

The Making and Unmaking of an Irish Woman of Letters

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Trinity Term 2012

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List of Abbreviations

- Ret. Except where indicated all references are to 2004 edition of *Retrospections of an Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806*.
- P.C. *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity*. All page references are to the original manuscript.
- J. Herbert's *Journal* is not paginated all references are identified by date of entry.

Abstract

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Dorothea Herbert was an Irish provincial writer who did not publish during her lifetime. Only three of her manuscripts are now extant: a collection of poetry, *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity* (1793), an illustrated memoir, *Retrospections of an Outcast* (1806) and a *Journal* which covers the years 1806-7. All three manuscripts were missing for long periods and some doubts as to their existence and authenticity made many scholars reluctant to study her work. There is almost no documented historical evidence of her life and our only access to her is through her writing. The internal evidence of her writing suggests that by 1806 she was suffering from a serious mental illness. Nevertheless, her works reveal a relatively hidden world of literary practice in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Studied alongside the manuscripts and printed works of a range of contemporary writers, Herbert's extant manuscripts uncover a complex and informal literary culture. This textual world is dependent on print culture but operates independently of it in a closed system of gift-giving and manuscript circulation. In this thesis I explore the influence of print

culture on the writing and reading practices of Herbert and her contemporaries. The thesis is divided into five chapters which examine: the history of Herbert's manuscripts and those of her contemporaries, their writing as material practice, the cultures in which they read the writing and circulation of manuscripts and the history of the print trade in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Acknowledgments

My overriding personal and professional debt is to my supervisor, Josephine McDonagh. Without her constant encouragement and intellectual guidance none of the work undertaken on this thesis would have been possible. My thanks also, to Bernard O'Donoghue, who was my main support during my time in Oxford.

I would also like to thank my colleagues in the School of English, University College Cork. My special thanks go to Anne Fitzgerald, Eibhear Walshe, Graham Allen, Cliona Ó Gallchoir, Kalene Kenefick, Cal Duggan, Pat Coughlan, Sarah Farrelly, Damian Bracken, Ruth Saffman, Patrick Wyse Jackson and Julian Walton.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary patience of my friends, Áine Hyland, Helen Rouse, Marie Duffy, John MacDonnell, Alice Fawsitt and Mary Duggan.

This thesis is dedicated to my three children, Peter, Joseph and Anna and to my remarkable 94-year-old mother, May Breen.

Introduction

In 1929, one hundred years after her death, the first volume of Dorothea Herbert's memoir *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806* was published for the first time.¹ A mild flurry of interest followed, and its appearance was remarked on by some of the major writers of the time. Elizabeth Bowen dismissed Herbert's memoir as an uncongenial and unreliable historical source for *Bowen's Court*, her extensively researched history of her family and the Anglo-Irish.

She was a clergyman's daughter, fatally well-connected, she broke her own heart, failed to marry and writes through a mist of queerness: she could not stay the course.²

Bowen finds no place for Herbert's "queerness" or inability to "stay the course" in her idealised reconstruction of the history of the Anglo-Irish and her belief in their courage in the face of adversity. She crowds five negative comments into this tightly packed summary of Herbert's personal failings as an Anglo-Irish woman. More positively, Virginia Woolf, unburdened by Bowen's

¹ Dorothea Herbert, *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806* (London, 1929). Volume two was published in 1930.

² Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court* (London, 1942), p. 204.

investment in the fragile status of her class, recommended *Retrospections* to her sister Vanessa Bell as an amusing memoir.

If you want an amusing book of memoirs, rather randy and rollicking, I advise the retrospections of Dorothea Herbert – she lived in Ireland at the end of the 18th century, and talks as you might of the Chamber pot and how the gentlemen laughed when they saw the stream trickle through the door.³

There is little of the “randy and rollicking” in *Retrospections* however; Herbert’s very occasional descriptions of the Anglo-Irish as amusingly vulgar and uncivilised is what seems to have attracted Woolf to the text.⁴ The contrary nature of these responses signals the conundrum that Dorothea Herbert’s work was and has become. That these two novelists read and responded to Herbert’s memoir gives an indication of the interest that surrounded its initial appearance in print. Other contemporary responses were equally divided between those who were attracted to the story of unrequited love that lies at the heart of the memoir or dismissive of the sentimental style in which the love story is narrated. However, questions about the authenticity of the memoir also circulated at the time and were to persist into the twenty-first century.⁵ This may explain why after some modest success and mixed reviews the memoir was to remain out of print until 1988 and Herbert’s reputation as a writer to sink into relative obscurity.

³ *A Reflection of the Other Person: The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson (London, 1978), vol. IV, p. 40. The passage that Woolf is referring to shows Herbert’s sense of humour as well as the vulgarity of the Anglo-Irish. “We in our confusion overturned the Pot-de-chambre and the Two doors being opposite the Whole Contents meander’d across the Lobby into their Barrack – Immediatley the House rang with their laughter and left us au Desespoir” (Ret., p. 68).

⁴ Ironically, Herbert like Bowen was anxious to represent her Anglo-Irish family as cultured and decorous and was careful not to support the English stereotype of the Irish as primitive and uncivilised.

⁵ For a discussion of the controversy that surrounds Herbert’s manuscripts, see Chapter One.

Dorothea Herbert was born in Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary c 1770 and died there in 1829. During her relatively long life she left her home only for short family visits to Dublin, Killarney and Bristol and to the Rectory at Knockgrafton, one of her father's outlying parishes. Her father the Reverend Nicholas Herbert, a Church of Ireland clergyman, earned a substantial income from the four livings he held in County Tipperary.⁶ As a result the family lived in very comfortable circumstances. Both of her parents were connected to the leading Anglo-Irish families of the day and they formed part of a relatively closed network of Anglo-Irish relations and friends.⁷ Herbert was the eldest of eight children. As was common among their class at the time the boys received a formal education while the girls were expected to cultivate the polite accomplishments that would guarantee them advantageous marriages. Herbert's three brothers were educated at the Rev. Patrick Hare's boarding school in Cashel and then attended Trinity College Dublin. Otway and Nicholas entered the Church and Tom practiced law in London. Herbert and her four younger sisters were educated at home. This education was perfunctory at best; her father's Parish clerk taught them to read and write and makeshift French governesses and itinerant dancing and music masters arrived and departed at random intervals from the parsonage. At the age of ten Herbert was sent to her Herbert relations in Dublin for a year to have what she describes as "the last Polish to our education" applied (Ret., p. 41). In Dublin her country manners, style of dress and former teachers were ridiculed. There Herbert received more formal dancing, music and drawing lessons, and was taught the way of life of a young lady of fashion whose primary duty it was to marry within her own class. But despite this conventional preparation and the expectations it brought, Herbert attracted few suitable marriage

⁶ Herbert calculated her father's income at the time of his death at "upward of eighteen hundred a year" (Ret., p. 406).

