Chapter 4: Literacy and Learning

For Further Reading

Because the opportunities for girls to gain basic schooling in reading and writing were so much less than those for boys, discussions of girls' education are often found as brief sections within works focusing on boys. These include the following: Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society 1500–1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain* (London and New York, Longman, 1982); George Huppert, *Public Schools in Renaissance France* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1984); JoAnn Hoeppner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling, 1340–1548: Learning, Literacy and Laicization in Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1985); Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1986); Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Paul F. Grendler, "Education in the Renaissance and Reformation," *Renaissance Quarterly* 43 (1990), 774–824, which also includes an

extensive bibliography; Pavla Miller, *Transformations of Patriarchy in the West, 1500–1900* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1998). The general survey that best integrates the experiences of girls and women is R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern England: Culture and Education 1500–1800*, 2nd ed. (London and New York, Longman, 1988; 2001). Differences between male and female literacy rates have been discussed in David Cressy, "Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530–1730," in Harvey J. Graff (ed.), *Literacy and Social Development in the West: A Reader* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 105–21.

Two books that focus only on women's education in this era are Barbara Whitehead (ed.), *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History 1500–1800* (London, Garland, 1999), and Elizabeth Teresa Howe, *Education and Women in the Early Modern Hispanic World* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2007). Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993), includes discussion of literate women in the early modern period in several chapters. Less formal educational settings have been analyzed in Kenneth Charlton, "'Not publike onely but also private and domesticall': Mothers and Familial Education in Pre-Industrial England," *History of Education* 17 (1988), 1–20, and Celestina Wroth, "'To root the old woman out of our minds': Women Educationists and Plebian Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 48–73.

Divergent ideas about the effects of the Protestant Reformation on women's education may be found in Lowell Green, "The Education of Women in the Reformation," *History*

of Education Quarterly 19 (1979), 93–116, which takes a positive view, and Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in Luther's Germany* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), and Susan Karant-Nunn, "The Reality of Early Lutheran Education: The Electoral District of Saxony – a Case Study," in *Responsibility for the World: Luther's Intentions and Their Effects*, Sonderdruck aus *Lutherjahrbuch* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1990), pp. 128–46, take a more negative view. Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education in Early Modern England* (London, Routledge, 1999), discusses both the opportunities for greater control and for greater freedom that Catholics and Protestants offered women through education, whereas Judith R. Baskin, "Some Parallels in the Education of Medieval Jewish and Christian Women," *Jewish History* 5 (1991), 41–51, compares Jewish and Christian women.

Peter Petschauer has published several articles on women's education in Germany: "Improving Educational Opportunities for Girls in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 3 (1976): 56–62; Christina Dorothea Leporin (Erxleben), Sophia (Gutermann) von la Roche, and Angelika Kauffmann: Background and Dilemmas of Independence," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 15 (1986), 127–44; "Eighteenth-Century German Opinions about Education for Women," *Central European History* 19 (1986), 262–92. Caroline Bowden has addressed several issues regarding women's learning in England: "Women as Intermediaries: An Example of the Use of Literacy in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *History of Education* 22 (1993); "Parental Attitudes Towards the Education of Girls in Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century England," in Jeroen Dekker et al. (eds.), *Education and Cultural*

Transmission: Developments in Europe and International Trends Since Early Modern Times, Paedagogica Historica, Supplementary Series vol. 2 (Ghent, 1996). On women's education in France, see Patrick Harrigan, "Women Teachers and the Schooling of Girls in France: Recent Historiographical Trends," *French Historical Studies* 21, no. 4 (Fall 1998), 593–610, with a response by Sharif Gemie, "Institutional History, Social History, Women's History: A Comment on Patrick Harrigan's 'Women teachers and the schooling of girls in France," *French Historical Studies* 22, no. 4 (Fall 1999), 613–23; Marshall B. Jones, "Behavioral Contagion and the Rise of Convent Education in France," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31, no. 4 (Spring 2001), 489–521.

Books that address the issue of reading material for girls and women include Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, Methuen, 1981); Suzanne Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475–1640* (San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, 1982), and Cornelia Niekus Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror: Reading Material for German Girls in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, 36 (Wiesbaden, Harrasowitz, 1987). Jacqueline Pearson, *Women and Literature in Britain 1500–1700* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996); Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender and Literacy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2006), place women's reading practices into the story of the growth of literacy. Juliet Fleming provides a fascinating discussion of early dictionaries for women in "Dictionary English and the Female Tongue" (pp. 175–204) and Mary Erler of female book ownership in "The Books

and Lives of Three Tudor Women," (pp. 5–18), both in Jean R. Brink (ed.), *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England*, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, vol. 23 (Kirksville, MO, Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1993). Cornelia Niekus-Moore looks at women's independent reading in "The Quest for Consolation and Amusement: Reading Habits of German Women in the Seventeenth Century," in Lynne Tatlock (ed.), *The Graph of Sex and the German Text: Gendered Culture in Early Modern Germany* (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1994), as does Mary Ellen Lamb, "The Agency of the Split Subject: Lady Anne Clifford and the Uses of Reading," *ELR (English Literary Renaissance)* 22, no. 3 (1992), 347–68. On novels, see Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origin of the Novel in France* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1991); Catherine Labio, "'What's in fashion vent': Behn, La Fayette, and the Market for Novels and Novelty," *Journal of Medieval & Early Modern Studies* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1998), 119–39; Katherine Binhammer, "The Persistence of Reading: Governing Female Novel-Reading in Memoirs of Emma Courtney and Memoirs of Modern Philosophers," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2003), 1–22. On other types of reading material favored by women, see Sandra Sherman, "'The whole art and mystery of cooking': What Cookbooks Taught Readers in the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2004), 115–35; Reed Benhamou, "Fashion in the Mercure: From Human Foible to Female Failing," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31, no. 1 (Fall 1997), 27–43; Catherine M. Sama, "Liberty, Equality, Frivolity!: An Italian Critique of Fashion Periodicals," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2004), 389–414. Margaret Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003) traces

debates about female literacy and empire in the works of female writers such as Marguerite de Navarre, Christine de Pizan, Elizabeth Cary, and Aphra Behn, as well as male writers such as Shakespeare, Rabelais, and Wyatt.

Margaret King has highlighted the ambiguous position of Italian humanist women in *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991) and *Humanism, Venice, and Women: Essays on the Italian Renaissance* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2005). She and Albert Rabil have also edited a collection of original sources, *Her Immaculate Hand: Selected Works by and about the Women Humanists of Quattrocento Italy* (Binghamton, Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, SUNY at Binghamton, 1983). Diana Robin, *Publishing Women: Salons, the Presses, and the Counter-Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2007), analyzes the development and influence of groups of educated women in Italian cities, and Jane Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender and Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), provides a comprehensive study of women who wrote in Latin. On French humanist women, see Kendall B. Tarte, “Early Modern Literary Communities: Madeleine Des

Roches's City of Women," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2004), 751–70, Patricia Francis Cholakian and Rouben Cholakian, *Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), and Julie Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2006).

