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Sentimental Courtship Novels in Eighteenth-Century England

Their Guidance on Marriage-Related Issues and Contribution to Progressive Transitions in English Society

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“She is a happy Girl, in not meeting with Obstacles to her Choice from Parents or Guardians, who having out-lived all the more tender Passions, are too apt to regard Love but as another Name for Folly; by which means their unhappy Children or Wards too frequently are made the Victims of their Ambition and Avarice” (*Louisa,* 131). – Sophia

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to showcase sentimental courtship novels' socio-historical potential, as opposed to reading them as mere entertainment. It attempts to provide the literary field – through in-depth work on a small selection on sentimental courtship novels – with new research that can further enable us to understand how sentimental courtship novels engaged in the contemporary discourse on marriage motivations, how they appear to deliberately influence the attitudes of their readers on marriage-related issues, and thus contributed to influence the society of which they portray.

The context of this thesis is the many transitions that took place in eighteenth-century England and the changing attitudes concerning marriage-decisions. These transitions were not smooth, and especially in the upper strata of society, there existed a generational gap between conflicting attitudes. This resulted in two interrelated issues: the attachment of emphasis distributed between different motivations behind the marriage decision, and the redistribution of power over decision-making between parent and child.

This thesis analyzes and discusses three anonymous sentimental courtship novels: *Louisa: A Sentimental Novel (1771), Emma; or the Unfortunate Attachment: A Sentimental Novel (1773),* and *Anna: A Sentimental Novel (1782).* Firstly, as a form of literary and social backdrop, it discusses sentimental novel culture and historical transitions regarding the marriage-related issues to emphasize how the three novels' guidance were interpretations dependent on their contemporary contexts. Secondly, it discusses how the novels offer guidance on these contemporary issues through their treatment and guidance on social and economic ambition, love, and filial duty as motivations behind marriage. It discusses how even though the guidance is a compromise between what can be considered progressive and conservative attitudes, the novels' guidance appear ultimately progressive from an eighteenth-century English perspective. Lastly, it discusses how the three novels contributed to the process of progressive transitions in English society through both their progressive and conservative guidance and their ability to influence the reader.

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Introduction

Resulting from new and progressive currents of social, cultural, political, and religious views, eighteenth-century England underwent considerable changes that led to developing ideas on the interconnectedness between love, marriage, and autonomy. Still, love as the dominating motivation behind one's marriage decision was not the norm in the upper classes of English society. Nor was it the norm that children could freely choose their marriage partners; parental-, and sometimes kin intervention was common. Parents we often motivated by social and economic ambitions, encouraged by for example the new practice of primogeniture. Combined, this resulted in a generational gap between conflicting views on social and economic ambition, filial duty, love, and self-choice as motivations behind the marriage decision, and they became issues of great concern for many people. How should the emphasis be distributed between the various marriage motivations? And how should the power over decision-making be distributed between the parents and the children? Opinions and answers to these questions were therefore of considerable relevance to many people in late eighteenth-century England. As a result, these issues were repeatedly reflected and dealt with in contemporary literature, just like any other prominent change or concern would be. Novels, and especially sentimental courtship novels where the themes of love, courtship, marriage, and filial duty are prominent, could provide the reader with opinions on- and answers to these questions. Depending on this guidance, and through influencing their readers, sentimental courtship novels could also contribute to and accelerate transitions in English society.

In my thesis, I will answer the following question: In light of the sentimental courtship novels' contemporary context, how do sentimental courtship novels offer guidance on marriage-related issues, and how did they contribute to progressive transitions in English society? To specify the question, the marriage-related issues concerned with in this thesis are the two contemporary and interrelated issues discussed by Lawrence Stone; the attachment of emphasis distributed between different motivations behind the marriage decision, and the distribution of power over decision-making between parents and children (Stone, 181).

The first chapter in this thesis functions as a literary and historical backdrop to the novels. It discusses the context of the sentimental novel culture and the historical transitions that resulted in the three novels' guidance on the two marriage-related issues. The second chapter is an analysis of how the three novels offer guidance on these two issues, and I will focus on each novel's

treatment of the three following motivations; 1) social and economic ambition, 2) love, and 3) filial duty. These motivations are selected because of their relevance in light of the novels' contemporary context, the interconnectedness between all three motivations and the two issues, and because they are, precisely for these reasons, the most dwelled upon motivations for marriage in all of the sentimental courtship novels. The third chapter will discuss how and in what ways the three novels progressively influenced their readers and reinforced such attitudes in society, thus contributing to the process of progressive transitions in English society. Though the novels contributed to progressive changes for both men and women, considering the emphasis is primarily on women's situations in the novels, the discussion emphasizes this aspect. The focus is not so much on the progressive transitions themselves but on *how* the novels managed to contribute. Therefore, the discussion will not try to assess to what degree the novels contributed to such changes, nor does it suggest that the three novels' contribution was substantial. Furthermore, it acknowledges that the novels contributed to maintaining conservative attitudes in society as well. However, based on the predominance of progressive guidance found in the analysis, the novels' potential as progressive contributors have been emphasized.

Through Siv Gøril Brandtzæg's doctoral thesis *The Sentimental Courtship Novel and its Critics, 1769-1796,* and archival research in ECCO, I read sentimental courtship novels, as well as other sentimental novels, to become better acquainted with the sub-genre and sentimental novels in general. The fact that I could only access most of these novels through archival research in ECCO, also emphasizes the marginal position such novels have had and still have in the literary canon. Most sentimental- and sentimental courtship novels are not accessible to the general public. The only commonly available novels are *Emma,* which was republished in 2004 by David Gross, and *Julia de Roubigné: A Sentimental Novel* by Henry MacKenzie which has managed to maintain a position in the English literary canon.

Because of the repetition of representations concerning marriage-related issues and distress, I decided to study how sentimental courtship novels portrayed and expressed attitudes on different motivations behind marriage, as the conflict between different motivations appeared to be of considerable relevance to the contemporary reader. Furthermore, I wanted to explore the novels' function in society. Based on my research on the genre of sentimental novels and the sub-genre of sentimental courtship novels, I have selected the following three sentimental courtship novels as

the material sources for the analysis and discussions: *Louisa: A Sentimental Novel* (1771), *Emma; or, the Unfortunate Attachment: A Sentimental Novel* (1773), and *Anna: A Sentimental Novel* (1782). They are hereafter referred to as *Louisa, Emma,* and *Anna*. The three courtship novels were chosen because they all contain narratives of females in courtship processes, and, in contrasts to many plots were the women were already married, provide better material on the chosen field of study as they contain extended and various elaborations on the distress surrounding marriage and the conflict between different motivations behind marriage.

In regards to the authors, the novels were published anonymously. Anonymity was not unusual at the time as James Raven has calculated that more than 80 percent of all new novels were published anonymously between 1750 and 1790 (Vareschi, 1135, Raven, 143). In my research, I discovered no clue as to whom the author of *Louisa* is, except for the attribution to "a Lady [with a] polite Education" (*Louisa,* Vol 1, I) in the advertisement at the beginning of the first volume. As for *Anna,* any further attempts at discovering proof of two contemporary reviews' attributions of *Anna* to Miss Nugent and Miss Taylor, or any useful information on their identities, has proved unfruitful. Regarding Emma, there has been a long tradition of attributing the novel to Georgiana Cavendish, Countess of Devonshire. When re-publishing the novel in 2004, David Gross even put Georgiana's name on the title page and presented a preface and introduction where he discusses the external and internal evidence that suggests Georgiana is the rightful author (Devonshire and Gross, *Emma)*. However, in the article "The Duchess of Devonshire and *Emma; Or, The Unfortunate Attachment*: a case for de-attribution", Brantzæg effectively argues against and rebukes the logical flaws of both Gross' internal and external evidence on Georgiana's authorship. Due to the lack of any conclusive evidence on any of the three authorships, this thesis treats the authors of all three novels as anonymous.

I attempt to contribute to the literary field on the sub-genre by producing an in-depth study on a small selection of sentimental courtship novels which examines how they engage in the contemporary discourse on marriage motivations and how they appear to deliberately influence the attitudes of their readers on the two issues. Considering Brandtzæg has already written a doctoral thesis which contains summaries of repeating topoi in the sub-genre, I believe a close study of a few novels will best complement Brandtzæg's previous work, and contribute to the literary field.

Many of the arguments and conclusions presented in this thesis *can* apply to some or the whole sub-genre. This thesis also refers frequently to the three novels as 'sentimental courtship novels' which can appear to reference the genre as a whole. Nevertheless, as this is an in-depth study of select novels, it must be emphasized that any conclusions or arguments presented in this thesis do not represent the genre as a whole unless the thesis specifically refers in the argumentation to it as 'the sub-genre'.

Chapter One

The Literary and Social Contexts of Sentimental Courtship Novels

Sentimental Novel Culture

The eighteenth-century novel culture underwent considerable changes. J. Paul Hunter states that after decades of being the most popular books in England, the term 'novel' was eventually fixed near the end of the century, and it represented the "power of a "new" literary form to dominate the reading public" (9). Furthermore, 'novel' as a term developed during the century, narrowed in meaning and came to describe what could be considered 'realistic' fictions that featured familiar circumstances and ordinary people, and dealing with contemporary issues (Hunter, 9-10). The genre of sentimental novels can be categorized as a literary phenomenon specific of its time and place, and the genre should be seen in connection with the glorification and culture of sensibility. The sub-genre Sentimental courtship novels was, for a large part, inspired by the success of authors like Samuel Richardson with his morally virtuous didactic novels, and Frances Burney, with her novels of manners, and sentimental novels flourished in the second half of the eighteenth-century (Brandtzæg, *The Sentimental*, 9-10). This flourishing of sentimental novels was also made possible by the increasing commercialization of the printing industry in the eighteenth-century (Goring, *Eighteenth-Century,* 9).

Looking at the term 'sentimental,' Paul Goring writes that it "referred to a thought generated by or involving emotion; it suggested a 'mental feeling' – something which is at once intellectual and emotional, and typically concerned with moral conduct" (*Eighteenth-Century, 45).* John Mullan explains that ""sentimental" was usually a description of a *representation:* a person possessed "sensibility"; a text was "sentimental""(238). Of sensibility, Goring explains the term as the "capacity to feel sympathy for others and, by extension, their desire to alleviate the suffering of others" (*Eighteenth-Century,* 45). In relation to the contemporary culture of sensibility, there developed an idea, in the eighteenth century, that exercising sympathy for one's fellow beings was necessary for proper conduct in society (Goring, *Eighteenth-Century,* 45). Furthermore, Goring points out how works such as Lawrence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* contributed to the cultural phenomenon of exercising and examining one's feelings (*Eighteenth-*

Century, 45) Sentimental novels could, therefore, function as exercises in sensibility through their didacticism and sentimental narratives.

Through the act of reading sentimental novels, the reader's proper response, often in forms of crying, sighing, and other forms of outward emotional expressions of sympathy was a way to show others that they had internalized such a virtuous sensibility. This form of performance is connected with the existing expectations of how readers should respond to such novels to appear publicly as both virtuous and possessing proper sensibility. Mullan writes: "Sentimental texts appealed to the benevolent instincts of the reader, who might be expected to suffer with those of whom he or she read" (238). Goring also corroborates this view as he in *The Rhetoric of Sensibility* argues that "demonstrating a worthy response to fiction became important to polite (or would be polite) readers" (166). Moreover, he explains that because of these expectations, the response was determined "as much by the reader's relationship with local society as by an engagement with the text" (145).