⁷ Nicholas Herbert was the youngest son of the Herbert Family of Muckcross, Killarney, Co. Kerry. The Herberts were a junior branch of the Powis family of Powis Castle in Wales. Lord Powis secured Rev. Herbert his first living in Ludlow. Herbert's mother Martha was the daughter of John Cuffe, the first Lord Desart of Co. Kilkenny.

suitors and did not marry. Her one serious romance took place in 1789 when she formed an attachment to John Roe. Although the affair was very brief and ended when John Roe married another young woman, Herbert makes her story of unrequited love the main subject of *Retrospections*.

The most influential figures in Herbert's young life were her father's well-educated clergyman friends who visited the house regularly and gave her gifts of books and encouraged and directed her reading of serious literature. Herbert makes her veneration of these men and their learning clear. She refers to them as "Learned Ecclesiastics," lists the books they give her and credits them with laying the "foundations of my future erudition" (Ret., p. 35). These men gave her a model from which to fashion herself as a rational woman of letters. Her concept of what it means to be an intellectual is derived from her contact with these well-read and successful men from her childhood. Through describing their gifts to her she affiliates herself with them and mimics their style of intellectual learning. Thus there were two competing strands in Herbert's informal education, one directs her towards love and marriage and the conventional role of a woman of her class and the other fosters the desire to become an authoress and a lady of letters. The conflict between these two competing roles is one of the central contradictions of her writing. In her 1793 poetry collection Herbert constructs herself as a confident and ambitious young poet while her 1806 memoir and 1806-1807 *Journal* chart the destruction of this ambitious figure and construct in her place a sentimental and tragic heroine whose failed romance leads to her decline and eventual madness. Her manuscripts are themselves material expressions of this conflict. They are elaborate replicas of published books in the period and as such are the work of a woman of letters but they tell the history of the unfulfilled life of an Anglo-Irish woman who fails to marry the man she loves and is driven to madness by that failure.

The last entry in Herbert's *Journal* is dated 30 December 1807; there is no evidence of further writing after this date. Family history suggests that between 1807 and 1829 Herbert remained in the family home in Carrick-on-Suir with her nephew Walter or unmarried sisters.⁸ She is believed to have been mentally unstable during these last years of her life. She died there in 1829 and is buried in the family plot in the Church of Ireland graveyard in Carrick-on-Suir.

There are many challenges facing the student who makes such a minor writer the subject of a doctoral thesis. These are augmented in this case by a number of factors relating to Herbert and her work. Although she claims to have written at least four volumes of work, only a collection of poems, *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity*, her memoir *Retrospections of an Outcast* and a *Journal* for the years 1806-1807 are extant.⁹ None of these were published during her lifetime. Her only fully published work to date is *Retrospections*, and it has seen three editions since 1929/30.¹⁰ All of the original manuscripts were believed to be missing for many years fuelling doubts about the existence and authenticity of the works. The small body of work and this controversy have made many scholars reluctant to study her writing. Thus there is almost no serious critical response to her work. The reception history consists mainly of reviews of the three published editions of *Retrospections*. The majority of these are biographical readings of the text. There is also a dearth of documented historical evidence about Herbert and her writing making it very difficult to verify facts about her life

⁸ A letter from Desmond Mandeville to his cousin Lal sums up the lack of family knowledge about Herbert. "It's tragic about Dolly H, that none of us knows what happened between the end of her diary and annex (1807) and her death in 1829. The most likely thing, I feel, is she lived on quietly, and just a little mad, in the house of her nephew Walter; or else with her sister Mattie." Letter from Desmond Mandeville to Cousin Lal, 18 Feb. 1986.

⁹ Dorothea Herbert, *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity* (MS in private hands); *Retrospections of an Outcast* (Dublin: Manuscript Room, Trinity College Dublin Library, Herbert Deposit); *Journal 1806-1807* (Dublin: Manuscript Room, Trinity College Dublin Library).

¹⁰ Dorothea Herbert, *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806* (London, 1929-30); *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806* (Dublin, 1988); *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806* (Dublin, 2004).

or the history of her manuscripts. Added to this, internal evidence from *Retrospections* and her *Journal* suggests that Herbert was mentally unstable when completing the manuscript of *Retrospections* in 1806 and during the writing of her *Journal* in 1806/07.

Most readers of Herbert to date have read the published editions of *Retrospections* to find out about Herbert herself, or the life and times in which she lived. However, her writing and her handmade manuscripts also tell us about the literary culture which she inhabited. Even though the manuscripts were not published in her lifetime, they mimic books in their style and presentation. I read her manuscripts therefore, not only for what they can tell us about Herbert and her times but, for what they can tell us about the cultures of books and printing in provincial Ireland. Thus this thesis is a detailed case study of Dorothea Herbert's manuscripts in the context of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Irish print culture. It seeks to understand the works as a reflection of that culture but also to understand the impact of that culture on Herbert's self-identity as she constructs it in her writing. I study her work not in isolation but alongside other published and unpublished writers, particularly those in her immediate circle in provincial Ireland and also in the wider world of contemporary Irish life-writing.

My research for this thesis began with the task of recovering Herbert's missing manuscripts. I have to date located three of her original manuscripts: *Retrospections of an Outcast*, *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity* and her *Journal*. The novels and plays she claims to have written are still unaccounted for. My research has uncovered other unpublished manuscripts from the same time and region, and the existence of these texts is evidence of a literary culture in which manuscripts were constructed and circulated informally among family members and neighbours. This has been corroborated by published sources of the time, such as for instance Edward

Mandeville's poem "Lines to Miss Herbert, on Reading Her Villa." Mandeville dedicated the poem to Herbert in recognition of having read and been inspired by her unpublished poem "The Villa."¹¹ The discovery of these texts discloses a manuscript culture in which Herbert was an active participant. Thus rather than appearing strange and unusual, which is what has attracted most commentators to her work, she emerges as much more part of a community of writers and readers and very much a product of the literary culture of her time.¹²

I include unpublished journals, published memoirs and autobiographical novels in this contextual study of Herbert's work and build on the work carried out by other scholars in this area. Among the unpublished manuscripts I have located is the original manuscript of James Ryan's *The Carrickman's Diary 1787-1809* which had been missing, believed lost, for many years.¹³ Ryan, like Herbert, lived all of his life in Carrick-on-Suir and his diary covers the same time period as Herbert's *Retrospections* and *Journal*. I have also located a number of Sir Vere Hunt's diaries.¹⁴ Vere Hunt of Curragh Chase in Co. Limerick was a dedicated book collector and his diaries contain details of this collection and the arrangements of his library.¹⁵ Many forgotten unpublished manuscripts now also form part of this study. Among these are the diaries of Herbert's cousin and childhood friend William Blunden, of her

¹¹ Edw. M. Mandeville, Esq. *Miscellaneous Poems* (Waterford, 1798).