Other discussions of women and humanism include Norma McMullen, "The Education of English Gentlewomen 1540–1640," *History of Education* 6 (1977), 87–101; Alice T. Friedman, "The Influence of Humanism on the Education of Girls and Boys in Tudor England," *History of Education Quarterly* 25 (1985), 57–70; Retha M. Warnicke, "Women and Humanism in England," in Albert Rabil, Jr. (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy, vol.2: Humanism beyond Italy.* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); Joan Gibson, "Educating for Silence: Renaissance Women and the Language Arts," *Hypatia* 4 (1989), 9–27; Ann Rosalind Jones, "Contentious Readings: Urban Humanism and Gender Difference in La Puce de Madame Des-Roches (1582)," *Renaissance Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 109–28; Nancy Virtue, "*Le Sainct Esperit. . . parlast par sa bouche*: Maguerite de Navarre's evangelical revision of the *Chastelaine de Vergi," Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997), 811–24; A. D. Cousins, "Humanism, Female Education, and Myth: Erasmus, Vives, and More's To Candidus," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 2 (April 2004), 213–30; Margaret L. King, "Petrarch, Self-Conscious Self, and the First Women Humanists," *Journal of Medieval & Early Modern Studies* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2005), 537–58.

The University of Chicago Press series, The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe, edited by Margaret King and Albert Rabil, Jr., has published a number of translations of works

by many Continental women writers. Included among these are works by several learned women discussed in this chapter: Laura Cereta, *Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist*, ed. and trans. Diana Robin (1997); Cassandra Fedele, *Letters and Orations*, ed. and trans. Diana Robin (1997); Anna Maria van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated and Other Writing from Her Intellectual Circle*, ed. and trans. Joyce L. Irwin. (1998); Olympia Morata, *The Complete Writings of an Italian Heretic*, ed. and trans. Holt N. Parker (2003); Elisabetta Caminer Turra, *Selected Writings of an Eighteenth-Century Venetian Woman of Letters*, ed. and trans. Catherine M. Sama (2003); Isotta Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, ed. and trans. Margaret L. King and Diana Robin (2004); Maria Gaetana Agnesi, et al., *The Contest for Knowledge: Debates over Women's Learning in Eighteenth-Century Italy*, trans. Rebecca Messbarger and Paula Findlen (2005); Madeleine and Catherine des Roches, *From Mother and Daughter*, ed. and trans. Anne R. Larsen (2006).

Learned women have been the focus of several essay collections, including that of Labalme, noted earlier, and Jean R. Brink, *Female Scholars: A Tradition of Learned Women before 1800* (Montreal, Eden University Women's Publications, 1980). Una Birch, *Anna van Schurman: Artist, Scholar, Saint* (London, Longman, 1909), Joyce Irwin, "Anna Maria van Schurman: From Feminism to Pietism," *Church History* 46 (1977), 48–62, and Mirjam de Baar, et al. (eds.), *Choosing the Better Part: Anna Maria*

van Schurman (1607–1678) (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic, 1996) discuss the life and ideas of this most unusual woman.

Women's proposals for institutions of higher education have been discussed in Bridget Hill, "A Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery," *Past and Present* 117 (1987), 107–30, and Moira Ferguson, *First Feminists: British Women Writers 1578–1799* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985). The bibliography following Chapter 5 includes further sources about learned women, especially women writers.

Stephen Kolsky, *Courts and Courtiers in Renaissance Northern Italy* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2003), explores gender in the world of the courts, as does Sharon Kettering, "The Household Service of Early Modern French Noblewomen," French Historical Studies 20, no. 1 (Winter 1997), 55–85; Rudolf Dekker, "Sexuality, Elites, and Court Life in the Late Seventeenth Century: The Diaries of Constantijn Huygens, Jr.," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 23, no. 3 (November 1999), 94–109; Gregory Brown, "Leibniz's Endgame and the Ladies of the Courts," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 1 (January 2004), 75–100.

Women and the salons have seen a number of new analyses in the last few years. Joining Caroline Lougee's classic *Les Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1976), are now Steven Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), and Faith E. Beasley, *Salons, History, and the Creation of Seventeenth-Century France* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2006). Articles on salons in France include Katherine

Clinton, “Femme et Philosophe: Enlightenment Origins of Feminism,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 8 (1975), 283–99; Evelyn Gordon Bodek, “Salonières and Bluestockings: Educated Obsolescence and Germinating Feminism,” *Feminist Studies* 3 (1976), 185–99; Dena Goodman, “Enlightened Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 22 (1989), 329–50, and “Filial Rebellion in the Salon: Madame Geoffrin and Her Daughter,” *French Historical Studies* 16 (1989), 28–47; Deborah Heller, “Bluestocking Salons and the Public Sphere,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22, no. 2 (May 1998), 59–82; Jolanta T. Pekacz, “The Salonnieres and the Philosophies in Old Regime France: The Authority of Aesthetic Judgment,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60, no. 2 (April 1999), 277–97; Steven D. Kale, “Women, Salons, and the State in the Aftermath of the French Revolution,” *Journal of Women’s History,* Special Issue on Women and the State 13, no. 4 (Winter 2002), 54–80; Steven D. Kale, “Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2002), 115–48.

Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation* (New York, New York Review Books, 2005), Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, (eds.), *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2005), and Robin, *Publishing Women* (noted earlier) consider salons in other parts of Europe. Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1994); Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2001); and Elizabeth Eger et al. (eds.), *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700–1815*

(Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), consider the issue of the women and the public sphere more broadly.

Women's patronage, like their schooling, is often mentioned briefly in general discussions of mostly male patrons, and is also beginning to get more comprehensive treatment, especially for Italy but increasingly for other parts of Europe as well. For Italy, see D. Marrow, *The Art Patronage of Maria de'Medici*. Studies in Baroque Art History, 4 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982); Carolyn Valone, "Roman Matrons as Patrons: Various Views of the Cloister Wall," in Craig Monson (ed.), *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion and the Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 49–72, and "Piety and Patronage: Women and the Early Jesuits," in Ann Matter and John Coakley, *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); M. Dunn, "Piety and Patronage in Seicento Rome: Two Noblewomen and Their Convents," *Art Bulletin* 76 (1994), 644–63; Catherine King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Italy c. 1300–1550* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998); Sheryl E. Reiss and David G. Wilkins (eds.), *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy,* Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies (Kirksville, MO, Truman State University Press, 2001); Carolyn Valone, "Mothers and Sons: Two Paintings for San Bonaventura in Early Modern Rome," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 108–32; Konrad Eisenbichler (ed.), *The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo: Duchess of Florence and Siena* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2004); Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Patronage in Early Modern Florence* (Chicago, University of Chicago

Press, 2006); Katherine A. McIver, *Women, Art and Architecture in Northern Italy, 1520–1580: Negotiating Power* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2006).

For France, see Sharon Kettering, "The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen," *Historical Journal* 32 (1989), 817–41; Sheila ffolliott, "A Queen's Garden of Power: Catherine de Medici and the Locus of Female Rule," in Mario Di Cesare (ed.), *Reconsidering the Renaissance* (Binghamton, State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 245–55; Sara Chapman, "Patronage as Family Economy: The Role of Women in the Patron-Client Network of the Phelypeaux de Pontchartrain Family, 1670–1715," *French Historical Studies* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2001), 11–35. For England, see Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Bluestocking Sisters: Women's Patronage, Millenium Hall, and 'The Visible Providence of a Country'," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2006), 25–55. One of the few studies that looks at eastern Europe is Lucienne Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2007).