It is within the genre of sentimental novels we find the sub-genre Brandtzæg has identified as sentimental epistolary courtship novels – abbreviated to sentimental courtship novels (*The Sentimental,* 9). It consists of twelve novels, of which three of them are *Louisa, Emma,* and *Anna.* Sentimental courtship novels were popular and widely read by the public, despite how contemporary critics highly abused the novels. Brandtzæg writes, "Seen collectively, the publication of sentimental courtship novels suggests that the readers' appreciation of specific genres was unconcerned with the critics' devaluation of sentimentality" (*The Sentimental,* 12). Sentimental novels also mainly concerned themselves with themes of love, friendship, virtue (often in distress), family, courtship, and marriage, with sentimental representations of issues concerning these topics. Therefore, the novels could offer relevant guidance on how to think, feel and act in similar situations, and many sought literature precisely for this reason (Hunter, 22-23).

New Transitions and a Generational Gap Between Conflicting Attitudes

Looking at the contemporary context of the novels, and how they can be seen as a cultural expression, Lawrence Stone discusses two contemporary and interrelated issues related to marriage in his book *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800,* that are directly connected with the guidance offered by the novels. He writes: "The first is the distribution of power over decision-making between the parents and the children; and the second is the distribution of weight attached to various factors in making the choice" (Stone, 181). Both of these issues were matters of great concern to contemporary readers of sentimental courtship novels and had been for some time. It is obvious that the novels' guidance on the three motivations behind marriage is interconnected to the second issue on the attachment of emphasis distributed between different factors in making the marriage choice. Because one of the motivations behind marriages that the three novels focus on is filial duty, and filial duty is so interrelated to the distribution of power over decision-making between parent and child, the guidance offered by the novels are interconnected to the first issue as well. This is why the novels' treatment of the three motivations can be said to offer guidance on the two issues.

Stone states that at the root of the changing motives that guide the marriage-decisions, and the changes in the power balance regarding marriage-decisions "there lie a deep shift of consciousness, a new recognition of the need for personal autonomy, and a new respect for the individual pursuit of happiness" (Stone, 183-184). Based on these changes, Stone argues for a transition in marriage arrangements among the upper strata of English Society based on shifts in the distribution of power in the marriage-decision. Stone argues that between 1660 and 1800 there takes place a radical shift from the predominant custom that the family, kin and family 'friends' have the power to make the marriage-choice, while the children maintain the right of veto, to the power balance shifting in favor of the children, where they predominantly make the marriage decision, while the parents maintain the right of veto (181-182). However, there exist some conflicting views on this transition, especially relating to how Stone's model makes the transition appear somewhat unproblematic, which does not seem to account for the contemporary marriage-related distress so often repeated in the novels (Brandtzæg, *The Sentimental,* 108). It is, therefore, necessary to further discuss progressive transitions and the consequent clash between what is here considered progressive and conservative attitudes from an eighteenth-century perspective.

Progressive Transitions

For centuries, English society had undergone a development of increased emphasis on love between spouses as an important component in marriage, and in the eighteenth century, the idea of conjugal love was widespread among the upper strata of society (Macfarlane, 175). In his analysis, Alan Macfarlane traces the emphasis of love in marriage back to at least the fifteenth century and states that by the eighteenth century "the ideal of the companionate marriage [was] already flourishing (156). In England, as early as the twelfth century onwards, it was legally established that marriage was a contract ultimately concerning only the couple themselves (Macfarlane, 207, 125). This was a revolutionary doctrine at the time. While most of Europe was greatly affected by the Roman law's growing ascendancy, which suppressed much of the Germanic customs and gave great power to the father, England remained largely unaffected throughout this development, and it was the only country in which Roman law did not reassert itself (Macfarlane, 126). Not until Hardwick's Marriage Act of 1753 was marriages made illegal for couples under 21 years old unless they had acquired the consent of their parents. Ironically, as Macfarlane points out, "It was at the very time [of Hardwick's Marriage Act of 1753] when many commentators believe the major transformation from parentally arranged to individual marriage took place" (127). The average age for marriage in the eighteenth century was 22-23 for women, between 27 to 29 for male heirs, and the early to middle thirties for younger sons (Stone, 42). It is one thing to try to arrange the marriage of a daughter or son when they are still young and living at home. It is considerably more difficult to assert parental control and authority to influence the marriage decision of older children who are not only more independent but often more removed from parental authority and influence as many lived away from home.

Religious transitions also contributed to changing views. Macfarlane writes "The godly treatises covering marriage were equally insistent on the necessity of deep love and the primacy of the marital bond" (181). Stone also argues that Puritanism's "stress on the importance of holy matrimony – meaning marriage bound by mutual affection – helped to undermine its contrary emphasis on the need for strict filial obedience to parents" (153). This stress contributed to a change in the power balance between parent and child. The authoritarian claim of the child's filial duty is in some respect checked by the new rights of the child to claim the parents' duty not to force their children into an unwished-for or loveless marriage. As a result of holy matrimony, and the

contemporary view that there could exist an immediate antipathy between the intended couple, which could prevent mutual compatibility, later development of love, and fidelity, love-based marriages were emphasized by the church (Stone, 182). The influence of this concept was effective because most people believed in God, and "issues of faith and religion were central to social and cultural discourse" (Goring, *Eighteenth-Century,* 3). Holy matrimony, therefore, stressed that love should be a precept for marriage, and not something that may or may not occur at a later stage.

Stone argues for a progressive growth in affective individualism, or in other words, marriages based on love and self-choice, in eighteenth-century England. He sees this in connection with the new trend towards equalizing the spousal relationship and increasing autonomy for children in the late seventeenth- and eighteenth century, which progressively overran the sixteenth-century trend of authoritarian relationships taking place in the middle and upper strata of English Society (Stone, 149). Stone argues that the spousal relationship was more equalized as a result of the new companionate marriage, which in turn was a result of the restructuring of kinship with a new emphasis on the conjugal unit, and the growth of affective individualism (217). As opposed to marriages where a hierarchy of respect defined the spousal relationship, companionate marriages based itself on mutual love, respect, and close friendship. The growth of individualism can also be connected to the development of more affectionate parent-child relationships (Stone, 149). He argues that between 1660 and 1800 there existed a slow and irregular transition towards the acknowledgment of children's individuality and the growth of affectionate parent-child relationships (254). As a result, parents were more likely to consider their children's feelings, and not just act according to their mercenary motivations. Affective individualism, therefore, can be said to have changed the power relation both between husband and wife, and parent and child (Stone, 217).

Stone is not alone in this view. Catherine Sobba Green writes that in addition to Stone, historians like Randolph Trumbach and John R. Gillis "have argued that coincident with this new understanding of individual rights in the eighteenth century was a new conception of the spousal relationship, a shift from marriage based on parental arrangement and familial convenience to marriage based on an affective relationship between husband and wife" (1). In her book *Novel Relations,* Ruth Perry agrees in part with these shifts and states that England underwent a "restructuring of kinship from a consanguineal to a conjugal basis for family identity" (29). This

restructuring of kinship involved a "movement from an axis of kinship based on consanguineal ties or blood lineage to an axis based on conjugal and affinal ties in the married couple" (Perry, 2). She points out that while the consanguineal kinship system stressed spouses' obligations to their filial and sibling ties above and against the conjugal ones, the conjugal kinship system stressed spouses' obligations towards each other before and against their filial and sibling ties (2). This transition, therefore, resulted in the conjugal family becoming the predominant concern of the couple, while the consanguineal family gradually became secondary (Perry, 2).

However, Perry does not agree with every aspect of Stone's model. She states that "the privatization of marriage choice coincides with a more calculating attitude towards the economics of marriage" (217). This view is in discord with Lawrence Stone's view that "the shrinking of the family to its nuclear core" (Perry, 217) was a result of marriage "becoming less mercenary and based more on mutual attraction and personal choice (Perry, 217). She acknowledges that there existed a shift towards marriage based on individual choice, but argues that in the upper strata of society "the re-centering of marriage on individual choice must be understood as the social concomitant of an economic system that encouraged people to look out for their own self-interest" (220). Perry's arguments suggest that romantic love was merely a new way to rationalize social and economic ambition for the individual, and that "romantic love provided the rationale for inter-class marriages and facilitated upward mobility" (230).

Still, though children were gradually gaining more power over their marriage-decision, they were also encouraged, and often pressured to focus on social and economic ambitions in their decision-making, rather than love. The privatization of marriage-choice and affective individualism, therefore, might have resulted in a gradual limiting of the kin's natural claims on their relatives (Perry, 29). Nevertheless, through filial duty and the practice of primogeniture, Perry's arguments suggest, as will be discussed in the following, that parents still maintained considerable power to influence and even control the marriage-decision of their children in late eighteenth-century England.

The Maintaining of Conservative Attitudes

Parents' ability to maintain power over the marriage-decision was because eighteenth-century English society, despite these changes, remained a deeply inegalitarian and authoritarian society, with a rigid social hierarchy (Goring, *Eighteenth-Century,* 22, 2). The fifth commandment, 'though shalt honor thy mother and thy father' held much authority and continued to claim children's filial duty. Furthermore, in the noble and higher strata of society, courtship and marriage were more strictly controlled by the parents (Macfarlane,136). Brandtzæg argues that "the parental generation's practice of arranged marriages at a time when the idea of love-in-marriage exerted an increasingly strong hold was sanctioned by a new legally based practice of primogeniture" (*The Sentimental,* 108). The practice of primogeniture preserved the accumulated estates and fortunes by bequeathing the bulk of it to the firstborn son. Though the Roman law was not reasserted in England, parents still had the legal rights to practice primogeniture. Many parents in the upper strata used this legal opportunity to put a lot of pressure on their children to marry well in order to continue to accumulate and maintain resources within the nuclear family and estate. For example, by threatening to refuse a future settlement, disinherit, or even exile their children from the family (Macfarlane, 140). As a result of this new practice of primogeniture, and the weakening of consanguineal ties, Ruth Perry has argued for both a psychological and material disinheritance of women and states that "women could be deprived of their rightful inheritance and psychologically blackmailed as well as threatened legally" (66). This was the case both if they resisted their dispossession or if they did not act according to their parents' or guardians' wishes.

Because of the changing family structures and the new practice of primogeniture, the fathers' responsibility for his daughters was to a greater extent concluded when they married, and fathers increasingly considered their daughters as "property to be deployed in the family interest rather than as lifetime kin" (Perry, 79). It is this social problem that Perry argues resulted in the new emphasis and development of filial duty and devotion in eighteenth-century England. Perry states;

> The ideological power in the father-daughter relationship came from imagining tenderness where authority indisputably ruled. It reinforced a sentimental belief in filial obedience by emotional blackmail rather than naked force, in a society in which feudal patriarchal prerogative was losing ground to newer, subtler forms of male authority (78)

This re-imagining of authority as tenderness and the consequent emotional blackmail is especially apparent in for example *Emma.* The new economic pressures and the reinforcement of filial duty, therefore, maintained parents' ability to control or influence the marriage decisions of their children according to their interests – though it should be emphasized that these interests could be both in line with or divergent to those of their children. It does not appear, from Perry's argumentations, that the parents were "left with no more than the right of veto over socially or economically unsuitable candidates" (Stone,183).