¹² An account of the discovery of Herbert's and other manuscripts is contained in Appendix Two.

¹³ James Ryan, *The Carrickman's Diary 1789-1809*. Waterford: Waterford City Library, MS not catalogued. See Appendix Two for an account of the history of this manuscript; Patrick Hayden, *Journal* (1802-1851), MS in private possession of Mr. A. McCan; Samuel Cooper, *Diaries* (1782, 1785, 1786, 1795, 1804, 1806, 1807, 1809, 1814 and 1823). MSS of Cooper Family, England.

¹⁴ See Appendix Two for an account of their location.

¹⁵ I located four of the *Vere Hunt Diaries* in the Strong Room of the Boole Library in University College Cork. They were un-catalogued and there was no record of how they came to be in Cork. Following the discovery, they were catalogued MS U267 and later returned to Limerick City Library where they now are located.

neighbours Samuel Cooper and Patrick Hayden, the unpublished autobiographical novel *Selena* written by the poet Mary Tighe and *Marianna* the unpublished novella of Mary Delaney.¹⁶ These forgotten unpublished texts and missing manuscripts add materially to the context in which I place this study of Herbert's unpublished manuscripts. They show a vibrant reading and writing culture that is not seen when we study the history of the published book in the period and yet is heavily influenced by book culture. The location of these lost and forgotten manuscripts adds to our understanding of the part played by the writing and circulation of manuscripts in the history of literature in Ireland. It also provides a wider and richer context for the study of Herbert's writing and also for the study of book history and reading and writing practices in the period.

The study of Herbert's unpublished manuscripts is further illuminated when placed in the context of texts from the period, which are now in print. My research here has been aided by the substantial work carried out in the archaeology of lost manuscripts and the publication, reprinting and scholarly readings of forgotten works from the period. Significant publications in the area are, *The Diary of Mary Mathew* edited by Maria Luddy, *The Memoirs of Mrs Leeson, Madam 1727-1797* edited by Mary Lyons, *The Diary of Elizabeth Richards 1798-1825* edited by Marie de Jong-IJsselstein, *The Collected Poems and Journals of Mary Tighe* edited by Harriet Kramer Linkin, *Letters from Georgian Ireland: The Correspondence of Mary Delaney, 1731-68* edited by Angelique Day, *The Drennan*

¹⁶ Mary Tighe, *Selena*. Dublin: National Library of Ireland, MSS 4742-4746; William Blunden, *Diary of William Blunden, Birchfield, Co. Kilkenny 1789-98*. Dublin: National Library of Ireland, MS. N 3618, p, 3236; Mary Delaney, *Marianna* 1759. Bloomington, Indiana: The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Delaney MSS.

McTier Letters edited by Jean Agnew, General Editor Maria Luddy, *Life with the Ladies of Llangollen* edited by Elizabeth Mavor and Rolf and Magda Loeber's *Guide to Irish Fiction, 1650-1900*.¹⁷

To broaden further the context in which I study the connections between Herbert's unpublished manuscripts and published books of the period, I compare her texts with the following memoirs which were published during the lifetime of the authors: Letitia Pilkington's *The Memoirs of Mrs Letitia Pilkington 1712-1750*, a three-volume work published in Dublin between 1748 and 1754, Margaret Leeson's *The Memoirs of Mrs Leeson, Madam 1727-1797*, published in three volumes in Dublin between 1795 and 1797 and *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence*.¹⁸ I also compare Herbert's texts with Mary Wollstonecraft's two semi-autobiographical novels, *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria or the Wrongs of Woman*.¹⁹ Comparing Herbert's work with these published texts provides a context in which to understand the relationship not just between manuscript and print culture but also between women writers and the publishing industry.

¹⁷ Mary Mathew, *The Diary of Mary Mathew*, ed. by Maria Luddy (Thurles, 1991); Mrs Margaret Leeson, *The Memoirs of Mrs Leeson, Madam*, ed. by Mary Lyons (Dublin, 1995); Elizabeth Richards, *The Diary of Elizabeth Richards 1798-1825*, ed. by Maria de Jong-Ijsselstein (Hilversum, 1999); *The Collected Poems and Journals of Mary Tighe*, ed. Harriet Kramer Linkin, (Lexington, 2005); Mary Delaney, *Letters from Georgian Ireland: The Correspondence of Mary Delaney, 1731-68*, ed. Angelique Day. (Belfast, 1991); *The Drennan-McTier Letters*, ed. Jean Agnew, General Editor Maria Luddy (Dublin, 1998); *Life with the Ladies of Llangollen*, ed. by Elizabeth Mavor (Harmondsworth, 1984); *A Guide to Irish Fiction, 1650-1900*, eds. Rolf Loeber and Magda Loeber with Anne Mullin Burnham (Dublin, 2006).

¹⁸ Letitia Pilkington, *Memoirs of Mrs Letitia Pilkington 1712-1750* (Dublin: Printed for the Author, 1748); Margaret Leeson, *The Memoirs of Mrs Margaret Leeson, Written by Herself*, Vol. I (Dublin: Printed for the Authoress, 1795), Vol. 2 (Dublin: Printed for the Authoress, 1795) and Vol. 3 (Dublin: Printed for the Authoress, 1797); Lady Morgan, *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence*, ed. by W. Hepworth Dixon (London, 1863).

¹⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary, a Fiction* (London, 1788); *Maria or the Wrongs of Woman* (London, 1798).

Critical Fields

Herbert's writing is, as I have said, a conundrum. It is the site of many unresolved conflicts. The most troubling for the reader are those between the different subject positions she occupies, particularly those between the rational author who narrates the story of her insanity and the mad woman in the text; and between the accomplished paratexts which present her manuscripts and the bizarre stories they contain. Most previous readers have ignored these conflicts by accepting Herbert's account of her life as a transparent chronicle of her journey to madness and silence. The main question this thesis explores is how thinking about Herbert's work in terms of book history opens up new ways of reading her unpublished manuscripts and how this approach to the unpublished manuscripts of a relatively unknown provincial writer changes the ways we think about literary culture in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Life-Writing

Despite the many autobiographical elements in Herbert's three manuscripts none fall comfortably within the genre of autobiography. In my discussion of Herbert's self-fashioning as an author I read her three works as forms of life-writing. I use the term life-writing in a fluid and inclusive sense. Hermione Lee in *Body Parts: Essays on Life-Writing* defines it as follows: "The term 'life-writing' is sometimes used when the distinction between biography and autobiography is being deliberately blurred, or when different ways of telling a life-story – memoir, autobiography, biography, diary, letters, autobiographical fiction – are being discussed together."²⁰ Herbert's three texts are based on versions of herself, as in each she uses her own life as the material out of which she creates

²⁰ Hermoine Lee, *Body Parts: Essays on Life-Writing* (London, 2005), p. 100.

multiple literary personae. Margaretta Jolly, in *Encyclopaedia of Life-Writing* highlights the difficulty of attempting to define the subject area accurately.