Essay collections bring together many perspectives on women's patronage and creativity: Craig Monson (ed.), *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion and the Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1992); Cynthia Lawrence (ed.), *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe: Patrons, Collectors, and Connoisseurs* (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Ann Matter and John Coakley, *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia, University

of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Helen Hills (ed.), *Architecture and the Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2003).

Web Sites

Other Women's Voices. Web site developed and maintained by Dorothy Disse, containing introductions to more than 100 pre-eighteenth-century women authors from around the world, including excerpts of works and references to print and online editions. Includes about fifty women from Europe 1450–1700, who originally wrote in several different languages. Many of the female humanists and learned women discussed in this chapter are among the women included on this site.

http://home.infionline.net/~ddisse/

Original Sources

1. Leonardo Bruni, Letter to Lady Baptista Malatesta, 1405

Humanism was an intellectual movement that admired the works of ancient Greeks and Romans for both their content and style and so advocated the study of classical literature as the best type of learning. Humanists viewed an education in the classics as the best preparation for a political career as either a ruler or adviser, for it taught one how to argue persuasively, base decisions on historical examples, write effectively, and speak eloquently. This emphasis on the public role and reputation of the educated individual led to questions about whether humanist education was appropriate for women. In general, male humanists thought that some level of classical education was acceptable for women, although they advocated a narrower range of subjects than offered to men. In this letter

to the daughter of the duke of Urbino, a supporter of humanist education, Leonardo Bruni, a prominent Florentine humanist, lays out the authors and subjects appropriate for women. The entire letter can be found at: http://history.hanover.edu/texts/bruni.html.

In some branches of knowledge I would rather restrain the ardour of the learner, in others, again, encourage it to the uttermost. Thus there are certain subjects in which, whilst a modest proficiency is on all accounts to be desired, a minute knowledge and excessive devotion seem to be a vain display. For instance, subtleties of Arithmetic and Geometry are not worthy to absorb a cultivated mind, and the same must be said of Astrology. You will be surprised to find me suggesting (though with much more hesitation) that the great and complex art of Rhetoric should be placed in the same category. My chief reason is the obvious one, that I have in view the cultivation most fitting to a woman. To her neither the intricacies of debate nor the oratorical artifices of action and delivery are of the least practical use, if indeed they are not positively unbecoming. Rhetoric in all its forms—public discussion, forensic argument, logical fence, and the like—lies absolutely outside the province of woman.

What Disciplines then are properly open to her? In the first place she has before her, as a subject peculiarly her own, the whole field of religion and morals. The literature of the Church will thus claim her earnest study. Such a writer, for instance, as St Augustine affords her the fullest scope for reverent yet learned inquiry. Her devotional instinct may lead her to value the help and consolation of holy men now living; but in this case let her not for an instant yield to the impulse to look into their writings, which, compared with those of Augustine, are utterly destitute of sound and melodious style, and

seem to me to have no attraction whatever.

Moreover, the cultivated Christian lady has no need in the study of this weighty subject to confine herself to ecclesiastical writers. Morals, indeed, have been treated of by the noblest intellects of Greece and Rome. What they have left to us upon Continence, Temperance, Modesty, Justice, Courage, Greatness of Soul, demands your sincere respect. You must enter into such questions as the sufficiency of Virtue to Happiness; or whether, if Happiness consist in Virtue, it can be destroyed by torture, imprisonment or exile; whether, admitting that these may prevent a man from being happy, they can be further said to make him miserable. Again, does Happiness consist (with Epicurus) in the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain: or (with Xenophon) in the consciousness of uprightness: or (with Aristotle) in the practice of Virtue? These inquiries are, of all others, most worthy to be pursued by men and women alike; they are fit material for formal discussion and for literary exercise. Let religion and morals, therefore, hold the first place in the education of a Christian lady.

But we must not forget that true distinction is to be gained by a wide and varied range of such studies as conduce to the profitable enjoyment of life, in which, however, we must observe due proportion in the attention and time we devote to them.

First amongst such studies I place History: a subject which must not on any account be neglected by one who aspires to true cultivation. For it is our duty to understand the origins of our own history and its development; and the achievements of Peoples and of Kings.

For the careful study of the past enlarges our foresight in contemporary affairs and affords to citizens and to monarchs lessons of incitement or warning in the ordering of public policy. From History, also, we draw our store of examples of moral precepts.

2. Isotta Nogarola, *Of the equal or unequal sin of Adam and Eve,* 1453

Despite the reservations of male humanists, a few women began to gain a humanist education through tutors or programs of self-study. They argued in letters and then in published writings that women were capable of advanced learning and that they could indeed be both eloquent and chaste. Several put this assertion into practice, writing and reciting public orations in Latin and Greek, and circulating their letters, both common practices for male humanists. Isotta Nogarola (1418–66), educated in Latin by a tutor, gave several public orations that combined biblical and classical allusions and circulated her correspondence. This is from her major work, which she couched in the form of a dialogue between herself and Ludovico Foscarini, a Venetian diplomat. It is taken from Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil, Jr., Her Immaculate Hand, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies (SUNY Binghampton, 1983). More of the dialogue can be found on-line at:* http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/book-sum/imaculat.html. More on Nogarola can be found online at: http://home.infionline.net/~ddisse/nogarola.html.

Eve sinned out of ignorance and inconstancy, and hence you contend that she sinned more gravely, because the ignorance of those things which we are obligated to know does not excuse us, since it is written: “He who does not know will not be known.” I would concede your point if that ignorance were crude or affected. But Eve’s ignorance

was implanted by nature, of which nature God himself is the author and founder. In many people it is seen that he who knows less sins less, like a boy sins less than an old man or a peasant less than a noble. such a person does not need to know explicitly what is required for salvation, but simplicity, because [for him] faith alone suffices. The question of inconstancy proceeds similarly. for when it is said that the acts which proceed from inconstancy are more blameworthy, [that kind of] inconstancy is understood which is not innate but the product of character and sins.

The same is true of imperfection. For when gifts increase, greater responsibility is imposed. When God created man, form the beginning he created him perfect, and the powers of his soul perfect, and gave him a greater depth of wisdom. Thus it was that the Lord led to Adam all the animals of the earth and the birds of heaven, so that Adam could call them by their names. For God said, “Let us make mankind in our image and likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, the cattle, over all the wild animals and every creature that crawls on the earth,” making clear his own perfection. But of the woman he said: “It is not good that the man is alone. I will make him a helper like himself.” And since consolation and joy are requirements for happiness, and since no one can have solace and joy when alone, it appears that God created woman for man’s consolation. For the good spreads itself, and the greater it is the more it shares itself. Therefore, it appears that Adam’s sin was greater than Eve’s. [As] Ambrose [says]: “In him to whom a more indulgent liberality has been shown is insolence more inexcusable.”

“But Adam’s companion,” [you argue], “is not excused because Adam was appointed to protect her, because thieves who have been trustingly employed by a

householder are not punished with the most severe punishment like strangers or those in whom the householder placed no confidence." This is true, however, in temporal law, but not in divine law, for divine justice proceeds differently from temporal justice in punishing [sin.]