Stone's model seems to make the error of oversimplifying the transition regarding the two issues. It appears from his model that the marked shift away from emphasizing family interests towards "well-tried personal affection" (183), and the shift in power to decide the marriage-choice from parent to child, were consolidated by the end on the century. Stone's model, therefore, seems to suggest that this transition was unproblematic and that because children predominantly had the right to decide who they wanted to marry, they were also free to be motivated by the reason which suited them individually. He also argues that "almost everyone agreed … that both physical desire and romantic love were unsafe bases for an enduring marriage" (183). His model and arguments do not account for the parental intervention based on social and economic ambition that existed in the novels' contemporary times. Nor does it account for the apparent stress on romantic love, which resulted in the contemporary distress surrounding the marriage-related issues so repeatedly represented in the novels of the time.

A Generational Gap Between Attitudes and the Novels as Expressions of Cultural Concerns

In contrast to Stone, Perry suggests that the two struggles exist in the novels' contemporary society because new and progressive ideas of love and autonomy in marriage were becoming increasingly influential. Unlike Stone's model, she argues that these transitions were neither smooth nor solidified in the attitudes of late eighteenth-century English society. On the contrary, as Brandtzæg has pointed out, Perry, to a greater extent than Stone, emphasizes the difficulties people experienced as a result of the transition of these kinship structures (*The Sentimental,* 108). We must keep in mind that the structural changes in family ties and these new changes and developing ideas on motivations behind marriage occurred over long periods of time. Like any other social and cultural change, there are always variations as to when people implement and

internalize new ideas and attitudes. Considering the two issues relate to conservative and progressive attitudes to motivations behind marriage, Stones model does not seem to take into account the conflicting attitudes that made for the generational gap in the second half of the century. The existence of such a generational gap is in accordance with Perry's arguments, in addition to Brandtzæg's statement that "the slow pace of transformation caused distress because the parental generation still believed in arranged marriages while the younger advocated romantic love-in-marriage with a partner of their own choosing" (*The Sentimental,* 108).

Both Ruth Perry and Siv Gøril Brandtzæg argue for what appears to be a more nuanced social, cultural and political development than Stone does. Both also specifically concern themselves with sentimental novels and their contemporary contexts and express coordinating arguments regarding the sentimental courtship novels' social, cultural and political context. Therefore, their arguments account for both the contemporary distress and need for guidance on the two issues, and the bountiful representations of the two issues and the consequent distress found in the three sentimental courtship novels.

Ultimately, the transitions from older conservative attitudes of arranged marriages, social and economic ambitions as motivations behind marriage, filial duty, and primogeniture, towards progressive attitudes of love as an emphasized marriage motivation, companionate marriages, individuality, compassion, and autonomy were both complex and irregular. As a result, it caused a generational gap between attitudes and marriage-related distress. Ultimately, we see how the novels, through their guidance of the two issues, are cultural expressions of contemporary concerns as they take part in the contemporary discourse on the two issues.

Chapter Two

The Novels' Guidance on Marriage-Related Issues

Louisa, Emma, and *Anna* concern themselves to a great extent with representations that present social and economic ambition, love, and filial duty as motivations behind marriage with positive and negative connotations. Thereby, they offer guidance on the two interrelated issues concerning the attachment of emphasis distributed between different motivations behind the marriage decision and the distribution of power over decision-making between parent and child. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these issues are connected to the complex transitions from older conservative attitudes, towards, new progressive ones in society. The result was a generational gap between somewhat clashing views, which accounts for the distress the three novels so often repeat relating to the three motivations behind marriage. This analysis, therefore, will discuss how the three novels treat and offer guidance on social and economic ambitions, love, and filial duty as motivations behind marriage. It will show how the novels offer a complex and intermingled guidance on which motivations should influence the reader depending on the circumstances, and that, for the most part, all three novels' guidance are consistent in their compromise between progressive and conservative guidance. It will also show that when considering this guidance as a whole, the three novels ultimately express predominantly progressive guidance, from an eighteenth-century English point of view.

Louisa: A Sentimental Novel (1771)

Social and Economic Ambition and Filial Duty

Louisa's narrative treatment of the three motivations centers on the representations found in the correspondence between the two cousins Miss Louisa Fermor and Lady Sophia Saville. In the novel, we learn that previous to the narrative's beginning, Sophia was forced by her father to marry a man she despised, while at the same time being in love with Lord Sedley. Through the representations of her distress and distrust in the institution of marriage, there exists a strong repudiation of and warning against social and economic ambition and filial duty as the emphasized motivations behind the marriage-decision. However, this treatment depends on the circumstances. The two motivations are colored with negative connotations only when they are based on an

ambition to improve one's social and economic position (or greed) and parental force. The following extract is part of Louisa's correspondence to Sophia, and is a form of sympathetic recapitulation which allows the reader to be acquainted with Sophia's history, from Louisa's perspective:

> How justly punished would your Father have been, my *Sophia*, had he lived to have seen that Settlement which tempted him to prefer Sir *Charles Saville* to all your other Admirers, now disputed by his Heir; and what he esteemed the Means of your future Felicity, become the Source of all your Anxiety! Melancholy Instance of the Shortsightedness of Parents! Had your Heart been consulted, had you been permitted to wait till you could have fulfilled your Engagement to Lord *Sedley*, How much Misery would have been spared! But all was to be given up to satisfy Lord Walton's offended Pride and his Avarice (2).

This extract is representative of the general antipathy expressed in the novel towards both high social and economic ambition and tyrannical parents, and it uses different literary devices to influence the reader. Firstly, this perspective makes it easier to subjectify the intended message. This can be very effective because it allows for a more intimate apprehension – in this case of Louisa's feelings on why Sophia was married off – which function to enhance the reader's emotional response and influences the reader in the targeted direction. Secondly, the somber and dramatic mood is used to provoke an emotional response of anger and sympathy on Sophia's behalf, which reflects the emotions Louisa express in the extract. This provocation is achieved primarily by the narrator's extensive use of words with strong negative connotations, such as 'anxiety', 'melancholy', and 'misery'. Thirdly, the juxtaposition of felicity and anxiety also enhance the desired emotional effect. By contrasting Sophia's potential future of felicity to her reality of anxiety, her situation appears more dramatic. This heightens the impression of injustice and potentially invokes the reader's sympathy for her situation. The excessive use of exclamation marks further enhances this dramatic effect. As a result, the reader is likely to sense this mood, internalize Louisa's expressed feelings of anger, frustration, and sympathy, and hence, be more receptive of Louisa's views, which is the progressive repudiation of social and economic ambition and parental force.

In continuation, the motif of the tyrannical father is used to emphasize how unjust filial duty can be as a motivation behind a marriage-decision. To further influence the reader to sympathize with the progressive guidance, the engineer of this marriage-scheme, Lord Walton, is presented with character traits colored by strong negative connotations, such as 'shortsightedness',

'pride', and 'avarice.' The desired effect is the reader's association of Lord Walton with excessive greed and arrogance. To further the negative view on Lord Walton's involvement, Louisa uses the word 'tempted' to describe why Lord Walton decides to marry off his daughter when she was in love with someone else. The reader might associate this with lack of self-control and again, greed. The suggestion that greed tempted him both reduces Lord Walton's respectability and invalidates his right as a father to interfere in the marriage-decision. Considering the motivation of social and economic security is acted out by Lord Walton, the same negative connotations that color Lord Walton, are subconsciously transferred and applied to this motivation, as well as filial duty. These negative connotations are also transferred to all parents who act similarly to him, as Louisa writes 'the Shortsightedness of *Parents'*, and not 'the Shortsightedness of Lord Walton'. The choice of words indicates that this attribute is general, and it signals to the reader that this is a mistake many parents commit – it is a social problem. The novel openly critiques parental control, and it protests how filial duty enables family and sometimes kin, motivated by vanity or avarice, to marry off their children without regard for their feelings, thus sentencing them to a potentially miserable marriage. Lord Walton functions as a cautionary tale and represents the kind of behavior and motivation that the novel strongly guides every parent to avoid.

Another aspect of the novel's guidance on social and economic ambition is evident from how Sophia only enters into marriage after her financial situation regarding her inheritance is settled. She is willing to give up a considerable amount of money to rid herself of any connection with the late Charles Saville's relatives. In regards to Sophia's decision to wait with her marriage to Lord Sedley until she is financially independent and relieved from all economic claims, Louisa writes: "the generous soul of my *Sophia* will not permit her to bestow her Hand on Lord *Sedley* till she can give him a Fortune as free from all Claims as the Heart she has so long reserved for him" (3). Combined, social and economic ambition is, in a sense, turned around. Instead of being portrayed as something negative, despite the apparent wish to *secure* her fortune, Sophia's social and economic ambition, or lack thereof, is portrayed as a progressive statement of generosity, independence, and source of self-empowerment in the novel. At the same time, this progressive statement should not be overly emphasized. Though it is the predominant impression in the novel, the progressive aspects are somewhat balanced by her statement that "Money is so essential an Ingredient towards making Life happy, that it cannot be so without it" (6). The impression is that *improving* her social and economic situation is not necessary, but *securing* it is. From an

eighteenth-century perspective, this suggests an ultimately progressive, though not radical, guidance, as it is checked by the conservative but more moderate stance of social and economic security.

Love

Louisa also guides the reader to consider the progressive motivation of romantic love as an important motivation behind marriage. While Sophia was married off, Louisa, on the other hand, inherited a small fortune from her libertine aunt. As a consequence, she was free to marry whomever she wanted. Her story revolves around her many suitors, and how she cannot forget her love for James Brudenell. After "proper" hinderances have prevented her from marrying the man she loves, they are finally united and marries. Her narrative can ultimately be considered a celebration of enduring love and the institution of marriage. While she can be said to exhibit some libertine behaviors, her love endures, and she marries out of mutual love – albeit, with the permission from her loving brother. She writes: "I shall wait for his Approbation before I become Lady *Brudenell;* it is a compliment I owe to the best of Friends and Guardians" (220). The extract suggests the underlying sense of obligations towards her brother and the novel's guidance to respect family advice and one's filial duty. Still, the novel emphasizes that filial duty should not be a direct motivation behind the marriage-decision as the acquisition of her guardians' permission remains a mere courtesy of respect. Louisa also expresses her happiness in that her love is justified and that "the indulgence of its [her heart's] Weakness [is] authorized by Reason" (219). However, unlike the contemporary focus on mercenary aspects as part of this reason, Louisa's reference to reason suggests both Brudenell's social and economic position and his worthiness as a loving man who possesses proper sensibility.