The hope of describing fully a subject of such celebrated ambiguity and disciplinary iconoclasm is certainly vain. In fact it would not only be undesirable but also impossible to offer a final account of this immense and protean literature, that some might argue encompasses all forms of narrative.²¹

Explaining the use of the term in the title of her work Jolly writes “the term ‘life-writing’ has been chosen for the title because of its openness and inclusiveness across genre, and because it encompasses the writing of one’s own or another’s life.”²² Philippe Lejeune in “The Autobiographical Pact” defined autobiography very specifically as “[r]etrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality.”²³ Lejeune describes how in his early work when “faced with such a blurred and many-sided domain” he wanted to define autobiography so as to establish a coherent “corpus.” He later criticised this very narrow definition because it operated “through a system of exclusion” that “became a sort of ‘club’ of which the critic makes himself the guardian, selecting with the help of exclusions a relatively pure ‘race.’”²⁴ As a consequence in a new formulation of his theory Lejeune “adds to ‘Le Pacte’ the sharps and flats it was missing” thus giving

²¹ Margaretta Jolly, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms* (Chicago, 2001), p. ix.

²² Jolly (2001), p. ix.

²³ Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, ed. and trans. Paul John Eakin (Minneapolis, 1989), p. 4.

²⁴ Lejeune (1989), p. 150.

a much wider definition to the genre.²⁵ “Le Pacte” in this new formulation is now, like the term life-writing, a more inclusive and flexible definition. The Oxford Centre for Life-Writing uses a similarly inclusive definition of this term.

Life-writing involves, and goes beyond, biography. It encompasses everything from the complete life to the day-in-the-life, from the fictional to the factional. It embraces the lives of objects and institutions as well as the lives of individuals, families and groups.²⁶

Although Herbert’s three texts take very different forms, poetry, memoir and journal, they are similar in their claims to literary status. In her definition of literary autobiography Bonnie Gunzenhauser isolates the writer’s intentions in the telling of their life story and their foregrounding of the creative and the literary in their construction of the past. “Literary autobiographers tend to privilege aesthetics: their primary concern, finally, is how mind and memory make art.”²⁷ For Michael Kenneally “[t]he literary autobiographer is involved in an imaginary encounter with selected details of biography.”²⁸ He highlights the literary and imaginative qualities of the style.

Earlier moments of existence and previous states of being are recalled across a gulf created by time and only accessible now through memory which, necessarily selective, often

²⁵ Lejeune (1989), p. 133.

²⁶ The Oxford Centre for Life-Writing (OCLW), Wolfston College, University of Oxford.

²⁷ Bonnie J. Gunzenhauser, “Autobiography: General Survey,” in *Encyclopaedia of Life Writing*, p. 563.

²⁸ Michael Kenneally, “The Autobiographical Imagination and Irish Literary Autobiography” in *Critical Approaches to Anglo-Irish Literature*, Irish Literary Studies 29, eds. Michael Allen and Angela Wilcox (Buckinghamshire, 1989), p. 114.

compensates for its failures and distortions through the use of imagination. In autobiographical portrayal, then, to recollect is often to imagine, to remember is frequently to create.²⁹

Jerome Bruner and Susan Weisser in their essay “The Invention of the Self: Autobiography and its Forms” also emphasise the influence of the conventions of genre on life-writing. “Almost from the start of language, self-report is framed by stylistic conventions and by rules of genre.”³⁰

Drawing on the work of these critics I read Herbert’s *Retrospections*, *Poetical Eccentricities* and *Journal* as literary forms of life-writing. They are literary in so far as Herbert as author foregrounds aesthetic concerns above any literal renditions of the life stories she tells. Each of her texts, poetry, memoir and journal, is also dictated by the conventions of genre to which it belongs. Herbert’s texts as we will see are further distanced from the facts of her life story by her emulative aesthetic: that is her practice of writing in the image of the writers and texts she knows and admires. As we have seen Elizabeth Bowen was critical of the “mist of queerness” through which she claims Herbert writes. However, the artfulness of Herbert’s writing cannot be read simply as an indication of her madness but, I will argue, it is also a direct product of her investment in life-writing as literary performance. Bowen’s contention that “[i]t is as Literature, not as a private document, that Modern Autobiography Makes its Claims” is realised in Herbert’s eighteenth and nineteenth-century manuscripts.³¹ Herbert’s presentation of her life-writing as literature brings her much closer to

²⁹ Kenneally (1989), p. 115.

³⁰ Jerome Bruner and Susan Weisser, “The Invention of the Self: Autobiography and Its Forms” in *Literacy and Orality*, eds. David Olsen and Nancy Torrence (Cambridge, 1991), p. 129.

³¹ Elizabeth Bowen, *Seven Winters and Afterthoughts* (New York, 1962), p. 70.

Bowen's twentieth-century view of the purpose and aims of autobiography than Bowen recognised or gave her credit for.³²

My research shows that Herbert's passion for writing, for recording in the written form the details of her life was not unusual at the time. On the contrary she was just one of many in her immediate family circle and in her extended group of acquaintances who wrote about their lives in diaries, journals, day books, memorandums and letters. In Herbert's immediate circle there are many who keep daily journals. This preoccupation with the keeping of journals is also reflected in the wider community. Comparing Herbert's manuscripts with these other writers of private journals allows us to see whether or not her writing practices are singular or part of a much wider set of practices. Herbert presents her life-writing in elaborate book form. She also constructs her identity through an imagined idea of a printed book. Although she does not publish her manuscripts she presents them as published books and the material impact of print culture is clearly visible in her texts. Studying Herbert's manuscripts in the context of other unpublished texts allows us to see if indeed her mimicking of published books in the production of her manuscripts is unique or part of a general practice at the time.