[You argue further that] "the fragility of the woman was not the cause of sin, but rather her inordinate appetite for seeking that which was not suited to her nature," which [appetite] is the product, as you write, of pride. Yet it is clearly less a sin to desire the knowledge of good and evil than to transgress against a divine commandment, since the desire for knowledge is a natural thing, and all men by nature desire to know. And even if the first impulse of sin] were this inordinate appetite, which cannot be without sin, yet it is more tolerable than the sin of transgression, for the observance of the commandments is the road which leads to the country of salvation. [It is written]: "But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" and likewise: "What shall I do to gain eternal life? Keep the commandments." And transgression is particularly born of pride, because pride is nothing other than rebellion against divine rule, exalting oneself above what is permitted according to divine rule, by disdaining the will of God and displacing it with one's own. Thus Augustine [writes] in *On nature and Grace*: "Sin is the will to pursue or retain what justice forbids, that is, to deny what God wishes." Ambrose agrees with in his *On Paradise*: "Sin is the transgression against divine law and disobedience to the heavenly commandments." Behold! See that the transgression against and disobedience to the heavenly commandments is the greatest sin, whereas you have thus defined sin: "Sin is the inordinate desire to know." Thus clearly the sin of transgression against a command is greater than [the sin of] desiring the knowledge of good and evil. so even if

inordinate desire be a sin, as with Eve, yet she did not desire to be like God in power but only in the knowledge of good and evil, which by nature she was actually inclined to desire.

3. Laura Cereta, Letter to Bibulus Sempronius, 13 January 1488

Laura Cereta (1469–99), a middle-class urban woman born in Brescia, Italy, was educated through her father's tutoring and her own reading. She corresponded and met with humanist scholars in the area around Brescia. In 1488, a Latin manuscript of Cereta's Epistolae familiares, *containing eighty-two letters and a mock funeral oration in the classical style, circulated in many Italian cities. In this letter, addressed to a fictional correspondent or someone to whom she gave a silly nickname (*Bibolo *can mean "tippler"), she defends women's education forcefully. Source: "Laura Cereta to Bibolo Semproni: Defense of the Liberal Instruction of Women," in Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr. (eds.),* Her Immaculate Hand *(Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies (SUNY Binghampton, 1983).*

My ears are wearied by your carping. You brashly and publicly not merely wonder but indeed lament that I am said to possess as fine a mind as nature ever bestowed upon the most learned man. You seem to think that so learned a woman has scarely before been seen in the world. You are wrong on both counts, Sempronius, and have clearly strayed from the path of truth and disseminate falsehood. I agree that you should be grieved, indeed, you should be ashamed, for you have ceased to be a living man, but have become an animated stone; having rejected the studies which make men

wise, you rot in torpid leisure. Not nature but your own soul has betrayed you, deserting virtue for the easy path of sin.

You pretend to admire me as a female prodigy, but there lurks sugared deceit in your adulation. Yu wait perpetually in ambush to entrap my lovely sex, and overcome by your hatred seek to trample me underfoot and dash me to the earth. It is a crafty ploy, but only a low and vulgar mind would think to halt Medusa with honey.. . .

I would have been silent, believe me, if that savage old enmity of yours had attacked me alone.. . . But I cannot tolerate your having attacked my entire sex. For this reason my thirsty soul seeks revenge, my sleeping pen is aroused to literary struggle, raging anger stirs mental passions long chained by silence. With just cause I am moved to demonstrate how great a reputation for learning and virtue women have won by their inborn excellence, manifested in every age as knowledge, the [purveyor] of honor. Certain, indeed, and legitimate is our possession of this inheritance, come to us from a long eternity of ages past.. . .

[A long list of learned women and female scholars from history follows.]

Lesbian Sappho serenaded the stony heart of her lover with tearful poems, sounds I might have thought came from Orpheus' lyre or the plectrum of Phoebus. Soon the Greek tongue of Leontium, full of the Muses, emerged, and she, who had made herself agreeable with the liveliness of her writing, dared to make a bitter attack on the divine words of Theophrastus. Nor would I omit her Proba, noted both for her exceptional tongue and her knowledge; for she wove together and composed histories of the Old Testament with fragments from Homer and Virgil.

The majesty of the Roman state deemed worthy a little Greek woman, Semiramis,

for she spoke her mind about the laws in a court of law and about kings in the senate. Pregnant with virtue, Rome bore Sempronia, who, forceful in her eloquent poetry, spoke in public assemblies and filled the minds of her audiences with persuasive orations. Hortensia, the daughter of Hortensius, and also an orator, was celebrated at a public meeting with equal elegance. Her grace of speech was so great the she persuaded the triumvirs, albeit with the tears of a loyal mother, to absolve the women of Rome from having to pay the debt levied against them. Add also Cornificia, the sister of the poet Cornificius, whose devotion to literature bore such a fruit that she was said to have been nurtured on the milk of the Castalian Muses and who wrote epigrams in which every phrase was graced with Heliconian flowers. I will not mention here Cicero's daughter Tulliola or Terentia or Cornelia, Roman women who reached the pinnacle of fame for their learning; and accompanying them in the shimmering light of silence will be Nicolosa of Bologna, Isotta of Verona, and Cassandra of Venice.

All history is full of such examples. My point is that your mouth has grown foul because you keep it sealed so that no arguments can come out of it that might enable you to admit that nature imparts one freedom to all human beings equally—to learn. But the question of my exceptionality remains. And here choice alone, since it is the arbiter of character, is the distinguishing factor. For some women worry about the styling of their hair, the elegance of their clothes, and the pearls and other jewelry they wear on their fingers. Others love to say cute little things, to hide their feelings behind a mask of tranquility, to indulge in dancing, and lead pet dogs around on a leash. For all I care, other women can long for parties with carefully appointed tables, for the peace of mind of sleep, or they can yearn to deface with paint the pretty face they see reflected in their

mirrors, But those women for whom the quest for the good represents a higher value restrain their young spirits and ponder better plans. They harden their bodies with sobriety and toil, they control their tongues, they carefully monitor what they hear, they ready their minds for all-night vigils, and they rouse their minds for the contemplation of probity in the case of harmful literature. For knowledge is not given as a gift but by study. For a mind free, keen, and unyielding in the face of hard work always rises to the good, and the desire for learning grows in the depth and breadth.

So be it therefore. May we women, then, not be endowed by God the grantor with any giftedness or rare talent through any sanctity of our own. Nature has granted to all enough of her bounty; she opens to all the gates of choice, and through these gates, reason sends legates to the will, for it is through reason that these legates transmit desires. I shall make a bold summary of the matter. Yours is the authority, ours is the inborn ability. But instead of manly strength, we women are naturally endowed with cunning, instead of a sense of security, we are naturally suspicious. Down deep we women are content with our lot. But you, enraged and maddened by the anger of the dog from whom you flee, are like someone who has been frightened by the attack of a pack of wolves. The victor does not look for the fugitive; nor does she who desires a cease-fire with the enemy conceal herself. Nor does she set up camp with courage and arms when the conditions are hopeless. Nor does it give the strong any pleasure to pursue one who is already fleeing.

Hold on! Does my name alone terrify you? As I am not a barbarian in intellect and do not fight like one, what fear drives you? You flee in vain, for traps craftily-laid rout you out of every hiding place. Do you think that by hiding, a deserter [from the field

of battle], you can remain undiscovered? A penitent, do you seek the only path of salvation in flight? [If you do] you should be ashamed.