Sophia's narrative also expresses the importance of love as a motivation behind marriage. Despite how negatively she perceives the institution of marriage, she is willing to go through with it for the man she loves. This enhances the recommendation of love-based marriages. As is seen throughout the novel, Sophia experienced a liberation and new independence in her widowhood that she is reluctant to let go of before she eventually enters into marriage with Lord Sedley. Sophia can even be considered to take on the character of a libertine in the novel. She writes; "Was I less attached to Lord *Sedley* than I am, I should most indubitably prefer my present State of Liberty to

the most glittering Chains of Savery" (102). Symbolism and imagery are used to enhance the impression of how negatively she perceives the institution of marriage by referring to it as 'chains' with the negative association of imprisonment attached to the term. She further describes these chains as glittering, or in other words, tempting. This also emphasizes the difference in character between her and her father, who did get tempted. The novel suggests that even after all her suffering, love is worth it, and a love-based marriage will result in a companionate marriage and therefore lower the risk of future suffering. With a love-based and consequently companionate marriage, the institution of marriage appears altered to the reader, because the terms and conditions of women are portrayed as changed somewhat for the better. Sophia writes of her brother's marriage: "He is perfectly sensible of her Worth, and will, I make no Doubt, render her happy" (218). Unlike many other female libertines in the genre, Sophia does not meet with an unhappy ending but is instead rewarded for choosing love over her libertine inclinations, and over social and economic ambitions. Still, this should also be perceived as a compromise between the progressive motivation of love behind marriage, and the conservative conformity of the progressive libertine to the institution of marriage.

The guidance on the two issues is complex as there is a compromise between conservative and progressive attitudes to the three motivations depending on circumstances such as the parents' behavior, the social and economic consequences of the match, and whether they would ultimately result in a companionate marriage or not. On the one hand, the novel expresses a general acknowledgment of the respect for one's filial duty, and it maintains that the reader should make sure to *secure* his/her current social and economic situation. On the other hand, the novel strongly promotes rational and well-tried love as an important motivation behind marriage, and advice against marrying for greed to enhance one's social and economic position. It also advises parents to avoid force and young people that, though filial duty should be valued, they are not required to follow their filial obligations or marry based on this motivation if their parents take on the role of the tyrant. The overall guidance offered, therefore, appear to be more progressively positioned.

Emma; or, the Unfortunate Attachment: A Sentimental Novel (1773)

Social and Economic Ambition

In *Emma*, it is also apparent that the novel offers a compromise between conservative and progressive guidance on the three motivations behind marriage-decisions. However, its guidance on social and economic ambition appears more conservative than that of *Louisa* and *Anna*. Though *Emma* provides the reader with a general impression that marrying for money is wrong, it also provides a stronger guidance than both *Louisa* and *Anna* not to condemn oneself or one's partner to a life of poverty, for the sake of love. In the following extract Emma's friend Miss Thornton has just learned that Emma's father has lost all his money, and taking this and Sidney's lack of a fortune into consideration, she writes:

> I tremble, my dear girl, at the dreary view which offers itself to me, when I reflect on the many disasters attending such imprudent matches. Do not hastily enter into engagements which will last when every inducement to them has fled: wait some years, at least until your lover's services shall have raised him in his profession (Vol 1, 101).

It is apparent that Miss Thornton is very much against a marriage that would reduce both their stations in life so drastically, and Miss Thornton is made to represents a voice of reason. The words 'tremble', 'dreary', 'disasters', and 'imprudent', all with very negative connotations, is used to intensify the reader's perception of how ill-advised such a match would be. The phrasing 'my dear girl' suggest a form of seniority, which combined with affection, give the association of welcomed wisdom and experience. By neglecting to begin her command with 'you should not' or referring to Emma, her advice, or warning, is therefore not only directed at Emma but also towards the reader. Her use of 'hastily' also suggests to the reader that Emma has not properly reflected on the consequences of her decision, while the word 'fled' brings to mind the association that Emma's inducement, love, is a fleeting concept and not dependable. Social and economic security, on the other hand, is an inducement that will last, and the novel strongly emphasizes the need to *secure* one's current social and economic situation. Nevertheless, through Miss Thornton's advice for Emma not to forget Sidney but wait for him to earn a position that can sustain a comfortable life for them both, the extract expresses the general guidance in the novel to value and show understanding of love as an important marriage motivation.

The novel's understanding and acceptance of love as a motivation behind marriage, but not important enough to condemn oneself and another to a life of poverty, is also apparent from the following extract. Emma's father writes to Sidney, stating: "could I give my daughter fifty thousand pounds, no other man should have her; but I cannot seal her ruin, and your too, by consenting to your union" (Vol 1, 115-116). Here, Mr. Egerton appears to want his daughter to marry for love. Even though the reader might not like the way Mr. Egerton handles this situation, he might still have been considered reasonable by the contemporary reader in not giving his consent in this instance. When writing 'seal her ruin', imagery is used to increase the expression of the negative consequences an acceptance of such a marriage would entail. It is dramatic, and makes use of the reader's visual imagination, since 'Seal her ruin' can bring to mind him physically sealing her condemnation to ruin.

The novel also expresses the view that for love to last, the reader must also consider social and economic security. Of love, Miss Thornton writes; "It may exist in a cottage, but it must have been bred there; for it will not, I promise you, condescend to go from the stately dome to the straw-built shed – it must breathe its native air" (Vol 1, 155). Love may exist between people who are poor and people who are rich, but it will not survive the shock of the drop into poverty. Because this aphorism is expressed by a character that the novel characterizes as both sensible and wise, her statement similarly appears trustworthy and enhances the impression of it being an axiom to the reader. Her statement must be seen in relation to how it is presented in the novel, as a way to reason with Emma's willingness to give up her social and economic security for Mr. Sedley. Emma had previously written: "He has not more than three hundred a year to offer me; but my dearest Fanny, is not that enough, when people love as we do?" (Vol 1, 105). Though this suggests a strong sentiment in favor of love as the most important motivation behind marriage no matter the circumstances, Miss Thornton's correspondence portrays this view as reckless. The impression on the reader is therefore likely to be that Miss Thornton represents a loving, understanding, but also, a justifiable voice of reason, and the reader is guided not to marry based on the motivation of love alone.

Filial duty

Emma expresses divided guidance on filial duty depending on the behavior of parents. The novel enhances the impression that Mr. Egerton is a reasonable and kind parent, as opposed to a tyrant, at the beginning of the novel to justify the many struggles and suffering Emma experiences as a result of being forced to choose between love and filial duty. He is repeatedly characterized positively through statements such as "my kind, my indulgent father" (Vol 1, 9), and "Mr. Egerton is so indulgent a parent, and has such a liberal way of thinking" (Vol 1, 100). Combined they reinforce the image of him, not only as a reasonable parent but also as a kind and loving father who adores his daughter and only has her happiness in mind. To justify his refusal of Emma's proposal, Mr. Egerton states; "it is your judgement I appeal to" (Vol 1, 116), strengthening the impression to the reader that reason is the foundation of his resolve, not caprice or his own want for money. Furthermore, he argues: "You have to deal with an indulgent parent, not with an insulting tyrant who speaks his will, and will be obeyed without giving a reason" (Vol 1, 137). The juxtaposition is used to emphasize his reasonableness, as opposed to tyrannical parents. Mr. Egerton suggests to the reader that had he been a tyrant; he could not have made such a claim on Emma's filial duty and devotion, as he does. He later states that "it was my duty to interfere, and break off a connexion which threatened inevitable destruction" (Vol 1, 145). As a result, Mr. Egerton is perceived as a father who considers his obligations towards his daughter, and not just her obligations towards him.

However, there is a developing portrayal of Mr. Egerton in a different light that ultimately reveals his previous statement that he is not a "tyrant that speaks his will" to be paradoxical. His behavior regarding Emma's engagement with his friend Lord Walpole is gradually becoming more similar to the so often portrayed tyrannical parent. As Emma relates her father's words of conjures and commandments in a devoted and sentimental language in her correspondence, the reader begins to perceive him in a different light, and comprehend her oppression. After having stated that he does not care for Lord Walton's riches and that he would not have wanted her to marry Lord Walton if he did not think it would have resulted in Emma's happiness, the following extract demonstrates particularly well the manipulations of Mr. Egerton which results in Emma's struggles:

> my heart was fixed on the match; its completion would have given me pleasure to my last hours; I should have had no fears of death, could I have left you such a protector – but you refuse to gratify my wish; you will not let me be happy in this world, and your want of duty adds to my disorder, and hurries me into the grave before my time (Vol 1, 204-205)

Mr. Egerton is playing on Emma's guilt, and he presents her refusal to consent to the engagement out of a want of duty. Filial duty and guilt are used as manipulative tools to convince her as he states that this is his last wish before he dies and that her refusal to obey him hurries his death upon him. He goes on to kneel and beg before her. This action proves to be too much for Emma to handle, so she implores him to change postures and forgive her, stating: "any argument but this might have been withstood – but now I have nothing more to say; your will shall be mine – take my consent, whilst I have yet life to give it" (Vol 1, 205-206). He then precedes to command Emma and to promise him never to tell Lord Walton that she has previously loved Mr. Sidney, stating "the only chance you have to make me happy is by concealing all that has happened" (Vol 1, 207). This promise and commandment, where she is forced to value her filial duty over her conjugal one, become the root of much of her suffering later in the novel. What the reader observes through Mr. Egerton's actions is emotional blackmail, and his expectations of Emma are no longer perceived as reasonable. Despite the previous emphasis on Mr. Egerton's love for his daughter, the reader, unlike Emma, would most likely have perceived him as a tyrant that, as such, has less claim to his daughter's filial duty.

There is also an evident romanticism of Emma's persistence in obeying her filial obligations, despite her continued sufferings as a result from this, which appear to color the motivation with positive connotations. For example, Emma writes of her father's wish for her to marry Lord Walton; "Come, sweet Filial Piety! And firm by breast! Yes, let one daughter to her fate submit; be nobly wretched – but her father happy" (Vol 1, 199) and "O come, filial obedience, to strengthen my failing courage! It demands all thy wondrous power to enable me to perform the task of duty" (Vol 1, 213). Emma's virtue as she is willing to sacrifice herself for her father's happiness is apparent throughout the novel. It is portrayed as a form of noble action. Emma suggests that through the 'wondrous powers' of filial duty, people are enabled to follow their parents' wishes in their marriage-decision without compromising their morals.

At the same time, the romanticism of oppression and Emma's suffering can be considered a social critique. First of all, statements, such as Miss Thornton's "we feel the satisfaction of having performed our duty, and that compensates for all the pain we have endured in bringing ourselves to do it" (Vol 2, 1), could have been perceived as social irony. Secondly, because Mr. Egertons' claim on his daughter's filial duty has been discredited through his tyrannical behavior, Emma's

continued devotion and sense of filial duty despite the consequent and elongated struggle she experiences arguably influences the reader to consider the basis of her filial duty as deceptive. All the suffering and struggle that Emma has had to go through because of her strong sense of filial duty can thus result in the progressive attitude that even filial duty is not worth such suffering and that her struggles, therefore, should be perceived as unnecessary and unjust by society. Emma, perhaps more than *Louisa* and *Anna*, plays on the reader's sensibility to emphasize Emma's injustice and oppression. Emma's continuous sense of filial duty, despite her father's tyranny, highlights Emma's oppression through her re-imagination of fatherly tenderness where tyrannical authority obviously (at least it appears so to the reader) rules. The novel's insistence on Mr. Egerton's love and devotion for his daughter makes this re-imagining plausible from Emma's perspective. However, the reader is likely to consider Mr. Egerton, as a consequence of his tyranny, void of any actual claim on the filial duty Emma so readily complies with. The critique appears even more apparent because the oppressed Emma does not seem to understand that her father is a tyrant. Because such suffering and distress is often narrated by the libertine character Miss Bishop and stands as oppositions to her expressed feelings and attitudes, the impression of social irony is enhanced. As Brandtzæg writes is often the case with the sub-genre, "filial duty is sentimentalized, but also infused with a politicized language of oppression" (*The Sentimental*, 106). This combination arguably emphasized the social critique and enhanced the desired effect for the reader to consider Emma's distress and continued suffering as uncalled for and unjust.

