 1959.

54. *ibid.*, pp. 306, 308, 316, 344.

55. Both Rogers and Plumb have noted the reluctance, on the part of contemporaries as well as modern historians, to acknowledge the role French culture played in eighteenth century England. Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 7; J.H. Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, Harmondsworth, 1963, pp. 84-5.

56. Daniel Defoe, 'Of Academies', *op. cit.*, 1969.

57. *ibid.*, p. 233; Defoe was not alone in calling for an academy to be set up. See for example Bishop Sprat, quoted in Thomas Stackhouse, *Reflections on the Nature and Property of Languages* , London, 1731, and Jonathan Swift, 'A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue',

op. cit. See also J. Milroy and L. Milroy, *Authority in Language: Investigating Language Prescription and Standardisation*, London, 1985, for a review of what they describe as the emergence of the 'complaint' literature in the eighteenth century.

58. Henry Felton, *A Dissertation on Reading the Classics and Forming a Just Style*, London, 1723, p. 147; *Spectator* Nos. 165, 405. See also the *Annual Register*, 1758, p. 373. It must be pointed out however that towards the end of the century, there were some who considered that borrowing even from French improved English and contributed to making it a superior tongue: Lindsay Murray, *English Grammar Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners*, London, 1795, p. 111; John Corbet, *A Concise System of English Grammar*, Shrewsbury, 1784, p. 46.

59. *Spectator* Nos. 165, 405.

60. Felton, *op. cit.*, p. 89; Stackhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 181. See R. Leppert, *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology and Socio-cultural Formation in Eighteenth Century England*, Cambridge, 1988, for a discussion of the gender of music in the eighteenth century.

61. Gildon and Brightland, *op. cit.*; Stackhouse, *op. cit.*; Corbet, *op. cit.* See G.S. Rousseau, *op. cit.*, 1991, for a discussion of the masculinity of 'nervous', and Vance, *op. cit.*, for a discussion of the masculinity of sinews.

62. The copiousness of the English language was a recurrent theme. See for example Stackhouse, *op. cit.*

63. Gildon and Brightland, *op. cit.*, Preface. The sense of the moral pollution brought on by French is also conveyed by Johnson in his preface to the *Dictionary*. Telling the reader about his strategy, he points out that he collected words from writers before the restoration, when, before it had deviated 'towards a *Gallick* structure and phraseology', English had been *'undefiled'*. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, (1755), London, 1827, Preface, p. 9.

64. Stackhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 172. This image was borrowed from the contemporary discourse on generation: for instance, Tobias Smollett, who trained as a physician, wrote that: '... the exercise of common venery ... by ruining the constitutions of our young men, has produced a puny progeny, that degenerates from generation to generation'. 'The Adventures of Roderick Random,' (1748), George Saintsbury (ed.), *The Works of Tobias Smollett*, London, n.d., vol. 3, ch. 51, p. 44.

65. Such as 'Abbreviations and Elisions', which harden the language, in *The Tatler*, September 27, 1710.

66. Addison, *op. cit.*

67. For a discussion of the meaning of 'spleen', see William B. Ober, 'Eighteenth Century Spleen', in C. Fox (ed.), *Psychology and Literature in the Eighteenth Century*, New York, 1987.

68. *op. cit.*, p. 36.

69. *op. cit.*, p. xix.

70. Defoe, *op. cit.*, 1969, p. 250. For a discussion of Swift's proposal for an Academy, see Barrell, *op. cit.*, ch. 2.

71. Politeness was an art of sociability, and taciturnity was 'the extreme of unsociability', writes Klein, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

72. See for example David Hume's discussion of gallantry in 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences', in J.W. Lenz (ed.), *Of the Standard of Taste and Other Essays by David Hume*, New York, 1965, pp. 89-94.

73. P. Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-9; Fowler and Cornforth, *op. cit.*, p. 36 and *passim*; Jarrett, *op. cit.*, p. 166 and *passim*.

74. *Spectator* No. 45.

75. *ibid.*, No. 435.

76. *ibid.*, No. 128.

77. Also called Beaus, coxcombs, Men of Mode and at times in the *Spectator*, 'Women's Men'.

78. Sir John Vanbrugh, *The Relapse*, (1697), in Michael Cordner (ed.), *Sir John Vanbrugh: Four Comedies*, Harmondsworth, 1989, Act II, Scene i.

79. *Spectator* No. 57. It is interesting to note that nurseries and mothers were regarded as pernicious influences on the boy's masculinity.

80. John Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, London, 1883, p. 105.

81. That speaking French is a characteristic of fops is illustrated by the character of Melantha, in Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode*. Kenneth Muir writes: she has 'a passion for everything French', and 'contrives to introduce at least one French word into every sentence and gets her maid to collect new words for her to use'. K. Muir, *The Comedy of Manners*, London, 1970, p. 51. She is 'the female fop', note A. Beaurline and Fredson Bowers, *ibid.*, note 2.

82. *Spectator* No. 92.

83. Ashton, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

84. N. Holland, commenting on Novel and Plausible in Wycherley's *The Plain-Dealer*, quoted in S. Staves, 'A Few Kind Words for the Fop', *Studies in English Literature*, vol. 22, No. 3, 1982, p. 413. Collocations of the term fop in the *Spectator* include: empty, insipid, affectation, falsehood; and, from Dryden, 'outward form, empty noise'. Nos. 92, 128, 156, 280.

85. John Andrews, *Letters to a Young Gentleman on his Setting out for France*, London, 1784.

86. The monster is recognisable enough to belong, but different enough to highlight the normal through his own abnormality.

87. Staves, for example, is concerned to show that 'foppery was a real social phenomenon, not merely a theatrical convenience', *op. cit.*, p. 419.

88. John Dennis, 'A Defense of Sir Fopling Flutter', (1722), reprinted in E.A. Bloom and L.D. Bloom (eds.), *Addison and Steele: The Critical Heritage*, London, 1980, p. 167.

89. *Spectator* No. 128; see also No. 92.

90. *ibid.*

Chapter 4

POLITENESS

Politeness was so central to the construction of the English gentleman in eighteenth century England that, as Mark Girouard recently put it, 'something has to be said about it'.[1]

In the first major study of the subject, Lawrence Klein brilliantly maps the ways in which politeness 'altered the landscape of discourse'. He argues that politeness arose in late seventeenth century England as part of the spread of the courtly tradition over the English *élite*,[2] and came to function as a 'cultural ideology' for that *élite*. This was not unrelated to the weakness of the Court as a source of culture and as the authority on language, taste and manners that it was in France. Instead, the polite constituted themselves into that standard and authority.[3] As politeness pervaded increasing areas of English cultural life, it gradually acquired multiple meanings. But its 'master metaphor', as Klein puts it, was conversation.[4] As such, politeness was profoundly implicated in the construction of the gentleman; it even 'rewrote the definition of the gentleman'.[5] Here, however, because Klein's aim is to write a 'history of discourse' and mine a genealogy of conversation, our strategies differ. Thus, it is not relevant to his project to discuss a particular set of tensions and ambiguities in the discourse on politeness, tensions which I have already identified in connection with the role of conversation in the construction of the gentleman. I am referring specifically to the relation of politeness and conversation to France, and to the anxiety over masculinity.

It is not that Klein fails to acknowledge the connection with France, on the contrary. He points out, for instance, that politeness was a 'vehicle for a certain view of social relations developed in France', and discusses the ways in which terms like *politesse* and *honnêteté* were translated - or not - into English.[6] But he does not consider the possibility that something might have been lost in the translation, as it were, as my discussion of the fop illustrates. Nor does Klein ignore the tensions inherent in politeness. He notes that it was problematic from the outset, because, as a 'theory of social living', it was concerned primarily not with social virtue but with social success.[7] Taking this idea further, he

argues that the complex of tensions generated by politeness resulted from conflicts between two languages rooted in the humanist tradition: the language of courtly behaviour and refinement, and the language of civic humanism. Klein's main interest here is to trace the way the language of politeness was 'assimilated' to political discourse, resulting in a 'cultural politics'.[8] While Klein's argument is persuasive, my contention is that these eighteenth century 'languages' also resonate with overtones of gender,[9] are constructed, even, as gendered relations, and that this has to do with the way France was discursively produced in England. Locating the contrasting discourses of politeness and civic humanism in antiquity[10] has served to occult the relation to France, and consequently its role in the production not just of an English politeness, but of English nationalism. I suggest that the ambiguity of politeness in England is rooted in that relation.

To illustrate this ambiguity, I have chosen to discuss two perspectives on politeness. First, that of Lord Chesterfield's, an aristocrat who saw France as the model of politeness to emulate, and secondly, that of David Fordyce, who taught at the University of Edinburgh, and for whom the association with France was one of the main problems of politeness.[11]

Politeness in Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*

Chesterfield wrote more than 400 letters, over a period of 30 years, to his son Philip Stanhope. They begin when the boy was about five, living with his mother, and, like most aristocratic boys, was being educated at home by a private tutor, Mr Maittaire,[12] before going on to Westminster School. Chesterfield wrote to instruct his son, and, as he said himself, 'never were so much pains taken for any body's education ... and never had any body those opportunities of knowledge and improvement'.[13] The letters are about history, geography, the classical world and mythology, grammar and languages; they tell detailed anecdotes of the Great, and of history and travel. These are some of the things a gentleman ought to know.[14] At the same time as conveying 'facts ', Chesterfield continually reminds his son of the absolute necessity of good-breeding, without which 'mere learning is pedantry'. Learning is important of course, it gives 'solidity' to breeding, but it has no charm or graces unless it is polished. Without

polish, virtues and learning, like rough diamonds, lack lustre and despite their intrinsic value, do not shine.'[15].

From the time his son approaches nine years of age, Chesterfield insists upon his acquiring civility and good-breeding as a way of being 'welcome in conversation and common life'. 'Remember', he admonishes him,

> that to be civil, and to be civil with ease, (which is properly called good-breeding,) is the only way to be beloved and well received in company; that to be ill-bred, and rude, is intolerable, and the way to be kicked out of company; and that to be bashful is ridiculous.'[16]

How is good-breeding acquired, since it is not learned in books? Chesterfield sees his paternal role as transmitting the *arcana*, the secret knowledge necessary to his son's 'initiation' into that elite society, the *beau monde*.'[17] One of the secrets is to observe the French 'whose politeness seems as easy and natural as any other part of their conversation'. The English, on the other hand, are not just 'awkward in their civilities', but when they actually mean to be civil, are ashamed to 'get it out'. This bashfulness, this *mauvaise honte*, is

> the characteristic of the British booby; who is frightened out of his wits when people of fashion speak to him; and when he is to answer them, blushes, stammers, and can hardly get out what he would say; and becomes really ridiculous, from a groundless fear of being laughed at; whereas a well-bred man would speak to all the kings in the world, with as little concern, and as much ease, as he would speak to you.'[18]

It would not be an exaggeration to describe Chesterfield's letters as a panegyric to French good-breeding and good manners, and an unmitigated derogation of English ones. The only superiority he grants the latter is that of learning, and he exhorts his son to practise both so as to arrive (almost) at the 'perfection of human nature, English knowledge and French good-breeding'.'[19]

Politeness and good-breeding are a language of the voice and of the body, and fluency requires their simultaneous expression. 'The look, the tone of voice, the manner of speaking, the gestures, must all conspire to form that *Je ne sçai quoi* that everybody feels, although nobody can

exactly describe'.[20] Graceful speaking, which distinguishes 'people of fashion from the illiterate vulgar', includes accurate grammar and good pronunciation, 'according to the usage of the best companies'.[21] Here again, the French are held up as a model. And it is conversation that is the measure of the well-bred man'.[22] For this, Chesterfield outlines a choreography of speaking. 'Think of your words, and of their arrangement before you speak: choose the most elegant, and place them in the best order'.[23] Like De Vaumorières and Méré, he specifies what a man of fashion ought to say and avoid saying: it is possible to disagree with someone, but not to be tactless. The proper conduct of conversation involves discipline of the tongue.[24]

As important as polite phrases, are the polite gestures and demeanour which define the gentleman: how to come into a room full of company 'with a graceful and proper assurance ... and without embarrassment', how to eat, how not to be encumbered by one's body.[25] Chesterfield draws a scathing portrait of the awkward fellow, whose solecisms - stumbling over his own sword, letting his coffee cup or saucer fall, coughing in his glass when drinking, not knowing what to do with his hands or where to put them - make him so ridiculous or disagreeable that he is unwelcome in society, and avoided by anyone who 'desires to please'.[26]

What kind of man is produced by this education? Chesterfield hoped to fashion a gentleman destined for the 'world of business',[27] more precisely, for diplomacy. With the education and opportunities for improvement he had received, Philip would be far more qualified than most English ministers taking up such a post. Unlike them, he would speak foreign languages, and thus appear to advantage in conversation, and possess what they all lacked, manners and breeding. A good figure in the *beau monde* and in Foreign Courts could not, Chesterfield insisted, be achieved without these 'graces'.[28]

The ultimate aim of politeness and civility is to please and to make oneself agreeable. For the *honnête homme*, this was a technique for producing the self. For Chesterfield, as he makes ruthlessly clear, it is indispensable for another reason. Politeness and an *'extérieur brillant'* will make his son irresistible, especially to women, enable him to insinuate himself into people's affection, and conduct 'the principal business of a foreign minister... to get into the secrets'.[29] Insinuation

has an altogether different meaning here than it had in seventeenth century France:

> observe their characters, and pry, as far as you can, into both their hearts and their heads. Seek for their particular merit, their predominant passion, or their prevailing weakness; and you will know what to bait your hook with, to catch them.[30]

The seduction involved here has nothing to do with the play of gallantry, but is a cynical means to social success. That politeness is a mask does not worry Chesterfield unduly. He is not interested in sincerity. The deception involved in commending people, especially women, 'a little more, it may be, than [one] really thinks they deserve', is a small price to pay for the affection and good will of the people one converses with. Well-bred Frenchmen are 'the perfection of human nature', yet, 'what a number of sins does [their] cheerful easy good-breeding ... frequently cover?'[31]

Chesterfield's *Letters*, which earned him Johnson's remark that they 'teach the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing master',[32] reveal a conception of *politesse* that meets Klein's description of the polite as 'the outer man ... the man who was involved in the willed act of self-presentation', a figure who 'enjoyed a dubious relationship with the sphere of the ethical'.[33] It is as 'decorticated', emptied of its meaning as the conception of *honnêteté* which produced the fop.

Politeness in David Fordyce's *Dialogues Concerning Education*

If Chesterfield was throughout his life the 'devoted servant' of the graces,[34] for David Fordyce, the question was how much or rather how little to sacrifice to them. The terms of the debate are set in one of the earlier dialogues.[35] Simplicius and Cleora[36] are discussing the contrast between the dishonesty and dissembling of polite conversation, and the awkward but truthful bluntness of native English intercourse. Cleora, educated in sober virtues by Phylax,[37] the wise uncle who instructed her as he brought her up, argues that many of the polite Forms of ordinary Conversation are not just 'a more specious kind of Lies' which hinder the 'Freedom and Easiness of friendly Intercourse', but an enslavement to foreign manners, and as such, alien to the British character. She would

have them 'banished out a Country, once justly celebrated for the Plainness and Bluntness of its Inhabitants'. Simplicius, who claims he would rather be called a 'scrupulous Simpleton than a polite Dissembler', nevertheless thinks Cleora too severe. Even though they are 'inferior Graces', without the 'DECENCIES of Life, that regulate the Conversation and Practice of the Politest Part of the World', will not the English be 'reckoned awkward, antiquated Creatures, and even somewhat unsociable'?[38] Could not the 'ordinary forms of civility, and polite phrases' just be treated as counters, whose value is determined and agreed upon by the well-bred, who share amongst themselves the knowledge of its arbitrariness, he asks later.[39] Politeness would then just be the currency in the commerce of sociability.

For Fordyce no less than for Chesterfield, education is meant to breed up the gentleman. But, in Fordyce's view, something has gone wrong. Whereas the education of the Ancients succeeded in combining the teaching of knowledge and of manners to produce men that were at once scholars and gentlemen, there is, in modern education, a 'divorce' between 'Politeness and Learning'. The problem is that 'one kind of Knowledge has been thought necessary to furnish a learned Head, and quite another to form a Gentleman'.[40] Parents nowadays are concerned only with their children's polite accomplishments, and think them accomplished enough when they 'talk French prettily'.[41] However, if polite education is derogated for its frivolity, politeness itself is not. When Cleora asks whether there is a way of being polite and agreeable 'without polishing ourselves out of our old British Plainness and Sincerity?', she expresses an implicit theme of the *Dialogues*: the attempt to create an indigenous 'British' politeness. The gentlemen who discuss these issues may be teachers and students but they are not rustics, and they want education to produce gentlemen. Like Chesterfield, they believe that 'the most perfect characters are those who have added the knowledge of the scholar to the accomplishments of the gentleman'.[42] Though the discussion is ostensibly about the ways in which learning has been brought into disrepute, it is also about the necessity of politeness. Its absence produces both Fordyce's recluse scholar and Chesterfield's awkward man, strikingly alike in their lack of physical and verbal fluency, and their transgression of the most elementary rules of polite conversation and sociability.[43]

Gentlemen they cannot be, then, unless they are polite, but French politeness - though the French glory in it - is a servility, and is dishonest.[44] To suit the character of the English, politeness must be cleared of French contamination. Euphranor's[45] Plan of Education is meant to do just that. Though no explicit comparison is made with the education obtained in Dancing schools, 'those elegant nurseries of Politeness and Decorum', every single step of the Plan is set in contrast to it, as can be deduced from my statements in brackets. First, the youth's body must be hardened by toughening exercises and a plain diet, (whereas politeness entails a softening of manners). The accent is then on training an English tongue, (not on learning French), on plain speaking, and perfecting the knowledge of the mother tongue by learning it 'in the grammatical way'. The youth's mind will be trained to appreciate the excellence of virtue by reading about the great characters of history, (instead of becoming acquainted with 'all the Graces and Modern Decorum of Fashionable Conversation' in the company of Ladies). He will thus develop a 'Spirit of Patriotism', an 'invincible Love of Liberty' and a 'Contempt of Danger and Death', the seeds of 'manly Enthusiasm, the Soul and Spring of every social and political Virtue'. After attending University, the youth will go to Town,

> to converse with Men of all Ranks and Characters, frequent Coffee houses, and all Places of public Resort, where Men are to be seen and practiced, go to the shops of Mechanics as well as the Clubs of the Learned, Courts of Justice and particularly the Houses of Parliament, in order to learn something of the Laws and Interests of his Country, and to inspire him with that Freedom, Intrepidity and public Spirit which does, or should, animate the Members of that August Body.[46]

It is conversing with men, not women, that will 'rub off that awkward Air and Pedantry of Manners' inevitably acquired during an academic education. Conversation polishes this gentleman too, but it is not a hot-house plant of a conversation, it roams widely, it is intrepid, above all, it is unambiguously masculine, like the education that preceded it. The sites of its production ensure that it is essentially English, free from the gilded chains of French politeness and slavery to an arbitrary ruler.[47]

After spending up to two years in Town, the youth will travel abroad,

to 'bring him to the Standard of a fine Gentleman'. Not only will he be old enough by then, but, Philander is careful to point out, he need not be guarded against the influence of foreign manners, especially in those countries 'where Foppery is often mistaken for Politeness' and 'Liberty is blasphemed under the title of Licentiousness'. His education and conversation will have provided the inner strength of virtue - not just civic virtue, but manliness - and constituted him as a Briton.[48] He will never be a fop.

The education Fordyce outlines, by instilling the English virtues of patriotism and love of liberty, will make the gentleman less vulnerable to French seduction: a liberal education on the classical model, not 'the Finishings of a French education',[49] can best produce the English gentleman. What his educational plan subverts is not the necessity of politeness but its association with the French. Whereas French politeness is frivolous, English politeness is serious, amd produces free men, men of civic virtue.[50] To achieve this, it is necessary to wrest politeness from its French parentage, because French politeness is a slavery.

Derogating French politeness as slavery - and therefore effeminacy - was a theme which became increasingly explicit as the century wore on, even while the French remained models of fashion and culture, French the language of polite learning, and France the focus of increasing numbers of English travellers. John Andrews' *A Comparative View of the English and French Nations in their Manners, Politics and Literature* contains an interesting illustration of what I take to be an attempt to expose the origin of *politesse* while at the same time exculpating the French as a people, thus justifying their continuing attractiveness to the English. In his story, French politeness was the product of an elaborate strategy of political tyranny feasible only in a despotic monarchy. The French aristocracy had their minds 'designedly diverted' from 'speculations of national importance' to 'affairs of little moment'. They were made passive instruments of their own fate, and, by having their freedom removed from them, were subjected, enslaved, and rendered like women. Richelieu and Mazarin are particularly taken to task by Andrews, the one for establishing the conditions for absolute monarchy while pretending a 'reformation of abuses', the other for strengthening 'the establishment of slavery' while pretending to be 'restoring order and tranquillity'.[51] In other words, they

perpetrated a gigantic hoax on their own subjects. The result is that the French nobility spend their time involved not in serious affairs of State but in that 'intercourse with the fair sex which goes under the name of gallantry'. French politeness is born out of fraud, subjection and emasculation, and functions to perpetuate them. As a result, French nobles' conversation is frivolous and sprightly, just like that of women. Their voice has no authority.

But Andrews' notion of French politeness - just like Chesterfield's and Fordyce's - was an English construction; it was a form deprived of its inner significance. It loomed large because it served a particular function, that of an Other. Setting up an (English) notion of French politeness and then derogating it, enabled the English to construct an English politeness in *difference*. The role English relations with France had in producing the tensions inherent in politeness has not really been explored. To what extent, for example, was the contemporary awareness of the cultural superiority of France[52] instrumental in the efforts to produce an English politeness, predicated simultaneously on the rejection of any parentage with French *politesse* and on claims of descendance from classical culture? When the role of French culture has been acknowledged, it has been in terms of 'influence', reaction, xenophobia.[53] But the possibility that relations with France might be woven into English discourses, as politeness illustrates, has, I think, been occulted. The question, which I can only begin to raise in this thesis, is why.

Politeness and gender

It is not surprising that in Fordyce's account, it was Cleora who articulated the ambiguity of politeness. We have seen how, to Simplicius's dismay, she condemns gallantry, the language of seduction, the tacitly sexual game of polite conversation, because it engages men in deceit and subjects women. She constructs the desire to please, which is the main component of *politesse*, as a fraudulent way of enslaving women and taking away their liberty: 'when you see us taken with the shining Trifles, you carry us off in triumph and reduce us under the Orders of domestic Discipline'.[54] Ironically, though Cleora perhaps rightly condemns the dishonesty of polite gallantry, she misses the point because she treats the

game as real - as if it were a way of seducing women to marry them. The subterfuge inherent in the polite gallantry practised by the French is not that it is a courtship, but that it has little to do with women at all.

Politeness on the French model cannot be achieved without the conversation and company of women. But it is precisely fashionable conversation, with its 'Flowers of Speech' and its gallantries, which is the object of Cleora's contempt. A conversation which is about trifles and uses phrases which either signify nothing at all or 'trespass' on the truth, perverts its main aim, 'to exchange sentiments with one another for mutual instruction'. She prefers a conversation that 'import[s] less subjection, but more of that equality of friendhip that ought to reign in society',[55] a conversation divested of artifice. Through Cleora as ideal model, Fordyce shows a woman who knows that women 'excel in Conversation ... and ... delight and polish the Men by their Softness and Delicacy in speaking', and that speech is one of their 'instruments of power'. Gallantry and the constant desire to please, which Cleora attributes to women as well as men, eroticize verbal commerce. But her language, on the instruction of her tutor, has been regulated by grammar, and she has been taught the importance of correct and graceful pronunciation. Her voice thus has authority and will be listened to by sensible men, who are 'apt to be caught by the Ear',[56] because her conversation subdues men's passions, rather than exacerbating them. The ideal conversation is unsexed, and so is Cleora, despite her alleged charms.

The *art de plaire*, this essential element of *politesse*, was misunderstood or misconstrued by the English. *Plaire* was dangerous, because, as Dryden wrote:

> 'Our thoughtless Sex is caught by outward Form,
> And empty Noise, and loves itself in Man.'[57]

In desiring to please women, men become like them.[58] This came to represent *French* politeness, and was one of the means of its derogation. English politeness, on the other hand, is constituted out of its other, (though for *politesse*, inseparable), element, ease. 'The true effect of genuine politeness seems to be rather ease than pleasure', wrote Johnson in The *Rambler*.[59] The additional danger of polite conversation, for Cleora,

is not only that men want to please women, but that 'the Ladies too generally make it their grand Aim to please the Men'.[60] Cleora's understanding of the role of pleasing in conversation is another illustration of the way in which the French concept of *honnêteté* was turned on its head by crossing the Channel. When the central technique for the production of self of the *honnête homme* is reduced to a mere courtship, it must be admitted that it has lost its meaning. A letter written by Abbé Le Blanc well illustrates that difference. He notes that in England, the 'desire of pleasing is ... seldom found among the Great'. They 'despise the acquisition of ... polite and insinuating manners', especially the 'mutual attentions and regards towards each other', and consider the 'tenderness and complaisance to the Fair as something beneath them'. Nor would an English woman, he claims, be 'subdued by the insinuating softness' of the jargon of a gallant who, in France, would pass as a man of 'good fortune in Amours'. To her, these 'solicitudes and flatteries' would be 'mere trifles'.[61] Unsexing conversation and politeness removes desire, and therefore danger. Dispensing with women - at least erasing or silencing their sexuality - makes it possible to find other sites for the production of politeness at the same time as it severs its French parentage. An autonomous politeness should be at once English and masculine. But there is more to the story.