I have been praised too much; showing your contempt for women, you pretend that I alone am admirable because of the good fortune of my intellect. But I, compared to other women who have won splendid renown, am but a little mousling. You disguise your envy in dissimulation, but cloak yourself in apologetic words in vain. The lie buried, the truth, dear to God, always emerges. You stumble half-blind with envy on a wrongful path that leads you from your manhood, from your duty, from God. Who, do you think, will be surprised, Bibulus, if the stricken heart of an angry girl, whom your mindless scorn has painfully wounded, will after this more violently assault your bitter words? Do you suppose, O most contemptible man on earth, that I think myself sprung from the head of Jove? I am a school girl, possessed of the sleeping embers of an ordinary mind. Indeed I am too hurt, and my mind, offended, too swayed by passions, sighs, tormenting itself, conscious of the obligation to defend my self. For absolutely everything—that which is within us and that which is without—is made weak by association with my sex.

I, therefore, who have always prized virtue, having put my private concerns aside, will polish and weary my pen against chatterboxes swelled with false glory. Trained in the arts, I shall block the paths of ambush. And I shall endeavor, by avenging arms, to sweep away the abusive infamies of noisemakers with which some disreputable and impudent men furiously, violently, and nastily rave against a woman and a republic worthy of reverence.

4. Cassandra Fedele, *In Gymnasio Patavino pro Bertucio Lamberto,* 1487

Cassandra Fedele (1465–1558) was taught Latin and Greek by her humanist father and later studied classical literature and rhetoric with tutors. A child prodigy, she received invitations to present orations to groups of learned men. One of these was an oration in Latin at the University of Padua in honor of her (male) cousin's graduation. The excerpt that follows comes from Cassandra Fedele, Letters and Orations*, edited and translated by Diana Robin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). More information and quotations can be found online at:* http://home.infionline.net/~ddisse/fedele.html.

Gracious fathers, officers of the academy, and gentlemen worthy of the highest honor, if it were fitting for me to be afraid . . ., I would stutter and stammer, and I would gradually lose my composure. But I know that my coming here is fitting, though it is by no means very brave. So let the fear end here.

I am well aware that many of you may think it outrageous that I, a young girl to whom higher learning is denied, would come before an assembly of men so learned and so luminous and not worry about my sex or talent for speaking, especially in this city where the liberal arts are flourishing now as they once did in Athens.. . .

I have dared to come here to speak relying on your great gentility and leniency, which, I trust, will allow you to forgive me if I should speak inelegantly and unintelligently. Indeed, there is such power in this particular virtue of yours that I hold it as proof that you are endowed with all the other virtues.

5. Louise Labé, Letter to Mademoiselle Clemence de Bourges, 1555

Louise Labé (1520?–66) was a middle-class French woman born in Lyon, an important

cultural center. She received a solid humanist education through the efforts of her father, and wrote sonnets and other types of poetry. In 1555, she published a book of her poetry, which also contained a prose work, the "Debate between Folly and Love." This work contained a dedicatory letter to a local noblewoman who may have been Labé's patron, in which Labé urges women to show off their learning and not restrict themselves to a domestic setting. This translation is from Katharina M. Wilson (ed.), Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation (*Athens and London, University of Georgia Press, 1987). More selections from Labé's works can be found online at:* http://home.infionline.net/~ddisse/labe.html#anchor305404.

The time having come, Mademoiselle, when the stern laws of men no longer bar women from devoting themselves to the sciences and disciplines, it seems to me that those who are able ought to employ this honorable liberty, which our sex formerly desired so much, in studying these things and show men the wrong they have done us in depriving us of the benefit and the honor which might have come to us. And if anyone reaches the stage at which she is able to put her ideas into writing, she should do it with much thought and should not scorn the glory, but adorn herself with this rather than with chains, rings, and sumptuous clothes, which we are not really able to regard as ours except by custom. But the honor which knowledge will bring us cannot be taken from us—not by the cunning of a thief, not by the violence of enemies, not by the duration of time.

If I had been so blessed by heaven as to have a mind great enough to understand whatever it desired, I would furnish an example in this regard rather than an admonition.

But having spent part of my youth in the practice of music and having found the time remaining to me too brief for the rude nature of my understanding, not being able myself to do justice to the goodwill I bear for our sex—to see it not only in beauty but in knowledge and eminence surpass or equal men—I cannot do otherwise than beg excellent Ladies to raise their minds a little above their distaffs and spindles and to exert themselves to make it clear to the world that, if we are not to command, we ought not to be disdained as companions in domestic and public affairs by those who govern and command obedience.

And in addition to the recognition that our sex will gain by this, we will have furnished the public with a reason for men to devote more study and labor to the humanities lest they might be ashamed to see us surpass them when they have always pretended to be superior in nearly everything.

For this reason, we must inspire one another in so worthy an undertaking from which you should not spare your intellect, already accompanied by many different graces, nor your youth and other favors of fortune, to acquire the honor which literature and the sciences are accustomed to bring those persons who follow them.

If there is something worthy of respect after glory and honor, the pleasure which literary study usually gives us ought to move everyone of us to action. This pleasure is distinct from other diversions. When one has indulged in them for as long as one wants, one cannot boast of anything except having passed the time. But study rewards us with pleasure all its own which remains with us longer. For the pat delights us and serves us better than the present, but the pleasures of the senses are immediately lost and never return, and sometimes the memory of them is as disagreeable as the acts were delectable.

Moreover, the other sensual pleasures are such that whatever memory of them comes to us cannot put us back in the frame of mind we were in. And however strong the impression of them we have fixed in our minds, we know well that it is nothing but a shadow of the past which deceives and betrays us. But when we put our thoughts into writing, even if afterwards our minds race through no end of distractions and are constantly agitated, nevertheless, returning much later to what we have written, we find ourselves at the same point and in the same state of mind we were in before. then we redouble our happiness, because we regain the past pleasure we had in what we were writing, or in understanding the sciences to which we were devoting ourselves. Furthermore, the judgment which our second impression makes of the first gives us a singular satisfaction.

These two advantages which come from writing ought to spur you on, assured as you are that the first will not fail to accompany what you write, as it does all your other actions and your way of life. The second will be yours to take or refuse, depending on whether your writing please you.

As for me, in writing these works of my youth to begin with, and after reviewing them later, I did not seek anything but an honorable pastime and a way to escape idleness, and I did not intend that anyone other than myself should ever see them. but since some of my friends found a way to read them without my knowing anything about it, and (thus we easily believe those who praise us) since they have persuaded me that I should bring them to light, I was not so bold as to refuse them. But I did threaten to make them drink half the measure of shame which would be the result.

And because women do not willingly appear alone in public, I have chosen you to

serve as my guide, dedicating this little work to you. I do not send it to you for any purpose other than to assure you of the goodwill I have borne you for a long time and to make you, seeing this roughly and badly written work of mine, long to create another which might be more polished and more elegant.

God keep you in good health.

From Lyon, July 24, 1555

Your humble friend,

Louise Labé

6. Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Heptameron,* 1558

Marguerite Angoulême was the sister of Francis I, king of France, and the wife of Henry II. She gained an excellent humanist education, learning Latin and Greek, and later supported humanist writers (including Rabelais) and religious reformers. She wrote poems and plays and a collection of intertwined short stories, some humorous and some serious. She originally intended to write 100 stories, as Boccaccio had in the Decameron *but died before this was completed. After her death, the stories were published as the* Heptameron. *This is one of the earlier, shorter stories; the entire* Heptameron *can be found at:* http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/navarre/heptameron/heptameron-1.html#N6.