Love

The novel also guides the reader to value love as a necessary motivation in the marriage-decision, but unlike *Louisa* and *Anna*, *Emma* connects love to the motivation of filial duty. After her marriage to Lord Walton, Emma reflects on her marriage-decision. She makes it clear to Mrs. Noel (previously named Miss Thornton) that, though she agreed to the proposal out of filial duty, she would never have gone through with the wedding with Lord Walton unless she knew that she could love him. Emma writes:

> No Fanny, I would not have sacrilegiously prophaned the altar at which my faith was plighted, by offering my hand without the consent of my heart. … force or pity could not have dragged me to the church, had I not found myself sensible of the merits of the object destined for me by my father" (Vol 2, 146)

Neither her filial duty nor her sensation of pity towards her father would induce her to marry someone that she did not love. Combined with the previous emphasis on, and understanding of love as a motivation, the novel makes it clear that love is a necessary motivation behind marriage and that this should not be compromised.

At the same time, it is Emma's sense of filial duty that eventually enables her to move on from Mr. Sidney, force herself to be open to new emotions and then learn to love Lord Walton. The novels guidance on filial duty and love as motivations behind marriage, therefore, become intermingled. The novel seems to suggest that filial duty *can* be enough to create love. If people were to possess a proper sense of filial duty and virtue, as Emma does, it could be enough to make them inclined to change the sentiments of their hearts and make it susceptible to the growth of such emotions necessary as to marry according to one's parents' wishes. In other words, love is necessary, but love can also be achieved through a proper sense of filial duty. In this sense, it is because of her filial duty that she learns to love Lord Walton and ultimately gains happiness. However, despite this conservative guidance that through filial duty the emotions of love can be achieved (or learned), *Emma* still guides the reader to value the motivation of love over filial duty. If such emotions cannot be achieved through filial duty alone, and the emotions of love do not exist, the reader is guided to avoid going through with a marriage. By ultimately attaching so much weight on love, the novel contributes to transfers power from the parents to the children, and emphasis from social and economic ambition to love.

Emma is also the novel that to the greatest extent emphasizes the contemporary struggle from shifting one's obligations and investments from the consanguineal family to the conjugal family, as discussed in chapter one. Throughout the novel, she is conflicted and pulled between her duty to her father and her duty towards her husband. It is only when she ultimately lets go of her filial obligations – by breaking her promise to her father to keep silent on her previous attachment and is honest with her husband – that she appears to become completely invested in her conjugal obligations to him. As a result, Louisa manages to explain the misunderstanding and convince Lord Walpole that her previous attachment to Sydney was the unfortunate one and that she had loved Lord Walpole ever since they married. As a reward, the novel ends happily with Lord Walpole somewhat improved, and the couple reunited and in love. Therefore, *Emma* arguably suggests that

these shifts in investment and obligations from the consanguineal to the conjugal family are necessary to achieve a companionate marriage.

Like *Louisa, Emma* offers guidance characterized by a compromise between progressive attitudes of love as a necessary motivation behind marriage and the repudiation of social and economic *ambition* on the one hand, and conservative guidance in regards to its emphasis on social and economic *security*. It is also apparent that while it critiques tyrannical parents' claim to their children's filial duty, it strongly emphasizes filial duty in general. Nevertheless, the combined guidance can be considered more progressively anchored, than the conservative, from an eighteenth-century English perspective.

Anna: A Sentimental Novel (1782)

Social and Economic Ambition

In *Anna*, a similar treatment of and guidance regarding the three motivations to that of *Louisa* and *Emma* is found when analyzing the novel. Again, we see that social and economic ambition is colored with negative connotations. At the very beginning of the novel, John Cecil corresponds with his friend Colonel Charles Johnson, about his first encounter with Lady Mira – his wife of four years. Through a flashback related by Cecil, the reader learns that Lady Mira has just run away from her family estate when she encounters her cousin Horace Armstead and his friend, and her later husband, John Cecil. Lady Mira's account as to why she has run away reveals to the reader that she has just received a proposal from the rich Lord Alston, a man that her parents implore her to marry, but whom she does not love. Lady Mira reflects to Armistead and Cecil: "nay so well am I convinced of it [the importance of love], that had Lord Alston, or any other man, who so little interested my heart, the riches of Golconda, I would refuse his suit" (Vol 1, 6). Though not as dramatic as Sophia's fate, this extract is part of a longer reflection on the importance of love in a marriage, and quite strikingly expresses how little she cares for riches over love. To emphasize to the reader the impression of how little money means, compared to love, she uses the symbolism of Golconda. Golconda, a citadel in southern India, used to be highly renowned for its riches and gems, and its reputation was known to Englishmen in the eighteenth century. Therefore, it would have been clear to the reader that even if Lord Alston, or any other man, could offer her all the

riches and gems she could ever want for, which would elevate and secure her social and economic situation for life, she would still not accept his proposal unless she was inclined to love him. The novel relays a message to its reader that marrying based only on the ambition to increase one's riches, at the expense of one's heart, is discouraged; not even all the riches of Golconda are worth a loveless marriage.

Social and economic ambition is also connected to selfishness in the novel. In continuation of the previous reflection, Lady Mira states: "I would refuse his suit, and as much with a view to his felicity as my own, for how could he experience any degree of comfort, when total indifference would be the return of his ill-placed affection?" (Vol 1, 6). An undertone of guilt colors the motivation of marrying for such selfish reasons with negative connotations. The reader is reminded that it is not only one's *own* feelings that should be taken into consideration. Even though the suitor has affection for her, this is not enough. Marrying him for his money and status, while knowing that her future love for him is unlikely, would mean condemning him to a loveless and unhappy marriage, and the novel presents this as wrong. Her statement that she takes into consideration his felicity as much as her own in the matter also reinforces her image as a generous and selfless person, of whom the reader is likely to approve.

Love

Anna also guides the reader to emphasize love as a motivation behind their marriage-decision heavily. Lady Mira argues; "I have read, I have heard, and even seen, by many innocent couples in our neighborhood, that a unity of hearts and purity of sentiments are indispensable requisites to render the hymenial state, a state of happiness" (Vol 1, 6). The extract emphasizes that the foundation of companionate marriages, namely *a unity of hearts*, is crucial. By emphasizing the many sources she bases her argument on, and by portraying herself as a sort of witness to the truth of this, it is conveyed that love is a common and indispensable motivation to secure happiness in a marriage. The use of sensory repetition also enhances the impression of the widespread acceptability of this view – she has read, heard and seen that this is the case. Furthermore, Lady Mira's account of her reading of these indispensable requisites is a form of meta, as the reader is

doing the same, and arguably convinced similarly as Lady Mira, because the novel's message reflects her argument.

The novel also makes use of characterization to color the motivation of love with positive connotations. The novel portrays Lady Mira as a beautiful, kind, and selfless person with whom the reader is consequently inclined to sympathize. This is an effective literary device because when the reader approves of and sympathizes with a character, they are also more likely to sympathize with the character's expressed opinions and actions. There is also, to some degree, the use of nemesis in the novel, with positive and negative characters achieving poetic justice by being rewarded or penalized. Lady Mira and Miss Louisa Denham are characterized with positive attributes such as kindness, generosity, devotion, Christian piousness, and other exemplary behavior, and hence, become positive characters and acceptable role models in the novel. The antagonist, Juliet Columbani, is contrarily characterized as selfish, hateful, and cruel. And though she is repentant in the end, as they often are in the genre, she dies as poetic justice for her crimes. The characters' views and actions are colored by positive or negative connotations, likely to influence the reader's opinions and to think that the heroes' actions and views are preferable and that if they follow the character's example, they will also more likely receive a 'happy ending'. As exemplary models of moral virtue, Lady Mira and Miss Louisa Denham become effective didactic tools throughout the novel and function to transform the reader in their image. They are virtuous examples to follow, and through them and other characters just as admirable, or detestable, the novel guides the readers to value love as a motivation behind the marriage, and companionate marriages based on mutual love, friendship, and respect.

Furthermore, the guidance of love – as opposed to social and economic ambition – as a preferable marriage motivation is further developed through the indirect connection between Lady Mira, love, companionate marriages, and the rural, in contrast to social and economic ambition, the urban, and Londoners. Lady Mira is presented as a form of embodiment of love, sensibility, innocence, and rural bliss and represents happiness through a companionate marriage. The novel contains an anecdote by John Cecil on how Lady Mira refused to accompany him to London when they first got married, and how he instead was converted to the pleasures of the country and came to love it (Vol 1, 8). London, on the other hand, can be said to represent the opposite and is connected with social and economic ambition and the old conjugal hierarchy based on respect (and

not love and friendship). On her first visit to London, Lady Mira writes; "O! Sally, the difference in this place to our land of innocence; would you believe my fondness for Mr. Cecil, is matter of derision to this unthinking tribe" (Vol 1, 10). Through the use of anthropomorphism, the country is given the human trait of innocence, while London is characterized as widely different from this innocence, suggesting a form of corruption. She describes how the London population does not value conjugal love but views it instead as a matter of mockery. By using the term 'tribe' to characterize Londoners, she enforces the negative connotations as readers of the time would likely associate the term with savagery.

This form of antithesis is further emphasized as Lady Mira continues by pointing out the contradictory urban view on love and companionate marriages:

> Lady Evans laughed, "for Heaven's sake, my dear creature, do not expose yourself." I was at a loss, sally, do discern my error, "till she added, "it is sufficiently ridiculous to appear in public with your husband, to be particular to him is unpardonable" (Vol 1, 10-11)

It is unlikely that anyone would view it as unpardonable to be in love with one's husband. However, Lady Evans is made to be an extreme example, representing an extreme metropolitan view. Considering the whole novel is positively inclined towards romantic notions and sentimentalism, it is not surprising that several main characters, such as John Cecil and Miss Louisa Denham eventually change their sentiments, views, and preferences to that of Lady Miranda. Lady Evans' notion is presented in contrast to these, and she represents the corrupted views. It is her sentiments that the novel guides the reader to perceive as the ridiculous ones. Both Lady Mira's and Louisa Denham's marriages are portrayed as companionate marriages, based on mutual love and obligations, respect, close friendship, and equality. As a result, the reader is likely influenced to view this form of marital state more positively, and the urban view as mercenary and corrupt.