The fact that virtuous Cleora is said to have been brought up by a male guardian, not by her mother, is not accidental. For it is mothers who, allegedly concerned only with the social advancement of their progeny, insist on their acquiring polite accomplishments. Diverting their children, especially their sons, from serious and proper education, they spoil them and set up the conditions for their future depravity. The representation of mothers' influence on their children, especially their sons, as pernicious, is a recurring theme which appears in a variety of guises, as we shall see later. In *The Rambler*,[62] Johnson charts the progress of two young noblemen's education in politeness, a sorry tale of their gradual degradation. The mother in each case insists that her son will not go near a school but must be taught at home by a tutor. Since conversing with books produces awkward scholars who are at once tongue-tied and pedantic, she ensures that her son's contact with books, learning, and even his tutor, are kept to a minimum. From a young age, he spends a great deal of

time in polite company, especially that of women, so as to become fluent and easy in his conversation. One of these noblemen, admired and petted from a young age by women, becomes so effeminate that when older, he is shunned by other men assembled in the masculine company of a coffee house. 'Observations upon sleeves, buttonholes and embroidery' form the substance of the other young nobleman's conversation.[63] Learning French is indispensable, as well as the acquisition of such polite knowledge as the 'rules of visiting', and the 'early intelligence of fashions'. The more delighted the mother is with her son's progress, believing that these skills and accomplishments prepare him for future 'eminence', the more obvious is the inevitability of his depravity. Eventually he brings his whole family to near ruin. Johnson comments dryly that 'women ... always judge absurdly of the intellect of their boys'.[64] Polite education is about instilling in the young male the ease, vivacity and confidence necessary for social success. But, Johnson argues, such early confidence can be produced only by ignorance and 'fearlessness of wrong'. What boys need is a confidence produced by the 'hardening of long familiarity with reproach', and the struggle of learning to 'suppress their emotions'. The language Johnson uses speaks of the effeminacy of polite education contrasted with a training that would make men out of boys. What an education in politeness ultimately produces, then, is a male who is incapable of self-regulation, a male who is therefore not a man. Emblematic of this lack of regulation is his language.

> He has changed his language with his dress, and, instead of endeavouring at purity or propriety, has no other care than to catch the reigning phrase or current exclamation till, by copying whatever is peculiar in the talk of all whose birth or fortune entitles them to imitation, he has collected every fashionable barbarism of the present winter, and speaks a dialect not to be understood among those who form their style by poring upon authors.[65]

Because he lacks the inner, masculine virtue which an education like Euphranor's would have cultivated, he succumbs like a woman to the superficial and frivolous attractions of fashionable life, and has no language but what he can ape. Like David Fordyce, Johnson does not derogate politeness as such, only the politeness that women, in this case mothers, produce.[66] Thus, politeness is implicated in the problematization

of masculinity, because it blurs gender boundaries with its emphasis on softening, pleasing, and polite, (that is, fashionable), conversation. The construction of the English gentleman is located at the intersection of multiple and contradictory positionings. Can he be both masculine and polite ?

The best way to acquire manners and *politesse* was to go to France and spend time in the best company, that of the French nobility.[67] But travel had another purpose: it removed the young male from the effeminating influence of his mother. The last we hear of Johnson's young nobleman is that he is being sent abroad with a French governor.

Just as something had to be said about politeness, so too must the Grand Tour, which dominated English society for most of the eighteenth century, not be ignored. The next chapter will discuss the Grand Tour as a technology of self of the English nobleman. Travel to France highlighted the paradoxes and contradictions of the courtly ideal for the English gentleman, but it was out of these paradoxes that was elaborated the notion of a masculine, English character.

References and footnotes

1. M. Girouard, *The English Town*, London, p. 76. Until very recently, however, not much attention had been paid to politeness by historians of the eighteenth century.

2. 'The Rise of "Politeness" in England, 1660-1715', unpublished Ph.D thesis, Baltimore, 1984, p. 203.

3. Klein, *op. cit.*, p. 49; see Barrell, *op. cit.*, for an insightful discussion of the role of the polite as authority in language.

4. Klein, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 30. See also pp. 80-93, 185-189.

5. Klein, 1989, p. 588.

6. *op. cit.*, 1984, pp. 50, 74-5, 77.

7. *op. cit.*, 1989, pp. 584, 585.

8. *ibid.*, pp. 584, 585.

9. For example, the ideal classical citizen was 'independent, public minded, martial, frugal and simple', whereas his opposite was 'self-indulgent and private...soft and sensuous...expensive...excessive'; the terms are recognizably those used in the eighteenth century to praise masculinity, or to criticize women and effeminacy, and of course, luxury. *ibid.*, pp. 593, 594. John Barrell, for example, writes: 'The discourse of civic humanism was the most authoritative fantasy of masculinity in early eighteenth century Britain...'. ' "The Dangerous Goddess": Masculinity, Prestige, and the Aesthetic in Early Eighteenth Century Britain', *Cultural Critique*, 12, Spring 1989, p. 103.

10. Klein is not alone in doing this. See for example Rogers' comments on this issue, *op. cit.*

11. Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, *Letters to his Son 1737-1768*, (1774), London, 1890. As all references to the Letters are from this edition, I will quote only their number in roman numerals. Though Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son* range over a period of thirty years starting in 1738, I have selected mainly the letters he wrote to his adolescent son; the time period matches approximately that of the text I use in contrast, David Fordyce's *Dialogues Concerning Education*, which was published in 1745-48.

12. He is also the author of *The English Grammar*, London, 1712.

13. CXLI.

14. CLVII.

15. CLV, LXXIV; Locke uses the same metaphor in *Some Thoughts on Education*. Chesterfield had read Locke, admired him and sent his son a copy of the text. See CLXVIII.

16. LXIX.

17. CXXXIX. See also CLXI.

18. LXIX.

19. XCV.

20. CI, and CLIV.

21. XCVI, CXCV, and LXXIV, CLVII, CCXXIX; See also Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

22. CLI.

23. CCXLIII. In the same breath, as it were, Chesterfield reminds his son of the importance of the purity, clearness and gracefulness of diction for a Parliamentary career, and of his dancing master, 'at this time the man in all Europe of the greatest importance to you', CCXXXVIII.

24. CXCV, CLXVI, XCV. Vaumorières, *op. cit.*

25. XLIV.

26. LXXIII.

27. Business - here refers to official or public engagements. *OED.*

28. CLII, CLXIII: 'An ungraceful manner of speaking, awkward motions, and a disagreeable address are great clogs to the ablest man of business'.

29. CLXIV.

30. CLXI.

31. CXI, CXVIII.

32. James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, (1791), A. Glover (ed.), London, 1925, vol. 1, p. 170.

33. *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 44.

34. Charles Whibley (ed.), 'The Characters of Lord Chesterfield', reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 March 1928.

35. *op. cit.* The dialogues take place in an Academy in the country, said to be modelled on the old Academy, or Portico, at Athens, where philosophers talked philosophy in a familiar and unassuming manner. The book consists of twenty dialogues on different aspects of education, mostly comparing ancient and modern education. The term 'Dialogues' is somewhat of a misnomer, since each involves three or four participants; they might equally well have been called conversations. Simplicius, whose visit to the Academy is the pretext for the Dialogues, is the narrator. The characters to whom I will be referring are Cleora, Phylax, Philander and Euphranor. All references will indicate volume and page number.

36. Cleora is a young woman whom Simplicius meets in the carriage on the way to the Academy. He is struck by her unaffected manner and conversation, and by the lack of display she makes of the excellent education she has received from Phylax. She lives near the Academy.

37. Phylax is Cleora's uncle and guardian. Concerned to educate his niece in polite and virtuous ways, he elaborated a Plan for the Education of Women, which Cleora outlines in vol. 2.

38. Vol. 1, p. 48.

39. *ibid.*, p. 46.

40. *ibid.*, p. 98.

41. Vol. 2, p. 327.

42. *ibid.*, p. 347.

43. Philander is Euphranor's assistant. He disdains some 'Modern Refinements'. However, he does not want to form mere scholars, who know nothing about the modern world, who wear singular clothes and think a wig 'too modern an invention'; who, when they appear in polite company, look like 'the inhabitants of another world', and whose conversation is about such recondite scholarly subjects that no one can converse with them. Vol. 1, pp. 97-98.

44. Vol. 2, p. 336. It is interesting to compare the sentiments of a French contemporary with this perspective. In his essay on politeness, Abbé Trublet argues like Cleora that sincerity and politeness are incompatible, but his standpoint is diametrically opposed to hers. Sincerity, he asserts, is a natural, universal disposition of mankind. Man 'loves to speak what he thinks, and to give vent to his own sentiments'. To be polite and hold back what might offend is the difficult achievement. It implies a great deal of self-control, indeed, 'constant dissimulation is a violent state'. Without politeness, he contends, there is no society. Abbé Nicolas Charles Joseph Trublet, *Essays Upon Several Subjects of Literature and Morality*, London, 1744, vol. 3, pp. 292, 293, 299.

45. Euphranor is the Head and Genius of the Academy, and its Master.

46. Vol. 2, pp. 62, 297-302, 304-5.

47. For a discussion of the relation between politeness and liberty, see Klein, *op. cit.*, 1989.

48. vol. 2, p. 309. The original meaning of virtue is manliness. *OED*.

49. *ibid.*, p. 327.

50. See Klein, *op. cit.*,

51. London, 1785, pp. 73, 74-75, 84.

52. Klein, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 415; Jarrett, *op. cit.*

53. See for instance G. Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: a Cultural History 1740-1830*, London, 1987.

54. vol. 1, pp. 46-7.

55. *ibid.*, pp. 45, 46, 48.

56. *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 151.

57. Quoted in *Spectator* No. 128.

58. Pleasing produces effeminacy in both males and females, but, James Fordyce argued, whereas allowances can be made for females, effeminacy 'fills you with contempt for those creatures that call themselves men'. *op. cit.*, 1777, vol. 2, p. 166. James Fordyce, a Presbyterian divine and poet, was David Fordyce's younger brother. See also [Mary Evelyn], *Mundus Muliebris*, London, 1690, for an earlier comment on the subject.

59. *The Rambler*, a Periodical Paper, (1750-1752), London, 1824, Letter

No. 98. Johnson sets up a distinction between what he calls 'genuine' politeness and the practice of the 'exterior and unessential parts of civility'. The former aims at putting others before the self and curbing one's vanity; the latter consists of the minutiae of visiting, and talking 'frippery and slight silks' with the ladies,

60. Vol. 2, p. 151.

61. Abbé Jean Bernard Le Blanc, *Letters on the English and the French Nations*, Dublin, 1747, vol. 2, pp. 237, 238, 239.

62. Letters Nos. 109, 132, 194, 195.

63. *ibid.*, No. 194.

64. *ibid.*

65. *ibid.*, Letter No. 195.

66. See *ibid.*, Letter No. 98; see also James Fordyce, *op. cit.*, the chapter entitled: 'On a manly Spirit, as opposed to Effeminacy'.

Chapter 5

THE GRAND TOUR OF THE ENGLISH NOBLEMAN

Chesterfield's son Philip travelled for a number of years on the continent, David Fordyce's plan of education included travel as the final 'finish' for the gentleman, Johnson sent his young nobleman abroad. Why did young males travel abroad?

Though travel had long been considered the final stage, the 'crown' of liberal education,[1] it was in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that it became the fashion for young aristocratic males to go on what Lassels was the first to call the 'Grand Tour'.[2] Why did travel suddenly expand at that particular time, for that particular group of people? The most plausible explanation is that it was part of the process which Klein describes as the diffusion of the courtly tradition over the English *élite*, a process which also accounts for the rise of politeness after the Restoration.[3] My aim in this chapter, then, is to describe the way in which the Grand Tour, embodying an eighteenth century notion of courtly education, was a major constituent in the technology of self of the aristocratic English gentleman.[4]

As an educational institution, the Grand Tour[5] can be placed firmly in the courtly tradition. Young noblemen were sent to France to learn gentlemanly accomplishments as well as French with a good accent. Blois was often recommended, as the French spoken there was thought to be particularly 'pure'.[6] They were also expected to learn about men, manners and political institutions, lose national prejudices and acquire a broad perspective. Those with letters of introduction would be received at the French Court or in aristocratic salons, where conversation would effect its polish. They were accompanied by a tutor who was usually expected to possess, among his many other qualities, a command of foreign languages. The tour lasted between two and five years, after which the young men returned to England, ideally accomplished and finished, complete gentlemen.[7]

Accomplishments featured centrally in courtly education. An accomplishment was what 'perfected'.[8] Humanist education aimed to produce 'the human ideal, the ideal of man in a generic sense' through an education that was 'at once intellectual, moral and physical'.[9]

Accomplishments were essential to that project. Locke, whose educational work belongs to the courtly tradition,[10] stressed the interdependency of learning and accomplishments in producing the harmonious noble man, in whom the outside, (civility and breeding), was but a reflection of the inside, (virtue). Without polishing, he argued, the rough diamond cannot shine.[11] And while the polite accomplishments might be the 'ornaments' of a gentleman's education, they were 'Marks of Distinction' which could not be denied to those of rank. Thus, riding and fencing were 'necessary Qualifications in the Breeding of a Gentleman', and dancing not only produced graceful motions, but most importantly, asserted Locke, it gave 'Manliness, and a becoming Confidence'.[12]

French had long been considered essential for the social life and public career of young men of the upper classes, and in the humanist tradition, languages were considered the best study for gentlemen.[13] Breeding implied fluency of the tongue as well as of the body, and no gentleman could be accomplished without a knowledge of French. French was not only believed to have a polishing, improving influence on the young gentleman, but had traditionally been instrumental in making him a man. Thus, Howell had claimed that France and the French tongue, 'bold and hardy like its Gentry', had a good effect upon young Englishmen : 'she useth to take away the mothers milk ... and to enharden with confidence'. Travel was the best school for languages, and ensured a correct pronunciation would be learned. A good French accent was considered particularly difficult to acquire.[14]

Just as it did the *honnête homme*, conversation produced the English gentleman. But whereas in France, this took place in the feminine space of the *salon*, for the young English nobleman, a *dépaysement* seems to have been necessary, a time during which he was supposed to lose his mother tongue, the language of the women who brought him up. Paradoxically, the French language was, at that time, also being derogated as airy and effeminate, (and its speakers as loquacious and volubile), in contrast to the more muscular and manly English language, (and its sober speakers), an assertion which became increasingly emphatic as the century wore on.[15] And if, as Lassels explained, young noblemen were sent to France to study the 'Elements and the Alphabet of Breeding' from French nobles, because

these men spent so much time in gallantries with ladies, their masculinity was considered suspect, and young Englishmen were also warned not to imitate them.[16] This is not the only paradox of the Grand Tour. Another concerns the gap between the age at which boys were usually sent abroad, and what they were expected to achieve during their stay. Though biographical records suggest that despite notable exceptions, aristocratic youths did set out in their early to mid teens, there was widespread criticism of early travel.[17] From Steele to Goldsmith, critics complained that 'children' were sent abroad who could only stare and gape at the 'strange things' they saw.[18] As Knox would eventually point out, 'to expect that boys should make observations on men and manners, should weigh and compare the laws, institutions, customs, and characteristics of various people is to expect an impossibility'.[19] The age at which foreign travel would be most beneficial remained a contentious issue thoughout the eighteenth century.[20] One final puzzling question remains, a question which Jeremy Black posed but which, after consulting quantities of archival and manuscript sources, he still could not answer: why did youths from noble families travel abroad, a dangerous undertaking, at a time of such crisis for the English aristocracy that there often were not enough male heirs to ensure direct descendence?[21] To answer this question requires telling a different story about the Grand Tour from the one that has usually been told. To begin with, we must first look at the early education of boys in aristocratic families since the late seventeenth century.

Where best to educate the young noble, at home or at school, had for a long time been the subject of intense debate, a debate which lasted throughout the eighteenth century.[22] In the late seventeenth century, most aristocratic families chose to educate their sons at home under a tutor. They were supported in this by the views of such educators as Burnet, Gailhard, and Locke, who claimed that schools encouraged vice and moral corruption, and narrowed boys' experience of society. At the same time, however, these same educators warned that home education was not without its dangers.

Mothers and the education of the boy

The main danger of a home education for the boy lay in the domestic and emotional comforts it provided. Locke warned that boys 'bred like Fondlings at home' often developed a 'sheepish softness'. This must be avoided 'for Vertue's sake' because it enervates them and makes them susceptible to corruption. Though both parents were accused of overfondness, it was the mothers' tenderness that was said to be 'the loss of children'.[23] And it was with regard to their sons' education and breeding that mothers' influence was said to be most pernicious. From Jonathan Swift to James Fordyce, the same picture was painted of the mother in noble families. Overly concerned about the ill effects of study on her son's health and/or social skills, afraid that he will learn the manners of a scholar and not those of a gentleman, (in other words, that his education will 'un-gentleman' him) the mother simultaneously derogates study and claims that her 'darling' is far too clever for the education a mere tutor can provide. As a result of these practices, the young nobleman, 'naturally under the Conduct and Tuition of his Mamma, becomes, instead of a fine Scholar... a compleat Fop'.[24] By interfering with her son's education, the mother prevents him from attaining, through learning, the virtue emblematic of the noble gentleman.[25] Worse still, her appropriation of her son prevents him from becoming a male. As long as he remains under her influence and authority, he cannot 'improve', achieve nobility and above all, masculinity.

In *Spectator* No. 364, Steele tells the story of a Lady who is convinced that her son has made such 'prodigious Improvements' that he is now beyond 'Book-Learning', and is ready to learn about 'Men and Things'. She decides that he should make the tour of France and Italy. However, because she cannot bear to have him out of her sight, she intends to go with him. Steele's reaction seems extreme: 'I could not but believe that this Humour of carrying a Boy to Travel in his Mother's Lap ... is a Case of an extraordinary Nature, and carries on it a particular Stamp of Folly'. Why did he find this resolution so 'extravagant', so grotesque? Because travel, as Sterne declares in the Sermon on the Prodigal Son, is precisely about getting the boy away from his mother: it 'take[s] us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nursery

mistakes'.[26] And that's the nub of the issue. The concern that emerges, then, is for the boy to be toughened. Not surprisingly, then, travel involves not just leaving behind the softness of mothers and 'all tenderness and seeking...ease too much; all effeminateness and delicateness', but the experience of 'wholesome hardship'.[27] Misson, who describes in lavish detail the difficulties of travel - the roughness of the weather, the unpleasantness of the journeys, the 'hard Lodging and worse Diet' - as well as the additional 'many Dangers' also tells of surmounting them.[28] The young nobleman travelled abroad not only to become a gentleman, but to become a man. The Grand Tour 'could ... produce men. It had a way of setting men free to be themselves'.[29]

Travel and the construction of the gentleman

Paradoxically, the fear also loomed large that travel to France (and Italy) might effeminate the young noblemen. By going abroad, says 'Locke', in Hurd's *Dialogues on the Uses of Foreign Travel*, the youth may be 'polished ... out of his rusticity ... but may easily wear himself into the contrary defect, an effeminate and unmanly foppery'.[30] That travel abroad could corrupt rather than improve young men had been a commonplace for a long time.[31] But it was in the eighteenth century that the fear of effeminacy became an increasing concern, as the vehement reactions to display suggest.[32]

Howell had already urged that returned travellers 'abhore' affectations that 'speak them travellers', such as body positions or 'a phantastique kind of ribanding themselves'.[33] And when Costeker, nearly a century later, complained that the young noble gentleman returned corrupted from the Grand Tour, the emblem of this corruption was his display: exhibiting himself, now that he was an accomplished gentleman, 'in all the most fashionable and publick Places': 'the *Mall*, the *Play*, the *Ring*, the Opera, is dull, insipid all, without the fine Appearance of my Lord'. Everything is ostentation, even *Virtue*, which the gentleman uses to screen his Vices.[34] Display is a gendered discourse associated with women. What is displayed is always effeminate, vain, in other words, unmanly. Throughout the eighteenth century, young noblemen returning from the Grand Tour were accused of ostentation, though the most extreme must have been

the Macaronis, who, in the 1770s, formed the macaroni club and claimed to represent the standard of taste in fashion as well as in 'polite learning, the fine arts and the genteel sciences'. Satires of the macaronis, (and these abounded),[35] all focused on their failure at being men. Concerned solely with display, macaronies could only be empty shells, enervated parodies of males. 'Of man, they only bear the name; they are perfect nothingness'.[36] The true gentleman, on the other hand, displayed neither his foreign clothes nor his foreign tongue, both emblems of an effeminated sexuality. He was expected not to display even his knowledge of languages, though that knowledge might never be tested.[37] The point is, it did not need to be. Not only must the true gentleman's achievements never be displayed, but the more invisible his powers, the more infinite they are assumed to be, as were those of the *honnête homme* in seventeenth century France.[38]

Since travel could corrupt as well as improve the gentleman, it could therefore be the test which would distinguish the man of sense from the fool. As James Burgh put it:

> The first returns from foreign parts improved in easiness of behaviour, in modesty, in freedom of sentiment, and readiness to make allowances to those who differ from him, in a useful knowledge of men and manners, The other brings back with him a laced coat, a spoiled constitution, a gibberish of broken *French* and *Italian*, and an awkward imitation of foreign gestures.[39]

Throughout most of the eighteenth century, accounting for the failures of the Grand Tour served to sustain it and the fiction that its practices could indeed produce the complete gentleman. As late as 1780, Vicesimus Knox claimed that boys whose acquisitions abroad had been 'grimace, affectation and an overbearing insolence' must have been the weak ones, those who had been bound to fail. Travel was suitable only for boys 'with parts'.[40] For a long time, the accomplishments that the Grand Tour was expected to produce had been criticized. Most returning youths were found wanting. They had been sent abroad to lose narrow home-grown prejudices and returned having acquired new ones, foreign to boot. They had been sent abroad to become polished gentlemen, men of conversation.[41] They returned with a 'smattering of languages'. They had been sent abroad

to learn about men and manners, and thus appreciate their own country knowingly. They returned Frenchified. By the 1760s, however, it was not just French politeness and polite accomplishments that were under attack, but the very notion of travel as a means of perfecting the gentleman, in other words, travel as a technology of the self.

The most significant illustration of this shift is Hurd's *Dialogues on the Uses of Foreign Travel*. Written as a conversation that might have taken place between John Locke and Shaftesbury, it is ostensibly about foreign travel, but in fact about how best to produce the English gentleman. (To avoid confusion, I will refer to John Locke, author of *Some Thoughts* as John Locke the author, and to Hurd's characters as 'Locke' and 'Shaftesbury'). Although some writers on the Grand Tour have treated Hurd's dialogue as if it represented the views of its real interlocutors,[42] it is in fact anachronistic: Hurd speaks with the voice of the 1760s, not that of the 1690s. And it is precisely because of their anachronisms that the *Dialogues* highlight the shift that has taken place in the definition of the gentleman since the late seventeenth century.

'Shaftesbury' supports foreign travel, because it is 'the most essential part' of the education of the nobleman, polishing the 'illiberal and ungraceful' effects of English education.[43] 'Locke' opposes it, because it promises only 'shewy and ornamental accomplishments', and he is concerned to produce not 'fine gentlemen' but men who will be 'worthy citizens of England.[44] The contrast between 'fine gentlemen', (especially meant ironically), and citizens of England was not one that preoccupied John Locke the author. The most telling anachronism, however, concerns 'Locke''s attitude to manners, good breeding and politeness. Whereas John Locke the author had set a very high value upon these components indispensable to the construction of the gentleman, for 'Locke', they are accomplishments of little value whose worth has been fixed by the ladies, for whom appearances, the mere display of good breeding, is a sufficient indication of merit.[45] And while for John Locke the author, gestures and manners were the 'Language whereby that internal Civility of the Mind is expressed', for 'Locke', the 'excessive sedulity' about manners which civility entails is effeminating.[46] Not only does the concern for politeness come from women, but politeness itself is born of subjection in

an absolute monarchy. 'Let [it] flourish in France' where insinuation, not merit, brings favour or distinction, but 'let a manlier character prevail here' exclaims 'Locke'. Having constructed an exquisitely polite but effeminated, subjected Other, 'Locke' then produces an English gentleman out of the rejection of all that John Locke the author had thought indispensable to his construction:

> Let our countrymen then be indulged in the plainess, nay the roughness of their manners; But let them atone for this defect by their useful sense, their superior knowledge, their public spirit, and, above all, by their unpolished integrity.[47]

It is no longer politeness, a foreign and effeminating import, but its opposite, manly sincerity,[48] that is set to produce the *English* gentleman.

As important to John Locke the author as civility and breeding, was the knowledge of French, which he 'advocated forcefully'.[49] 'Locke', on the other hand, condemns this 'pretense' to fit the gentleman for conversation 'with foreign acquaintances' as a waste of time, which would be better spent in the study of the learned languages, 'and perhaps his own.'[50] Between John Locke the author and 'Locke', the techniques for perfecting the gentleman had become a means of derogating not only the French as effeminate Other, but politeness and accomplishments as alien to the national English character. Thus, twenty years later, John Andrews reminded the young gentleman setting out for France that travel abroad was precisely not about learning politeness and 'engaging manners'. These are best learned at home, especially as, Andrews specified, English manners are not only more becoming but more manly than those of the French.[51] By then, that was what mattered.