Although this thesis moves determinedly away from biographical readings of Herbert's texts, it is not difficult to understand how compelling such readings can be. Herbert's three manuscripts show her attachment to and engagement with her past and her memories; hers is a life re-lived and re-imagined with passionate intensity in her writing. However, repeated concentration on Herbert's inner life, her emotional turmoil, the highs and lows of her love affair and her apparent descent into madness have given to her reputation a romantic patina that needs to be chipped away to reveal the

³² For a discussion of Bowen's autobiographical writing see Mary Breen, "Autobiography As We Know It Now is Artists' Work" in *Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. Eibhear Walshe (Dublin, 2009), pp. 110-132.

literary qualities of her writing. Thus I do not read Herbert as the romantic heroine of her own writing, as has been the tendency of most readers in the past. Instead this case study of Herbert's work examines her writing and reading practices, not as an end in itself, but as a way of adding to our knowledge and understanding of these practices in the period. This is best seen through a study of her manuscripts, which are the full expression of her literary ambitions and her relationship to the literary culture of her day. Her use of the three genres, poetry, memoir and journal, allows us to read her versions of her life on different levels, from the very refined poetry of the 1790s to the highly mediated *Retrospections* of 1806 and finally to the apparently raw material of the 1806/07 *Journal*. In Herbert's life-writing the reader encounters multiple literary versions of the author but at no time is there unmediated access to the Herbert's interiority. Thus, Herbert's life-writing is interesting not because it tells us about her life but because it tells us about life-writing and about the impact of print culture on readers and writers in the period.

Herbert's Emulative Aesthetic and the Material Practices of Writing

Herbert handmade her manuscripts in the image of printed books and she created her identity as an author through the practice of emulation. I approach the study of Herbert's emulative aesthetic through an analysis of her use of paratext in the construction of her manuscripts. Gerard Genette's theory of paratext informs my approach to this study as does the work of Janine Barchas and Phillip Lejeune.³³ Genette defines paratext as "[t]he means by which a text makes a book of itself and

³³ Gerard Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 9. 22. 2 (1991), 261-272; *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997); Janine Barchas, "Grandison's Grandure as Printed Book: A Look at the Eighteenth-Century Novel's Quest for Status," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 14. 3-4 (2002); Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography: Theory and History of Literature* (Minneapolis, 1989); *On Diary*, eds. Jeremy D. Popkin and Julie Rak, trans. Katherine Durnin (Honolulu, 2009).

proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public.”³⁴ It may appear counter-intuitive to employ Genette’s theory of paratext, which he applies to published books, to this study of Herbert’s unpublished manuscripts. But it is a most revealing way to approach the study of manuscripts that pretend to be books as it focuses entirely on that pretence; that is on the paratext that Herbert employs in the counterfeiting of published books. I employ Genette’s three categories of paratext, the textual, the iconic and the factual, in my analysis of Herbert’s emulative practices. Herbert’s textual paratext is modelled on the use of prefaces, index pages, introductions, footnotes and epigrams in published books. The thirteen watercolours that Herbert painted and bound into the *Retrospections* manuscript form the principal part of the iconic paratext. The factual paratext consist of the facts about Herbert and her manuscripts that influence how they are read. For example, Herbert’s madness and doubts about the authenticity of the manuscripts both play a part in the way the texts have been received.

The detailed analysis of Herbert’s use of paratext tells us about her writing practices and her construction of herself as an author and it also informs our understanding of the meaning of the published book in the period. Herbert’s knowledge of published books, both in terms of their content and materiality is evident in her construction of her own texts. The study of the material aspects of these crafted manuscripts provides a literal example of what the published book meant to an ordinary provincial reader in Ireland in the period. Herbert’s choice of manuscript size, of paper, of binding and all the material minutiae she uses to create her texts are not decorative excess. They are fundamental to the construction of meaning in the manuscripts. For example Herbert’s choice of octavo rather than duodecimo as the size of her manuscripts shows her deliberate attempt to align her work with English original texts and not with cheap Irish reprints.

³⁴ Genette (1991), p. 262.

Reading the carefully hand-crafted paratexts of Herbert's manuscripts in conjunction with the texts they contain opens up some of the inherent contradictions in her work. The paratexts of all three manuscripts are elaborate, genre-specific and highly disciplined, even at times sophisticated. The written texts exhibit very different qualities. The narratives of *Retrospections* and Herbert's *Journal* are at times hysterical and seemingly out of control while the poems in *Poetical Eccentricities* are weighted down by the elaborate paratext that is designed to support them. Reading paratext and text together therefore allows us to explore Herbert's unusual work in new ways and challenges some of the assumptions that have been made about her as a writer.

My approach to the study of the material aspects of the manuscripts in this study is indebted to Ann Laura Stoler's research on Dutch East India archives.³⁵ The reason Stoler's work is useful is that thinking about the many manuscripts that form part of my study as an archive presents it as a body of work and allows us to see its shape and form. This archive includes not just Herbert's unpublished manuscripts but also those of her contemporaries. Stoler is one of a number of scholars who are looking at archives and manuscripts in new ways. The recent work of Peter Stallybrass and Nicholas Barker is interesting in this context.³⁶ In her monograph *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Stoler argues "Archival documents serve less as stories for a colonial history than as an active generative substance with histories, as documents with itineraries of their

³⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, 2009).

³⁶ Nicholas Barker, *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society, The Clarke Lectures, 1986-1987* (London, 1993) and *Form and Meaning in the History of the Book* (London, 2003); Peter Stallybrass and James N. Green eds., *Benjamin Franklin: Writer and Printer* (Philadelphia, 2006); Peter Stallybrass, "Visible and Invisible Letters: Text Versus Image in Renaissance England and Europe," in Marija Dalbello and Mary Shaw eds., *Visible Writings: Cultures, Forms, Readings* (Piscataway, 2011) pp. 77-98.

own.”³⁷ Stoler emphasises the importance of reading the manuscripts as objects in themselves: “Reading along the archival grain draws our sensibilities to the archive’s granular rather than seamless texture, to the rough surface that mottles its hue and shapes its form.”³⁸ Herbert’s handmade manuscripts and those of her contemporaries have stories of their own to tell which influence our reading of the texts they contain.

Emulation and the Art of Allusion

What singles Herbert out from her contemporaries is that she uses her reading as the vehicle through which she presents her life. Her life-writing is therefore a product of her reading as much as it is a product of her life. We see this not only in her construction of herself as a reader in her texts but in her use of direct allusions to other writers in her manuscripts. Herbert’s emulative aesthetic can be seen as a direct product of her reading. She models the material aspects of her manuscripts on published books and her writing style on a relatively small group of carefully chosen writers. She relies most heavily on the work of John Milton, Alexander Pope and Oliver Goldsmith. She borrows themes, plot structures and narrative styles from all three and also from a wider circle of published writers. The most obvious presences of these writers in her work are the lines of poetry she quotes in her own writing. The study of Herbert’s use of allusion shows us the main pillars of her self-fashioning as an authoress and helps to define the relationship of her unpublished manuscripts to the literary tradition she inhabits. Her allusions to these writers also provide a map of reading, not

³⁷ Stoler (2009), p. 1.