Filial duty

Similarly to the *Louisa* and *Emma,* the novel offers complex guidance to value filial duty when considering marriage, while at the same time indirectly advising against parental force. When meeting upon her cousin Horace Armstead and John Cecil, Lady Mira states that her parents have conjured and commanded her to marry Lord Alston and that she did not have "the presumption to

remonstrate with them" (Vo1 I, 6-7). The extract expresses the deep respect Lady Mira has for her filial duty towards her parents. However, as has previously been pointed out, Lady Mira values love as a motivation behind marriage and refuses to deem herself or another person to a loveless marriage to gain social and economic prosperity or to fulfill her filial duty. This is why she escapes in the first place. Her reluctance to disobey her filial duty, however, is apparent from her statement; "the greatest pang I feel, is the want of courage and bodily ability to return" (Vol 1,5). She is struggling with the conflict between motivations of love and filial duty. She eventually returns without her parents' knowledge of the attempted escape. It was her "contrition and ingenuous account of her emotions [that] wrought her pardon and permission to dismiss Lord Alston (Vol 1, 7). Her parents choose to listen and respect her feelings, which allows her to combine the two motivations and happily marry John Cecil, of whom they approve. It sends a strong message to the young reader that disobeying your filial duty by running away is not the answer, while at the same time offers the guidance to parents, that they should listen and respect their children's emotions. As opposed to *Louisa* where the representations mainly concern a tyrannical father, *Anna* indirectly opposes filial duty based on parental force through its emphasis on the importance of loving and understanding parents. Had *Anna* contained representations of the 'shortsightedness in parents' and tyrannical father or mothers, it would in all likeliness, express a similar and more direct disregard for filial duty, as is the norm in the sub-genre. The expressed guidance in both novels on the acceptability of filial duty as a motivation behind marriage, therefore, depends completely on how the parents or guardians fulfill their obligation to respect their children's feelings.

Furthermore, the whole narration of the character Anna's unhappiness and eventual death is connected to her duty and devotion towards her father and brother, and it suggests that filial and sibling obligations should not be overemphasized. Even when she reunites with her lost fiancé, she refuses to marry him out of respect for her father's memory. There is a general sense that Anna's fixation on her filial obligation of mourning, suffering, and unhappiness is emphasized too much. Filial duty is further colored with negative connotations as she ultimately dies from it.

Ultimately, *Anna'* guidance is characterized by much the same compromise between progressive and conservative attitudes, as *Louisa* and *Emma. Anna* offers the guidance that children should respect their filial duty, while parents should listen and respect their children's feelings. Therefore, it indirectly suggests that only parents who are understanding deserve their children's

filial duty and devotion. Furthermore, the novel guides the reader to perceive ambitions of social and economic gain as wrong, and that entering into a marriage based on this motivation is selfish and therefore, must be avoided. Instead, it is love which comes across as the motivation that, no matter the circumstances, should not be sacrificed for the other two, if the reader wants to secure a companionate marriage and, consequently, their future happiness.

The Novels' Guidance as Progressive Answers to the Equation of Marriage-Motivations

It is evident that the three novels have colored the three motivations with positive and negative connotations and that they, as a result, offer a complex and intermingled guidance on the two issues through their treatment of and guidance on social and economic ambition, love, and filial duty as motivations behind marriage. *Louisa*, *Emma*, and *Anna's* guidance can be considered answers; each novel's guidance is an equation of marriage-motivations where the emphasis is distributed between different motivations behind the marriage choice and power distributed between parent and child in the decision making – depending on the circumstances. It is not one motivation that is recommended completely, and it is neither children nor parents who are guided to make this decision alone. In this answer the attitudes of the older and younger generations are united. All three novels, though *Emma* value filial duty more strongly than *Louisa* and *Anna*¸ offer guidance on this equation based on a compromise between progressive and conservative motivations. As a result, each novel's guidance is not conflicting but emerges as a coherent answer to the two marriage-related issues depending on the circumstances.

In her chapter on recurring types, topoi and social engagements within this sub-genre, Brandtzæg argues that sentimental courtship novels "advocate a type of *golden mean* rather than positioning themselves as radically (proto)feminist" (*The Sentimental*, 105). Though the three novels guidance cannot be considered radically progressive, the guidance on *these issues* appears not a complete golden mean either. Despite this compromise in guidance, and based on the social conditions and transitions discussed in the previous chapter, the guidance offered by *Louisa, Emma,* and *Anna* can be considered *predominantly* progressive, from an eighteenth-century point of view. While emphasizing social and economic security and filial duty as part of this guidance, it is still the progressive guidance on romantic love, independence, companionate marriages, and the

repudiation of parental force and social and economic ambition that appear to be emphasized the most in the three novels' answers to the two issues.

Chapter Three

The Novels' Contribution to Progressive Transitions in English Society

It is relevant to discuss how *Louisa, Emma,* and *Anna* performed a socio-political function in their society. Siv Gøril Brandtzæg writes that sentimental courtship novels aim to entertain first and moralize second (*The Sentimental,* 10). Still, she argues that "we should highlight their potential for being read as at least semi-realistic portraits of contemporary society" (*The Sentimental,* 104), as they engage in solemn social commentary. By looking at the three novels' social and political engagement, instead of their mere ability to entertain, they appear to be social commentaries in contemporary discourse on the two issues, and function to alter the society of which they portray. This chapter explores how the novels influenced their readers, reinforced their predominantly progressive attitudes in society, and thus, contributed to the process of progressive transitions in English society regarding the two marriage-related issues.

The novels' guidance as a contribution to progressive transitions regarding marriage-related issues should be seen in connection with two arguments in J. Paul Hunter's article "The novel and social/cultural history" that the following discussion bases itself on. Firstly, that "novels sometimes reach for radical or reformist ideals through their didactic tendency. They try to make things happen as well as reflect what has already happened" (Hunter, 30). While attempting to portray the contemporary distress regarding the two issues, *Louisa, Anna,* and *Emma's* didacticism are likely influenced by the authors' agendas and morals. Diana Spearman writes that when novels become concerned with defending or attacking reality, the representations loses some of their reflective abilities, and become "less a 'reflection' and more a deliberate construction" (214). While the novels' didacticism is not radical, it does appear to be reformist. Secondly, Hunter argues that "Readers read, respond, react; the culture itself is altered, made different by the text" (Hunter, 30). With this in mind, because the novels offer predominantly progressive guidance, by influencing the reader, they reinforce their expressed attitudes in society, one reader at a time, thereby contributing to progressive (albeit modest) social and political changes. It must also be emphasized that while the novels ultimately contributed to progressive transitions regarding these issues, they could also have contributed to maintaining conservative attitudes in society regarding other issues through their guidance.

The Novels' Conservative Guidance as Contributory to Progressive Transitions

The novels' ability to influence the reader and reinforce progressive attitudes in society is, paradoxically, in part, because they maintain a conservative stance in their guidance. This conservative guidance in all likeliness made the novels more acceptable – both to the general reader and the critics, which in part muffled fears of the novels as corruptive. Since the novels are not only progressive but also contain conservative guidance on filial duty and social and economic ambition, *Louisa, Emma,* and *Anna*'s guidance were likely to come across to their contemporary readers as more approachable and respectable. Had they not maintained conservative attitudes, the novels would likely have been considered radical, and reviews would have warned against the corruptive effects of the novels. Instead, the progressive aspects of the guidance are more accepted. The same can be said of the contemporary reader, and as a result, the novels arguably influenced the reader more effectively. Armstrong argues that people considered the expression of- and the reader's indulgence in the fantasies of political power as more acceptable because the novels ultimately affirmed the subordination of female to male through the domestic framework of the novels (29). In other words, the reader was more likely to accept and internalize the progressive attitudes in the novels, when they maintained certain conservative and patriarchal attitudes. While the three novels promote progressive attitudes, they still maintain an overall framework where children are ultimately subordinate to their parents, and women to their parents, brothers, and husbands.

Socially, culturally, and educationally, many viewed novels as a grievous threat because of the novel's effective ability to influence its readers. For the moralists concerning themselves with the moral education of young people, novels were at best considered a waste of time or trash-reading (Hunter, 25). At worst, novels were a "serious instrument of evil (Hunter, 21). J. Paul Hunter elaborates;

> Three things especially concerned them: (1) that fictions, with imaginary solutions to problems … could mislead the young in their expectations about life … (2) that the "sentiments" in the novels – their valuing of feelings over rationality and received truths – corrupted the reasoning of the readers; and (3) that the depictions of romance and courtship … might not only warm the imagination but overheat the passions (21).

These three accusations might seem harsh, but this view on novels was not uncommon. Much like the saying *you are what you eat*, many believed that you were what you read. Goring's arguments support this impression, stating that sentimental novels were "widely regarded as morally dubious

and its consumption was regularly condemned as anything from an idle waste of time to a deranged and corrupting indulgence in fantasy" (*The Rhetoric*, 166). Some of the older generations and moralists believed that novels could also "undermine the traditional authority of parents and elders and subvert conventional social values, including the expectations of hard work, obedience, piety, and contentment" (Hunter, 21).

Because of the novels' compromise in guidance, critical concerns, such as the previously mentioned, were somewhat muffled, and the three novels were to a greater extent perceived as virtuous conduct novels. This, in turn, would have made them better equipped to influence their progressive guidance on the reader. Armstrong states: "Until well into the eighteenth century the reading of fiction was considered tantamount to seduction, but in the last decades of that century, certain novels were found fit to occupy the idle hours of women, children, and servants (17-18). Such novels were considered to be virtuous guides on proper manners, views, and behavior, and were to a greater extent recommended to the public.

In Brandtzæg's composition of contemporary reviews on the twelve sentimental courtship novels, we find in the reviews of *Louisa, Anna* and *Emma* a general recognition of the novels as somewhat virtuous and without corruptive contents.[1] *The Monthly Review* describes *Louisa* as "undoubtedly, in *our* estimation, greatly to be preferred to the *mob of them*, and especially, to those 'looser productions of the press, which vitiate the manners, and corrupt the heart'" (Brandtzæg, *The Sentimental*, 329). *The European Magazine* writes about *Anna* that "Although we perceive no striking excellence, we are not offended with any material impropriety" (Brandtzæg, *The Sentimental,* 336). About *Emma, The Critical Review* states that they "heartily recommend the perusal … and we do it very confidently, as we have experienced its effects … no part of it has any immoral tendency" (Brandtzæg, *The Sentimental* (331). *The Universal Catalogue* also states *Emma* "abounds with such noble sentiments, as if properly attended to, must certainly correct the human heart" (Brandtzæg, *The Sentimental*, 332). Despite receiving critique, there is a general acknowledgment that these novels do not contain corruptive or improper material.

When David Gross refers to Hannah More' confession to her correspondent Horace Walpole that "a novel is a dish I never venture upon without a taster, or some knowledge of the cook," (Devonshire and Gross, 14), he highlights a common contemporary view on the importance of a

[1] See Brandtzæg's Appendix in *The Sentimental Courtship Novel and its Critics, 1769*-1796, pp. 327-370 for full reviews on the sub-genre. For full reviews on the three novels, see p. 329-330 (*Louisa*), pp. 331-332 (*Emma*), and pp. 334-336 (*Anna*).

novels' reviews. Though sentimental novels were popular regardless of the regularly poor reviews, people did respond to them, and they functioned as a form of insurance that the novels were not corruptive. Due to the contemporary influence reviews had on the reading public, the acknowledgments in the three novels' the reviews probably resulted in an increased number of readers and a more diverse readership, especially in age, gender and morality. Because the readers were less likely to consider the three novels as vehicles of political contents, as will be discussed below, and more as entertainment, and because the reviews emphasized that they were not corruptive, the readers would arguably have 'let their guards down' and become more susceptible to the novels' guidance. As a result, an increased number of readers characterized by greater diversity in gender, age, attitudes, and social class became more susceptible to the novels' progressive influence. In turn, this increased the impact of the novel on society.