Hurd's *Dialogues* are significant because they mark the onset of the disintegration of the courtly ideal of gentlemanly education. With this, the cohesion between intellectual, physical and social accomplishments constituting that education no longer made sense. The very meaning of accomplishments, politeness and speaking French shifted, because the discourse in which they had been central was changing; they became detached from the idea of education, and, in complex ways that will be discussed later, constituted a separate though related discourse, the 'social' discourse. Thus, by the end of the eighteenth century, dancing and

fencing were merely frivolous accomplishments, and though still considered necessary by some, were unambiguously secondary to the 'solid' improvements provided by classical education. Similarly, while a knowledge of French was to remain indispensable for a young man 'who proposes to mix in elegant and respectable companies'[52] until at least the end of the eighteenth century, language learning was now said to be an insipid occupation for a young man. Fluency in foreign languages ceased to be emblematic of the polished tongue of the gentleman, for not only did it not guarantee, remarked John Andrews, that a man would be 'conversant in any knowledge', but, he added, 'the best linguists are found among illiterate people'.[53] When, finally, it could be said that the single best thing that French politeness could produce was obedient servants,[54] the *raison d'être* of the Grand Tour as an apparatus for producing the aristocracy was no more.[55]

Historians of the Grand Tour rarely discuss why it ended. Nevertheless, I would want to suggest one reason for its demise. As a means of producing the nobleman, the tour was discontinuous with other practices of liberal education, in that its failures were both visible and audible, as Burgh makes clear. The gentleman's powers must precisely not be tested or questioned, but the Grand Tour was a test, and its results meant to be displayed. Ironically, display was also the site of all the problematizations concerning the production of the English gentleman: not only his masculinity and his national identity, but his superior mental powers as well. The Grand Tour thus produced multiple and contradictory positionings for the gentleman, and display was a condition both for the end of the Grand Tour and for the emergence of a technology for the construction of the masculine English gentleman in which it was crucial that his achievements - and failures - remain invisible, silent and incommensurable.

Two conclusions can be drawn at this point in terms of the overall aim of this study as a history of the present. Firstly, learning French has not always been a female accomplishment. Secondly, oral skills, the ability to converse in French with a good accent, has not always been associated primarily with girls, but was an essential requirement for the (male)

English aristocracy. In other words, the eighteenth century gentleman learned French because, without it, he could not be accomplished. So far, the focus has been on the courtly education of the English nobleman. I will now look at girls' learning of French and how they were positioned by this knowledge and by the concepts of accomplishments and politeness.

References and footnotes

1. Travel is 'requisite to ... accomplish a gentleman'. William Ramesey, *The Gentleman's Companion*, London, 1672, p. 55; most seventeenth and eighteenth century books on the education of the young nobleman include a section on travel, though not necessarily in its favour: see Henry Peacham,*The Complete Gentleman*, (1634), V.B. Heltzel (ed.), Ithaca, 1962; Edward Leigh, *Three Diatribes or Discourses*, London, 1671; Obadiah Walker, *Of Education*, (1673), Menston, 1970; John Locke, *op. cit.* See also G.B. Parks, 'Travel as Education', in R.F. Jones (ed.), *The Seventeenth Century: Studies in the History of English Thought and Literature from Bacon to Pope*, Stanford, 1951; R.C. Stephens, *op. cit.*

2. 'No man understands Liuy and Caesar, Guicciardini and Monluc like him who hath made exactly the Grand Tour of France and the Giro of Italy'. Richard Lassels *The Voyage of Italy*, Paris, 1670, Preface to the Reader. I am concerned with the Grand Tour, i.e with travel in France.

3. *op. cit.*, 1984, pp. 194, 203. Klein does not discuss the Grand Tour, but his insights concerning the rise of politeness are entirely congruent with its expansion at that particular time. Other explanations have been suggested: see J. Burke, 'The Grand Tour and the Rule of Taste', in R.F. Brissenden (ed.), *Studies in the Eighteenth Century*, Canberra, 1968; W.E. Mead, *The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century*, New York, 1914; C. Maxwell, *The English Traveller in France 1698-1815*, London, 1932.

4. In this chapter especially, I use the term 'gentleman' to refer primarily to the nobleman, after the manner of Swift and Chesterfield. For example, Jonathan Swift, 'An Essay on Modern Education', *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 291; Stanhope Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, *op. cit.*, CCXIV; In the eighteenth century, however, the increasingly wider application of the term gentleman caused Chesterfield to complain that the term was 'misapplied', *The World*, 6 December 1753; Barrell too discusses the 'problems of identifying the 'true' gentleman' in *op. cit.*, p. 36, and J.A. Sharpe apologizes for the 'imprecision' in his promiscuous use of the terms 'nobility', 'gentry', 'gentleman' and even 'aristocrat'. But, he adds, this imprecision was 'shared by most early modern writers'. *Early Modern England: A Social History 1550-1760*, London, 1987, pp. 153-54. See also K.S. Dent, 'The Informal Education of the Landed Classes in the Eighteenth Century, with particular reference to reading', unpublished Ph.D thesis, Birmingham, 1974. The very ambiguity of the term is related to the problematisation of the construction of the noble gentleman, and is central to my thesis.

5. Dent, *op. cit.*

6. See for example S. Klima (ed.), *op. cit.*, London, 1975. Addison spent one year there learning French, noted Lambley, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

7. For a critique of this view, see Cohen, 'The Grand Tour: constructing the English Gentleman in Eighteenth Century France', *History of Education*, vol. 21, No. 3, 1992, pp. 241-257.

8. *OED.*

9. R. Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, Urbana, 1956, p. 2; R. Jebb, cited in Stephens, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

10. Stephens, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

11. Locke, *op. cit.*

12. Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, 'A Dialogue Concerning Education', *A Collection of Several Tracts*, London, 1728, p. 322; Locke *op. cit.*, pp. 254, 252; See also Walker, *op. cit.*; Stephens, *op. cit.*

13. Stephens, *op. cit.*

14. James Howell, *Instructions for Forreine Travel*, E. Arber (ed.), (1640), London, 1869, pp. 19, 68-69; Stephens, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

15. See for example Felton, *op. cit.*, p. 87; Stackhouse, *op. cit.*, London, p. 181; *The Conversation of Gentlemen*, London, 1738, p. 138;

16. Lassels, *op. cit.*, Gilbert Burnet, *Thoughts on Education*, (1668), J. Clarke (ed.), London, 1761, p. 91.

17. For example, Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury was sixteen; Thomas Coke, First Earl of Leicester was fifteen, and Edward, his younger brother, was fourteen, as was Chesterfield's son. R. Voitle, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, London, 1984; J. Lees-Milne, *Earls of Creation*, London, 1962; Chesterfield, *op. cit.*, CXI. J.W. Stoye commented 'many of the young men abroad were hardly more than boys, and often they were boys', *English Travellers Abroad 1604-1667*, London, 1952, p. 62.

18. *The Spectator*, No. 364; Oliver Goldsmith, 'An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe', (1756), A. Friedman (ed.), *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, Oxford, 1966, vol. 1, p. 331.

19. Vicesimus Knox, *Liberal Education or, a Practical Treatise on the Methods of Acquiring Useful and Polite Learning*, London, 1784, p. 382.

20. See Cohen, *op. cit.*; see also Stephens, *op. cit.*, pp. 359-60.

21. Black, *op. cit.*, pp. 233, 243, 246. This may explain why a number of travelling tutors were trained physicians, Locke, for one.

22. For reviews of the debate, see G. Brauer, *The Education of a Gentleman: Theories of Gentlemanly Education in England, 1660-1775*, New York, 1959; Stephens, *op. cit.*

23. Burnet, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 20; Locke *op. cit.*, p. 129. The *OED* defines *Fondling* as one who is much caressed and petted.

24. J.L. Costeker, *The Fine Gentleman or the Complete Education of a Young Nobleman*, London, 1732, p. 10; There are many other references to the ill effects of mothers' fondness on their sons' education and character. See for example *The Conversation of Gentlemen*, *op. cit.*; *David Fordyce op. cit.*; *Johnson, op. cit.*, No. 195; James Burgh, *The Dignity of Human Nature*, London, 1754; James Fordyce, *op. cit.* This fear is not confined to the eighteenth century, as Christine Heward has shown in *Making a Man of Him: Parents and their sons' education at an English public school 1929-1950*, London, 1988.

25. Learning is essential to nobility. See Peacham, *op. cit.*; Locke, *op. cit.* For an excellent discussion of the relation between learning and virtue, see Stephens, *op. cit.*

26. Laurence Sterne, 'Sermon on the Prodigal Son', in *The Works of Laurence Sterne*, London, 1857, p. 600.

27. Lassels, *op. cit.*

28. François Maximilien Misson, *A New Voyage to Italy*, London, 1695, vol. 1, p. 144, vol. 2, p. 305.

29. R.J. White, 'The Grand Tour', in A. Natan (ed.), *The Silver Renaissance: Essays in Eighteenth Century English History*, London, 1961.

30. Richard Hurd, *Dialogues on the Uses of Foreign Travel Considered as a Part of an English Gentleman's Education: Between Lord Shaftesbury and Mr Locke*, London, 1764, p. 105.

31. Joseph Hall, *QUO VADIS? a Just censure of Travel as it is commonly undertaken by the Gentlemen of our Nation*, London, 1617; Howell, *op. cit.*; Francis Osborne, *Advice to a Son*, Oxford, 1656.

32. Display of the body as a social symbol was an important aspect of the 'courtly ethic of graceful behaviour' developed by French nobles, writes M.E. Motley, 'Aristocratic Education in Seventeenth Century France', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Princeton, pp. 116-7. Display is yet another aspect of French culture which had an entirely different meaning in England.

33. Howell, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

34. Costeker, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

35. For a review of the satirical literature on the macaronies, see Cohen, *op. cit.*

36. Thomas Wright, *Caricature History of the Georges or Annals of the House of Hanover, compiled from the Squibs, Broadsides, Pictures, Lampoons and Pictorial Caricatures of the Time*, London, 1868; *The Macaroni Jester and Pantheon of Wit containing all that has lately transpired in the Regions of Politeness, Whim and Novelty*, London, 1773.

37. Barrell notes: 'it seems no part of the definition that the gentleman must put his qualities and accomplishments to use. The end of his education appears to be, simply, to 'appear', to 'shine': he 'polishes' himself so that he may 'shine in the world'. *op. cit.*, p. 38.

38. See Stanton, *op. cit.*

39. Burgh, *op. cit.*, Book II, Section VI, p. 148.

40. Knox, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

41. A Gentleman is a 'man of conversation', wrote Steele in *The Tatler*, No. 21.

42. Hurd's *Dialogues* have been taken to represent Locke's actual views on foreign travel: R.S. Lambert (ed.), *The Grand Tour - A Journey in the Tracts of the Age of Aristocracy*, London, 1935, p. 11; Dent takes it to represent Locke's 'updated' views about the merits or disadvantages of travel: *op. cit.*, pp. 303-4; Brauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-8; White, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-5.

43. Hurd, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

44. *ibid.*, pp. 44, 71, 74, 91.

45. *ibid.*, pp. 117-8.

46. Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 200; Hurd, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

47. Hurd, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-9, 159, 160.

48. A discussion of sincerity is beyond the scope of this thesis. I would however argue that the derogation of French politeness is one condition for the emergence of the discourse on sincerity. As such, it is linked to both masculinity and the English national character.

49. Stephens, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

50. Hurd, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

51. *op. cit.*, 1784, p. 4.

52. *ibid.*, p. 29.

53. *ibid.*, pp. 32, 40. James Fordyce, who also criticised foreign travel, counterposed 'language learning' to 'the exercise of reason and the attainment of wisdom'. *op. cit.*; see also Knox, *op. cit.*

54. Hannah Cowley, *The Belle's Stratagem*, Dublin, 1781, Act 1, pp. 10-11.

55. This does not mean that the Grand Tour as an institution had ended. By then, it had become dispersed over English culture. Though this process is of intrinsic interest to the discourse on the Grand Tour as a whole, it remains beyond the scope of this study.

Chapter 6

GENDER AND LEARNING FRENCH IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

Daughters of the nobility were usually educated at home,[1] and although many are said to have learned French, little information is available as to how. Thus it is only from Locke's observations on the effectiveness of the conversational method,[2] which he recommends to teach boys Latin, that we learn about girls too. They learned French by speaking it with their governess, a custom that lasted well into the nineteenth century.[3] We can also infer from their biographies that in the eighteenth century, girls born in noble families might acquire French as their sole first language. Sarah Lennox, daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Richmond, born in 1744, had a French governess and 'spoke nothing but French' at five years of age.[4] The daughter of the Earl and Countess of Oxford, Lady Margaret, born in 1715, also had a governess, Miss Philippa Watson, and 'learned French and Italian'.[5] Since this governess appears to have been English, one can only wonder how Lady Margaret learned these languages. French was probably an important qualification for eighteenth century governesses, though perhaps not quite as indispensable as it was to become in the nineteenth century. Girls as well as boys seem also to have been taught the rudiments of French at home by tutors, since a number of popular French language teaching grammars published in the late sevententh and early eighteenth centuries are dedicated to girls as well as boys.[6]

It is likely that, as the century advanced, conversation was increasingly complemented with instruction through grammar or other formal means. Bridel Arleville, for instance, recommended his *Practical Accidence of the French Tongue* to governesses, who, he said, would find it 'peculiarly useful'.[7] Mrs Delany advised her niece to 'read the Psalms for the morning in French, and some French lesson' before breakfast, if there was time.[8] Visiting tutors with foreign language skills were probably common in the many boarding-schools which thrived throughout the eighteenth century.[9] Contemporary advertisements targetting both boys and girls all boast in-house or visiting tutors who will teach French. Thus, the boarding-school for young gentlemen newly established, in 1745, at Theobald's House near Cheshunt, claims that 'for the Ready Attainment of French, a Native of the Country attends Youths from Morning till Night,

both in School and at their Diversions'. The language is taught 'both by Rote and Grammar'. In November 1785, Mr Praval, 'hopes his Lessons, united to a Constant Opportunity of conversing in French' will soon make the pupils attending Mrs Praval's boarding-school 'speak that Language with Fluency and Elegance'.[10]

The difference between learning French at home with a governess, mainly by conversational methods, and learning it with a tutor, at home or at school, is not without implications. For if the governess spoke French all the time with her pupil, the language would be acquired as a first or second language, whereas if a tutor came for French instruction, it would be learned as a foreign language.[11] French acquired by conversation at home could eventually be spoken fluently. Fluency would be more difficult to attain if it was learned as a foreign language, as was likely at boarding-school, because of the conditions generally prevailing in a school. Even when claims were made that there would be 'constant opportunity' to speak French, the practice was undoubtedly very different. One might even suspect the prominence given to such claims in the advertisements to be evidence of how little success was generally achieved in that area. In the end, as Le Breton was to write in the early nineteenth century, in the best schools, 'it is usually required that the pupils converse exclusively in French, at least during the hours allotted to the study of that language'. These might add up to two or three hours a week.[12] It is probably the intermittent practice of language which produced the abominated 'smatterings', symptomatic to the eighteenth century of superficial knowledge and display.

The point must be made here that, at least in the eighteenth century, this criticism of superficiality was not specifically related to gender or to class. On the one hand, the growing practice of sending daughters of 'merchants or mechanicks' to boarding schools, to give them a genteel education modelled on that of the noble classes, was denounced and ridiculed.[13] What use was it to them to learn dancing and imperfect French, asked the *Annual Register* in 1759.[14] Forty years later, Hannah More's sentiments on the subject echoed the same opinion: she too disapproved of 'the paltry accessions' girls of the 'humbler classes' make 'by hammering out the meaning of a few passages in a tongue they but imperfectly understand, and of which they are never likely to make any

use'.[15] Her disapproval, however, had a different motive. She deplored the corrupting effect of such a useless accomplishment on the substance of the middling classes. In Maria Edgeworth's novel *Patronage*,[16] on the other hand, it is ladies of rank who regrettably punctuate their speech with French phrases and never actually *speak* the language. We are told that Count Altenberg, a well educated German nobleman, speaks French fluently, and we can also infer that Caroline, daughter of a country gentleman who has (temporarily) lost his fortune, knows French, since she understands the smatterings uttered around her and *writes* a French sentence in a letter to her brother. However, neither the Count, a nobleman of exceptional qualities and sincerity, (whose sincerity prevails over his *politesse*), nor Caroline, the incarnation of domestic virtue, ever utter a single French word throughout the text. They are not smatterers because they do not feel the necessity of displaying their French. That is the difference between speakers and smatterers. The same can be said of the young men back from the Grand Tour.[17]

So far, then, it appears that in the eighteenth century, both males and females of rank learned French, and were expected to speak it. But there were two major differences in the way they were supposed to reach proficiency. Firstly, many young men went on the Grand Tour, whereas their sisters did not. During their stay abroad, the youths were expected to perfect themselves in two major respects: accent and correctness. These were important for girls as well, but had to be attained somehow at home. In a dialogue in Lainé's *The Princely Way to the French Tongue*, a girl writing in French to her brother who is travelling in France apologises for her mistakes, implying that he would not make such errors. But, she adds, he is more fortunate than her, 'vous êtes à la source', in France, while she remains in England.[18] Secondly, noble males were 'learned', they knew Latin, whereas their sisters did not. Girls did not know grammar, and were therefore likely to be left at a disadvantage as the importance of formal teaching developed.

As grammar became more and more important not only in English but as a tool in foreign language learning, and access to its strengths varied between the sexes, it is probably necessary to clarify its role and purpose. The impetus to learn French grammatically originally lay in the

concern to achieve and maintain a standard of correctness.'[19] This is clear from definitions of grammar in the period under discussion. As Cheneau, writing in 1685, put it, the 'end of Grammar is to learn to write exactly ... to read smoothly ... and to speak elegantly'. Grammar, wrote Porny at the end of the eighteenth century, is 'the only effectual means of acquiring a perfect knowledge of any language'. More importantly, this knowledge would guard the speaker from 'improprieties of expression ... both in speaking and writing'.[20] Grammar was necessary to train the tongue of the gentleman, for what mattered most was that his voice be distinguished from the vernacular. Similar concerns were being shown with regards to English.[21]

A comparison of French language teaching texts published in the first and second half of the eighteenth century, reveals that a major shift had taken place. Comparing what two writers said was the best way to learn to speak French highlights the nature of this shift: for Cheneau (1723), it was by constant practice. For Chambaud (1772), it was by understanding the rules of the language. Between the first edition of Boyer's *The Compleat French Master for Ladies and Gentlemen* in 1694, and the last posthumous edition, the 21st, in 1767, the section on grammar had increased by 31 pages, the rest of the text remaining virtually unchanged.[22] At the same time, the fact that Boyer was still used in the 1760s suggests that the shifts outlined here did not entirely displace the older methods or render them obsolete. Tandon's *A New French Grammar*, which was not only modelled on Boyer's grammar but faithfully reproduced a number of his dialogues, (without ackowledgement), was first published in 1745 and reprinted in 1815.[23] There is plenty of evidence that, at least until the mid 1770s, there were controversies concerning whether French should be taught mainly by rules, or by practice.[24] But in view of the way French was learned in the nineteenth century, we are seeing the development of a trend towards grammar which was soon to become the dominant mode. However, grammar education had traditionally been done in Latin and this must have presented a problem for females learning French. For not only did the texts use the terminology of Latin grammar, but French syntax was stretched to fit the framework of Latin.[25] Noun accidence is a particularly clear illustration of this process. Such an approach was so well established that Chambaud, who had been the first to question it as

early as 1758, still felt he courted contention by rejecting it fourteen years later:

> I admit of one Article only, and of no case at all in nouns, contrary to all those who have writ upon the French language before me, I give reasons for that singularity, Reason and the right of the thing, not imitation, is my guide, and the rule which I go by through this performance.[26]

The practice in fact continued until the end of the nineteenth century and has not disappeared even today.

The usual method for teaching girls grammar was by question and answer dialogues, such as Mauger's 'Entre une Dame et le Maître de Langues'.[27]

> « Monsieur, je n'ai pas appris la langue Latine, je ne sais pas ce que c'est que Grammaire, qu'un Nom, qu'un Verbe ... et je voudrais pourtant bien apprendre par Règles, et non par Routine, Je vous prie de m'en informer' »
> « Il est très raisonnable ... il faut savoir les fondemens, La Grammaire est l'Art de bien Parler ...»

The lady then asks what is a syllable, then a phrase, then how many parts language is composed of and so on. Far from being a tedious list of rules, the dialogue is charmingly lively and the lady's ignorance never used to make her appear lacking or stupid. On the contrary, her questions, like a child's ingenuous yet perceptive remarks, reveal the illogicality of the world as it is. The discussion of gender should illustrate my point:

> «Mais je vous demande une chose, pourquoi les autres noms des choses inanimées sont-ils Masculins ou Féminins? »
> «Madame, vous objectez fort bien, je vous le dirai; ils le sont par accident, Si un *e* que nous appelons Féminin, c'est à dire faible, qui n'est point prononcé, finit un mot, généralement il est Féminin à cause de cet *e* »

Contrary to expectations, it appears that lack of Latin grammar training was not treated as a serious problem for females learning French, and grammar itself was certainly not perceived to present particular obstacles to them on the basis of their sex. For example, in the dialogue discussed above, the lady also asks her master: 'Ne changez-vous pas quelque fois ces noms, car j'ai lu, le Roi, du Roi, au Roi'. She has noticed noun accidence. In other words, grammatical categories were deemed to be self-evident, and

the teacher just organised these observations into rules. This would also indicate that achieving success was not a problem for females. Had not Isabella Carr, Fauchon's pupil, made more progress 'without any previous knowledge of Grammatical Rules' than someone trained 'Scholastically'?[28]

Learning grammar was also entering hallowed ground and becoming one of the initiates. By learning French grammar, girls could gain access to the 'Art of Grammar, the Golden Key to unlock all other liberal Arts and Sciences'.[29] But there may also have been a practical reason why girls were said to want to learn French the grammatical way: learning by rote, without organising principles, large amounts of vocabulary and dialogues, seemed very time consuming. '[La méthode] d'apprendre par coeur est fort difficile, on ne peut pas mettre les règles en pratique ... on est fort long à apprendre'.[30] Grammar had represented an attractive short cut.

However if grammar was, as Peyton claimed further, 'the Gate' that would give an 'easy entrance' into all foreign languages,[31] why then did so many texts published in the second half of the eighteenth century mention that learning grammar was 'disagreeable', and that, as a result, the study of language was 'dry, tedious and disgustful to young people'?[32] The point is, grammar was not delivering the goods, it was not fulfilling its promise. It did not make language learning easy, and above all, it did not shorten the time taken to learn French. Quite the opposite. 'Many grammars protract the improvement of youth', complained Porny.[33] By the 1770s, textbooks were claiming to make the study of French 'less painful, and the attainment of that fashionable language more expeditious'.[34] In other words, ease and speed. One way of achieving these was to publish abridged grammars, as became the practice by the beginning of the nineteenth century.[35] Another was to devise 'plans', ways of categorising and organising the language with a practical pedagogical aim. In order to fully understand what this entailed, a brief survey of the organisation and content of the texts used to teach French in the eighteenth century is necessary.[36]

French language teaching texts

Earlier texts[37] were constructed on the following model: a grammar section - including pronunciation, prosody, the parts of speech and syntax - and a section I call 'language':[38] vocabulary, familiar phrases, dialogues, gallicisms and anglicisms and proverbs. The vocabulary was arranged thematically, and often began with God, the angels and the firmament. Man was described in great detail: parts of the body inside as well as out - limbs, veins, arteries, marrow; attributes of the body - tears, sweat - as well as of the soul - emotions; diseases, male and female clothing and occupations, food and meals, categories of dwellings and contents of homes, the animal and plant kingdom, wild as well as edible. The main principle of selection seems to have been exhaustiveness. 'Familiar Phrases' or *Dialogues Familiers* might include phrases or sentences which we would today call 'functional': how to inquire about the health of one's interlocutor, how to thank, agree, consent and deny, get angry, what to say when playing cards or billiards, or an exchange between a governess and a young lady, a man and his servant. The Dialogue section consisted of longer dialogues often painting vignettes of the social life of the time: a dialogue between two friends concerning marriage, between two young ladies, between a man and his mistress and so on. There was often a conversation on learning French, and how pleasant and important it was to learn this 'universal' language. These reveal that a lot of emphasis was put on speaking, that the constant use of French was encouraged, and travelling to France deemed the best way to become proficient. These dialogues were not graded for difficulty, nor were they designed to illustrate grammatical points. They were meant to be memorized. The main method of teaching was 'composition', translating from English to French with a dictionary, referring to rules as the need arose.