³⁸ Stoler (2009), p. 53.

just of Herbert's own reading but also of the community to which she belonged. My research shows that Herbert was part of a coterie of readers who gave books as gifts, shared the books they owned and read aloud to each other. Her use of allusion suits her manuscripts to this community of readers with shared knowledge. It also describes a range of reading, a set of common references, and a shared community of quotation. The inclusion of a detailed listing of the writers and works to which Herbert refers provides a comprehensive view of her reading. Noting the frequency with which she quotes from each text also suggests the relative popularity of texts and writers in the period.

Herbert's emulative practices extend well beyond the modelling of her texts on those of published writers. Even when not consciously using references to other texts Herbert's style is a rich collage of many styles of writing popular in the eighteenth century. Examining these influences is beyond the scope of this study of Herbert's work but it is worth noting them briefly as they provide a more complete textual context for the study of her writing. Reading her wider emulative practices as a repository of writing styles in the period tells us much about the textual world she inhabits and how it is filtered through her writing practices.

Book History

This thesis is the first full study of Herbert's unpublished manuscripts to date. Reading her manuscripts in the context of print culture opens up new ways of thinking about her writing and also paradoxically makes a contribution to the study of the history of the book in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Herbert's construction of her life in her writing is transformed by her knowledge of the printed book and her manuscripts are embedded in literary culture through the use of allusion to other writers and the mimicking of the paratext of printed books. Her conscious engagement with print gives us an insight into the ways in which the material forms of the printed book influenced how people thought about and structured their own lives.

Book history is a relatively new field of research in Irish literary studies. Sources for this study, particularly for the eighteenth century, are not easily accessible or well documented. Neither has the field itself been clearly defined. Raymond Gillespie, in the concluding essay in *The Irish Book in English, 1550-1800*, discusses the challenges facing researchers in the field.³⁹ He highlights the fact that “there are no neat bodies of archival material that can be seen to be the obvious preserve of the book historian.”⁴⁰ Despite the difficulties created by the dearth of sources there is a growing body of criticism in the field. One area that has received particular attention is the history of the publishing trade in the eighteenth century. The Dublin librarian Mary Pollard carried out much of the primary research in this area. Her two texts *Dublin’s Trade in Books* (1989) and *A Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade, 1550-1800* (2000) along with J.W. Phillips’ *Printing and Bookselling in Dublin, 1670-1800* (1998) have laid the foundations for subsequent research in the area.⁴¹ Toby Barnard and Richard Cargill Cole have made substantial contributions to the study of book-collecting and the contents of public and private libraries. Maire Kennedy and Raymond Gillespie have pioneered the study of reading practices in Ireland in the eighteenth century.⁴² My thesis is informed by this work and seeks to build on it in particular by showing how the history of the book in the period influenced Herbert as a writer, how it nourished her ambition, informed her

³⁹ Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield, eds., *The Irish Book in English, 1550-1800* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 385-392.

⁴⁰ Gillespie and Hadfield (2006), p. 385.

⁴¹ Mary Pollard, *Dublin’s Trade in Books: 1550-1800* (Oxford, 1989) and *A Dictionary of the Members of the Dublin Book Trade, 1550-1800* (London, 2000); J. W. Phillips, *Printing and Bookselling in Dublin, 1670-1800: A Bibliographical Enquiry* (Dublin, 1998).

⁴² Toby Barnard, “Libraries and Glazed Bookcases in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Additional Evidence,” *18th and 19th Century Fiction Newsletter* 13 (1999), 4-6 and “Children and Books in Eighteenth-Century Ireland” in *That Woman – Studies in Irish Bibliography: A Festschrift for Mary (Paul) Pollard*, eds. Charles Benson and Siobhan Fitzpatrick (Dublin, 2005), pp. 213-238; Richard Cargill Cole, “Private Libraries in Eighteenth-Century Ireland,” *Library Quarterly*, 44 (1974), 111-123 and *Irish Booksellers and English Writers, 1740-1800* (London, 1986); Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: Print and Social Change in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2005).

sense of who she was, and led to her viewing and constructing her life in terms of her reading and her experience of published books. Viewing book history through the life-writing of this unpublished minor writer provides an unusual but illuminating way to approach the history of book culture in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Book Collecting, Private Libraries and the Cultures of Reading in Herbert's Works

Like many of her contemporaries Herbert is caught up in the fever for reading and books that is so much part of the literary landscape in her time. Herbert is not singular in writing about herself as so many of her contemporaries are keeping diaries and journals, collecting books and establishing libraries. What Herbert's writing and that of the other writers in this study show is the enormous power and influence of printed books in the period. The influence was felt not just in urban areas but equally in remote country areas like the Herbert parsonage in Carrick-on-Suir, where women like Herbert, born into affluence and with little to do, found in books not an idle pastime but a whole way of life. But how unusual are the lengths to which Herbert takes her obsession with reading, writing and printed books? To what extent was her life filtered through her reading and her experience of the printed book? We can begin to answer this question by examining her self-representation as a reader and her reading practices in her writing.

I place my analysis of Herbert's construction as a reader in the context of the new scholarly interest in the printed book by documenting the importance and extent of book ownership and collecting in the lives of ordinary people, the building and stocking of private libraries and the opening of circulating and public libraries in Ireland in the period. Herbert's representations of herself as a reader provide the cornerstone for the production of her sense of self. As I have noted,

one of the principal ambiguities of Herbert's texts is the disjunction between herself as the author, in control of her own self-representation, and herself as the subject of a narrative that is about her psychological decline, to an eventual state of insanity. The study of the motif of the reading woman opens up this contradiction that infiltrates Herbert's texts between the rational author of her passage from sanity to insanity, and the insane woman who inhabits the final stages of the text.

Comparing Herbert's reading practices with those of her contemporaries allows us to see how much she is a product of this new culture. It also challenges the view expressed both by Irish men and visitors to Ireland in the period that there was very little interest in books in the country. The Irish poet William Preston, in the preface to his *Poetical Works* published in 1793, lamented the paucity of intelligent readers for his work: "We have few readers among us, and of the few who do read, a small portion are capable of thinking or judging for themselves."⁴³ George Montague, the English Viceroy in Ireland, wrote to his friend Horace Walpole from Dublin in 1761 advising him that there was nothing to be gained by having his books sold in Ireland, as they would be like "pearls before swine."⁴⁴ Herbert and the other writers in this study admittedly belong to the gentry and middling classes, and as such are not representative of the country at large. However, this study does suggest that books and reading were far more popular than these accounts would suggest. It also challenges the conventional stereotype of the Anglo-Irish as an idle leisured class with little interest in literature.