NOVEL VI.

Stratagem by which a woman enabled her gallant to escape, when her husband,

who was blind of an eye, thought to surprise them together.

CHARLES, the last Duke of Alençon, had an old valet-de-chambre who was blind of an eye, and who was married to a woman much younger than himself. The duke and duchess liked this valet better than any other domestic of that order in their household, and the consequence was that he could not go and see his wife as often as he could have wished, whilst she, unable to accommodate herself to circumstances, so far forgot her honor and her conscience as to fall in love with a young gentleman of the neighborhood. At last the affair got wind, and there was so much talk about it, that it reached the ears of the husband, who could not believe it, so warm was the affection testified to him by his wife. One day, however, he made up his mind to know the truth of the matter, and to revenge himself if he could on the person who put this affront upon him. With this view he pretended to go for two or three days to a place at some little distance; and no sooner had he taken his departure, than his wife sent for her gallant. They had hardly been half an hour together when the husband came and knocked loudly at the door. The wife knowing but too well who it was, told her lover, who was so astounded that he could have wished he was still in his mother's womb. But while he was swearing and confounding her and the intrigue which had brought him into such a perilous scrape, she told him not to be uneasy, for she would get him off without its costing him anything; and that all he had to do was to dress himself as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile the husband kept knocking and calling to his wife as loud as he could bawl, but she pretended not to know him. "Why don't you get up," she cried to the people of the house, "and go and silence those who are making such a noise at the door? Is this a

proper time to come to honest people's houses? If my husband was here he would make you know better." The husband, hearing her voice, shouted louder than ever. "Let me in, wife; do you mean to keep me at the door till daylight?" At last, when she saw that her lover was ready to slip out, "Oh, is that you, husband?" she said; "I am so glad you are come! I was full of a dream I had that gave me the greatest pleasure I ever felt in my life. I thought you had recovered the sight of your eye." Here she opened the door, and catching her husband round the neck, kissed him, clapped one hand on his sound eye, and asked him if he did not see better than usual. Whilst the husband was thus blindfolded the gallant made his escape. The husband guessed how it was, but said "I will watch you no more, wife. I thought to deceive you, but it is I who have been the dupe, and you have put the cunningest trick upon me that ever was invented. God mend you! for it passes the act of man to bring back a wicked woman from her evil ways by any means short of putting her to death. But since the regard I have had for you has not availed to make you behave better, perhaps the contempt with which I shall henceforth look upon you will touch you more, and have a more wholesome effect." Therefore he went away, leaving her in great confusion. At last, however, he was prevailed upon by the solicitations of relations and friends, and by the tears and excuses of his wife, to cohabit with her again.

You see from this example, ladies, with what adroitness a woman can get herself out of a scrape. If she is prompt at finding an expedient to conceal a bad deed, I believe she would be still more prompt and ingenious in discovering means to hinder herself from doing a good one; for, as I have heard say, good wit is always the stronger.

7. Mary Astell, ***A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of Their True***

***and Greatest Interest, By a Lover of Her Sex*, London, 1694 and 1697**

Mary Astell (1666–1731) was a middle-class English woman educated by her father and uncle and through self-study. In A Serious Proposal, *she called for the establishment of a spiritual and intellectual retreat for unmarried women and widows that would give them freedom to study away from male society. Her emphasis on the religious as well as educational purposes of such an institution and her sharp critiques of marriage and male treatment of women led her proposal to be ridiculed and attacked as a "Protestant nunnery." Astell's proposal was never followed until the nineteenth century when orders of Protestant deaconesses and women's colleges attached to Oxford and Cambridge began to offer serious spiritual and intellectual education for unmarried women. Long excerpts from many of her works can be found at http://www.luminarium.org/eightlit/astell/.*

The Incapacity, if there be any, is acquired not natural; and none of their Follies are so necessary, but that they might avoid them if they pleas'd themselves. Some disadvantages indeed they labour under, and what these are we shall see by and by and endeavour to surmount; but Women need not take up with mean things, since (if they are not wanting to themselves) they are capable of the best. Neither God nor Nature have

excluded them from being Ornaments to their Families and useful in their Generation; there is therefore no reason they should be content to be Cyphers in the World, useless at the best, and in a little time a burden and nuisance to all about them. And ‘tis very great pity that they who are so apt to over-rate themselves in smaller matters, shou’d, where it most concerns them to know, and stand upon their Value, be so insensible of their own worth.

The Cause therefore of the defects we labour under, is, if not wholly, yet at least in the first place, to be ascribed to the mistakes of our Education; which like an Error in the first Concoction, spreads its ill Influence through all our Lives.

The Soil is rich and would, if well cultivated, produce a noble Harvest, if then the Unskilful Managers not only permit, but incourage noxious Weeds, tho’ we shall suffer by their Neglect, yet they ought not in justice to blame any but themselves, if they reap the Fruit of their own Folly. Women are from their very infancy debarred those Advantages with the want of which they are afterwards reproached, and nursed up in those Vices which will hereafter be upbraided to them. So partial are Men as to expect Brick where they afford no Straw; and so abundantly civil as to take care we shou’d make good that obliging Epithet of *Ignorant*, which out of an excess of good Manners, they are pleas’d to bestow on us!

One would be apt to think indeed, that Parents shou’d take all possible care of their Childrens Education, not only for *their* sakes, but even for their *own*. And tho’ the Son convey the Name to Posterity, yet certainly a great Part of the Honour of their Families depends on their Daughters. ’Tis the kindness of Education that binds our duty fastest on us: For the being instrumental to the bringing us into the World, is no matter of

choice and therefore the less obliging: But to procure that we may live wisely and happily in it, and be capable of endless Joys hereafter, is a benefit we can never sufficiently acknowledge. To introduce poor Children into the World, and neglect to fence them against the temptations of it, and so leave them expos'd to temporal and eternal Miseries, is a wickedness, for which I want a Name; 'tis beneath Brutality; the Beasts are better natur'd for they take care of their off-spring, till they are capable of caring for themselves. And if Mothers had a due regard to their Posterity, how *Great* soever they are, they wou'd not think themselves too *Good* to perform what Nature requires, nor thro' Pride and Delicacy remit the poor little one to the care of a Foster Parent. Or, if necessity inforce them to depute another to perform *their* Duty, they wou'd be as choice at least in the Manners and Inclinations, as they are in the complections of their Nurses, lest with their Milk they transfuse their Vices, and form in the Child such evil habits as will not easily be eradicated.

Nature as bad as it is and as much as it is complain'd of, is so far improveable by the grace of GOD, upon our honest and hearty endeavours, that if we are not wanting to our selves, we mai all in *some,* tho' not in an *equal* measure, be instruments of his Glory, Blessings to this World, and capable of eternal Blessedness in that to come. But if our Nature is spoil'd, instead of being improv'd at first; if from our Infancy we are nurs'd up in Ignorance and Vanity; are taught to be Proud and Petulent, Delicate and Fantastick, Humorous and Inconstant, 'tis not strange that the ill effects of this conduct appear in all the future Actions of our Lives. And seeing it is Ignorance, either habitual or or actual, which is the cause of all sin, how are they like to escape *this,* who are bred up in *that?* That therefore Women are unprofitable to most, and a plague and dishonour to some Men

is not much to be regretted on account of the *Men*, because 'tis the product of their own folly, in denying them the benefits of an ingenuous and liberal Education, the most effectual means to direct them into, and to secure their progress in the way of Vertue.