By the latter part of the eighteenth century, grammar had ostensibly become more important, and took up a major part of most texts. As I mentioned earlier, many French language teaching texts attempted to deal with the failure of conventional approaches to grammar by devising 'new and original' plans. Arleville's main claim for the advantages of his 'more Extensive and Easy Plan than any Extant' is that 'it joins practice to theory'. Why this should 'facilitate the progress of the learners', is that

it was an improvement on

> the tedious task of getting by heart 100, and, in some grammars, 160 pages of elementary rules, the dryness and insignificancy of which, when not exemplified, are sufficient to dishearten the most willing scholars,

The problem was motivation, and Arleville believed that 'understanding' would 'excite the desire of learning', and was thus the key to progress in learning language.[39]

A closer look at the texts, however, reveals that in attempting to be practical, writers had complemented the dry abstract rules with 'recipes for use', many of which were abstruse if not impenetrable. The 'Use and Signification of *Y* ' in Porny's *Grammatical Exercises* should illustrate my point:

> The Particle *Y* is sometimes used instead of a Substantive or Pronoun, which is mentioned in the first Part of the Sentence; in such case it must be rendered into English by *him, her, them* or *it*, as the sense directs; with one of the Particles, *at, by, for, to, with,* or *in*, set before.[40]

As for the plans, they had had very little to do with what I would call grammar. They were 'systems' rather than syntax, as the following examples will show. The first is Arleville's plan to teach verbs. The organising principle governing his system is the notion of 'termination'. Verbs are not introduced according to their conventional endings, but grouped alphabetically according to their terminations. Thus the verb section begins with the termination *aincre* which includes two verbs, *vaincre* and *convaincre*. The next set comprises the terminations *andre, endre, aindre, eindre, oindre, ondre, erdre, ordre, ourdre, oudre*. Each termination includes a list of verbs and their translation followed by instructions for their conjugation. For example,

> Verbs in *aindre*
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *plaindre* | to pity |
> | *craindre* | to fear |
> | *contraindre* | to constrain |
>
> Form their singular of the present of the Indicative by changing *dre* final of the present of the Infinitive into *s,s,t*, and their perfect like those in *aincre*.

Verbs in *eindre*
ceindre to inclose or gird
feindre to feign
peindre to paint
enfreindre to infringe
épreindre to extract
empreindre to imprint
...
are conjugated like the verbs in *aindre*.

Verbs with the next termination, *oindre*, are also said to be conjugated like the verbs in *aindre*.[41] Not surprisingly, the verb section, which also contains exercises, spreads over one hundred and sixty three pages, about two thirds of the text. Each set of terminaison is followed by an exercise consisting of sentences to be translated, with vocabulary supplied at the bottom of the page. The following three sentences demonstrate that the practice of translating strings of unconnected sentences was well underway by the end of the eighteenth century:

Sophia and St Firmin take Mr Melford's hand and wipe their eyes.
Your remark is just, my son, replied Mr d'Ogere.
I have long dreaded a discovery of this nature.[42]

To the modern reader, the proliferation of terminations seems superfluous, and Arleville's 'easy plan' not only confusing but difficult to justify on rational grounds.[43] It is not immediately obvious how it facilitated the learning of verbs. Eventually, one cannot fail to wonder about the efficacy of a system which provides a separate termination for verbs in *euvoir* of which *pleuvoir* is the sole member.[44]

My second example is of another 'easy' plan, one to teach pronunciation. The full title of Murdoch's text, *The Pronunciation and Orthography of the French Language Rendered Perfectly Easy on a Plan Quite Original* is revealing. The originality[45] of his plan consists in introducing vowels in phonetic lists of monosyllabic words and nonsense syllables, so as not to 'distract' the attention from 'the single focus' of the sound to be learned. The vocabulary is also organised phonetically, to illustrate 'Distinctions'. This includes homophone groupings such as *cinq, sein, sain, seint*, words differing from each other by gradation in sound

such as *Somme, sommet, sommer*, and finally 'those French words where the same letters differ in sound, or signification and sometimes both, according to the accentuation or connection with other words'. For example, ***est*** varies both in sound and in meaning, depending on where it is placed in the sentence: *il **est** vrai* , ***est**-il vrai*, and *l'**Est** est un point cardinal*.[46]

Not all systems were as complicated nor as seemingly arbitrary as some of those I have just reviewed. The tables advertised in the title of Calbris' *The Rational Guide to the French Tongue* are an interesting example of a system that is in fact clear, almost like the modern structural approach.[47] Calbris designed a set of tables mapping the place of pronouns in simple sentences. The most innovative feature is the visual element, which plays a central role in the illustration of the 'Order of the French Syntax'. This is an excerpt of Table I (part i):

Il		ME	LES			donne
Il		ME	LES	a		donnés
-	ne	ME	LES			donne-t-il pas?
Il	ne	ME	LES			donne pas
Il	ne	ME	LES	a	pas	donnés

Instructions are given for repeating the process with TE LES, LES LUI, NOUS LES, VOUS LES, LES LEUR. Table 2 and 3 illustrate the same process with Y and EN, and Table 4 all the pronouns at once. Calbris cautioned that some of the 'usages' thus produced were not very elegant. Each table was followed by a set of disconnected short sentences for translation, of the type: 'He did not shew *them* to *me*. Shew *them* to *me*. We will not give *them* to *them*'.[48]

What is most striking about most of these practical plans is that whatever the organising principle was, it entailed the sacrifice of meaning. From Du Mitand's pronunciation exercise, consisting of monosyllabic phrases of the type:

un bain froid	un beau jeu
deux à deux	des oeufs frais
je vous ai vu	de la mie de pain

and so on for a 110 examples, to Gérardot's exercise on the accidents of nouns comprising such phrases as *'From under the Slime of the Pond; ...*

Besides the Limbs of the Calves', to quote just two,[49] the language had been 'decorticated', stripped of its meaning.

By the end of the eighteenth century, things had come full circle, though the ends did not meet: whereas in the early eighteenth century, the learning of grammar had been perceived as a way of avoiding the memorizing of large chunks of language such as those in Dialogues or Familiar Phrases sections, by the end of the century, learners were still required to memorize large chunks of language, but now these were grammar rules. Pronunciation was practised by reciting rules,[50] dialogues between teacher and pupil consisted of exchanges about points of grammar. One of the most telling illustrations of this shift is Calbris's *A French Plaidoyer Between Five Young Ladies*. Five young noblewomen are engaged in a contest, organised and arbitrated by their learned aunt, the Marquise de..., which consists in explaining clearly and elegantly the rules of French syntax. There is no other conversation between them.[51] The difference between this text and the dialogues between young ladies in Mauger, Boyer and even Peyton could not be more dramatic. As for vocabulary, it had become a by-product of grammar teaching. Gratte, for instance, claimed:

> On ne peut pas douter que quand un enfant aura appris et récité attentivement toutes les Règles contenues dans cette *grammaire* avec leurs exemples, il ne sache la signification des mots qui y sont enfermés.[52]

Though being able to hold a conversation in French was still held to be of the utmost difficulty,[53] the communicative function of language had been obliterated. Chambaud had already derogated the 'common compliments', and the 'trifling topics of familiar discourse',[54] which constituted the knowledge of those taught French conversationally, without a thorough grounding in principles of the language. If method was associated not just with rationality, but as Murdoch claimed, with virtue, 'in proportion as METHOD is attended to in the education of youth, they not only make progress in learning, but also in virtuous habits',[55] and if in addition grammar was said to 'form the mind',[56] then the scales were becoming heavily weighted against what Alice Zimmern was to call the 'slipshod chatter' of French conversation classes in girls' schools.[57]

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, conversation and speaking, which had been the focus of early eighteenth century texts, though still said to be the main aim of learning French, held very much second place in boys' French language classes. Eventually, as exercising the mind of the pupil took on increasing importance, construing, grammar and translation constituted the language work,[58] while conversation was considered 'not a result ... really worth while to aim at'.[59]
The question then is, what happened to girls' learning of French, since in the nineteenth century, what they learned and were expected to know was mainly French conversation?[60]

The evidence reviewed has shown that in the eighteenth century, the learning of French was not gendered.[61] What differences there were, were incidental - many upper class males went on the Grand Tour and females did not; females learned grammar through French and boys through Latin. Most texts explicitly addressed both sexes. But differences were emerging by the end of the century. Upper class males had been in an advantageous position to learn French. But did they know it better? It would seem not, according to a dialogue in Porny's *Practical French Grammar*, in which a girl who has been learning French for six months 'understands it better ... construes it, writes it, and *even speaks it better*' than her brother who has been learning it for six years at school.[62]

At this point, two strands of the thesis must be brought together. We must recall firstly that in the eighteenth century, proficiency in French meant proficiency in speaking and therefore the ability to communicate orally would be the measure of achievement; and secondly, that French was the only 'serious' subject learned by both boys and girls. What derives from these two strands is that comparisons between them were inevitable, and that these comparisons were mainly of the ability to speak, as Porny's dialogue demonstrates.

Two features of the dialogue deserve attention. The first concerns the boy. Though his reluctance to learn is obvious - he finds French 'too hard' and does not see 'what use it is' - his failure is located in an aspect of the educational process, the method. ' 'Tis none my fault' says the boy, and his interlocutor concurs; the blame rests with the master.[63] Bad methods were commonly held responsible for boys' 'aversion' to French and 'sometimes even their books and master',[64] they were the 'bad Tools'[65]

Englishmen had to work with. The complaint was frequent, even though there was no consensus as to what constituted a bad method.[66] If, on the other hand, it was girls who were said to be 'discouraged' by French, the problem was not lack of motivation or interest because of the method, but in their 'nature': their 'more nice and tender constitutions' are not 'able to endure those rugged and thorny Difficulties in the Methods hitherto practiced'.[67]

The second feature concerns the girl. Though her superior achievement is meant to discipline the boy,[68] we should not lose sight of the fact of that achievement nor of how is it constructed. The girl does not conceal the fact that she takes 'much pains' to learn, on the contrary, she believes that 'Science and Languages are only acquired by diligence and labour', and that without effort, knowledge would not be of much value.[69] She succeeds not because she is able, nor because she has a special talent for language learning, but because she is diligent and has a good teacher. Positioned as hard working rather than able,[70] she does not undermine or threaten the boy's potential and his taken-for-granted superiority. Indeed, once he is convinced of the 'benefits' of learning French, he endeavours to 'take so much pains' that he hopes to speak it in a short time.[71]

Porny's dialogue is significant because of its relevance to present issues in the teaching of French. In particular, it suggests that though learning French was not gendered in the eighteenth century, achievement appears to have been. In the literature reviewed so far, boys' achievement appears unproblematic. It is treated as the unquestioned, natural outcome of their breeding and virtue, it is something *in them*. By merely following the set educational course, boys attain the status of 'complete gentlemen'. Failure is said to derive from the shortcomings of pedagogy. Boys fail to learn French or Latin because the methods used are wrong, and to speak a fluent and elegant English because of the nature of their classical education. There is little discussion of girls' failure - perhaps because they were not expected to achieve - except for the brief mention of girls being 'discouraged' by French grammar because of their delicate 'nature'. Girls' achievement, on the other hand, seems more problematic. Though the discourse on conversation in the eighteenth century rested on the acknowledged superiority of females' conversational skills, and though even their language skills were reckoned to be superior to males', this was no achievement, since English was a language learned merely at the mother's

lap. They owed their evident success at learning French to a good method or to their hard work. Nevertheless, this achievement was treated with ambivalence. Women who knew French well were either commended for concealing it,[72] or suspect because they were said to know it *too well*.[73] In the nineteenth century girls' superior knowledge of French was derogated as a mere accomplishment. The question that must be asked, then, is: was there ever a space for the achieving girl?

We have so far looked at the way learning and accomplishments positioned the nobleman in the courtly tradition of education. But just as the ideal that inspired it, the humanist tradition of education, was highly gendered,[74] so too was the courtly ideal of education.[75] Thus, the way in which education and accomplishments perfected the male was different from the way in which a female became accomplished, as we shall see in the next chapter.

References and footnotes

1. See Hans, *op. cit.*, ch. x.

2. Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

3. Cohen, *op. cit.*, 1982. See also the testimony of Mr Tarver, French master at Eton, to the Clarendon Commission, Eton Evidence, vol. III, Q.7044.

4. E.R. Curtis, *Lady Sarah Lennox: an Irrepressible Stuart 1745-1826*, London, n.d., pp. 17, 18.

5. S. Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth Century England*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 22, 23.

6. Abel Boyer's *The Compleat French Master for Ladies and Gentlemen*, 1694, was dedicated to William, Duke of Gloucester and Queen Anne's son; Pierre de Lainé's *The Princely Way to the French Tongue*, 1677, to Lady Mary and her sister Anne; Francis Cheneau's *French Grammar* 1685, to James II; Fauchon's *The French Tongue*, 1751, to Isabella Carr, daughter of Thomas Carr, Esq.

7. Bridel Arleville, *Practical Accidence of the French Tongue; or Introduction to the French Syntax upon a more Extensive and Easy Plan than any Extant*, London, 1798.

8. R. Brimley Johnson (ed.), *Mrs Delany: At Court and among the Wits*, London, 1925, p. xx.

9. See Hans, *op. cit.*; D. Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School*, Oxford, 1929, Ch. 15; J. Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History*, London, 1965, ch. 10.

10. David Lysons, *Collecteana*, London, vol. I, pp. 17, 19.

11. Hawkins distinguishes two language learning situations: 'The language lesson which is accompanied by use of the target language outside the classroom for everyday activities; and the language lesson which takes place in an otherwise English context and is the pupil's only experience of the target language ('gardening in a gale')'. *op. cit.*, p. 99.

12. Philip Le Breton, *Elemens de la Grammaire Françoise*, London, 1815.

13. P.J. Miller, 'Women's Education, 'Self-improvement' and Social Mobility - A Late Eighteenth Century Debate', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 20, 1972, pp. 302-314.

14. *Annual Register*, 1759, p. 424.

15. Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, (1799), London, 1811, vol. 1, pp. 74-5.

16. Maria Edgeworth, *Patronage*, (1814), London, 1986.

17. For example, characters such as Buck, in Samuel Foote's 'The ENGLISHMAN return'd from *Paris*, (1756), in P.R. Backscheider and D. Howard (eds.), *The Plays of SAMUEL FOOTE*, London, 1983.

18. Pierre de Lainé, *The Princely Way to the French Tongue*, London, 1677, p. 345.

19. Bouton argues that this is the main reason why grammars of French began to be published in England, even when French was habitually spoken

among the English nobility. C.P. Bouton, *Les Grammaires Françaises de Claude Mauger à l'usage des Anglais*, Paris, 1972.

20. Cheneau, *op. cit.*, 'To the Reader'; Marc Antoine Porny, [Antoine Pyron du Martre], *The Practical French Grammar*, Dublin, 1812, introduction. Porny was French master at Eton in the early nineteenth century.

21. See Barrell, *op. cit.*

22. Cheneau, *The True French Master*, London, 1723; Lewis Chambaud, The Art of Speaking French, Dublin, 1772; Boyer, *op. cit.*, and Edinburgh, 1767.

23. J.E. Tandon, *A New French Grammar*, London, 1745.

24. Chambaud, *op. cit.*, 1772, p. xx; see also Fauchon, *op. cit.*

25. According to Lévizac, who agreed with Chambaud, this had been established by the Académie Française. Abbé Jean Pons Victor Lecoutz de Levizac, *L'Art de Parler et d' Écrire Correctement la Langue Françoise*, London, 1797, p. 25.

26. *A Grammar of the French Tongue*, London, 1758; *op. cit.*, 1772, p. vii.

27. Claude Mauger, *Mauger's French Grammar*, London, 1688, pp. 45-51.

28. Fauchon, *op. cit.*, Dedication. These claims could also serve to advertise the efficacy of the writer's own method.

29. Peyton, *The True Principles of the French Language*, London, 1757, p. iv.

30. Cheneau, *op. cit.*, 1685, p. 157.

31. Peyton, *op. cit.*, p. iv.

32. George Picard, *A Grammatical Dictionary*, London, 1790; see also B. Calbris, *The Rational Guide to the French Tongue, containing Tables Calculated to Teach the Order of French Syntax*, London, 1797; Levizac, *op. cit.*; Charles Antoine Devisscher, *Grammaire de Lhomond or the Principles of the French Language*, London, 1816.

33. Porny, *op. cit.*, p. ii.

34. John B. Perrin, *The Elements of French Conversation*, London, 1774, Preface; see also Porny, *op. cit*; George Picard, *The English Guide to the French Tongue*, London, 1778; Charles Praval, *The Syntax of the French Tongue*, Dublin, 1779.

35. A. Picqot, *A New Introduction to the French Language; being an abridgement of the grammar of M. de Levizac*, London, 1816.

36. These texts were selected from R.C. Alston, *A Bibliography of the English Language*, vol. 12, Part I, The French Language Grammars: Miscellaneous Treatises, Dictionaries, Great Britain, 1985.

37. Mauger, *op. cit.*, and subsequent editions; Cheneau, *op. cit.*, 1685 and 1723; Guy Miège, *The Grounds of the French Tongue*, London, 1687; Boyer, *op. cit.*, and subsequent editions; Claude Mauger and Paul Festeau, *Nouvelle Double Grammaire Françoise-Angloise et Angloise-Françoise*, 1696; Tandon, *op. cit.*

38. The number of pages allocated to the sections on 'grammar' and 'language' in the 1729 (10th) edition of Boyer's text is typical of the usual composition and organisation of texts at the time. The grammar

section contains 157 pages and the language section 215. Later on in the century, grammar and language tended to be published as separate texts. In Chambaud's *A Grammar of the French Tongue*, 1758, the grammar section - pronunciation, parts of speech and syntax - spreads over 306 pages. Though the 55 page appendix is about language, it is organised syntactically not semantically.

39. Arleville, *op. cit.*, p. iii.

40. Dublin, 1804, p. 128.

41. Arleville, *op. cit.*, pp. 74, 75.

42. *ibid.*, p. 81.

43. Given the frequency of 'plagiarism' in eighteenth century French language teaching texts, it is possible to suppose that Arleville got the idea from Fauchon's *The French Tongue*, where Fauchon assigned the verbs with the termination *vrir* and *frir* to a separate category of the 2nd conjugation, and those with *aindre, eindre and oindre* to a separate category of the 3rd conjugation, because of specific irregularities which such an arrangement clarified. Curiously, Arleville does not even mention these irregularities.

44. Arleville, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

45. See however Chambaud, *op. cit.*, 1772, pp. 8-15.

46. London, 1788, p. 4.

47. The combination of traditional and innovative approach was also typical of many textbooks published at the time. This was inevitable because the innovations were practical rather than based on a theoretical framework.

48. Calbris, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-84.

49. Huguenin Du Mitand, *A New French Spelling Book*, London, 1784, pp. 101-104; Rev. Jean Baptiste Antoine Gérardot, *Elements of French Grammar*, London, 1815, p. 25.

50. 'Dès qu'un Ecolier commence à lire on peut l'exercer dans cette Grammaire en lui faisant relire les cinq premiers chapitres jusqu'à ce qu'il les sache assez correctement pour en apprendre quelques lignes ou quelques sentences par coeur, qu'on lui fera réciter, et ensuite traduire ... Par là, il se fortifiera dans la lecture et la prononciation, en les récitant'. Henri Gratte, *Nouvelle Grammaire Françoise à l'Usage de la Jeunesse Angloise*, London, 1791, p. vi; See also Chambaud, *op. cit.*, 1772.

51. Calbris, *op. cit.*, Part III, *A Treatise for Attaining Idiomatical French Elegance, and Rules for Learning the Language without Disgust, and for Speaking it with Facility.*

52. Gratte, *op. cit.*, p. viii. Vicemus Knox uses the same argument concerning boys learning Latin rules in Latin, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

53. 'Quiconque a l'expérience avouera qu'il a été capable de traduire toute espèce de livres François surtout en prose, avant de pouvoir ou entendre ou tenir une conversation'. Calbris, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

54. *op. cit.*, 1772, p. xx.

55. Murdoch, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

56. Chambaud, *op. cit.*, 1772, p. xxiii.

57. *The Renaissance of Girls' Education*, London, 1898. p.74

58. Clarendon Commission, see for example vol. 3, Eton evidence, Q.6945, and Winchester evidence, Q.602.

59. *ibid.*, Harrow evidence, Q.382.

60. Cohen, *op. cit*, 1982.

61. See R. Wakely, 'The History of French Teaching in Britain: Some Remarks', *Association for French Language Studies Newsletter*, 20, Summer 1988, pp. 22-23.

62. My emphasis. Porny, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

63. *ibid.*

64. Chambaud, *op. cit.*, 1772, p. xvi; see also Picard, *op. cit.*, 1788, and Calbris, *op. cit.* Blaming the method is not peculiar to the eighteenth century. Now, in the late twentieth century, methods are still blamed for boys' failure at French, and modified in order to interest them and improve their performance. See chapter 1 above.

65. Peyton, *op. cit.*, p. iv.

66. For Peyton, for example, it was the effect of having to learn rules without reasons or explanations; Chambaud alone maintained that it was the 'abuse' of forcing beginners to 'speak nothing but French among themselves'. *op. cit.*, 1772, p. xvi.

67. Peyton, *op. cit.*, p. iv.

68. For evidence of the same strategy in the twentieth century, see C. Grant and N. Hodgson, *The Case for Co-Education*, London, 1913 and R.R. Dale, *Mixed or Single-Sex Schools*, London, 1971, vol. 2, especially ch. 13.

69. Porny, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

70. This positioning is not confined to the eighteenth century. In today's schools, 'good girls' are those who must rely on hard work because they lack 'that elusive gift, "brilliance", writes Walkerdine, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

71. Porny, *op. cit.*

72. David Fordyce, *op. cit.* This is discussed more fully in Ch. 8 below.

73. *ibid.*

74. Grafton and Jardine, *op. cit.*

75. Kelso, *op. cit.*

Chapter 7

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND WOMEN'S SPACE

Throughout the eighteenth century, there were many calls for women to be educated.[1] This education was aimed not at their becoming learned, but at improving 'their influence on their families and keep them from idleness and frivolity'.[2] This does not mean, however, that women were simply confined to the domestic sphere.[3] Women had a central role in the production of politeness and polite conversation, social activities which formed the basis of eighteenth century sociability. In seventeenth century France, the *salon* was the space for conversation, but, as I have argued earlier, attempts to import this notion into England were not unproblematic. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that in the eighteenth century, women's sphere consisted of two distinct spaces, what I will call the 'social space' and the 'domestic space'. Whereas the domestic space was metaphorically and literally located within the boundaries of the home, the social space hovered between inside and outside, because it was, in a sense, a public space in the private. Thus the tea-table, other women's houses on visits, assemblies, 'company', the space depicted in conversation pieces, were all the social space. They were 'society'.

The social space was the stage where politeness was acted out; it was the space for sociability and conversation, a female domain which men entered at their peril since women's conversation, long deemed necessary to refine men's, was, as we have seen, dangerous to their masculinity. It is the space where the mothers described by Johnson and Costeker[4] showed off their ignorant offspring as accomplished scholars, where the young gentleman and the precocious young lady practised the effeminate arts of the tea-table, and where accomplishments were displayed. Social space was the space for the public gaze in the private setting.

Woman's true self, however, was to be found behind the scenes, as it were, in the domestic space. 'The utmost of a woman's character is contained in domestic life'.[5] This was where woman could fulfil her domestic duties, defined in filial, conjugal or maternal terms. And if her tongue was considered dangerous,[6] this was the space where it could be disciplined, in the mutual conversation between husband and wife that constituted the companionate marriage.

Learning and accomplishments for females were valued according to whether they positioned them in the social or the domestic space. It was not 'shining' that was the problem, but affecting 'to shine anywhere but in their proper sphere'.[7] A woman could be accomplished, (and a woman could have learning as an accomplishment), as long as that particular accomplishment remained invisible in the social space.[8] Accomplishments could however be deployed in the domestic space, for they would then have a purpose, and could even be said to be necessary. An educated mother could be entrusted with the teaching of her children, especially her daughters, at home;[9] she could be the enlightened and educated companion with whom a husband would want to converse: 'I wou'd have Men take Women for Companions, and Educate them to be fit for it'.[10] At the same time, throughout the period I am discussing, the concern that educating women would threaten their commitment to their domestic responsibilities, and encourage either pedantry or display, was used to justify the difference between their education and that of males. Not surprisingly, the argument that education would discipline women for the domestic space became an integral part of the rhetoric of those who claimed women's right to education.[11]

By the latter part of the eighteenth century, however, the domestic space had come to represent virtue, and the social danger. 'In public company, [girls] will be exposed to the seductions of gaiety and pleasure'. Their judgements will be 'ruled by the caprice of fashion, the folly of pride, and the affectations of vanity'. In domestic retirement, on the other hand, they will learn 'wisdom and prudence'.[12]

To illustrate how the discourse on women's education and conduct was articulated in relation to these two spaces, I will discuss two texts concerned with girls' education: John Burton 's *Lectures on Female Education and Manners*, and Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*.[13] Burton was addressing girls at a boarding school,[14] More, 'Ladies of rank'.

John Burtons' *Lectures.*

Burton aims to show that education will make the domestic and the social compatible. He argues that it is in domestic life that education is

most important, but for men to confine women to 'domestic servitude' is to consider them not as rational companions, not as friends, but as slaves. 'The two sexes are designed for mutual happiness; and for enjoying a reciprocation of sentiments and affections'.[15] The success of the companionate marriage, (which, it must be remembered, also regulates husbands), thus depends on women being educated. Furthermore, for Burton, the domestic situation privileges women as early instructors of their children 'of both sexes'. Because children are the 'future hopes of the Community', from the most private of all spaces, women have direct influence on the most public of all spaces, the polity: 'political Government may be said to derive from the strength of the nursery'. The health of the nation thus depends on educating women, for it ensures their commitment to and success in the domestic sphere.[16] While celebrating the domestic sphere, Burton is also careful to admit its ambivalence: he is perhaps complicit with his audience of young girls in recognizing the drudgery of purely domestic concerns and acknowledging that girls are 'fond of ornamental accomplishments'.[17] The success of his enterprise depends on his redeeming both the domestic and the social by blurring the boundary between them. This he does by domesticating social accomplishments, and adorning domestic duties. 'The accomplishments, therefore, which you should acquire, are those which will contribute to render you serviceable in domestic, and agreeable in social life'.[18] Thus, if reading, which he recommends as the main means of attaining knowledge, provides occupation and amusement in domestic retirement, it also prepares for society: 'nothing is more ornamental, than the art of pleasing in conversation'. Needlework, the central female accomplishment, can also be shown to be both useful and ornamental. If the other accomplishments - drawing, music and dancing - are only ornamental, they are justifiable because embellishment, grace and the art of pleasing are the 'province' of the female sex.[19]

Hannah More's *Strictures*.