Through their progressive, yet compromised, guidance, the novels created awareness and contributed to mutual generational changes in attitudes. Young and old readers were educated through increased awareness of the marriage-related distress, and thus, became more likely to sympathize with one another's concerns. The older generation would likely be more inclined to avoid acting like the tyrannical Lord Walton and Mr. Egerton and value their children's feelings so that their children would not have to go through such distress and suffering as Sophia or Emma. The younger generations of readers were likely influenced not to be reckless, but to value reasonable and selfless love as a motivation behind marriage, while at the same time maintaining respect for their filial obligations to their parents and take their advice and wishes into consideration. This compromise, where both the feelings of parents and children are respected and valued – as long as each of them is reasonable – would probably have made it easier for both younger and older readers to come to terms with the predominantly progressive guidance of the three novels. Consequently, each novel's guidance is not conflicting but emerges as a coherent and circumstantial answer to the two marriage-related issues, where the older and younger generations' attitudes are both considered and included. Thus the novels contributed to narrow the generational gap between conflicting attitudes. Nevertheless, though this gap was narrowed from both sides, we could say that because they influenced and spread predominantly progressive guidance, the novels contributed to 'push' this gap in a predominantly progressive direction.

The Novels' Progressive Guidance as Contributory to Progressive Transitions

The three sentimental courtship novels can be considered particularly effective in influencing their readers according to their politically progressive attitudes. Firstly, the sentimental novels' popularity and social range made it an effective medium to promote social and political views. Through borrowing, circulating- or subscription libraries, and public readings, even people in the lower end of society could potentially be exposed to an author's views. Though, it should be pointed out that the main target audiences of sentimental courtship novels were the middle and upper classes of society, as they could more easily afford and acquire such novels. Secondly, the three sentimental courtship novels make use of sentimental rhetoric and extensive use of other literary devices to arouse the reader's emotions and induce sympathy, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Lastly, because sentimental novels were considered a female genre, written primarily for, by and about women, they were often viewed as more politically impotent, which could potentially make their political critique more effective and influential. In her book *Desire and Domestic Fiction,* Nancy Armstrong states that "Female writing – writing that was considered appropriate for or could be written by women – in fact designated itself as feminine, which meant that other writing, by implication, was understood as male" (28). Though often looked down upon, novels and especially sentimental novels were considered part of this feminized genre. Even though women lacked direct political power, they were, nevertheless, indirectly politically influential. However, women were viewed as naturally belonging to the domestic sphere, and considered completely disconnected from the political one. Armstrong writes of the contemporary attitude; "The female view was simply different … and not likely to be critical of the dominant view" (28). Because females were treated and viewed as lacking any claim to political power, novels were also often considered as such, and thus subconsciously stripped of political content that could threaten the established patriarchal society. Even the male narrators in the epistolary form would arguably have been considered less politically influential because the letters are part of a domestic, and consequently, female genre.

It is precisely the underestimation of the political influence that the novel could have on the reading public that potentially made it such an effective medium. Armstrong argues that "The explicitly female narrators … are more effective in launching a political critique because their gender identifies them as having no claim to political power" (28-29). She also states that "In

assuming the guise of a woman … an author could avoid overtly disclosing his position" (28). Though Armstrong mentions royalists or dissidents, her argument applies to authors with a more (proto)feminist or liberal agenda as well. Her statement also emphasizes it was not only women who wrote these novels, though they did outweigh the men in this genre. Therefore, precisely because the three sentimental courtship novels were considered a female genre, and thus, stripped of political power, *Louisa, Emma,* and *Anna* were excellent instruments in expressing their progressive (proto)feminist and liberal attitudes.

The three novels contain didactic narratives that not only created awareness but actively aimed to morally transform the reader – despite how sentimental courtship novels were designed to entertain first and moralize second. They achieved this through inculcating morality by example (Tompkins, 70), as was the case with Lady Mira. Paul Goring writes that in the attempt to promote virtue, authors wrote such novels *differently* by writing "didactically, aiming to transform their readers by positing exemplary models of modern virtue and politeness" (*The Rhetoric*, 167). It is therefore not surprising that the progressive guidance is found mainly in the representations of the actions, views, and behavior of the novels' many exemplary models of virtue and morality, and the reader is influenced accordingly. They also functioned to normalize the acceptance of such progressive attitudes and sympathies, as they are expressed by exemplary models of virtue and morality, such as Lady Mira or Louisa Fermor. Thus, the novels used them to instill the wanted morality. J. M. S. Tomkins writes that since the novels' business was to illustrate the moral truth they should redress reality, not imitate it (72-73). Considering moral truth is not objective, but is dynamic and dependent on subjective opinions, the three novels' ultimately progressive guidance in all likelihood reflects the authors' perception of morality and modern virtue and their moral agendas. Furthermore, because the novels actively aimed to transform the reader by accommodating their representations to attack or defend the three marriage motivations, they should, therefore, be considered "deliberate constructions" (214), as Spearman puts it, and not reflections of reality. Again, because the guidance is a compromise in attitudes, this transformation of the reader aimed to be reformist, and not progressively radical.

In connection with this aim to transform the reader, as mentioned in chapter one, sentimental novels functioned as an exercise in sensibility. Paul Goring argues; "such novels were not only sites for the literary staging of sentimental eloquence but sought actively to produce such

eloquence among the reading public" (*The Rhetoric,* 142). Through exaggerated representations, excessive distress, sentimental language and virtuous behavior, to mention some aspects, the novels were written differently to function as a vehicle for this exercise and contribute to transforming the reader. Considering the contemporary emphasis on sensibility and sympathy for one's fellow human beings, this repeated and exaggerated emphasis on distress functioned to enhance the reader's perception that the causes of this distress – social and economic ambition and parental force – was immoral according to modern morals of virtue and sensibility.

The novels can also have indirectly functioned to reinforce progressive attitudes in society when used as a tool for readers to showcase their sensibility to others. Goring argues for a "coercive somatic image of polite reading" (*The Rhetoric,* 146) as there existed a demand for both an emotional and physical response of sympathy to avoid the brand of insensibility (*The Rhetoric,* 143, 146). As a result, there was a contemporary *display* of such sensibility and compassion. By expressing sympathy in front of an audience, the reader's response was not merely private. Thus, the readers' response of outward expressions of sympathy, whether they did sympathize to such an extent as to match their response, or not, can be perceived to function as an outward acceptance of the novels' progressive attitudes, which would further influence the reader's *audience.* The readers' display of sympathy for the characters' distress, again, normalizes the acceptance of the novels' expressed attitudes and sympathies. From this perspective, the novels do not only function to directly contribute to progressive transitions in society, but they also function indirectly, as the readers' response through a public display might have reinforced and accelerated the novels' progressive attitudes in society.

In relation to the novels' public function, the three novels provide a concretization of the contemporary issues through their narratives and thus, arguably, function as a collective platform for open discussion. It might have been difficult or taboo for people to discuss issues in their private marriages and lives or express anxieties about the institution of marriage. The narrative representations made people more prone to openly discuss, critique and sympathize with the three motivations because they could refer to the novels, instead of disclosing their own experiences. In "Women writers and the eighteenth-century novel", Spencer writes: "the domestic sentimental novel of the late eighteenth century had an ambiguous role as the carrier of private concerns into public print" (217). This can also be seen in connection with why so many novels were published

anonymously in late eighteenth-century England (Vareschi, 1135, Raven, 143). Because "authors feared public ridicule and the wrath of their families" (Devonshire and Gross, 11), many authors chose to remain anonymous. The medium of novels can therefore also be said to function as a collective platform for open discussion for the authors where they could take part in the contemporary discourse on the subject and indirectly present social criticism through their representations of the three motivations, without fear of personal repercussions. Therefore, the novels were not just *a part* of the contemporary discourse on the two issues; they also contributed to *further* discourse on the two issues.

Louisa, Anna, and *Emma* contributed to the process of progressive transitions by presenting the conjugal family as a new domestic sphere where women are more equalized through the companionate marriage. The three novels emphasize companionate marriage, which is presented as the result if love and self-choice is part of the marriage motivations. The three sentimental courtship novels contributed to a progressive transition regarding the "redefinition of family membership and its obligations" (Perry, 221) through their emphasis on love and individual emotional satisfaction, and their expressed guidance that children are not obliged to follow their filial obligations when parents are unreasonable. With such a shift in the power-balance from parent to child and the consequent emphasis on emotional satisfaction before the social and economic ambition, Stone argues that the consequent effects upon the marital relations were a companionate marriage structure and equalization of the relationship between husband and wife (217). Perry, on the other hand, points out that the restructuring of kinship and new construction of the conjugal marriage which resulted in the centralization of the spousal bond, rather than equalizing the wife, instead submerged the wife's separate psychological identity into the marriage (Perry, 227).

However, the novels repeatedly emphasize newly married female characters' separate psychological identities by having them explicitly express to their confidantes how they remain themselves despite their new role as a wife. The explicit statements suggest that this loss of a women's subjective identity when becoming a wife was a common problem at the time like Perry points out - which is made even more apparent by the fact that the male narrators do not make such proclamations. Still, the three novels assert the wives' personal and distinct identities in the narrations, and continuously emphasize mutual love, respect, and friendship between the husbands and wives, as opposed to a mere hierarchy of respect between spouses. Through this form of

emphasis of the companionate marriage, the novels idealize and promote spousal equality – despite how they maintain a framework of subordination, thereby contributing to a positive progression towards better conditions for women.

The new conjugal family is arguably emphasized in an attempt to compensate for the weakening of the consanguineal ties, thus establishing a new sphere for women, where the empowered position of companionate wives in their new domestic arenas are idealized. This can be seen in connection with the three novels' emphasis on love as a precept for marriage, companionate marriages, the consequent idealization of spousal equality, and conjugal obligations before consanguineal. Perry argues that because of the consanguineal restructuring, there also existed an "urgent need of women to find safe berth, to land somewhere, to relocate domestic life in an establishment other than their families or origin" (220). This aspect is registered in the three novels, and they seemingly function to establish this safe berth. *Louisa, Anna,* and to some extent *Emma,* emphasize this companionate marriage. In *Anna,* we see how Lady Mira and Louisa, though remaining subordinate, is elevated to the rank of partners and close friends of their husbands. Spencer writes "What is new about eighteenth-century experience … is not the confinement of women to the home, but the new value placed on that home" (217). The novels contributed to emphasize this new value of the home. Through this idealized equalization of husband and wife, the novels portray this form of married state, or new domestic sphere, as an arena of domestic bliss and happiness if the reader fully invests in the new conjugal family. This is also achieved as the novels, and especially *Emma,* acknowledge the distress and sense of homelessness connected with this transition and conflict between consanguineal and conjugal obligations and affective investments. Perry writes: "the narratives … helped to consolidate the shift I am describing, by lamenting it. By showing what was lost, or imagining the loss retrieved, these narratives confirmed the new conjugal paradigm of kinship" (51). Thus, the novels contributed to establishing the companionate marriage and the conjugal family as a new, safe, and domestic arena for women, based on mutual love, friendship, respect, equality and affective individualism.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have discussed how different progressive changes, such as the growth of affective individualism, challenged existing conservative patriarchal attitudes, such as filial duty and arranged marriages, in eighteenth-century English society. I have found that as a result of these transitions, which were both problematic and irregular, there existed in the second half of the century a generational gap between progressive and conservative attitudes related to marriage-decisions, especially prominent in the upper social strata. In turn, this resulted in considerable distress connected to the two contemporary and interrelated issues concerning the attachment of emphasis distributed between different motivations behind the marriage-decision and the distribution of power over decision-making between parent and child. Having established this, I account for how the novels, through their guidance on the two issues and representations of the consequent distress, were cultural expressions that contributed to contemporary discourse on the two issues.