8. Baldassar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, 1528

In France, Spain, and Portugal beginning in the sixteenth century, and then later in central and eastern Europe, territorial rulers claimed greater personal political power. Noble families who had long held power independently became more dependent on the wishes and whims of the ruler and were forced to be more deferential if they wished to gain or hold political office or receive economic benefits. Noblemen had to learn their new roles as courtiers, for which the best guide was the Italian courtier Baldassar Castiglione's handbook The Book of the Courtier, *which provided advice to male and female courtiers. Castiglione's book laid out ideals of behavior that came to shape what was expected of middle-class gentlemen and ladies as well. Advice to female courtiers is in the* Third Book of the Courtier. *A 1561 English translation can be found online at: http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/%7Erbear/courtier/courtier3.html.*

In an introductory letter, Castiglione also summarized his advice for female courtiers. Here is his list from the 1561 English edition:

OF THE CHIEF CONDITIONS AND QUALITYES

IN A WAYTYNG GENTYLWOMAN

- TO be well born and of a good house.
- To flee affectation or curiositie.
- To have a good grace in all her doinges.
- To be of good condicions and wel brought up.
- To be wittie and foreseing, not heady and of a renning witt.
- Not to be haughtie, envious, yltunged, lyght, contentious nor untowardlye.
- To win and keepe her in her Ladies favour and all others.
- To do the exercises meete for women, comlye and with a good grace.
- To take hede that give none accasion to bee yll reported of.
- To commit no vice, nor yet to be had in suspition of any vice.
- To have the vertues of the minde, as wisdome, justice, noblenesse of courage, temperance, strength of the mide, continency, sobermoode, etc.
- to be good and discreete.
- To have the understandinge beinge maried, how to ordre her husbandes substance, her house and children, and to play the good huswyef.
- To have a sweetenesse in language and a good uttrance to entertein all kinde of men with communication woorth the hearing, honest, applyed to time and place and to the degree and dispostion of the person which is her principall profession.
- To accompany sober and quiet maners and honesty with a livelie quicknesse of wit.

- To be esteamed no lesse chast, wise and courteious, then pleasant, feat conceited and sober.
- Not to make wise to abhorr companie and talke, though somewhat of the wantonnest, to arrise and forsake them for it.
- To geve the hearing of such kinde of talke with blushing and bashfulnesse.
- Not to speake woordes of dishonestye and baudrye to showe her self pleasant, free and a good felowe.
- Not to use over much familyaritie without measure and bridle.
- Not willinglie to give eare to suche as report ill of other women.
- To be heedfull in her talke that she offend not where she ment it not.
- To beeware of praysinge her self undiscreatlye, and of beeing to tedious and noysome in her talke.
- Not to mingle with grave and sad matters, meerie jestes and laughinge matters: nor with mirth, matters of gravitie.
- To be circumspect that she offend no man in her jesting and tauntynge, to appeere therby of a readye witt.
- Not to make wise to knowe the thing that she knoweth not, but with sobernesse gete her estimation with that she knoweth.
- Not to come on loft nor use to swift measures in her daunsinge.
- Not to use in singinge or playinge upon instrumentes to muche devision and busy pointes, that declare more cunning then sweetenesse.
- To come to daunce, or to showe her musicke with suffringe her self to be first prayed somewhat and drawen to it.

- To apparaile her self so, that she seeme not fonde and fantasticall.
- To sett out her beawtye and disposition of person with meete garmentes that shall best beecome her, but as feininglye as she can, makyng semblant to bestowe no labour about it, nor yet to minde it.
- To have an understandinge in all thinges belonginge to the Courtier, that she maye gyve her judgemente to commend and to make of gentilmen according to their worthinesse and desertes.
- To be learned.
- To be seene in the most necessarie languages.
- To drawe and peinct.
- To daunse.
- To devise sportes and pastimes.
- Not to be lyghte of creditt that she is beloved, thoughe a man commune familierlye with her of love.
- To shape him that is oversaucie wyth her, or that hath small respecte in hys talke, suche an answere, that he maye well understande she is offended wyth hym.
- To take the lovynge communication of a sober Gentylman in an other signifycatyon, seeking to straye from that pourpose.
- To acknoweleage the prayses whyche he giveth her at the Gentylmans courtesye, in case she can not dissemble the understandinge of them: debasynge her owne desertes.
- To be heedefull and remembre that men may with lesse jeopardy show to be in love, then women.

- To geve her lover nothing but her minde, when eyther the hatred of her husband, or the love that he beareth to others inclineth her to love.
- To love one that she may marye withall, beeinge a mayden and mindinge to love.
- To showe suche a one all signes and tokens of love savynge suche as maye put hym in anye dyshonest hope.
- To use a somewhat more famylyar conversation wyth men well growen in yeeres, then with yonge men.
- To make her self beloved for her desertes, amiablenesse, and good grace, not with anie uncomelie or dishonest behaviour, or flickeringe enticement with wanton lookes, but with vertue and honest condicions.

The final ende whereto the Coutier applieth all his good condicions, properties, feates and qualities, serveth also for a waiting Gentilwoman to grow in favour with her Lady, and by that meanes so to instruct her and traine her to vertue, that she may both refraine from vice and from committing anye dishonest matter, and also abhorr flatterers, and give her self to understand the full troth in every thyng, without entring into self leeking and ignorance, either of other outward thinges, or yet of her owne self.

Maria Theresa

9. Luise Gottsched on Maria Theresa, 1749

Women were rulers as well as courtiers in early modern Europe, and success at their courts differed little from those courts surrounding male rulers. Luise Gottsched (1713–62) was a German poet, translator, and playwright who served at the court of Maria Theresa in Austria. She is known for her observant letters; here she describes a visit to the court of Maria Theresa.

To Fräulein Thomasius, of Troschenreuth and Widersberg, at Nürnberg.

Vienna, 28 September, 1749.

MY ANGEL: First, embrace me. I believe all good things should be shared with one's friends. Hence must I tell you that never, in all my life, have I had such cause to be joyfully proud as on this day. You will guess at once, I know, that I have seen the Empress. Yes, I have seen her, the greatest among women. She who, in herself, is higher than her throne. I have not only seen her, but I have spoken with her. Not merely seen her, but talked with her three-quarters of an hour in her family circle. Forgive me if this letter is chaotic and my handwriting uneven. Both faults spring from the overwhelming joy I feel in the two delights of this day—the privilege of meeting the Empress and the pleasure of telling your Highness of the honor.

This morning we went at ten to the palace. We took our places where Baron Esterhazy, who procured us admission, told us to stand. He supposed, as we did, that we, with the hundreds of others who were waiting, might be permitted to see her Majesty as she passed through the apartment on her way to the Royal Chapel. After half an hour we had the happiness of seeing the three Princesses go by. They asked the Court-mistress who we were. Then, on being told our names, they turned and extended their hands for us to kiss. The eldest Princess is about ten years old. As I kissed her hand, she paid me a

compliment. She said she had often heard me highly spoken of. I was pleased, of course, and very grateful for her remarkable condescension. Forgive me if this sounds proud. Worse is to follow. I cannot tell of the incredible favor of these exalted personages without seeming to be vain. But you well know that I am not vain.