For Hannah More the social and the domestic, far from being reconcilable, are dislocated. In *Strictures on The Modern System of Female Education*, while ostensibly tolerating the necessity for ornamental

accomplishments, More sets out to subvert the notion of 'accomplishment', and demonstrate how it cannot but fail women in both social and domestic spheres. Thus, she argues, the 'showy' education[20] of girls perverts not only their minds and character but the very fabric of society, language and its basis of shared meanings. Even taking into account the 'mutability of language', she asks, could a time have been foreseen when the words '[I] shall be at home' would 'present to the mind an image the most *'undomestic'* which language can convey?' For nowadays, she explains, when a lady announces she will be 'at home' on a particular night, far from referring to quiet domestic retirement, this just means that the houses of all her acquaintances will have been emptied.[21]

Conversation is another example of the failure of girls' education. It ought to be the social situation where mutual understanding reigns, and where

> the rough angles and asperities of male manners are imperceptibly filed and gradually worn smooth by the polishing of female conversation; while the ideas of women acquire strength and solidity by associating with sensible, intelligent and judicious men.[22]

But, More complains, because 'young ladies'...sprightliness has not been disciplined by a correct education', their tongue too lacks discipline, and they spoil the conversation. Not accustomed to look into the depth of a subject, they are apt to suddenly divert the direction of talk, and are captivated by what More calls 'the graces of rhetoric' rather than the 'justest deduction of reason'. Worse still, they transform conversation into a stage for display, where all the defects of their education coalesce to form an image of frivolity, superficiality and vanity. For More, the inevitable consequence is that men of sense consider the society of ladies as 'a scene in which they are rather to rest their understandings than to exercise them'; ladies, in turn, believe it a 'welcome flattery to the undertanding of men to renounce the exercise of their own' and 'affect to talk below their natural and acquired powers of mind'.[23] Communication has become opaque and the very meaning of conversation falsified. A situation which ought to have brought out the best in both sexes produces precisely the opposite.

Because conversation is one of the main concerns of this thesis,

More's comments on women's conversation justify further elaboration. She criticizes even what other writers on education and conduct[24] consider to be qualities peculiar to females, such as fluency, quickness, perceptiveness, memory. She argues that these are testimonies to women's shallowness, superficiality and lack of higher mental powers. She admits, for instance, that women may be quick to solve a problem, but this is only because they do not see the 'perplexities' of the question.[25] She concedes, on the other hand, that 'men of deep reflection often sound confused', but takes this very lack of fluency to be proof of their superior mental powers. In contrast to the 'rash dexterity' of women,[26] men's slowness demonstrates their powers of penetration.[27] Thus women's very mental agility is taken to signify a lack of deep understanding, and an ultimate concern with mere appearances.[28]

Women's conversation thus reveals the extent to which an education based on accomplishments fails them. In an age when, More alleges, 'inversion is the character of the day',[29] fashionable couples, more social than domestic, are no longer joined by mutual dependence, affection and obligations. They are companions no longer. Conversation has been corrupted, and mutuality, that 'cement which secure[s] the union of the family as well as of the state',[30] has disintegrated. The very fabric of society is threatened. More's solution is to argue that woman's best conversation is her silence. 'The silence of sparkling intelligence' is more becoming and advantageous to a woman than an 'abundance of florid talk', as it allows her the simultaneous expression of 'rational curiosity and becoming diffidence'. Eloquent silence and attention have the added advantage of encouraging 'men of sense and politeness' to pursue topics they might not otherwise have chosen to discuss in the presence of women.[31] Thus, despite the importance More attaches to the companionate marriage as the foundation of society, she strikes a heavy blow to the mutual conversation which produces it. It is *her* inversion that has the last word. Though she deplores the shifts of meaning which she sees as emblematic of the perversion and corruption of her time, she herself radically alters the meaning of mutuality and conversation, disciplining woman's tongue by simply cutting it off.

Accomplishments were the object of Hannah More's most vituperative

critique. Their meaning too has been perverted, she complained, and 'accomplishment', a term which used to mean *'completeness, perfection'*,[32] is now more 'abused, misunderstood or misapplied' than any other word.[33] Since a 'phrenzy of accomplishments'[34] has infected all ranks of society, the education of 'accomplished' young ladies is a parody of that original definition. 'Accomplishments falsely so called' produce 'talents which have display as their object', and neither 'assist the development of the faculties', nor prepare women's heart and mind 'to love home, to understand its occupations, to enliven its uniformity, to fulfil its duties, to multiply its comforts'.[35] Originally meant, More claims, to give women the means of enjoying leisure hours and solitude, these false accomplishments 'despise the narrow stage of home: they demand mankind for their spectators and the world for their theatre'.[36] They fail women in the domestic space as well as in the social, and produce a dislocation between these two spheres such that now even 'home' is bereft of its former association with the 'joys of the fireside'.[37]

Given these views, it is not surprising to find that More uses the term accomplishments equivocally at least, and mostly as a derogation. Of specific interest to the main theme of this thesis is the fact that she uses the term accomplishment in relation to the attainment of a good French accent:

> Perfection in this accomplishment has been so long established as the supreme object; so long considered as the predominant excellence to which all other excellences must bow down.[38]

More's highly critical view of accomplishments was not necessarily shared by contemporary writers on education, such as John Burton, John Bennett and Erasmus Darwin.[39] Nor did they consider French an accomplishment. For them, as for many others, French was one of the intellectual acquirements that graced a polite education. Most importantly, it was a *language*, and therefore the key to literature. This made it eminently suitable as a subject for girls. Why then did More call French an accomplishment?

All sorts of 'risks' are taken and 'sacrifices' made 'to furnish our young ladies with the means of acquiring the French language in the greatest possible purity',[40] she wrote bombastically. This was not limited to girls, for, as we have seen earlier, boys were sent to Blois for just

that reason. But since girls did not travel, the accent had to be imported as it were, in the form of a governess who was likely to be - and this is what More deplored - Roman Catholic. She was probably referring to the fact that after the French Revolution, aristocratic refugees might be employed as French governesses.[41] Their class and their French, the most pure since spoken at Court,[42] would have made them highly attractive to English families of rank. The only concession parents are willing to make to religion, More commented indignantly, is to ensure that it is never 'agitated'[43] between teacher and pupil. Girls are thus exposed to this danger for the sake of learning the language of an impious country whose 'contempt for the Sabbath ... and relaxed notions of conjugal fidelity' have already been imported into England by ladies who have resided abroad.[44] It is not surprising, then, that More should have denounced what she saw as the sacrifice of piety to a correct pronunciation. To her, it was emblematic of the corruption of girls' education.

It is not, thus, the learning of French as such that Hannah More was derogating as an accomplishment, but the sacrifices made for the acquirement of the French accent. Because the ability to speak implies by its very nature a performance, French seems a useful tool for examining the relation between accomplishments and display.

Speaking French as an accomplishment

A few writers of French language teaching texts published in the second half of the eighteenth century had deplored the fact that learning to speak French had too much to do with display, although this was clearly also a way of advertising their own, more 'thorough' method. Thus Chambaud claims that he has taken a lot of trouble with his grammar because he does not expect his pupils 'just to prattle something, or rather, to shew in an assembly that they can speak some French words and phrases'.[45] He blames parents, who are so keen to have their children show off their French that they want them to speak it no sooner they have started to learn it. Worse, many choose to send their boys to schools where, forced to speak 'nothing else but French', they 'acquire the knack of talking a

glittering gibberish'.[46] Earlier in the century, two female characters in David Fordyce's *Dialogues Concerning Education* had been praised because, though they knew French, they made no display of that acquirement. No one could have guessed from Cleora's behaviour, commented Eugenio, that she had been 'improved by any extraordinary education', or that she spoke both French and Italian. The well brought up daughter of a gentleman 'reads and talks the French prettily, but neither values herself for it, nor is forward to shew it'.[47]

Serious young ladies do not display their knowledge of French. Better still, they choose not to learn to speak it. Fanny Burney tells us that she had learned to read French in order to enjoy its literature, but as for speaking it...

> All my time ... was due to my dearest Suzette with whom I've been reading French; having taught myself that charming language for the sake of its bewitching authors - for I shall never want to speak it.[48]

The difference between serious young ladies and others, is illustrated by two characters in Thomas Day's novel *Sandford and Merton*. Martha, whose mother has ensured she has had the best education, talks French better than English. Miss Simmons, on the other hand, does not speak French, though she has read the best French as well as English authors. Martha's mother is concerned only with polite society and manners; Miss Simmons, an orphan, was brought up by her uncle, a gentleman who 'waged war with most of the polite and modern accomplishments', and was even reluctant to allow her to learn French.[49] Whereas Martha's other acquirements are drawing and playing 'most divinely upon the piano ', Miss Simmons' include the 'established Laws of Nature, and the rudiments of Geometry'.[50] But the major difference between them has to do with the domestic and social spaces I suggested earlier: Martha's education is justified by display. Miss Simmons, however, was taught to believe 'that domestic economy is a point of the utmost consequence to every woman who intends to be a wife and mother', and understands 'every species of household employment'.[51] Martha's education positions her in the social space and Miss Simmons' in the domestic. The author leaves us in no doubt as to which is the more virtuous young lady.[52]

For Hannah More, speaking French was an accomplishment because it positioned girls in the social space. Parents were at fault who educated their daughters 'for a crowd, forgetting that they have to live at home'.[53] Education for the social, for display, More warned, is a prerogative of the aristocracy which the middling classes can ill afford: 'the use of the pencil, the performance of exquisite but unecessary works, the study of foreign languages and of music require (...) a degree of leisure which belongs exclusively to affluence'.[54] The middle classes, who 'run to snatch a few of those showy acquirements which decorate the great', are being perverted, she lamented. Girls take on the 'indolent habits of life and elegance of dress', habits of effeminacy, vanity and display, (already discussed in relation to returned grand tourists), and become unfit for the 'active duties of their own very important condition'.[55] More's position is clear. Accomplishments are useless and sterile - since nothing useful is produced; they cannot compare with the 'practical industry', the 'active duties' and evangelical virtues of the middle classes.[56]

The feminization of politeness

Hannah More was not alone in feeling that words were losing their meaning or that they were misunderstood. Burton too had complained, but he was concerned with another component of the courtly ideal, politeness: 'there is no word in the English language that is less understood' than politeness, he claimed.[57] Most writers on girls' education and conduct included some discussion of politeness, and supplied their own definition of the term. For Hester Chapone, it was 'a delightful qualification', universally admired but possessed by few 'in any eminent degree'. To be 'perfectly polite', she recommended, a young woman must possess or cultivate two indispensable qualities: 'great *presence of mind*, with a delicate and quick *sense of propriety*'.[58] Politeness was not just 'a most amiable quality', wrote Bennett, it was also an art, 'the art of being easy ourselves, in company, and of making all others easy about us'.[59] The specifically social character of politeness, its emphasis on 'consider[ing] others more than yourself',[60] on self-effacement, '*annihilating*, as it were, ourselves', made it easy to accommodate within Christianity, the 'religion which requires us to love one another'.[61] Chapone and Bennett

spoke with one voice on the special relation of Christianity to politeness. It is Christianity that gives 'the best lesson of politeness',[62] and its best 'rules'.[63] Exterior manners and graces are 'requisite', conceded Bennett, but only if they 'proceed from inner virtue, gentleness, complacency, affability'. Only then can politeness, the 'sovereign enamel', provide the finishing touch which gives a 'lustre' to all qualities.[64] A politeness defined as compatible with Christian values not only erases the gap between exterior and interior,[65] but itself becomes the link between the two. True politeness is the 'intercourse of sentiment and civility'.[66]

Just as accomplishments could be false, so too could politeness. Fashion, with its 'insipid routines of ceremony and compliment', its 'affectation and Parade', was the epitome of false politeness. So were, of course, 'dissimulation', 'ceremonious attitudes or fulsome compliments', 'flattery, insincerity'.[67] Even the 'alphabet of breeding'- presenting yourself carefully, knowing how to enter a room, proper gestures, which Lassels and Chesterfield had thought so important - could be dismissed as merely a mechanical process, something that could be 'acquired by early education', or simply by associating with good company.[68] But, as Klein has pointed out, politeness was an 'idealized vision of human intercourse ... situated wherever gentlemanly (or lady-like) society existed'.[69] It was not just behaviour, it was also a locus. Thus, Burton argued, false politeness consisted not only in 'the scrupulous observance of fashionable customs' but in 'mixing with the fashionable world, at all Places of genteel resort'.[70] By the end of the eighteenth century, then, the main problem of politeness was that it was located in the social space, a dangerous space where gender boundaries were transgressed in display and ostentation, under the aegis of an ideal which was itself not clearly gendered.

If, as I have argued earlier, politeness could be questioned as an attribute for males in that it was incompatible with masculinity and the English national character,[71] this was more difficult to do in the case of females. The main characteristics of politeness - desire to please, self effacement, softness, and 'the graces' - were precisely those that delineated and enhanced the feminine ideal. 'Gentleness[72] of manners is perfectly consonant to the delicacy of [the female] form', Burton told his young audience.[73] So were 'polite' learning and accomplishments. Thus,

Hester Chapone advised her niece that

> politeness of behaviour, and the attainment of such branches of knowledge and such arts and accomplishments as are proper to your sex, capacity, and station, will prove so valuable to yourself throughout life, and will make you so desirable a companion, that the neglect of them may reasonably be deemed a neglect of duty.[74]

It is not surprising, therefore, to find a concern to redeem politeness for females. If - because it is 'exterior' and public - the social space distorts and corrupts politeness, reducing it to empty gestures, artifice and display, then true politeness is to be found within. Where can this be but in the domestic space? 'Your behaviour at home, when withdrawn as it were, from the public eye ... will be the real criterion of courtesy', Burton informs his young listeners.[75] It is towards members of one's own family that politeness is most necessary, insist Bennett, Burton and More.[76] This is why 'politeness is compatible with sincerity', asserted Burton.[77]

One problem remains: the relation of politeness to France. The most vitiating form of false politeness, declared Burton, is that performance of 'unmeaning ceremonies and ridiculous distinctions ... whence all the social and benevolent feelings of the heart are excluded', that 'grimace' of 'ceremony and ostentation' which, he tells us, was called the *Ton*. This 'air' followed by all fashionable society is a 'vortex' that saps their 'spirits' and 'corrupts their Principles'.[78] Implicit in the foreign name are the derogations usually deployed for the English who imitate the French: the grimace, as of a monkey,[79] and the performance of meaningless ceremonies associated with a society enslaved by an arbitrary government. The language Burton uses suggests, at the same time as it highlights, the foreigness and Frenchness expressed by the word *Ton*. The warning is that the French corrupt not just English manners, but their very spirit.

However, politeness can be redeemed if it can be shifted from the social to the domestic space, and is mostly appropriated by that space. Domesticating politeness could free it from two of the elements that constituted its problematics: gender ambiguity, and insincerity or hypocrisy. Though politeness had always been situated - problematically -

where women were, by shifting its locus, it ceased to be a means of producing a social, public, male *élite*, and became instead the site for the production of virtuous domesticity. Domesticating politeness transformed it into a virtue, severed it from its roots in the courtly tradition, and cleansed it once and for all of its parentage with the French: it could now be unambiguously English. Most important of all, a domesticated politeness could finally and unproblematically incorporate women. It became woman. 'What woman is most *really* admired in the world? The domestic. What women has all the suffrages of the sensible and the good? The domestic', rhapsodizes Bennett.[80] And it is the domestic woman, the woman who has refused to be enslaved by the social, with its connotations of Frenchness as well as artificiality, who wins the prince charming. I will let Maria Edgeworth, whose novel *Patronage* is a fictional version of some of the themes discussed in this section, have the last words. Count Altenberg, a German noble, has recently met Caroline Percy, a paragon of true politeness and real accomplishments.

> It was reserved for Count Altenberg, to meet in England a woman, who to the noble simplicity of character, that was once the charm of Swisserland, joined the polish, the elegance that was once the pride of France; a woman possessing an enlarged, cultivated, embellished understanding, capable of comprehending all his views as a politician, and a statesman; yet, without the slightest wish for power, or any desire to interfere in public business, or political intrigue, - Graced with knowledge and taste for literature, capable of being extended to the highest point of excellence, yet free from all pedantry, or pretension - with it, conversation talents, and love of good society, without that desire of exhibition, that devouring, diseased appetite for admiration, which preys upon the mind insatiably to it's torture, to it's destruction; without that undefineable, untranslateable French love of *succès de société*, which substitutes a precarious, factitious, intoxicated existence in public, for the safe self-approbation, the sober, the permanent happiness of domestic life.[81]

That woman can only be *English*, and is of course Caroline Percy. Although the Count's path to domestic happiness is strewn with difficulties arising from his courtly duties, he vanquishes them all because he too has refused the hypocrisy of politeness. For him, this is achieved not through its domestication, but through the quintessential masculine attribute of the

late eighteenth century, sincerity.[82]

The eighteenth century derogation of the social space is not without ambiguity. Caroline does not shun good society and conversation, her *Englishness* implies not a blunt rejection of the social, but a distillation of its best features. In her, More, Burton and Bennett's 'true' accomplishments and politeness are realised. What makes this possible is not simply that she is *English*, but that she is *not-French*. If, as Davidoff and Hall suggest, the 'idealized position of women was a central theme in nationalistic claims to English superiority',[83] then the construction of French women as Other can be said to have served the same purpose, and was as much of a fiction, as French politeness and effeminated French men: it constructed and emphasized *difference*. The site where *this* difference was played out was the domestic space.

Whereas French ladies are said to be willing to sacrifice 'the quiet and comforts of the home' for *Succès de Société*, writes John Andrews, English ladies are usually 'exemplary' in the 'assiduity and diligence' they bring to the domestic responsibilities with which they are 'principally taken up'.[84] He does not present French women as evil, on the contrary. Like many Englishmen and women, he admires their intelligence, their authority in matters of literary taste, and above all, their conversation.[85] French women's conversation rules the social space. It makes them omnipotent, but it cannot be contained. For fashionable French women are consumed by a 'national disease', the 'appetite for admiration'. This is part of their seductiveness, but it is also what makes them dangerous.[86] For Andrews, the 'native sprightliness', the 'natural ... eloquence' of French women is also a flaunting of their tongue akin to flaunting their sexuality. It is indeed saturated with sexuality, it is 'irresistible'.[87] But it renders men submissive. French men's masculinity is thus doubly threatened, by the absolute rule of their women and that of their monarch, a connection that Andrews does not fail to make. 'Subjection of some kind or other seems necessary for a Frenchman'.[88]

Though Hannah More, John Burton, Thomas Day and Maria Edgeworth operated in different discursive domains, their critique of accomplishments, politeness and speaking French was underpinned by one common feature: the critique of French morality and political system in general, and French

women in particular. The French represent a warning of the moral ills that ensue when women are concerned only with the social space. It is because Caroline Percy's conversation is grounded in the domestic space that it is not destructive of the male, but constructive of the companionate marriage. The integrity of the English nation rests on the construction of a virtuous, therefore domestic woman.

The questions that remain, then, are why did the learning of French become increasingly important for women, and, perversely in view of what has been discussed, why did French conversation become essential in the production of upper and upper middle class femininity in the nineteenth century?

In the next chapter, these questions will be situated in the context of the shift that transformed the learning of French in the nineteenth century: the derogation of the tongue, and its relation to the production of both the masculinity and the national identity of the English gentleman.

References and footnotes

1. Mary Astell, *op. cit.*; Lady Damaris Masham, *Occasional Thoughts in Reference to a Virtuous or Christian Life*, London, 1705; Bathsua Makin, *op. cit.*; Daniel Defoe, *op. cit.*; see also A. Browne, *The Eighteenth Century Feminist Mind*, Brighton, 1987.

2. M.M. Goldsmith,' 'The Treacherous Arts of Mankind': Bernard Mandeville and Female Virtue', *History of Political Thought*, vol. 7, no 1, Spring 1986, p. 98.

3. This is often treated as the inevitable deduction, because of the doctrine of separate spheres. For a critique of the notion of separate spheres, see L. Davidoff and C Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850*, London, 1987; see also L.E. Klein, 'Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere', in J. Still and M. Worton (eds.), *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, Manchester, forthcoming.

4. Johnson, *op. cit.*, 1824, Letter No. 191; Costeker, *op. cit.*

5. Sir John Fielding, *The Universal Mentor*, London, 1763, p. 250.

6. See ch. 3. above.

7. Rev. James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, London, 1770, vol. 1, p. 89.

8. There is no difference between a woman showing her knowledge - pedantry - and one showing her accomplishments - display. Pedantry and display are two sides of the same coin. They are both transgressions of female propriety.

9. This was important throughout the period under discussion in this thesis. See for instance Lady Damaris Masham, *op. cit.* Mothers were expected to teach their sons until they were old enough to be handed over to a tutor. The main emphasis was on mothers continuing to educate their daughters rather than abdicating this responsibility and sending them to boarding-schools. At the same time, the figure of the mother as instructor was equivocal, since she was also potentially a corrupting influence, on both her sons, (as I argued in chapter 5), and her daughters. Indeed, the most virtuous women in the literature were educated by men. See note 56 below.

10. Daniel Defoe, *op. cit.*, 1969. pp. 302-303.

11. Bathsua Makin, *op. cit.*, is one example.

12. John Burton *Lectures on Female Education and Manners*, London, 1793, vol. 1, p. 182.

13. Burton, *op. cit.*; Hannah More, *op. cit.*

14. For a discussion of the social classes represented in girls' boarding schools in the eighteenth century, see Miller, *op. cit.*

15. Burton, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 107-8, 87, 92, 95, 178, 111, 178, 137-8.

16. *ibid.*, pp. 87, 92, 95.

17. *ibid.*, p. 178

18. *ibid.*, p. 111.

19. *ibid.*, pp. 178, 137-8.

20. More, *op. cit.*, vol 2, p. 174.

21. *ibid.*, pp. 150-1.

22. Hannah More, *Essays on Various Subjects Principally Designed for Young Ladies*, London, 1785, p. 14.

23. *op. cit.*, 1811, vol. 2, pp. 46-7, 66-7, 72.

24. See David Fordyce, *op. cit.*; James Fordyce, *op. cit.*

25. *op. cit.*, 1811, vol. 2, p. 6.

26. *op. cit.*, 1785, p. 54.

27. *op. cit.*, 1811, vol. 2, p. 69.

28. *ibid.*, p. 67.

29. *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 23.

30. *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 186-88.

31. *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 70-1.

32. *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 74.

33. *ibid.*, p. 73.

34. *ibid.*, p. 74.

35. *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 175-6.

36. *ibid.*

37. *ibid.*

38. *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 106.

39. Burton, 38. *op. cit.*; *Erasmus Darwin, A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools*, London, 1797.

40. More, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 106.

41. See for example Maria Edgeworth, *The Good Governess*, London, n.d.

42. Since Vaugelas had pronounced it so. See ch. 2 above. It is interesting to note the fear of being taught the French of the servant class. See Abel Boyer, *op. cit.*; James Fauchon advertised the fact that he would teach the pronunciation of the polite, *op. cit.*

43. *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 107.

44. *ibid.*, p. 106. Whereas men could be improved or corrupted by travel to France, women could only be corrupted. See for instance Chesterfield, *The World*, No. 29, July 19, 1753.

45. Chambaud, *op. cit.*, 1772, p. xvii. Chambaud's grammars were very popular and reprinted many times, and were recommended by Erasmus Darwin in the reading lists he drew up for his female curriculum, *op. cit.*

46. *ibid.*, p. xvi.

47. David Fordyce, *op. cit.*, I, p. 146.

48. *The Early Diary of Fanny Burney 1768-1778*, Annie Raine Ellis (ed.), London, 1913, vol. 1, p. 102.

49. Thomas Day, *Sandford and Merton,* (1783-1789), London, 1860, ch. XIII, pp. 225-26; 'As to various languages', the uncle would say, 'I do not see the necessity of them for a women. My niece is to marry an Englishman, and to live in England'. p. 227. Brian Simon, *op. cit.*, calls *Sandford and Merton* an 'essay in moral education', and discusses it in some detail.

50. *ibid.*, pp. 226, 227. See for instance the scene where Martha plays several pieces of music 'which were allowed by all connoisseurs to require infinite skill in the performer', *ibid.*, p. 232.

51. *ibid.*, p. 226.

52. Miss Simmons, like David Fordyce's Cleora, was educated by a male tutor. At a time when there was a general outcry against boarding schools for girls and a call to women, especially women of rank, to educate their own daughters, and when, finally, women themselves sought education in order to be able to perform this domestic duty properly, the implicit derogation of women as educationists is, to say the least, curious, and worthy of note.

53. More, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 72.

54. *ibid.*, p. 76.

55. *ibid.*, p. 75.

56. *ibid.*

57. Burton, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 93.

58. Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind,* (1773), London, 1820, Letter viii, p. 144.