⁴³ William Preston, *The Poetical Works of William Preston* (Dublin: Printed for the author, 1793), p. xv.

⁴⁴ W.S. Lewis and Ralph S. Brown, eds., *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with George Montagu* (New Haven, 1941), vol. II, p. 20.

Herbert and the Irish Reprint Industry

One of the most interesting aspects of Herbert's writing practice is that she makes her books look like they have been published. There is no evidence in her writing or in other contemporary sources that she ever attempted to have her manuscripts published. It is possible, though I will argue unlikely, that she held the delusional belief that they were in fact published. Did conditions in the Irish print industry have an impact on Herbert's writing practices? For most of the eighteenth century Irish printers and booksellers re-printed books that were first published in England. As a direct consequence Irish writers found it almost impossible to get published in Ireland and were forced to travel to London to further their careers. Not alone were writers forced to emigrate to get published but many viewed the lack of opportunity as an obstacle that could not be overcome. Looking at the experiences of authors who attempt to get published and the trials of those who do tells us much about the literary environment in which Herbert wrote, and the impact this had on her writing practices.

Reading Herbert's manuscripts as material objects and highlighting the different story they tell when compared with the twentieth and twenty-first century published editions of her work, tells us much about the relationship between manuscript and print culture and attitudes to publishing in Ireland in the eighteenth-century. As I have noted, Herbert's manuscript *Retrospections of an Outcast* was first published in London as *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806* in two separate volumes, the first in 1929 and the second in 1930. The Dublin publishers Town House brought out a hardback edition in 1988 and a paperback edition in 2004. Both of these were based on the 1929/30 London editions and not on the original manuscript. All three editions omit eleven of the thirteen illustrations Herbert bound into her manuscript. Herbert's *Poetical Eccentricities Written*

by an *Oddity* and her *Journal* were published privately in 2011. The text *Introspections: The Poetry & Private World of Dorothea Herbert* was based on an incomplete photocopy of the original manuscripts.⁴⁵ The text bears little resemblance to the original manuscripts. I will argue that Herbert's published texts are not an accurate or fair representation of her writings as they were conceived and executed.

Print and Manuscript Culture

The unpublished status of Herbert's manuscripts, in a period when publishing was the *métier* of all aspiring professional writers, is the subject of my concluding argument. My research shows that despite the lack of publishing opportunities for writers, or perhaps because of it, there was a rich and vibrant manuscript culture in Ireland in the period. However, accessing this culture is problematic. Many unpublished manuscripts have either been lost or destroyed. Some remain in family homes or lie hidden, because un-catalogued, in Heritage centres and local libraries. This is a world that is virtually lost and will become increasingly difficult to uncover. The internal evidence of Herbert's manuscripts and those of her unpublished contemporary diarists suggests that many were very happy to be active participants in a manuscript culture. I will argue that in Herbert's case there were no attractions to publication. Manuscript culture, however, offered her the opportunity to construct herself credibly as an author without breaking the norms of her traditional beliefs and within the ethos of her class and culture. My study of manuscript culture is indebted to Andrew

⁴⁵ Frances Finnegan, *Introspections: The Poetry and Private World of Dorothea Herbert* (Piltown, 2010).

Carpenter's research on seventeenth and eighteenth-century Irish manuscripts and to the work of Nicholas Barker and Margot Finn.⁴⁶

In making her manuscripts in the likeness of printed texts Herbert's writing establishes a dialogue between manuscript and print culture. My research shows that Herbert belongs to an older culture, one where manuscripts of poems, plays and novels were circulated among a coterie of like-minded readers. Her world is also one where gift-giving and receiving, not commercial transaction, are the defining characteristics of relationships within communities. By resisting the lure of modernity Herbert occupies a rare pocket of traditional literary production. Making her own books and circulating them among her own set allows her to retain her status as a refined lady of letters. Conversely the making of her manuscripts in the image of printed books shows her dependence on the public and commercial print culture of her day. The study of her manuscripts as a material representation of the clash of manuscript and print culture allows for a more innovative approach to Herbert's work and to the literary culture from which it emerged.

Foregrounding the materiality and literary qualities of Herbert's texts tends to relegate the question of her sanity to the background. There is no extant corroborating evidence to substantiate claims that Herbert was mad or went mad during the writing of her texts. There are no family documents, no public records and no contemporary accounts of her supposed mental illness. The only family accounts of her mental state are based on her own writing. Herbert's writing repeatedly shows her delight in invention, deception and disguise as shown in her use of pseudonyms and multiple alternative titles for her texts. Nonetheless the question still remains, was she mad or was

⁴⁶ Andrew Carpenter, ed., *Verse in English from Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Cork, 1998) and "Circulating Ideas: Coterie, Groups and the Circulation of Verse in English in Early Modern Ireland" in *Print Culture and Intellectual Life in Ireland 1660-1941: Essays in Honour of Michael Adams*, eds., Martin Fanning and Raymond Gillespie (Dublin, 2006), pp. 1-23; Margot C. Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740-1914* (Cambridge, 2003).

she creating a literary madwoman? The study of the life-writing of her contemporaries would suggest a more nuanced answer than this dialectic question proposes. It is true that Herbert emulated other writers in her self-fashioning as an author but she is also demonstrably a product of her class and culture. I will show how the life-writing of her contemporaries employs similar expressions of exaggerated sensibility and mental instability in their accounts of grief and loss. In particular her close neighbour Richard Mansergh St. George uses an extravagant style to convey his acute suffering on the death of his wife in childbirth. Mary Wollstonecraft's fictional characters Mary and Maria also employ the language of suffering sensibility in the articulation of their grief and loss.