About eleven o'clock, a man-servant, dressed in gorgeous livery, came and told us to follow him. He led us through a great many frescoed corridors and splendid rooms into a small apartment which was made even smaller by a Spanish screen placed across it. We were told to wait there. In a few moments, the Mistress of Ceremonies came. She was very gracious to us. In a little while, her Majesty entered followed by the three princesses. My husband and myself each sank upon the left knee and kissed the noblest, the most beautiful hand that has ever wielded a scepter. The Empress gently bade us rise. Her face and her gracious manner banished all the timidity and embarrassment we naturally felt in the presence of so exalted and beautiful a figure as hers. Our fear was changed to love and confidence. Her Majesty told my husband that she was afraid to speak German before the Master of that language. "Our Austrian dialect is very bad, they say," she added. To which my man answered that, fourteen years before, when he listened to her address at the opening of the Landtag, he had been struck by the beauty and purity of her German. She spoke, on that occasion, he said, like a goddess. Then the Empress laughed merrily, saying "Tis lucky I was not aware of your presence or I should have been so frightened that I should have stopped short in my speech."

She asked me how it happened that I became so learned a woman. I replied, "I wished to become worthy of the honor that has this day befallen me in meeting your Majesty. This will forever be a red-letter day in my life." Her Majesty said, "You are too

modest. I well know that the most learned woman in Germany stands before me." My answer to that was "According to my opinion, the most learned woman, not of Germany only, but of all Europe, stands before me as Empress." Her Majesty shook her head. "Ah, no," she said, "my familiar acquaintance with that woman forces me to say you are mistaken."

Her husband, the Emperor Franz I, joined our group and chatted with us most affably. Some of the younger children were called in and properly reverenced. Then the Empress asked if we would like to see her remaining babies, upstairs. Of course, we were enchanted at the thought. Following the Mistress of Ceremonies, we went upstairs to the three little angels there, whom we found eating their breakfast under the care of the Countess Sarrau. After kissing the little, highborn hands, we were conducted through the private rooms of the palace, an honor not vouchsafed to one stranger out of a thousand. Finally we returned to the waiting room, where all congratulated us upon the unusual honor shown.

Illustration from an early edition of Pamela.

10. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded,* 1740

Almost all male commentators on women's education and reading advocated a narrower range of materials for women. In the eighteenth century, moralists were increasingly worried about women reading a new type of literature, the novel, which often incorporated exotic locales and sexuality, both seen as dangerous for women readers. Some writers addressed concerns about the impact on female readers by focusing on moral virtues in their novels. The heroine in Samuel Richardson's Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded *(1740–1), for example, is hired as a servant by a man who is her social superior; he tries to rape her but she resists. Over the course of the very long novel, written in the form of letters, he is convinced by the virtuousness of the heroine that he*

should marry her instead. Richardson's novel became wildly popular, inspiring Pamela dolls and other merchandise. This is the opening. The entire work can be found at: http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/6124.

LETTER I

DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,

I have great trouble, and some comfort, to acquaint you with. The trouble is, that my good lady died of the illness I mentioned to you, and left us all much grieved for the loss of her; for she was a dear good lady, and kind to all us her servants. Much I feared, that as I was taken by her ladyship to wait upon her person, I should be quite destitute again, and forced to return to you and my poor mother, who have enough to do to maintain yourselves; and, as my lady's goodness had put me to write and cast accounts, and made me a little expert at my needle, and otherwise qualified above my degree, it was not every family that could have found a place that your poor Pamela was fit for: but God, whose graciousness to us we have so often experienced at a pinch, put it into my good lady's heart, on her death-bed, just an hour before she expired, to recommend to my young master all her servants, one by one; and when it came to my turn to be recommended, (for I was sobbing and crying at her pillow) she could only say, My dear son!—and so broke off a little; and then recovering—Remember my poor Pamela—And these were some of her last words! O how my eyes run—Don't wonder to see the paper so blotted.

Well, but God's will must be done!—And so comes the comfort, that I shall not be obliged to return back to be a clog upon my dear parents! For my master said, I will

take care of you all, my good maidens; and for you, Pamela, (and took me by the hand; yes, he took my hand before them all,) for my dear mother's sake, I will be a friend to you, and you shall take care of my linen. God bless him! and pray with me, my dear father and mother, for a blessing upon him, for he has given mourning and a year's wages to all my lady's servants; and I having no wages as yet, my lady having said she should do for me as I deserved, ordered the housekeeper to give me mourning with the rest; and gave me with his own hand four golden guineas, and some silver, which were in my old lady's pocket when she died; and said, if I was a good girl, and faithful and diligent, he would be a friend to me, for his mother's sake. And so I send you these four guineas for your comfort; for Providence will not let me want: And so you may pay some old debt with part, and keep the other part to comfort you both. If I get more, I am sure it is my duty, and it shall be my care, to love and cherish you both; for you have loved and cherished me, when I could do nothing for myself. I send them by John, our footman, who goes your way: but he does not know what he carries; because I seal them up in one of the little pill-boxes, which my lady had, wrapt close in paper, that they mayn't chink; and be sure don't open it before him. I know, dear father and mother, I must give you both grief and pleasure; and so I will only say, Pray for your Pamela; who will ever be Your most dutiful DAUGHTER.

I have been scared out of my senses; for just now, as I was folding up this letter in my late lady's dressing-room, in comes my young master! Good sirs! how was I frightened! I went to hide the letter in my bosom; and he, seeing me tremble, said, smiling, To whom have you been writing, Pamela?—I said, in my confusion, Pray your honour forgive me!—Only to my father and mother. He said, Well then, let me see how

you are come on in your writing! O how ashamed I was!—He took it, without saying more, and read it quite through, and then gave it me again;—and I said, Pray your honour forgive me!—Yet I know not for what: for he was always dutiful to his parents; and why should he be angry that I was so to mine? And indeed he was not angry; for he took me by the hand, and said, You are a good girl, Pamela, to be kind to your aged father and mother. I am not angry with you for writing such innocent matters as these: though you ought to be wary what tales you send out of a family.—Be faithful and diligent; and do as you should do, and I like you the better for this. And then he said, Why, Pamela, you write a very pretty hand, and spell tolerably too. I see my good mother's care in your learning has not been thrown away upon you. She used to say you loved reading; you may look into any of her books, to improve yourself, so you take care of them. To be sure I did nothing but courtesy and cry, and was all in confusion, at his goodness. Indeed he is the best of gentlemen, I think! But I am making another long letter: So will only add to it, that I shall ever be Your dutiful daughter, PAMELA ANDREWS.

11. Salon Hostesses, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

During the middle of the seventeenth century, women in Paris began to gather together men and women for weekly formal and informal discussions, holding these in the drawing rooms of their own homes. The salon hostess (salonniére*) selected the guests, determined whether the conversation on any particular night would be serious or light, and decided whether additional activities such as singing, poetry readings, or dramatic productions*

would be part of the evening's offerings. The following Web site presents descriptions of several leading salon hostesses by prominent men who attended their salons.

http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/18salons.html