59. Rev. John Bennett, *Letters to a Young Lady,* Dublin, 1789, vol. 2, Letter ii, pp. 6-7.

60. Chapone, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

61. Bennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 8.

62. Chapone, *op. cit.*, p. 146;

63. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 8; see also More: 'cultivate true politeness, for...it is consistent with the gospel of Christ'. *op. cit.*, 1811, vol. 2, pp. 101-2.

64. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

65. This was integral to politeness, and its constant problematic. As Klein writes: 'politeness remained a phenomenon of the surface. It was permanently involved in conflicts between surface and depth, between exteriority and interiority'. *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 44.

66. Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

67. *ibid.*, pp. 95, 97.

68. Bennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 8.

69. Klein, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 587.

70. Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

71. See Hurd, *op. cit.*

A convenient vantage point for considering the way the learning of French developed in the nineteenth century is provided by the evidence of the two major Royal Commissions on education in the 1860s, the Clarendon and the Taunton Commissions. There are three reasons why this is convenient. The first is twofold: both commissions provide a view of the development of education in the nineteenth century, and their recommendations were to influence, albeit slowly, the course of education in Britain ever since.[1] Secondly, the Taunton Commission consented to investigate girls' schools, which had until then been regarded as providing not education but accomplishments, so that, as Kamm put it, the inquiry marked 'the opening of a new epoch'.[2] Not that being included in the dominant discourse on education resolved issues of girls' education, for, by producing the multiple and contrary positionings evident in writings on girls' education ever since,[3] it problematized it further. The last and most important reason is the place accorded to French by each commission. The Clarendon Commission and the Taunton Commission, dealing respectively with public schools and middle class secondary schools, are thus complementary. Together, they provide a full picture of the place of French in educational discourse in the nineteenth century.

The Clarendon Commission

Given how important speaking French had been for upper class males in the eighteenth century, one might have thought that at Eton, something of that tradition would have sustained. It was, after all, the public school which trained the men who were to occupy most of the highest government and diplomatic posts in the nineteenth century.[4] But no. Of the nine public schools which the Clarendon Commission investigated, Eton was the only one in which French was not part of the curriculum. 'It is a complete impossibility to teach French at Eton in class', said Mr Vaughan, a classics master, to Lord Clarendon.[5] It was available only as an extra, and had to be paid for. As Mr Tarver, (the sole French master at the time of the inquiry), put it, he was 'a mere *objet de luxe*'.[6] French was offered at

Chapter 8

THE DEROGATION OF THE TONGUE AND CONVERSATION IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND.

72. Note that the eighteenth century meaning of gentleness was good breeding. *OED.*

73. Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

74. Chapone, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

75. Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

76. see Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 7; Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 98; More, *op. cit.*, 1811, vol. 2, pp. 102-3.

77. *op. cit.*, p. 97.

78. *ibid.*, p. 91.

79. For example, *The Baboon a la Mode*, a satire against the French, London, 1704.

80. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

81. Maria Edgeworth, *Patronage*, (1814), London, 1986, p. 388.

82. See ch. 5 above, note 48.

83. Davidoff and Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

84. John Andrews, *op. cit.*, 1783, pp. 49, 50. See however M.H. Darrow, 'French Noblewomen and the New Domesticity', *Feminist Studies*, 5, No. 1, Spring 1979, pp. 41-65.

85. Andrews, *op cit.*, pp. 17, 18, 22.

86. *ibid.*, pp. 51, 165.

87. *ibid., p. 68; op cit.*, 1783, p. 242.

88. 'The female empire in France is like the governement of the country where it exists', *ibid.*, p. 184.

the other public schools, and was even obligatory at Westminster and Harrow, but it tended to be looked down upon and treated as an inferior subject.

Public schools in general, and Eton in particular, saw disciplining and strengthening the mind as their principal educational aim. It was necessary to teach 'strong subjects', subjects which 'require a strain upon the mind'.[7] The complex structure of Latin - rated as difficult because of its inflections - was thought to fulfil this function. Because it lacked declensions and its grammar was considered simple, French could not discipline the mind. The proof of its simplicity was that it could be learned 'empirically', as a 'vernacular or half-native tongue at home', and often was.[8] Knowing French was no indication of a boy's mental abilities. In fact, as John Walter, an old boy, declared, 'people may be first rate scholars in a language and not be able to hold a conversation'.[9] When French was taught, it was usually for two hours a week. To allow it more time, said Rev. H.M. Butler, Headmaster at Harrow, might 'damage ... the intellectual tone of the place'.[10]

French in the Public Schools

Mr Tarver provides the most detailed account. His pupils were expected to attend twice a week for one hour - though many did not.[11] During the lesson, they were to 'read and construe, write by ... dictation, translate into French or into English according to their capacity'. They also had to have prepared 'a piece of composition' and if they were not able to do as much as that, 'a grammatical exercise'.[12] At Winchester, where French was taught 'effectively', the work of the class consisted of 'translating French into English, translating English into French, and answering grammatical questions'. At Harrow, where French was compulsory, knowledge of French was defined as reading and translating. This was expected to enable boys to 'acquire afterwards in a short time what cannot be taught in a public school, the power of speaking fluently'.[13] French was taught grammatically, ostensibly because Englishmen could not be expected to teach pronunciation. Englishmen were preferred teachers of French because Frenchmen were said to be unable to keep discipline.[14]

What was really at issue, however, was the low esteem in which oral

fluency was held. At Rugby, for instance, the conversation classes were timetabled at the same time as games. Not surprisingly, they were attended 'reluctantly'. Max Müller, the Taylorian Professor of Modern Languages at Oxford, declared that servants and couriers spoke French very well, and he did not see the attainment of 'fluency in conversation', or of a 'perfect accent', to be within the purview of public schools.[16] Nor can the meaning of the term conversation be taken for granted: at Rugby, it meant reading French aloud.

The Taunton Commission

1. French in boys' schools

French was taught in most of the higher grade grammar and private schools investigated by the Taunton Commission,[16] but, just as in the public schools, it held a subordinate position, and was considered an inferior subject.[17] Throughout the country, it was assumed that boys attending such schools would go on to University, and a classical curriculum was therefore required. The assistant commissioners judged that, though there were some notable exceptions,[18] French was badly taught. Translations from English into French, 'the true test of a knowledge of the language', were full of the most elementary errors; even if the boys could manage to turn French into English tolerably well, this did not represent 'a sound grammatical knowledge'.[19] The most telling criticism concerned boys' incapacity to compose: even in the schools that paid most attention to French, wrote assistant commissioner Bryce, he did not 'find boys whose master considered them capable of writing a French letter on a given subject'. The teaching of French was 'unintelligent', commented another assistant commissioner, with too much stress on 'minute rules with long lists of exceptions' and on pronunciation and idioms, and too little on the 'main outlines of etymology and syntax'; there was, in other words, insufficient explanation of the 'universal principles of language'.[20] One of the reasons for this state of affairs, suggested assistant commissioner Fearon, was the textbooks. Most of the grammars used were 'exceedingly bad', and usually 'defective in the scientific treatment of the language'. The editions of French authors for English pupils were, if anything, worse.

The notes lacked any 'scholarship', there was

> no attempt to grapple with the real syntactical or idiomatic difficulties in a true spirit of philology ... I did not see one note in which any attempt was made to illustrate French usages or constructions by the light of parallel or analogous expressions in Latin, German or English authors; not one in which the origin and derivation of words and phrases was discussed, or they were traced through their various changes of signification; in short, not one in which any use or application was made of the stores of knowledge which modern studies in comparative grammar and philology have accumulated.[21]

Like the old Etonian John Walter, Bryce believed that one reason for these defects was that French is a living language, and teachers 'are apt to hesitate between two modes of treatment, the grammatical and the colloquial'. The latter often slips into superficiality and grammatical slovenliness.[22] Another major cause of concern was the status of male French teachers. Frenchmen were not respected as professionals either by their colleagues or by their pupils. According to Bryce, they were a 'serious source of weakness' in the teaching of French. Not only were they generally considered incapable of keeping discipline and commanding authority over boys, but their very availability made them suspect: 'a good Frenchman unwillingly expatriates himself'.[23] To inspire respect, a teacher ought to be a 'scholar and a gentleman'. The implication was that Frenchmen were neither. Worse still, they could not be, when their French accent in English, and the 'peculiarities of a foreigner', made them figures of ridicule to schoolboys.[24] Male French teachers were ridiculed by boys for their *Frenchness*, as if they had become parodies of the stock figures of eighteenth century caricatures.[25] Girls, apparently, did not have that response, something Fearon found difficult to explain.[26] Nor did this apply to French women teachers. If they were suspect, it was because their 'standard of propriety' did not measure up to that of English women, and worse, they might introduce their female pupils to 'too much freedom of thought and discussion, especially about theological matters'.[27] The danger that French women might have an immmoral influence was, however, nothing new. The crucial shift was in the derogation of the male French teacher, whose figure seems to have been collapsed with that of eighteenth century dancing masters.[28]

French in girls' schools

French was so commonly taught in girls' schools that it could be taken as 'the means of testing their general linguistic cultivation',[29] in other words, their educational standard. The exact opposite was said of French in boys' schools.[30] The best test of this linguistic cultivation was believed to be 'an examination in translation from English into French, and from French into English, with critical questions'. The results were poor. Even in the best private schools, girls could not

> discuss the origin and derivation of words and phrases; trace them through their various phases of signification; reconcile their employment, or point out their disagreement, with the general laws of grammar, illustrate the growth of such usages by other examples from the French or other languages.[31]

As we have just seen, similar criticisms had been made with reference to boys' schools, though not of the boys' performance but of their *textbooks*. It is clear that the commissioners were derogating the way French was taught in comparison - explicitly or implicitly - with the way Latin was taught. In fact, assistant commissioner Hammond had particularly commended Newcastle Grammar School, where French was taught 'precisely in the same way as the ancient languages... grammar, not vocabulary, being the first consideration'.[32] What is less immediately obvious is the way the derogation was articulated. The boys' failure was attributed to their textbooks, their capacities were not implicated, and their potential for success remained intact. The girls' failure, on the other hand, was due to something in them. Even given the best conditions, the best private schools, the girls failed. What the assistant commissioners omitted to take into account was that though boys were taught mostly 'grammatically', girls were not. It should have come as no surprise that they could not 'answer such questions upon their French authors, as boys in the upper sixth form of our public schools are expected to answer upon their Latin authors'.[33] But it did. Fearon was surprised that girls who were having 'conversational lessons in literature with Parisian teachers' were unable to construe, translate or conjugate verbs accurately. This was taken as incontrovertible evidence of the 'want of early and systematic mental discipline and a want of cultivation of the logical and reasoning faculties' of girls'

education.[34]

The most severe criticism of girls' French instruction concerned the use of the spoken language. The assistant commissioners complained that the French lesson was too often conducted entirely in French, as opportunities for explaining grammar (in English) were lost.[35] Yet, seventy years earlier, Lévizac and Gratte, for instance, had insisted on the use of French, especially in the teaching of grammar, so as not to waste any opportunities of using the language.[36] Now, the practice, common in the best schools, of enforcing constant use of French for a fixed number of hours outside class was considered 'mischievous', and even 'injurious to morals'. The assistant commissioners believed that this practice would encourage 'triviality and poverty of thought', and that conversations would be limited to the subjects within the reach of the available vocabulary. Above all, they were concerned that the resulting language would be slovenly and inaccurate.[37] In view of the Commission's conclusion that girls 'knew French better than the boys',[38] this opinion seems to me more indicative of the assistant commissioners' prejudices about 'French conversation' than an accurate assessment of the girls' achievement.

Overall, the assistant commissioners were critical of what they saw as wrong priorities in girls' French language classes. Fitch's disapproval is representative of the commissioners' sentiments: 'a pure Parisian accent is regarded as of more consequence than grammatical knowledge, familiarity with literature or the power of explaining principles'.[39] Bompas's complaint that 'the advantage of gaining fluency was greater than the evil of incorrectness' is intriguing: it speaks of the moral disapproval of the tongue and its display, in contrast to the rectitude of its containment through the regulation of grammar.

The assistant commissioners were well aware of the girls' superior achievement in French - so aware indeed that they felt the need to explain it away.[40] But because no attempt was found to teach grammar 'as a science' in girls' schools, they concluded that French taught conversationally had no educational value.[41] Thus, girls' achievement was not an achievement at all: the aim of language instruction was mental discipline, and accuracy its manifestation. No girls were found whose mind had been trained or strengthened by learning French.[42]

Thus, as the Direct Method, inspired by the German Reform School, was

hailed as a revolution in language teaching methods at the turn of the century, one of its foremost proponents could write: 'In pre-reform days ... the learner never handled the language himself for the purpose of expressing his own experiences and ideas'.[43] This was precisely what the assistant commissioners had criticised so severely in girls' language classrooms. In fact, the main 'innovative' tenets of the Direct Method comprised precisely those features of girls' French instruction condemned by the Taunton Commission: it advocated the use of French at all times in the classroom and opposed parsing, analysis and translation.[44] Because girls' French instruction had been perceived as 'unsystematic' and wanting in 'soundness and accuracy' - as had their education in general - it had not been treated as a method. Girls' achievement remained invisible. Again and again, the assistant commissioners found evidence of girls' superior achievement.[45] Each time, that achievement was explained away.[46] While boys' mental faculties were never questioned, despite the evidence,[47] the possibility that girls' achievement might be due to their intellect was simply not envisaged. The Taunton Commission's conclusion that girls were able to learn 'the various subjects of education', [48] made it possible for girls to have access to the same education as boys. But the way the achievement of males and females was constructed provided the conditions of possibility for later documents such as the Board of Education's *Report on the Differentiation of the Curriculum for Boys and Girls*.[49] As I argued earlier, this Report, which endorsed equality of access in theory while justifying inequality in practice, prescribed a curriculum based on different, gendered capacities. In such a curriculum, French was a female subject.

The Taunton Commission is a powerful illustration of the way discursive practices are articulated. The way girls' performance is conceived does not locate it, like boys', in their intellect, or, as Eynard and Walkerdine recently put it, 'it is not based on the same intellectual foundations as the performance of boys'.[50] It is thus devalued. As I argued in the introduction, this is not a conspiracy: the commissioners cannot be charged with having failed to 'recognise' the truth deriving from the 'evidence', and challenge existing practices, (although it would be tempting to do so). Nor can they be accused of blindness: they saw, and reported, girls' achievement. Thus, the Commission demonstrates that the

power of a discourse is not founded upon the strength of the 'real' - indeed, the discourse sustains in spite of it. Ultimately, then, the Taunton commission reaffirmed truths concerning girls which have continued to shape gendered educational practices ever since.

The derogation of the French tongue

Throughout this thesis, France and the French have been the leitmotif, a continuous presence. England's connection with France operated at two levels simultaneously. One was the level of the real. There were political and commercial, social and literary relations, there were wars, too, and the French revolution. But I have been concerned with the second level, England's discursive relations with France and the French. I have at various points in my discussion shown how the construction of the French as Other was embedded in discourses on the rise of nationalism, masculinity, and the creation of an idealised domestic space. At the same time, throughout the eighteenth century, the growing importance attached to a knowledge of the French language was one of the factors making the connection between the two levels, the 'real' and the discursive, possible. This connection was not static: as the century wore on, the population for whom it was important to learn French shifted; nor was it a simple and straightforward relation, because of the ambiguities inherent, paradoxically, in knowing French or in the desire to learn it. Two examples should illustrate this.

A recurring theme in eighteenth century texts is of the English aping the French. From early eighteenth century satires like *The Ladies Catechism,* to later moral tales like *Sandford and Merton* and *The Good Governess,* the bad girl speaks French 'better' than English.[51] Whether this was true or not is not really the issue.[52] It seems rather intended as a way of representing those who, lacking the inherent virtue, self-regulation and liberty of the English man, allow themselves to become the slaves of the alien, effeminate fashions of the French. Females and fops were particularly subject to these inordinate desires.[53] Knowing French 'too' well was therefore suspect. Displaying it, even more so.

Another aspect of the ambiguity associated with a knowledge of French has to do with the fact that it could be a different object in

different discourses. Because of its position as a universal language, French was spoken by kings and their servants, in the social space of the drawing room as well as in the commercial world. It was simultaneously a marker of status and exclusivity and its opposite, practically and professionally useful; at once valued and derogated. Dialogue xviii in David Fordyce's *Dialogues Concerning Education* illustrates this. The discussion concerns the relative merits of a classical and a modern education in a world of changing values, where the virtues of the 'Compleat Gentleman' are losing currency. French is the site on which these arguments are deployed. On the one hand, a 'French' education is less solidly improving than a classical one. On the other, French is more useful for business and conversation than the dead classical languages. Should parents who cannot afford to provide a 'truly liberal' education in the learned languages for their sons, content themselves with a modern one, and French? ask the discoursing gentlemen.[54] The question now is whether these contradictory elements were the conditions of possibility for the shifts in the status of French that had taken place by the middle of the nineteenth century. To answer this, we must turn again to the evidence from the two Royal Inquiries on education.

The Clarendon Commission and the Taunton Commission reveal two important shifts in the view of French language learning. The first concerns gender. As we have seen, there is little evidence that in the eighteenth century, learning French was gendered. In the nineteenth century, however, whereas grammar and public school teachers treated French as an inferior subject, the study of French was said to be 'the intellectual *spécialité'* of girls' schools.[55] Boys apparently despised the study of French because they thought Latin was 'boys' business' and French girls'.[56] Where French was taught to boys, it was taught grammatically: the higher the status of the school, the lower the value of spoken fluency. The reverse held in girls' schools, the critical difference being the importance they assigned to French conversation. The second shift concerns the perception of French as a subject. Whereas learning French grammar had been considered difficult in the eighteenth century, it was now considered so easy that French was treated as a language for the less able. Boys who could never 'make anything of Latin' could at least do French.[57] Why had French grammar become easy?

The major concern, reiterated by witnesses as well as inquirers of the Clarendon and the Taunton Commissions, was whether a particular subject would train and discipline the mind. 'Cultivating the faculties was the single most important educational learning theory of the nineteenth century'.[58] Public and grammar school teachers were unanimous in their belief that Latin was the best means of achieving this aim. Emily Davies and Frances Buss alone questioned the orthodoxy.[59] Yet, in the late seventeenth century, Locke had condemned the arduous learning of Latin through grammar rules, recommending instead that it be taught by conversation. The only grammar that can be usefully learned by a gentleman, he argued, was that of his own language, to avoid making errors unbecoming to his rank. Grammar, then, was to train the tongue of the gentleman, to distinguish his English from the vernacular.[60] Latin was considered necessary for a gentleman, insofar as the primary aim of education was to '[form] the mind to virtue'.[61] By the 1780s, however, Vicesimus Knox was declaring that learning Latin grammar had the 'most valuable effect of exercising and strengthening the mind', a belief held up as a scientific truth by the witnesses of the Clarendon and the Taunton Commissions, nearly one hundred years later.[62] But grammar is at best an elusive notion.[63] For Locke, it meant mostly learning rules. In the nineteenth century, it had acquired quasi mystical properties.[64]

In the words of J.S. Mill:

> Consider for a moment what grammar is. It is the most elementary part of logic. It is the beginning of the analysis of the thinking process. The principles and rules of grammar are the means by which the forms of language are made to correspond with the universal forms of thought ... The structure of every sentence is a lesson in logic. The various rules of syntax oblige us to distinguish betwen the subject and predicate of a proposition, between the agent, the action, and the thing acted upon; to mark when an idea is intended to modify or qualify, or merely unite with, some other idea; what assertions are categorical, what only conditional; whether the intention is to express similarity or contrast, to make a plurality of assertions conjunctively or disjunctively; what portions of a sentence, though grammatically complete within themselves, are mere members or subordinate parts of the assertion made by the entire sentence. Such things form the subject matter of universal grammar, and the languages which teach it best are those which ... provide distinct forms for the greatest number of distinctions in thought ... In these qualities, the classical languages have an incomparable

superiority over every modern language.' [65]

Grammar is also a discourse of exclusion. For Locke, knowledge of grammar served to mark the gentleman's class. In the nineteenth century, it served to mark gender. The logical analysis, defined by Mill as grammar, was attempted[66] in boys' schools, especially the elite grammar and public schools. The grammar which boys learned was 'the science of language'. The grammar which girls learned was a catechism of rules.[67] Even when it was taught grammatically, French was not generally thought to be adequate as a means of mental training. Its 'simple and uniform' sentence structure and its lack of inflections meant that it could not illustrate many grammatical principles and 'demand[ed] less thought and ingenuity than Latin'.[68] The fact that French could be learned totally 'empirically', by imitation, proved the point. Imitation was held to involve no rational thinking, since this was how it was thought the mother-tongue was acquired.

It must be stressed that the purpose of classical studies was not to learn to *speak* Latin.[69] Latin grammar was to train not the tongue, but the invisible faculties of the mind. This is the crux of the shift: the tongue had become derogated. The education of the English gentleman is at odds with the learning of French, had claimed John Walter, for a gentleman requires a classical education, and the object of learning modern languages is merely to speak them.[70] French could be redeemed only if its difficulties were highlighted, and if some parity could be established with the virtues of Latin. If French lacks 'flexional declensions, it has at least a verb which is as complicated almost as the Latin Verb', declared Professor Cassal.[71]

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss in detail the outcome of the Clarendon and the Taunton Commissions as regards the teaching of French in subsequent years. This has been reviewed elsewhere.[72] The authoritative voices of Max Müller and Charles Cassal will suffice to give a sense of the direction that was taken. Addressing the Clarendon Commission, Max Müller, Taylorian Professor of Modern Languages and Literature at Oxford, concluded that in teaching French, the aim should be 'principally' to secure 'an accurate knowledge of grammar', but not to attempt 'fluency and the attainment of a perfect accent'. Charles Cassal, Professor of Language and Literature at University College

London, told Lord Taunton that French could and ought to be taught, 'in a systematic, scientific or philosophical way', to discipline the mind, just like Latin.[73] These recommendations were not only to determine the way French was taught for years to come, but fixed the value of the 'oral' as easy, a ceiling for the less able.[74]

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars

Why did French become a derogated tongue in the nineteenth century? The standard reply to this question is that the fashion for learning and speaking French must necessarily have been one of the casualties of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Yet, it is difficult to draw such a straightforward conclusion when looking at English attitudes to France over that period. These were varied, extremely complex, contradictory even, and altered as events unfolded.[75] There is also a lack of consensus among historians even about the impact of the French Revolution in England, not least because it influenced historiography itself.[76] Nonetheless, while it is expected that the period 1789-1815 would have some repercussions on English attitudes to France, it is also important to consider what did not change. Surprising as it may seem to our twentieth century understanding or experience of the effects of war, travel to France, for instance, was only momentarily interrupted: the English even 'flocked to Paris' once the Peace of Amiens had been declared in 1802, to see the treasures Napoleon had brought back from Italy.[77] Nor did speaking French carry the stigma speaking German was to have during and after WWI and WWII. For example, the fact that Burke did not know French was not only ammunition to his critics, writes Mitchell in his introduction to the writings of Burke on the French Revolution, but was 'a badge of dishonour' and a 'deficiency that Burke must have keenly felt'.[78] By the 1790s, French had become 'an essential part of Education for a Young Lady'.[79] Writing in 1799, Hannah More too conceded that a young lady might 'excel in speaking French', because such skill was becoming.[80] Yet, she did not ignore the events of the French Revolution. In the same text, she reminded her readers of the 'malignity' and 'turpitude' of the 'practices and principles' of modern France, and called for a *patriotic*

resistance to the foreign 'contagion'.[81] Why would Hannah More, who condemned so vehemently French ladies' immoral practices and lack of religion, accept that French was a language English ladies wished to learn? Could it be attributed to her 'religious faith in the distinction between social classes'?[82] If so, given More's strong criticism of middle class girls' learning French noted earlier, her attitude suggests that by the turn of the century, French had become as powerful a social marker for females as it had been for males. Indeed, didn't Fanny Price's cousins 'hold her cheap on finding out that she had but two sashes, and had never learnt French'? [83]

Did the wars with France, then, have no impact whatsoever on English attitudes towards learning French? Two stories in Maria Edgworth's *The Good Governess*, allow us to explore further the complexities involved, at least as far as girls are concerned. The eponymous heroine of the first story is Madame de Rosier, a French aristocrat whose husband and son fell under Robespierre's guillotine, but who herself managed to escape to England. She becomes a governess[84] to Mrs Harcourt's children, whose former 'fashionable' governess had deserted them 'to go abroad with a lady of quality'. Madame de Rosier's character and culture are of the highest quality, and her French, because she is an aristocrat, of the highest purity. She not only imparts what is obviously Edgeworth's own plan of education to the three Harcourt children, but her example encourages their mother to improve her own understanding, so that she can eventually take over when the French aristocrat and her son, who had had a miraculous escape to England, both return to France, their property having been restored to them. In the second story, a Mademoiselle Panache is Lady Augusta's French governess. Her very imperfect English with its pronounced French accent is phonetically represented in the text as a rather painful and ridiculous jargon, peppered with French phrases. She is a suspicious character, with no manners or culture, (she reads cheap novels), and is soon revealed to be an impostor. Far from being the lady of quality she claimed to be, she is but a milliner. Because frivolous Lady S... leads the kind of social life usually attributed to English ladies corrupted by French manners, she is blind to the real character of her daughter's governess. The inevitable happens, and under Mademoiselle Panache's 'guidance', Lady Augusta ends up ruined.