As a means to offer guidance on these contemporary issues, I have identified social and economic ambition, love, and filial duty as the most recurring motivations behind marriage in their representations. I have shown how *Louisa, Emma,* and *Anna* offer both complex and intermingled guidance to the reader on which motivations are recommended depending on the circumstances, through coloring the three motivations with positive and negative connotations. I have found that *Louisa,* Emma, and *Anna* offer a compromise between both progressive and conservative guidance on the three motivations and that the each novel's guidance is very similar to each other. The progressive guidance found in the three novels is 1) for young readers to marry for love, 2) for parents to respect and value their children's wishes and feelings, 3) to refrain from marrying to improve their current social and economic situations, unless it is the result of a love-match, 4) for parents to avoid force or to sacrifice their children for their own social and economic ambitions, and 5) for young readers not to consider their filial duty as a marriage motivation if their parents are unreasonable, or if they act tyrannically. At the same time, the novels offer the conservative guidance to 1) not marry for love if it results in a severely decreased social and economic situation, 2) to make sure that the marriage secures their current social and economic situation, and 3) to value filial duty towards reasonable parents. As a result of this compromise between progressive and conservative guidance, the three novels can be said to follow a form of *golden mean* in their

guidance. However, this thesis has shown that despite this compromise, the guidance offered on these two issues can be considered predominantly progressive from an eighteenth-century point of view.

As to how the three novels contributed to progressive transitions in English society, I have shown how the novels reinforced predominantly progressive attitudes in society through their guidance and ability to influence and transform the reader. I have explained how the novels' conservative guidance paradoxically contributed to the progressive changes because the conservative aspects increased the reader's acceptability of the novel's progressive attitudes, thus contributing to enhance the novels' ability to influence the reader. I have also explained how the three novels more effectively influenced their novels as part of a politically underestimated genre. Furthermore, I have argued that the three novels influenced and aimed to transform the reader to value companionate marriages, and in doing so, emphasized an increased equalization of the spousal relationship – despite their subordinate frameworks. In relation to this, I have argued that they contributed to establishing a new and safe sphere for women through their idealization of the empowered position of companionate wives in their new domestic arenas. I have also argued that the novels functioned as a collective platform for discussion which incited public engagement in the discourse on the two issues. Ultimately, the novels' guidance can be considered a short-term answer to the reader on these marriage-related issues and the consequent distress. However, because the novels contributed to the process of progressive transitions in English society, they also contributed to diminish these marriage-related issues in the long run and relieve the contemporary distress so often repeated in the novels.

With this thesis, I have attempted to provide the literary field with new research on this often underappreciated genre that can further enable us to understand how sentimental courtship novels dealt with and offered guidance on the contemporary issues of attachment of emphasis distributed between different motivations behind the marriage choice and the distribution of power over decision-making between parents and children. I have also attempted to showcase the novels' socio-historical potential, as opposed to reading them as mere entertainment, by emphasizing their function as social commentaries in the contemporary discourse on marriage issues and contributors in political and social transitions in English society.

In recent years there have been conducted a series of studies relating to shifts in marriage-structures based on hierarchies of respect to companionate marriages. In her article "From Respect to Friendship? Companionate Marriage and Conjugal Power Negotiation in Middle-Class Hyderabad", Amanda Gilbertson writes:

> A number of studies have drawn attention to a widespread contemporary embrace of companionate marriage ideals in response to recent integration in a capitalist industrialised economy and resultant structural and cultural changes … Such changes have led some scholars to assert that, in recent decades, companionate marriage has become a global idea (225).

The further study of sentimental novels and sentimental courtship novels can provide relevant information in comparative studies both on a social, cultural, political and historical level, but also in comparative studies of literature. For example, are there similar representations of these two issues, and the resulting distress, in the literature of contemporary societies that are currently experiencing similar transition? For all these reasons, the study of sentimental courtship novels can not only provide further relevant information on eighteenth-century society and literature but also, for example, play a key role in studies on contemporary changes in family ties and motivations behind marriages currently taking place around the world.

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Appendix 1: Plot Summaries

In *Louisa: A Sentimental Novel* (1771), the two main protagonists in the epistolary novel, are the cousins Louisa Fermor and Sophia Saville, who write to each other about matters mainly concerning the heart. Preceding the epistles, Louisa was courted by Mr. James Brudenell, with whom she fell in love. However, he mysteriously disappeared, and she is later told that he married another woman. Sophia also has a prior story to the narrative, as it becomes evident that she has been forced by her father to marry the rich brute Charles Saville against her will, while all along being in love with Mr. Sedley. Her husband dies, however, and as the narrative begins, she is very skeptical of entering into a married state again, even though it is with her faithful lover, Mr. Sedley, who is waiting patiently for her throughout most of the novel. As the narrative develops, Louisa is courted by several men but is unable to forget Brudenell, while Sophia becomes more and more at ease with the idea of marrying again as she observes how faithful and constant Mr. Sedley is to her. Abruptly Brudenell is back in Louisa's life again, giving her an explanatory narrative of his dealings with, and the betrayal of his friend Mowbray. Mowbray had tricked him into marrying the woman Mowbray himself had impregnated. She, however, being a culprit in this scheme, dies with her child during childbirth. Finally, free from the bonds of a trick marriage, Brudenell is free to return to his beloved Louisa, and they marry. At the end of the narrative, after much convincing and a tricky law-dispute about her inheritance has been resolved leaving Sophia economically independent, she is finally ready to marry and accepts becoming Sophia Sedley in the end.

In *Emma; or the Unfortunate Attachment: A Sentimental Novel* (1773), the beginning of the narrative starts with Emma Egerton receiving a proposal from her lover Augustus Sydney. Sydney was taken in by her father Mr. Egerton when his parents had died and was a close friend of the family. Emma accepts this proposal, knowing that he does not have much money, but believing that her father's fortune can sustain them both. However, it is revealed that Mr. Egerton had lost most of their fortune, and as a result, he refuses to consent to Sydney's proposal to Emma. Though he wants Emma to be happy, he argues that it would leave his Emma and Augustus on the brink of poverty. Sydney is convinced to leave, and he joins the army to earn enough money to marry Emma. However, he later dies and leaves her all of his earnings. After her father appeals to her emotions and her strong sense of filial duty, he begs her to marry his rich friend Lord Walpole. He also forces her to promise never to tell Lord Walpole about her previous attachment. Emma is

persuaded to forget Sydney and out of filial duty learns to be inclined to love Lord Walpole. They marry, and she appears happily in love with Lord Walpole. However, Mr. Walpole finds out about her previous attachment to Mr. Sydney and becomes furious. He abandons his now pregnant wife and gambles away their fortune. Emma moves out to an old and run-down house her husband owns, where she meets and becomes close friends with Miss Neville, who coincidentally is the long-lost love of Lord Walton's close family friend Colonel Sutton. Emma gives birth to a baby girl, and though loving her child, her grief in having lost the love of her husband nearly kills her. In an effort to save Emma, Miss Neville calls for Colonel Sutton. As a last effort, the dying Emma writes a letter to her husband explaining everything and how much she loves him. He returns to her in atonement as a somewhat changed man and eventually prevents her from dying. After much discussion, Miss Neville and Colonel Sutton are reunited and agree to get married. At the end of the novel Emma gives birth to a boy and heir, and conveniently Mr. Walpole inherits a large fortune from his uncle, which allows them to be restored into society and their family home, ending the novel on a very happy note.

In *Anna: A Sentimental Novel* (1782), the narrative begins with John Cecil's account of his meeting with, and love-based marriage to Lady Mira, and how he has sent for his sister Louisa Cecil from a convent. Preceding the narrative of the novel, Anna and Louisa had become very close friends as they had spent years together in this convent, as a result of them both having lost their parents. Louisa soon moves back to England, where she meets and marries Lord Denham out of mutual love. The rest of both Louisa's and Lady Mira's narratives surround their blissful companionate marriages – albeit with some drama to keep it interesting. Anna, on the other hand, remains in the convent and she cannot get over her tragic past; her mother had caught smallpox, and on the day of her son's return from the grand tour she died from the strain of her excitement. Then, soon after, on the day of Anna's wedding, her beloved fiancé Frederick Darville mysteriously disappeared, and her father angrily blamed her brother for introducing his sister to such a man. The father drew a sword at his son in a fit of rage. In the act of self-defense, and much to his horror, her brother killed their father. Anna was left only with her brother. However, he blamed himself for all their disasters and decided to excommunicate himself, leaving his sister in the convent where she remains through parts of the narrative. Anna, considering for some time to take the veil, is eventually convinced by Louisa to discard this idea and is instead persuaded to travel to England and stay with Louisa's family. During her visit, though comforted by Louisa, Anna is too lost in

her grief, and her depression worsens throughout the novel and endangers her health. They encounter Darville in Bath, and through a letter, he explains how he was robbed, lured into marriage and kidnapped to Italy, but only lately managed to escape and travel back to England. He is forgiven, and they are reunited. However, her filial duty makes her unable to consent to his renewed marriage proposals. Her grief has taken too strong a hold of her and Anna dies in her brother's arms, just as he returns to see her. Louisa is left to mourn her friend but is consoled by her loving husband, extended family, and a newborn baby girl.

Appendix 2: The Master's Thesis' Relevance for the Teaching Profession

I consider this thesis relevant to the teaching profession in several ways. Working with this thesis has made me better equipped to teach in both English and history as the specialized knowledge the work has provided me with is directly linked to the learning objectives within the English curriculum and the curriculum in history. It is particularly relevant for the subject of English literature and culture, which I very much hope to be teaching in the future.

The master's thesis' interdisciplinary approach has also allowed me to explore the interconnectedness between the two subjects I will be teaching further. It shows how relevant the study of literature can be in relation to learning and understanding history, as it highlights the cycle of how literature is a product of its context, and how society – and ultimately history – can be made different by literature.

Furthermore, my work with this thesis reflects work I will guide my students through in the classroom, for instance, close-reading or analyzing English literature, which is part of the learning objectives in all three teaching subjects in English: International English, Social Studies English, and English literature and culture. The research that this thesis required, and my experience with primary sources that have not been dealt with much before, is also relevant and has enhanced my competence when working with primary sources and source criticism in history – which are important aspects of the subject's emphasis on the didactic approach learning-by-doing.

As for the work this thesis has entailed and its relevance for my profession, I chose this subject specifically because it was an area of both social, cultural, religious, political, and literary history that I have had little chance to explore in-depth before embarking on this project. I considered this thesis a great opportunity to learn more and broaden my competence a teacher in both my fields of interest. Thus, this thesis also reflects some of the most important skills I want to teach and inspire in my students – to be inquisitive, critical and intellectually curious so that, instead of settling for the knowledge they already possess or need to learn in school, they ultimately develop an internal drive to attain more knowledge throughout their lives.