There is no ambiguity about Madame de Rosier's Frenchness, on the contrary. A victim of her own tyrannical government, she is above all a model to emulate. She speaks both English and French fluently and with a perfect accent, and no French smattering is ever heard to drop from her lips. However, it is her language that first exposes Mademoiselle Panache's imposture. Helping one of the female characters to dress, she exclaims '*Ah bon, vous voilà mise à quatre épingles!*' '*A quatre épingles!* ... Surely, thought Emma, that is a vulgar expression'.[85] It is her class that makes her Frenchness ridiculous, because she obviously does not 'fit'. If, as Hannah More claimed, *Liberté* was only something the French learned from the English,[86] *Égalité* was not something the English seem to have had much sympathy with.[87] It seems safe to conclude that the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars did not affect the learning of French in England adversely. Clapton and Stewart argue that the wars even had the opposite effect, because of the influx of French *émigrés*. The fashion for learning French actually increased, especially in girls' schools.[88] However, if neither the French Revolution nor the wars with France between 1793 and 1815 diminished the fashion for learning French *as such*, then reasons for the shift in the status of the language must be sought outside that specific discourse. The shift indicates that a process of gendering was taking place, such that the tongue was derogated for males but not females, and this has to be explained.

For the purpose of this discussion, the most significant fact brought to light by the Clarendon Commission, is that, after having been central to the construction of aristocratic gentlemen for centuries, French was now the object of their scorn. By the mid-nineteenth century, it had become a virtual commonplace that the English gentleman did not speak French, as an anecdote told by Frances Power Cobbe reveals.[89] Yet, while French had become a derogated tongue for males, it had become the language without which no young lady could be accomplished.[90]

In the next section, I will be suggesting reasons for the gendered derogation of oral skills in French. I should state at the outset that I do not think that the derogation was caused by the gendering. I will argue, rather, that they were both implicated in the discourses emerging at that time. Space constraints do not permit an exhaustive analysis at this point

in the thesis. Nevertheless, I hope that the following arguments might be the basis of more thorough, future research.

The sexed body

'Some time in the eighteenth century, sex as we know it was invented'. The model of the body

> in which men and women were arrayed according to their degree of metaphysical perfection, their vital heat, along an axis whose telos was male, gave way ... to a new model of radical dimorphism, of biological divergence. An anatomy and physiology of incommensurability replaced a metaphysics of hierarchy in the representation of woman in relation to man.[91]

This was not, Laqueur affirms, a result of scientific progress and new knowledges about the body. The nature of sexual difference is not discovered by empirical evidence, but, Laqueur argues further, is 'logically independent of biological facts', because the language of gender is already embedded in the language of science, at least where the construction of sexual difference is concerned. The shift towards nature and biology, he suggests, was part of ongoing social and political changes, especially in the post-revolutionary era.[92]

In this section, I will be arguing that the sexed body provided a surface of emergence for a discourse of sex differences whereby there was sex in mind as well as in body. To provide a perspective on the way the new discourse was constituted, I have selected three texts on female education, Hannah More's *Essays on Various Subjects Principally Designed for Young Ladies*, 1785, John Bennett's *Strictures on Female Education*, 1787, and J.L. Chirol's *An Enquiry into the best System of Female Education, or Boarding School amd Home Education attentively considered*, 1809.[93] I will be describing the positions of these writers in some detail because they illustrate the way a discourse - that of mental differences - emerging in the late eighteenth century, came to be constituted as a scientific truth by the middle of the nineteenth century. It is an instance of what Foucault describes as the historical process by which a concept,

at first 'overlaid with metaphors or imaginary contents' becomes 'purified, and accorded the status of a scientific concept'.[94] In the new discourse, then, male and female bodies were believed to be homologous with their minds. There emerged a discourse of difference, wherein the (upper class) female's greater weakness of body and mind formed a continuity, as did the male's physical and mental strengths. None of the characteristics that were now neatly listed as opposites in the categories male and female were new, but the concept of the sexed body gave them coherence and authority.

All three writers agree that the structural 'weakness' or 'delicacy' of the woman's body betokens her mental inferiority. 'Woman's outward frame is marked with a *physical* inferiority'. It appears not to be 'calculated' for 'such efforts of thinking as the more abstracted sciences require', writes Bennett, and Hannah More believes that women lack the intellectual strength necessary to 'penetrate into the abstruser walks of literature'.[95] The comparison with the male intellect is implicit in the metaphor of penetration, a quintessentially masculine attribute. For Chirol, in addition, because woman's feeble constitution makes her liable to 'almost incessant infirmities', woman as a category is pathologized, a theme which was to take on increasing importance in the nineteenth century.[96] More, Bennett and Chirol are also unanimous about the quickness, vivacity and versatility of woman's mind, and unanimous as well that these constituted the visible manifestation of her mental inferiority. 'Vivacity', writes Bennett, is 'unfavourable to profound thinking and accurate investigation'; Chirol is more blunt: woman 'has scarcely a thought she can call her own, except what is fugitive and transient as lightning'.[97] What is striking about these stories, is that the very presence of certain mental qualities in the female constructs her as lacking, whereas their very absence in the male constructs his mental powers; the more invisible, the greater their strength. Nowhere is this more evident than in Bennett's discussion of the differences between little girls and boys, which he uses to show the 'precise bounties of nature' to each sex, to demonstrate the natural truth of difference. Though he reckons that little girls are 'quicker' and generally more advanced than boys the same age,[98] this is not a 'proof of their *general* superiority'. Quite the opposite. It is the boy's 'thoughtfulness' that prevents 'more brilliant and showy exertions'. The deep and true worth of the boy's mental apparatus and the shallow and

worthless brilliance of the girl's are summarized in one sentence: 'gold sparkles less than tinsel'.[99] By a rhetorical *tour de force*, the sexed mind is constructed so that the female's generates not only the physical space for 'the domestic comfort and felicity of man',[100] but the mental space which allows the superior intellectual powers of the male to be produced.

The main object of Bennett and Chirol's texts was a vehement denunciation of boarding school education for girls. They both favoured a home based, sex-differentiated education which positioned females firmly in the domestic space and as men's inferiors. Chirol's prescriptions are almost brutal: mothers must train their daughters to 'consider a Husband as a Master; and Matrimony as the grave of Liberty... a state of Pain'. Bennett, who makes the same point more mildly, resorts to nature to demonstrate that gender roles are natural, and superiority 'providentially lodged in the male'. Do not male birds, he points out - despite visible evidence to the contrary - display greater strength, and females more brilliant plumage?[101]

As the discourse on the sexed minded was being constituted, its very terms excluded females from education. The very structure of woman's mind renders her incapable of the profound thought and careful reasoning that carry knowledge to its 'zenith of perfection', asserted Bennett.[102] Rationality was inextricably intertwined with the notion of women's education. Were women rational beings, were they less rational than men? This 'apparently simple' question, notes Browne, 'yielded confusing and ambiguous answers'.[103] The issue of rationality is by no means clear, and there seems to be no consensus on the subject in the period I am discussing. Porter, for instance, argues that 'the (male) enlightenment was liberal enough to encourage the view that women ought to be treated as rational creatures'. At the same time, he points out, women's rationality was harnessed to a notion of 'rational' motherhood, which 'left an ambiguous legacy for women'.[104] Chirol, for example, shows no diffidence about using the term, when he contends that a girl must learn that she is born 'a dependent', and that she ought to be trained to 'rational', not servile obedience.[105] It is not that females were not accorded rationality, but that their rationality would make them desire to conform to their proper sphere.

The main significance of the discourse on the sexed mind, for the present discussion, is that it produced a major shift in the meaning of education. In the eighteenth century, the boy was educated in order to train his mind to virtue, and the civility of his manners and his conversation were a testimony to the civility of his mind. Learning as such played but a small part in this education. Schooling produced 'illiberal', tongue-tied schoolboys, who needed to be smoothed by politeness; the scholar was to be subsumed under the gentleman. Manners, conversation and a knowledge of French produced the accomplished gentleman. By the mid-nineteenth century, all this had changed. Why?

Sheldon Rothblatt, who has been concerned to explain the shift in the meaning of education in the early nineteenth century, suggests that it was the French Revolution which 'interrupted the general concern with polite behaviour'. There were now, he argues, 'more formidable problems' to be faced than 'the improvement in manners' and 'the delicate adjustments in personal conduct'.[106] This analysis is unsatisfactory on two counts. Firstly, as we have seen, the critique of politeness had been underway well before the 1790s. Secondly, Rothblatt's tone suggests that he has adopted the nineteenth century perspective on the courtly education of the gentleman in the eighteenth century, namely that it was frivolous, and that it lasted as long as there was nothing more serious to worry about.

The emerging discourse on mental differences in the early nineteenth century constituted male mental powers as higher and stronger than females'. Strength was the essence of masculinity, and access to knowledge, to 'science', was predicated on that strength. Women were excluded by virtue of their constitutional weakness. Education now meant exercising and disciplining male minds. According to Rothblatt, this explains why the nineteenth century was 'the age of the teacher': the teacher alone 'disciplined minds; only he could determine which faculties needed strengthening, and, consequently, which programme of study was best suited to the student'.[107] This, Rothblatt argues, accounts for the dominance of faculty psychology in that period: it is a direct result of the rise of the teacher. It seems to me, however, that the process unfolded the other way round. I would want to argue that the rise of the teacher was, on the contrary, a product of the new discourse of sexed mental abilities, and the rise of faculty psychology one component of that discourse. It was the

shift from educating the tongue and manners of the nobleman, (best achieved by women), to cultivating his masculine powers, that created the space and conditions for the emergence of a male expert.[108] Most importantly, this involved a shift from the teacher as a means of producing the authoritative voice of his pupil, to that of the teacher himself being the authoritative voice.

The sexed mind

The discourse on sexed mental differences did not imply that males had minds and females did not, but that the faculties of each sex must be cultivated to follow 'nature'. Both sexes must be educated for their 'destination in society': the upper class male eventually to rule his country, and the female, 'to constitute the happiness of the other half'.[109] This did not mean that women had to remain ignorant; rather, it became more imperative than ever that what they learned be related to their femininity, and not transgress 'natural' boundaries. Education was meant to emphasize *difference*. Latin, as Frances Power Cobbe remarked ironically, kept a man masculine by exercising and strengthening his mental faculties. Thus, for women to learn it - and gain access to University education - became heavy with the menace of an 'assimilation' of the training of the sexes, a step which was 'fatal' in that it obliterated the 'natural differences between them'. Learning French, on the other hand, kept women 'feminine in mind'.[110]

As stated earlier, my aim in this section is to suggest reasons for the two shifts which transformed the learning of French in the first part of the nineteenth century: its gendering, and the derogation of oral skills. While the first, gendering, has now been accounted for, the second, the derogation of the French tongue, remains a problem. We have seen that, in the late eighteenth century, *speaking* French was an accomplishment that positioned the female in the social space. Speaking had connotations of display, but a *reading* knowledge of French did not. In the nineteenth century, the good governess in Catherine Sinclair's novel *Female Accomplishments*, affirms that reading French is a means of training the female mind, but mere training in tongues is emblematic of an education

for display in the drawing room.[111] It could be argued, then, that the derogation of the French tongue was associated with the derogation of the social space and of the accomplishments associated with the courtly ideal. However, if music and dancing could unequivocally be classified as accomplishments, the position of French remained more ambiguous. Thus, even in the Taunton Commission, assistant commissioner Bryce included French among the accomplishments, whereas assistant commissioner Fearon listed it as one of the serious subjects.[112] Nevertheless, French conversation, a necessary accomplishment for girls of rank and essential to the construction of their femininity, was derogated. Why?

One explanation derives from the emergence of the new discourse on education at the turn of the century. While a new meaning of education was being elaborated as a result of the sexed mind, the meaning of the 'social', intricated in education throughout the eighteenth century, had to shift as well. This completed the separation of the social from the educational, a process which had started with the feminization of politeness and accomplishments. Now that the gentleman was produced through his mental powers, the social - where women's conversation polished men's - was not only at odds with the process of education, but believed to subvert it. Parents, who represented the social, were held to be misguided and ignorant about education. This was not something new; parents, especially mothers, had been blamed throughout the eighteenth century for interfering with their children's education. What was new, was the authoritativeness of the criticism. Training the (invisible) mental faculties of the boy required an expertise which parents totally lacked. Their voice was therefore dismissed contemptuously: 'Of the best means of training the mind and strengthening the faculties, parents are no judges at all'.[113] Criticism was even stronger as regards girls' schools. As assistant commissioner Fitch reported, parents are 'indifferent' to the 'mental cultivation' of their daughters. Governesses complained to him that parents could not ' "see the use of" any subject of instruction except plain rudiments and accomplishments'. Those governesses who strove to improve the quality of their instructions, he concluded, had to do so 'under the great difficulties of parental apathy or discouragement'.[114] The derogation of the social also comes across very clearly in the women's testimonies to the Taunton Commission. Asked whether the girls at the

North London Collegiate School for Girls learned French 'in an empirical manner, merely to enable them to talk and read in French', Mary Frances Buss declared that no, 'they study the syntax carefully and closely'. This was meant to demonstrate the seriousness of her educational purpose and the thoroughness of the instruction.'[115]

Setting up the social and the educational as opposing discourses accounts for the way French conversation produced contradictory positionings for girls in the first part of the nineteenth century. French conversation was an accomplishment valued only in the social space. Because it had no status in the educational discourse, it was believed to have no educational value, and achievement in it did not count. I want to argue, however, that the derogation of oral skills that it implies was part of a wider shift, which has to do, ultimately, with the production of the *masculine, English,* gentleman.

The derogation of the tongue, conversation and national character

Conversation had been celebrated throughout most of the eighteenth century. It had been a highly desirable aim for the gentleman, and most education and conduct books for both males and females included a chapter or a section on conversation. While this might seem to be putting a value on the voice, the image of the English gentleman remained one of taciturnity. In my earlier discussion of the taciturnity of the English male, I suggested that though it was seen by some as a national trait, attitudes to it were at least equivocal.[116] The English 'delight in Silence', had written Addison,[117] but Wilson had accused the English of national laziness. This, he warned, adversely affected the image of England as a nation. Indeed, foreign visitors also remarked on Englishmen's taciturnity. The English are 'little versed in conversation of mere amusement, being naturally silent', noted Abbé Trublet.[118] Taciturnity, and what Abbé Le Blanc called 'that disagreeable bluntness of character',[119] had long been been attributed to English men's neglecting the company of ladies. It was not just Frenchmen who maintained that ladies were 'the best school for politeness'.[120] 'Commerce with the ladies', declared a contributor to the *Monthly Review*, 'is the best nursery for those qualities which constitute a man of the world'.[121] Despite these exhortations, it

would appear that the eighteenth century English gentleman often fell short of the polite ideal. Because language and national character were thought to be interrelated, taciturnity was held to be a product not just of the English character, but of the English language as well. Monosyllabic, it eminently suited an 'enemy of Loquacity', had observed Addison.[122] At the time, few had agreed with him, arguing, like Swift, that a monosyllabic language was one that had not been polished.[123]

By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the monosyllabic English language and the taciturnity of its native speakers had been fused into a common national trait, manliness. In contrast with French, a language 'naturally made for graceful trifling', English was a 'plain, rational and monosyllabic tongue', suited its 'manly and laconic' speakers.[124] By the middle of the nineteenth century, taciturnity had been transformed into a virtue. It was the 'talent of Silence' that Carlyle celebrated, a silence that characterised his strong and manly heroes.[125]

When taciturnity had been attributed to the English character, it was the English male, not the female, that was being referred to. The tongue of English women was as voluble as any women's tongue; and, from Swift to Fordyce and even Hannah More, women's verbal skills were celebrated. Hannah More put it most forcefully:

> In the faculty of speaking well, ladies have such a happy promptitude of turning their slender advantages to account, that there are many who, though they have never been taught a rule of syntax, yet ... hardly ever violate one; and who often exhibit an elegant and perspicuous arrangement of style without having studied the laws of composition.[126]

In contrast to women and their 'flexible tongue',[127] males were said to lack both ease and elegance of expression. James Fordyce's explanation for this failure had been men's education in the classics. It gave them 'habits of accuracy' which 'often [hamper] the faculties'. This produced - and excused - their awkward and graceless conversation.[128] Thirty years later, Hannah More went further. She counterposed fluency of tongue to depth and penetration of mind. Implicit in the contrast between men's taciturnity and women's sprightly conversation, was a gendering of the tongue which mirrored the sexed mind. More claimed that men's very inarticulateness was a testimony to the power of their mind. Women's

voluble tongue and sprightly conversation, on the other hand, were evidence of their superficiality and lack of mental strength. In young women, asserted More, 'speaking accompanies and sometimes precedes reflection; in men, reflection is the antecedent'.[129] The strength of men's minds provided the self-regulation and restraint on their tongues that women lacked constitutionally. Silence, once held to result from the 'Clog upon [the] tongue' of the Englishman,[130] had become the emblem of his self-regulation, his strength, his virtue. It was to become that of his masculinity. Nevertheless, there is a huge gap between Sheridan's claims that the use of the tongue is 'the glory of man' and that oratory could cure the 'Disorders of English Education', and John Walter's statement that the inarticulateness of the scholar demonstrates how trivial fluency of the tongue really is.'[131] What can account for so complete a reversal?

The taciturnity of English men distinguished them not just from the shallow sprightliness of English females, but more importantly, from French men. From an English perspective, there was, in France, no *difference* between men and women's tongue. French men had 'many pretty ways of insinuating what they mean[t]', unlike the 'forcible and manly ways' of the English.[132] The conversational skills of French men thus positioned them as effeminate. Moreover, their wit and vivacity suggested that they 'must perhaps be proportionately deficient in judgement'.[133] Taciturnity, on the other hand, proved the superior mental powers of the English male. Thus, the *difference* in tongue, and silence, were essential elements in the construction of both the masculinity and the national identity of the English male.

The derogation of tongue and the silencing of women's conversation

I have suggested that at the end of the eighteenth century, a number of different discourses were being constituted, and I have attempted to describe how they might have articulated with each other. In the main, I have been arguing that the redrawing of the demarcations lines of gender around the sexed body and the sexed mind constituted a major shift. I have also argued that some of the concepts and practices constituting the discourse of the sexed mind were not new; elements of older discourses

continued as traces in the new. The new discourse thus represented both continuity - in terms of those traces - and discontinuity - in terms of the shift and the new meanings it generated. Masculinity, for example, had been a concern throughout the century, and the construction of the French as effeminate Other had served to produce English *difference.* Because of the centrality of conversation for the eighteenth century gentleman, one of the main sites for the deployment of this difference was the tongue. As long as education had meant the construction of the polite gentleman whose tongue and conversation emblematised his superiority and his class, women's conversation had been necessary because of its civilising and polishing role. This, I have argued, produced complex and contradictory positionings for the English gentleman. Writing in the late eighteenth century, William Alexander represents one attempt both to face the contradictions and resolve them.

> Of all the various causes which tend to influence our conduct and form our manners, none operate so powerfully as the society of the other sex. If perpetually confined to their company, they infallibly stamp upon us the effeminacy, and some other of the signatures of their nature; if constantly excluded from it, we contract a roughness of behaviour, and slovenliness of person, sufficient to point out the loss we have sustained. If we spend a reasonable portion of our time in the company of women, and another in the company of our own sex, it is then only that we imbibe a proper share of the softness of the female, and at the same time retain the firmness and constancy of the male.[134]

However, when the meaning of education shifted to emphasize exercising and strengthening mental faculties through the inculcation of grammar, women's conversation became superfluous to the construction of the gentleman. Conversation itself became derogated. The learning of languages, for so long necessary to produce the gentleman as a 'man of conversation',[135] was, by the end of the eighteenth century, described as an 'insipid occupation to a solid, thinking mind'. It was, after all, just a matter of learning 'combinations of sounds and letters'.[136] Only languages which were *not* learned by or for conversation could exercise the masculine mind and produce the masculine gentleman.

The discourse of the sexed body was a crucial element in this story, because it was underpinned by a profound change in the perception of

women's role in conversation. Woman's best conversation was now her silence, not just because, as Hannah More had argued, it enabled men better to express themselves, but also because, as Thomas Gisborne feared, women's witty tongue might emasculate them.[137] But it was not just the role of women's verbal conversation that shifted; it was also that of her *sexual* conversation.[138] Women's active participation in conception, her orgasm, which had long been thought necessary for conception, was now dispensed with.[139] Consequently, woman's reproductive conversation was silenced as well. Just as the tongue became gendered, so too did silence. While woman's receptive silence was the best way to produce the male, male silence was productive of his higher mental powers, and therefore of his national and gendered identity.

Thus at the turn of the century, women's voice had been disempowered, her silenced tongue and sexuality made passively receptive to promote the male by effacing herself.[140]
This, in essence, is the Victorian ideal of femininity.

References and footnotes

1. See H.C. Barnard, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-134.

2. J. Kamm, *op. cit.*, p. 214. The decision to investigate girls' schools was not initiated by the Taunton Commission, but by women, Emily Davies in particular, who sought and fought to improve girls' education. Ch. xiv gives an account of how they won.

3. Board of Education, *op. cit.*, 1923, p. 90. The final recommendation of the Board's Report states: we may assume that all children have to be educated with two ends in view: i. To earn their own living, ii. To be useful citizens, while girls have also to be prepared iii. to be makers of homes. See also the Taunton Commission, vol. 8, p. 41; vol. 9, pp. 792-3.

4. 'Over a quarter of the Cabinet from 1801 to 1924' were educated at Eton, writes T.W. Bamford, in *The Rise of the Public Schools: A Study of Boys' Public Boarding Schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the Present Day*, London, 1967, p. 230.

5. Clarendon Commission, Eton evidence, vol. 3, Q.3740.

6. *ibid.*, Q.7025.

7. Taunton Commission, vol. 5, Q.16,620.

8. Mr Tarver, the French master at Eton, reported that a number of boys had learned French at home with their sisters' governesses. This was the excuse Balston, Eton's headmaster, invoked for not wanting to teach it: French was something one did at home, before coming to Eton. Clarendon Commission, Eton evidence, vol. 3.

9. *ibid.*, Q.9362.

10. *ibid.*, vol. 3, Q.382.

11. Mr Tarver said he tried to have 10 to 12 pupils every lesson but often had only 2 or 3.

12. *ibid.*, Q.6945.

13. *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 216.

14. *ibid.* Tarver tells of an occasion when he sent boys to the Headmaster because of misconduct and neglect of work; they came back 'triumphant': the headmaster had not penalized them. Tarver reports this to show that the Headmaster attached little importance to work in French. What the incident reveals is how little authority was accorded at Eton to French masters. In such conditions, it is not surprising that they were unable to keep discipline.

15. *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 77, 120.

16. The division of schools into three grades was devised by the commissioners for their own guidance. It was based on the length of school life, and was therefore grounded in social distinctions. First or higher grade schools retained their pupils to the age of eighteen or nineteen. The pupils in grade two and grade three schools completed their courses at the ages of sixteen and fourteen respectively. Adamson, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

17. The modern school, said an assistant commissioner, 'is rather an excrescence than an organic part of the school. It exists rather by sufferance than with strong approval'. Taunton Commission, vol 9. p. 169.

18. Leeds Grammar school, and Newcastle Grammar School in particular.

19. Taunton Commission, *op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 201; vol. 9, p. 644.

20. *ibid.*, vol. 9, pp. 644, 645; vol 5, Q.10,756.

21. *ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 299-301.

22. *ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 645-6.

23. *ibid.*, p. 646.

24. *ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 392, 400.

25. Such as the caricatures of Bunbury, Rowlandson, and Hogarth. See Leppert, *op. cit.*; M. Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner*, Cambridge, 1986.

26. He suggested that girls attached more importance to French, and that they were 'more anxious to learn' and less disposed to ridicule a foreigner. *ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 392.

27. *ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 481.

28. See Leppert, *op. cit.*, pp. 78, 79, 83, 87.

29. *ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 403.

30. French was not important enough to be 'a subject by which the efficiency of the teaching may be fairly judged', *ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 644.

31. *ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 403, 405.

32. *ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 401. See also the testimony of Charles Cassal, Professor of French Language and Literature at University College, vol 5, p. 190, Q.10,760.

33. *ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 401.

34. *ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 401.

35. *ibid.*, p. 524.

36. *op. cit.* See ch. 6 above.

37. Taunton Commission, vol. 9, p. 297; assistant commissioner Stanton believed that girls would break the rule and lie about it, *ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 71. See also vol. 8, pp. 523, 524; vol. 7, p. 201; vol. 9, p. 298.

38. *ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 49.

39. *ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 297.

40. Bompas referred for example to girls' 'natural aptitude' for languages and to the fact that fluency was more important than accuracy, *op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 49; vol. 9, p. 292.

41. *ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 250.

42. *ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 809.

43. Walter Ripman, preface to the 5th edition of *Easy Free Composition*, London, 1925. When this book first appeared in 1907, the author's name was written as Rippmann. This was changed during WWI, because of anti-German feeling. cp. Ludwig von Glehn, (Perse School, Cambridge), who became Louis de Glehn.

44. 'The striking success of the 'Reform School' in Germany … has brought into prominence the right of French to receive a respectful hearing. This right rests upon a variety of considerations. There is no modern instrument of expression that can be more perfectly lucid, or more severely exacting in its demands on the logical faculty, if it is to be thoroughly understood and, still more, if it is to be tolerably well spoken or written ... Accurate knowledge implies accuracy of pronunciation'. Board of Education, *Memorandum on the Study of Languages*, London, 1907, pp. 4, 6. See also Vernon Mallinson, *Teaching a Modern Language*, London, 1953 and S. Bayley, 'The Impact of the German Reform Movement on Modern Language Teaching in England (1880-1918)', forthcoming.

45. Bryce, for example, found that they were better than boys in reading, spelling, geography and history. Vol. 9, pp. 291, 807, 811.

46. Girls were said to have 'a correct ear', 'quicker perception', 'greater aptitude'; they had spent more time learning the subject, and more time at school. This enabled them to develop greater maturity. *ibid.*, and vol. 8, pp. 49, 53, 54.

47. One is reminded here that Locke reprimanded fathers who, not realising the benefits owing to the conversational *method*, thought their sons 'more dull or incapable than their Daughters'. Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

48. See for instance vol. 8, p. 53.

49. *op. cit.*, 1923.

50. R. Eynard and V. Walkerdine, *The Practice of Reason: Investigation into the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics*, vol. 2: Girls and Mathematics, Institute of Education, (mimeo), London, n.d., p. 4.

51. Thus, Martha in Thomas Day, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-6; *The Ladies Catechism* London, 1703.

52. This could have to do with the fact that learning French might entail learning its grammar at a time when neither girls nor their brothers customarily learned the grammar of English.

53. The idea of slavery, even more than that of fashion, resonated with connotations of France: the French political system enslaved its subjects. The implicit contrast was with English liberty.

54. *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 323.

55. Taunton Commission , vol. 9, p. 297.

56. *ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 298.

57. *ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 647.

58. S. Rothblatt, *Tradition and Change in English Liberal Education: an Essay in History and Culture*, London, 1976, p. 129. See ch. 10 for a full discussion of the theory. It is interesting to note that it was not until Cyril Burt's 'Historical Note on Faculty Psychology' that faculty psychology was officially laid to rest in England. Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education with special reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools*, (Spens Report), London, 1938, Appendix iv.

59. Taunton Commission, vol. 5, Q.11390. See ch. 1 above.

60. John Locke, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-6 .

61. Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 5; John Locke, pp. 217-8.

62. Knox, *op. cit.*, p. 52; E.C. Mack argues that it was Locke who 'bequeathed' the idea that classics disciplined the mind. *Public Schools and British Opinion 1780 to 1860*, London, 1938, p. 179.

63. For a discussion of this question, see M. Stubbs, *Knowledge about Language: Grammar, Ignorance and Society*, London, 1990.

64. For an illuminating discussion of the value assigned to learning the minutiae of grammar, see Grafton and Jardine, *op. cit.*

65. John Stuart Mill, 'Inaugural Address at St Andrews', in F.A. Cavanagh, *James and John Stuart Mill on Education*, Cambridge, 1931, pp. 150-1.

66. It is important to note that the level of success achieved was not very high. Even Balston admitted that boys did not leave Eton 'with anything like a fair proficiency in the classics to which all their time is devoted'. Clarendon Commission, Eton evidence, vol. 3, Q.3550.

67. Taunton Commission, vol. 7, p. 260. This explains why, to Fearon's dismay, they were not able to give an account of 'one of the most valuable parts of analysis', the 'relations of a subordinate to a principal clause'. *ibid.*, p. 400.

68. *ibid.*, vol. 9, pp. 292-93.

69. *ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 190, Q.10757.

70. Clarendon Commission, Eton evidence, vol. 3.

71. Taunton Commission, vol. 5, QQ.10756, 10760.

72. See Cohen, *op. cit.*, 1982; Hawkins, *op. cit.*; H. Radford, 'Modern Languages and the Curriculum in English Secondary Schools', in I.F. Goodson (ed.), *Social Histories of the Secondary Curriculum: Subjects for Study*, Brighton, 1985; Bayley, *op. cit.*, 1991.

73. Clarendon Commission, vol. 4, p. 77; Taunton Commission, vol. 5, p. 190, Q.10760.

74. See C. Burstall *et al*, *Primary French in the Balance*, London, 1974, p. 66; D.G. Smith, 'French and the less able', *Modern Languages*, vol. LIV, No. 4, September 1973, p. 107. pp. 105-115.

75. See for example S. Prickett, *England and the French Revolution*, London, 1931; M.J. Quinlan, *Victorian Prelude: A History of English Manners 1700-1830*, New York, 1941; M.L. Bush, *The English Aristocracy: a Comparative Synthesis*, Manchester, 1984; J.V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in English 1660-1914*, Oxford, 1986.

76. H. Ben Israel, *English Historians on the French Revolution*, Cambridge, 1968, ch. 7.

77. The Duchess of Devonshire 'fled to Paris' from Brussels where she delivered her son, the Marquis of Hartington, in May 1790, writes B. Howe, *A Galaxy of Governesses*, London, 1954, p. 63; Henry D. Traill (ed.), *Social England*, (1896), London, 1904, vol. 5, p. 835.

78. L.G. Mitchell (ed.), *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, London, 1989, vol. 8, 'The French Revolution 1790-1794', p. 1.

79. Charles Praval, *The Rudiments of the French Tongue reduced to Question and Answer for the Use of Beginners*, Dublin, 1802, p. 2.

80. *op. cit.*, 1811, p. 110.

81. The medical model is compelling because the agent and the process are invisible, and the cause is inferred from the effect.

82. O. Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791-1819*, 1984, p. 96.

83. Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, (1814), New York, 1964, p. 13.

84. Hans writes: 'almost every exiled aristocrat ... resorted to giving private lessons as a living.' *op. cit.*, p. 188.

85. *op. cit.*, p. 100.

86. 'Village Politics', More's 'best known work on the French Revolution and the Burke-Paine controversy', excerpt in Prickett, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

87. Bush, among other historians, has noted that the effect of the 'period of intense and sometimes radical social criticism' on the English aristocracy as a ruling class was very limited. *op. cit.*, p. 144.

88. G.T. Clapton and W. Stewart, *Les Etudes Françaises dans l'Enseignement en Grande Bretagne*, Paris, 1929, p. 72.

89. *Female Education, and, how it would be affected by University Examinations*, Paper read at the Social Science Congress, London, 1862.

90. See Cohen, *op. cit.*, 1982. Hans writes: 'the only thing which society required of women of the upper classes was the accomplishments and a smattering of foreign languages'. *op. cit.*, p. 208. The operative word here is 'required'.

91. W. Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, pp. 5-6, 149.

92. *ibid.*, pp. 9, 153, 193.

93. Hannah More, *op. cit.*, London, 1785; John Bennett, *op. cit.*, London, 1787; J.L. Chirol, *op. cit.*, London, 1809.

94. Foucault, *op. cit.*, 1972, p. 190.

95. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 104. More, *op. cit.*, p. 6. It should be pointed out that in the early nineteenth century, the term 'science' also designated the study of Latin grammar and the classical literature.

96. Chirol, *op. cit.*, p. 4. This was a theme which took on increasing importance in the nineteenth century. 'Woman was, by definition, disease or disorder, a deviation from the standard of health represented by the male', writes O. Moscucci, *The Science of Woman: Gynaecology and Gender in England, 1800-1929*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 102.

97. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 107; Chirol, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

98. Burton used the same observation to assert that there were no mental differences between boys and girls. His argument is not more benign than

Bennett's, since it erases the difference which would mark girls' superiority. *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 164.

99. *op. cit.*, pp. 105-6.

100. Chirol, *op. cit.*, p. 16;

101. *ibid.*, p. 274; Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 104. One wonders which birds Bennett looked at since it is usually the male bird that displays the brilliant plumage. Moscucci, *op. cit.*, points out how science - and therefore the use of nature - was used to provide evidence for the allocation of gender roles in society.

102. More used almost the same words: the female mind, she wrote, is not 'capable of attaining so high a degree of perfection in science as the male'. *op. cit.*, p. 6.

103. Browne, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

104. R. Porter, *The Enlightenment*, London, 1990, p. 50. See also Browne, *op. cit.*

105. *op. cit.*, p. 240.

106. Rothblatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 117, 118.

107. *ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

108. Similarly, the construction of the female body as weak, delicate and even permanently ailing, was the condition for the emergence of another set of experts, doctors. See Moscucci, *op. cit.*

109. Chirol, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

110. Cobbe, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 10.

111. That was what the 'bad' governess was teaching her young charge. *Modern Accomplishments or the March of Intellect*, Edinburgh, 1836.

112. *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 800; vol. 7, p. 392.

113. *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 308.

114. *ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 300. Most of the other assistant commissioners criticized parents' attitude to the education of their daughters. Bryce, for example, wrote: 'As to thorough mental training, the formation of intellectual habits and taste, it was not the wish of parents to foster these'. *ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 826.

115. *ibid.*, vol. 5, Q.11476, p. 254. It is however interesting to read how Molly Hughes, who attended the school at that time, remembers those French classes: 'Of all the lessons French was the dullest. It is barely credible to-day that hardly a word of French was spoken ... The bulk of the lesson consisted of so-called translation.' M. Vivian Hughes, *A London Family*, London, 1946, p. 173.

116. See ch. 3 above.

117. *Spectator* No. 135; Wilson, *op. cit.*

118. Abbé Trublet, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

119. Abbé Le Blanc, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

120. Abbé Trublet, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

121. Vol. 8, Jan-June 1753, p. 257.

122. *op. cit.*

123. Swift, 'A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue, *op. cit.*

124. Alexander Jardine, *Letters from Barbary*, London, 1788, vol. 1, pp. 360-363.

125. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History*, (1840), London, 1940, p. 411; See also Vance, *op. cit.*

126. *op. cit.*, 1811, vol. 2, p. 59.

127. Henry Home, *Loose Hints upon Education, Chiefly Concerning the Culture of the Heart*, Edinburgh, 1781, p. 135. Home probably borrowed this phrase from Rousseau's *Émile*.

128. James Fordyce, *op. cit.*, 1770, p. 153.

129. More, *op. cit.*, 1785, p. 135.

130. Thomas Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

131. Thomas Sheridan, *A Rhetorical Grammar of the English Language*, (1781), Menston, 1969, p. 159; Clarendon Commission, Eton evidence, vol. 3. See also Vance, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

132. Jardine, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 268.

133. *ibid.*, pp. 266, 268. See also John Andrews, *op. cit.*, 1785.

134. *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 314.

135. *The Tatler*, No. 21, May 28, 1709.

136. John Andrews, *op. cit.*, 1784, p. 32.

137. More, *op. cit.*, 1811; Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, London, 1796, p. 58.

138. In the eighteenth century, the term conversation also referred to sexual intimacy and commerce. *OED*; see also Johnson's *Dictionary*, *op. cit.*, 1827.

139. R. Porter, 'English Society in the Eighteenth Century Revisited', in J. Black (ed.), *British Politics and Society from Walpole to Pitt 1742-1789*, London, 1990, p. 45. See also *The Ladies Dispensatory*, London, 1748; Laqueur, *op. cit.*; *Boucé*, *op. cit.*

140. See ch. 7 above, the section on 'Women and politeness'.

conclusion

This thesis aimed to discuss two interrelated issues relevant to the teaching of French in English secondary schools: the notion that French is a 'female' language, and its relation to gendered achievement. This has entailed an exploration of wider issues, mapping the relation between masculinity and the emergence of English nationalism. In this concluding discussion, I will rehearse the arguments that led me to follow this complex trajectory.

Since the 1980s, the interrelated issues of the gender of French and gendered achievement have been the object of much discussion and empirical research, the main focus of which has been boys' inferior achievement, and their lack of interest in pursuing the subject to O'level and beyond. There are two major problems with this research. In the first place, it has relied on the assumption of fixed categories 'male' and 'female', of a transcendental 'nature' with specific attributes and abilities. Secondly, though it is concerned, eventually, to redress the gender imbalance in achievement, the interventions this research suggests only serve to perpetuate it. This is because there is a much more fundamental issue involved, the problematization of girls' achievement. This problematization is an integral part of the discourse on achievement. Girls' achievement in French is explained away, so that it is said to be a product of everything except their intellectual ability. Boys' failure too is always attributed to external causes, such as dull teaching methods, or the sex of the teacher. In the case of maths, on the other hand, girls are said to fail because of a lack in them, and boys said to do well because of their intellectual power. The possibility that girls' success and boys' failure might both be due to something in *them* is not envisaged. The discourse on achievement rules out the possibility that boys might be lacking. They are always potentially, if not actually, able. The reverse is the case for girls. Any interventions to redress the gender imbalance in achievement are therefore produced within this discourse: improving girls' performance means changing the girls, since they are lacking what it takes to succeed, but improving boys' means changing the methods of instruction, since it is these which

are failing to produce the conditions for boys' achievement. The issues I wanted to address could not be dealt with by further empirical research, since even feminist counter-research would entail accepting the categories within which the questions had so far been framed.[1] The issue of gendered achievement could not be discussed without first analyzing the very structure of the discourse on achievement.

Nor was a historical approach as such an option, since, as I have shown, conventional histories of education and language teaching both tell their story either by ignoring girls or derogating their learning of French. Not only has this served to produce the story of French as a female language and a female accomplishment, but girls' learning of French has become a metonym for the frivolity and shallowness of female education throughout the ages. This may explain why feminists who have focused on girls' failure in maths have ignored girls' success in French. The very site where one would expect a celebration of girls' achievement is precisely the site where it cannot be spoken of.

This raises serious questions about the possibility of doing objective, empirical research. How can there be claims to 'truth' and to uncovering the 'real', when the framework within which the questions are posed is itself the product of knowledges which have been constituted at particular historical moments? The question was not to find out, once and for all, whether French is 'really' a female language, with all that it implies for gendered take up and achievement, but to find a framework which would enable me to question the silences.

This I found in Michel Foucault's postructuralist approach to history, his genealogy and archaeology. Central to Foucault's thought is the concept of discourse, and the notion that discourse produces positionings. An individual's position is not uniquely determined by being a 'woman', a 'girl', or a 'boy',[2] but is socially and historically produced. Discourses produce positions for subjects, and these positions are likely to be multiple and contradictory. For instance, in eighteenth century England, the discourse and practices of conversation produced multiple and contradictory positionings for women, because their conversation was at one and the same time necessary to polish men's, and dangerous to their masculinity.

Though genealogy does not aim to be a total history and is selective, it demands a vast accumulation of source material. I followed the traces of French and its dispersion over a multiplicity of discourses, and attempted to provide a grid of intelligibility for processes which I, like Joan Scott, found to be so interconnected that they could not be disentangled. An archaeology looks at 'slices in the discursive nexus', and justified my selection of the moments in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which were of specific relevance to my analysis. Because a genealogy 'opposes itself to a search for "origins"',[3] I intended not to trace the ancestry of French in a new perspective, but to map the complex landscape of discourses in which French was embedded since the late seventeenth century. An 'archeo-genealogical' framework enabled me to start with issues in the present and follow their traces in the past while keeping in mind the usefulness of my analysis for interventions in the present. Finally, because genealogy does not seek 'guarantees in "objective reality"',[4] and archaeology is a history of what has been said, it was not my aim to uncover underlying reasons, authentic 'facts' to explain the events on the surface of history, but to describe the play of discourses constituting that history.

Within this framework, gender was my main analytical category. As Scott has argued,[5] gender is not something that can be tagged on, an extra dimension, a mere shift in perspective. Because gender is historically and socially constructed, taking gender into account means rewriting history in terms of the relations of power and the positionings which produce the female as inferior. Thus, the object of my research was not to discover whether French was and always had been a female language, but to find out why such a statement was made at all.

Gender permeates all aspects of the history of learning French in England. Thus, as my thesis has demonstrated, though French was learned by both sexes in the eighteenth century, this knowledge produced different positionings for males and females. Firstly, it was, at that time, more important for males to learn it, for without it, the noble gentleman could not be accomplished. And, whereas perfect fluency and accent were *de rigueur* for the young gentleman, for a young lady to know French 'too

well' might make her suspect of being dangerously influenced by frivolous French fashions. And when a girl's achievement was noted to be superior to that of a boy, it was attributed not to her intellectual ability but to the efficacy of the method of instruction, or to her hard work. Thus, I argued, there has never been a space for the achieving girl. This undermining, or playing down, of girls' achievement has not just served to produce French as a frivolous female accomplishment, but has had a more serious consequence. It has occulted the way gendered abilities have been constructed, with remarkable historical continuity, so as to position females as inferior.

I consider that one of the most important arguments to have emerged from my research is that masculinity and femininity were not constructed as polarities based on the presence of rationality and mind in males and their absence in females.[6] On the contrary, it is masculinity that was produced in absence. It was absence and invisibility that produced the boundless and infinite - or incommensurable - mental powers of the male. And it was precisely the presence, the incontrovertible evidence of their superior abilities, that produced females as lacking. Though the notion that male and female minds have been produced in *difference* is not new, what emerges from my thesis is how this difference was constituted: it was the female mind that generated the space for the superior powers of the male to be produced. The implications of this argument go well beyond suggesting a fresh look at the way achievement is constructed in French classrooms. It provides an historical justification for a substantial reassessment of the way the notion of attainment has been constructed, and thus, of the structure of the discourse on education.

Gender was also embedded in the terms in which the discourse on English national identity was articulated. That identity was masculine. Eighteenth century English anxiety over masculinity has been variously noted.[7] What had not been explored, however, was the way in which English masculinity and identity were constituted by positioning the French as an effeminate Other. Since this was going on at the same time as France, French manners and politeness, and the French language were objects of desire, it was important to describe the contradictory positionings that were produced, and how they were eventually to be resolved. English

versions of French politeness and of the practices of French conversation illustrate how the construction of the French as an effeminate Other was integral to the elaboration of a masculine national identity in *difference*.

The emergence,[89] at the end of the eighteenth century, of a discourse on the sexed mind, by providing the conditions for a shift in the techniques for the construction of the gentleman, made this resolution possible. As long as the English gentleman was produced in conversation, cultivating the tongue was the main technique for perfecting the self. When, as part of the shift implied by the discourse on the sexed mind, the gentleman was to be produced by the disciplining of his mental faculties, the tongue came to be derogated. Because the derogation of the tongue also served to affirm masculine identity, something which had always been enmeshed with constructing the French as effeminate, the tongue became the site on which national as well as gender differences were played out. The inarticulateness of the English gentleman, which, throughout the eighteenth century, had been unfavourably contrasted to the easy conversational fluency of the French nobility of both sexes, and to that of English women, became evidence of his depth of mind. Thus, whereas the tongue of the French was not gendered, English gender difference and national character were finally fused in the taciturn English male. Masculinity and national character were produced in an absence of tongue. This, however, entailed another major shift. For, as the importance assigned to the tongue of the gentleman shifted, so too did the importance of conversation, and therefore, of women's conversation.

I have argued that the emergence of conversation as a technique of self perfection for the male produced a major shift in the discourse on women's voice, since women, who had traditionally been enjoined to silence, became central to the cultivation of men's politeness and conversation. In France, these processes took place in the feminine space of the aristocratic salon, and in England, in what I have termed the 'social' space. Because the social space was integral to eighteenth century sociability, where politeness and conversation were practised, it was also the space where men's masculinity was threatened, because politeness entailed softening, and the conversation of women was held to be

effeminating. Moreover, women's conversation itself was dangerous. Its very brilliance, and the quickness of their tongue made them so powerful that men - slower and less articulate - could be emasculated, just like French men. They were the evidence and the warning.

When the techniques for constructing the gentleman shifted from the cultivation of his tongue to the disciplining of his mental faculties, women's conversation became superfluous. It was this, however, which justified women's learning of French conversation. Though silence was now again vaunted as women's best conversation, the maintainance of difference required that women speak French when men didn't. This shift, ignored in conventional histories of language, also produced a transformation in the learning of French, and unless it is taken into account, the simultaneous devaluation of oral skills in French for males and their increased importance for females cannot be explained. It is this derogation which historians have taken on board, and which has produced French conversation as a superficial accomplishment. But it was not just superficial, it was 'showy', because of its location in the social space.

The social space has many more implications than could be pursued in this thesis. However, in elaborating its link with girls' learning of French, I have illustrated the way education produces multiple and contradictory positionings for women. Education was valued not in relation to the way it accomplished a female, but in relation to the space in which it positioned her. The social space was problematic, because, even when geographically located in the home, it was a space for display. In the eighteenth century, learning and accomplishments which were to be displayed in the social space - rather than in the domestic - were morally suspect; in the nineteenth century, they were, in addition, intellectually suspect. Since speaking French is, by definition, a performance, this was one of the conditions for the emergence of the notion that French conversation is a showy, as well as a superficial accomplishment. The other condition was, of course, the derogation of the tongue.

I have argued that in the nineteenth century, the learning of French became gendered. In effect, French became divorced from its 'Frenchness' and therefore its effeminacy. Englishmen were preferred teachers, since the

object of language learning, for males, was no longer conversational fluency, but mental discipline. French masters were even ridiculed for their 'Frenchness'. Eventually, a boy with a natural French accent could be 'obliged to imitate the manly British accent of his master'.[9] It is the derogation of the tongue that accounts for the problematic status of oral work in French, and the belief, challenged only recently, that boys despised or did not enjoy that aspect of language learning.[10] This also explains how French became a female language. Though it might have been plausible to argue for a slippage from 'effeminate' to 'female', there was no historical necessity or inevitability about it. The relegation of French conversation, of the French tongue, to females, can be said to have 'contaminated' French:[11] not only was it too easy to provide mental discipline, but, since it constructed femininity and the female mind, it was a language that males would not want to speak. It was a 'female language'.

Ever since the nineteenth century, the French tongue has been gendered, and ever since, too, attempts have been made to sever its feminine elements and render it wholly 'masculine'. Indeed, this was the condition that had to be fulfilled if it was to gain enough status to become a subject in the curriculum, a battle played out in the field of gender. French had to be taught 'rigorously' and grammatically, it had to train the mind.[12] However, because its 'daintiness and elegance' were added to the list of its virtues in girls' schools,[13] French, especially 'French conversation', never altogether lost its nineteenth century character of female accomplishment - feminine and therefore easy - at least for girls.

My thesis has thrown a new light on Anglo-French relations in the eighteenth century. It is not that the 'influence' of the French culture on England had never been examined. But it had generally been assumed that cultural elements were merely imported, and, if necessary, translated into English. Nor had the tensions, generated in England by the cultural hegemony of France, been ignored. What had not been explored was the possibility that France and the French had been intricated in the emergence and elaboration of English discourses. It is important here to reiterate the point made earlier, that my research was not based on hitherto unavailable material or archives. As I stated in my introduction,

my sources were the oft used texts of conventional historical, educational, and feminist research. But I read them differently. Within the framework of a genealogy, my analysis could focus on the way discourses are constituted historically, and on the production of historical knowledge itself. A genealogy required that French be situated in its historical and discursive context. French has thus been shown to have been not the unitary, homogeneous object with cohesive inner continuity described by traditional histories, but fragmented, paradoxical, and dispersed over a multiplicity of discourses. The emergence of French as a female language is just one element in a set of discourses which were mainly concerned with the elaboration of English nationalism and the construction of a masculine national character.

A genealogy is a history of the present, and I have argued that my aim was to open up the potential for change by showing that the problems of the present are not contingent but intricately woven into the structuring of discourses since the eighteenth century. The teaching of French today presents problems faced by no other school subject. Its place in the curriculum has always been under scrutiny, and in need of justification. Alan Hornsey was still having to answer 'Why teach a foreign language?', in 1981.[14] My analysis suggests that the difficulty in defining the purpose of teaching French is that it represents an attempt to fuse two contradictory legacies. On the one hand, the eighteenth century celebration of French as a living, spoken language, central to the construction of self. On the other, the fragmentation of French in the nineteenth century, so that its structure and grammar were allocated to males, and its derogated tongue to females. Traces of these two traditions can be discerned in present debates and they are far from being resolved. For, as George Varnava recently put it, the main reason for learning a modern language is to improve oneself as a person, in other words, for the perfection of self.[15] However, in the eighteenth century, this self was male, and in the nineteenth century, it was female. Problems around gender are not a temporary disruption in the smooth path of French. Gender subjectivation has been integral to the learning of French in England since the eighteenth century.

In conclusion, French, which histories of education have termed a 'mere accomplishment' when it was learned by girls, has provided a unique point of entry into the history of education and language learning. Even more importantly, it has proved to be a powerful analytical tool to reassess that history and open up possibilities for interventions. It is hoped that the arguments formulated in this thesis will provide the stimulus not only for historical research, but for a new perspective and different practices around gender in the classroom.

References and footnotes

1. See Walkerdine, *op. cit.*, 1989.

2. Walkerdine, *Schoolgirls' Fictions*, London, 1990, p. 14.

3. Foucault, *op. cit.*, 1984.

4. C. Venn, "The Subject of Psychology', in Henriques *et al.*, *op. cit.*,

p. 125.

5. Scott, *op. cit.*, 1983.

6. See Walkerdine, *op. cit.*, 1989.

7. See for example, Barrell, *op. cit.*, 1989. John Brewer, 'The Eighteenth Century Historian and the Public Sphere', paper read at the joint meeting of the Long Eighteenth Century Society and Economic History of England seminars, Institute of Historical Research, London, June 11, 1992.

8. Emergence, notes Foucault, 'is always produced through a particular stage of forces'. It is not the 'final term of an historical development'. *ibid.*, pp. 148-9.

9. Quoted in Radford, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

10. B. Powell and P. Littlewood, 'Foreign Languages: The Avoidable Option', *The British Journal of Language Teaching*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Winter 1982, pp. 153-160; see however D.E.S., *Boys and Modern Languages*, H.M.I. Inspection Report, London, 1985; Batters, *op. cit.*

11. Henry Sweet noted the belief that modern languages inherently weaken the mind and make it more superficial. *The Practical Study of Languages*, (1899), London, 1964, p. 229.

12. Board of Education, *op. cit.*, 1907, pp. 3-4.

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