The study of Herbert's unpublished manuscripts and those of her contemporaries shows us a much richer textual world than a study of published texts in the period would suggest. Looking at how people in Herbert's circle in provincial Ireland engaged with reading and writing reveals a world that is very consciously literary. It shows a society where the printed book is not the dominant form of literary production. That it is the most visible and obvious cannot be denied but its dominance hides a very vibrant and communal textual culture. Reading Herbert in conjunction with these long forgotten texts makes her look less original and eccentric and allows us to make sense of her in a broader context. It also makes us think differently about that broader context. The fact that Herbert uses her knowledge of literature as the one way to validate her sense of selfhood is a recognition of the importance of both reading and the production of literature in provincial Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

How do we best read Herbert's three manuscripts? Less, this reading will suggest, for an account of Herbert per se, because, as we will see as an accurate biographical record they are flawed. Rather they tell us about contemporary print culture, and a provincial woman's participation in that culture. The contradictions and oddities of all of Herbert's texts can be seen as a product of context as much as of her strange psychosis. I will argue that studied in the context of late eighteenth and early

nineteenth-century Irish letters, her writing starts to look less eccentric and much more a product of its complicated time and a valuable lens through which to view literary culture in Ireland in the period. This thesis performs a pincer movement, by firstly placing Herbert's writing in the context of her time, that is the literary and social world she inhabits, and then using a close analysis of her work as a way of interrogating our assumptions about that context. Is Herbert writing about her life or, like many others in the period, participating in a world of literary forms? Her manuscripts show us a world that is not represented by published books and published authors but one where literary manuscripts are produced and read for their own value. The manuscripts show how an Irish woman writer, with no pretensions to fame and public authorship, interprets print culture. The world it reveals is one rich in literary knowledge and usage.

Chapter One traces the histories of Herbert's manuscripts, *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity*, *Retrospections of an Outcast* and her Journal, from their production in the late eighteenth century to their publication in the twentieth century. Despite their late publication well after her death, the manuscripts themselves have complex histories, being passed between family members, as heirlooms and texts. When published in the twentieth century, the texts have been read primarily as autobiographical narratives and social history sources, particularly of the 1798 Irish Rebellion. In this chapter I look at the recorded responses to the texts by different generations, both as manuscripts, and as books, and consider the limitations of these responses. The richness and variety of her descriptions of life in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the genres in which she writes explain why her writings have been read primarily as biographical narratives and as historical sources. Yet, there are very few extant external references to establish her reliability as a chronicler of her times and in fact research reveals that Herbert tends to manipulate facts to heighten the dramatic impact of her retelling of her life and times. This analysis shows that as biographical and historical records her work is inaccurate and misleading. At the end

of this chapter I consider alternative ways in which Herbert's work is best read and appreciated. My reading of her work focuses on the literary qualities and material practices of her writing and on her manuscripts as material objects.

In Chapter Two I discuss ways of understanding Herbert's texts as autobiographical narratives. As an author Herbert reconfigures her life story in the shape of literary texts. She adopts the idea of the lady writer and constructs her own subjectivity through that persona. Herbert's self-construction as an author is a performance that relies on the conventions of particular genres of the time. Thus in *Poetical Eccentricities of an Oddity* she constructs herself as a poet, in *Retrospections of an Outcast* as a literary memoirist and in her Journal as a diarist. I begin with a discussion of Herbert's construction of herself as a poet, as a memoirist and as a diarist in her three manuscripts. This is followed by a discussion of her writing practices. Herbert makes herself as an author in *Poetical Eccentricities*, in *Retrospections* she first constructs and then deconstructs that carefully made image and shows, in the text and the visual representation, the unmaking of the author, and in her Journal we see the author unmade. I will argue, however, that this self-projection of the destruction of the author is belied by the textual competence of the manuscripts themselves. Thus Herbert's understanding of what it means to be an author can be seen best, not by looking at what she says about herself, but at what her manuscripts say about her as an author. In the second part of this chapter I compare Herbert's writing practices with the writing practices of published and unpublished contemporary Irish writers of diaries and memoirs. Comparing Herbert, as author, with other writers allows us to see if indeed her writing practices are atypical and unconventional, or part of a much wider set of writing practices in the period. Reading this prolific, but relatively unknown, body of life-writing provides an unusual window onto a virtually hidden area of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century literary practice in Ireland.

Chapter Three argues that the close study of the material aspects of Herbert's manuscripts challenges the idea that the writer is both naive and mad. Her emulative aesthetic reveals her to be an accomplished reader and emulator of printed books. The focus of the argument is on the materiality of her manuscripts and in particular on the paratext she employs in their construction. Her use of paratext is a conscious attempt to emulate book production and follows, for the most part, the conventions of her time. Her individual appropriation and adaptation of this key aspect of the production of literary texts tells us much about the meaning of her texts and her relationship to the print culture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Most revealingly Herbert's contrived and artful use of illustration and quotation shows that her self-fashioning as an "authoress" and her fashioning of her manuscripts as published books, like her representation of self-madness, is controlled and purposeful.

There is no simple answer as to why Herbert was making her own books. At the time people were writing and publishing in Ireland, even in small towns like Carrick-on-Suir. Herbert quietly wrote her manuscripts in the midst of heated debates over copyright between Dublin and London publishers, between authors and publishers and between those who argued over women's role in society and in print culture. By not publishing her work, not allowing it into the public domain, she avoided the difficulties awaiting authors in general, and women in particular, who allowed their work to enter the print industry. But there was no way to avoid the textual and print culture in which she operated. Her ideas about how to write, what to write about and how to present it were all drawn from the literary world she knew through her reading of published books. Herbert also found in the print culture of the time material ways to construct herself as an author. What she did with this knowledge in the production of her own texts reveals much about her own work and her relationship to the literary culture of her time. It also allows us to view that culture through the eyes

of an observant and not uncritical contemporary reader and writer. Herbert's emulative practices are the physical embodiment of her understanding of the meaning of the book in the period.

In *Retrospections* Herbert gives a list of the books she owns and cherishes as a young girl. All of these are gifts from family members and friends. She claims that it is from this small collection of books that she learns to be a writer. Herbert foregrounds her reading practices in her texts and the important role they play in her self-construction as a woman of letters. There are two distinct versions of Herbert as reader, the official and the romantic. In the construction of the official reader Herbert uses, not the books that matter to her, but the ones she believes will show her as an intellectual. However the romantic reader that is also constructed in the writing is a product of the reading of sentimental novels that she does not acknowledge. In Chapter Four I examine the book culture, which nurtures Herbert's ambition to be a writer. Her love of books, reading and writing is developed under the guidance of her father's literary friends who visit the house regularly during her childhood. Her reading and the ambitions it fosters are also a product of the wider literary culture in Ireland at the time. The chapter begins with a discussion of book collecting and the development of private, circulating and public libraries in Ireland in the eighteenth century. This section also looks at the contents of private libraries and readers' attitudes to their book collections. Against this background I examine Herbert's complex visual and textual representations of herself as a reader in her three texts. I then compare Herbert's construction of herself as a reader with other versions of the reader in the published and unpublished autobiographical works of her contemporaries.

There is no evidence in Herbert's own writing or in any other contemporary sources to suggest that she at any time thought of having her work published. Yet, as we have seen, her writing emulates and refers to the printed texts that surround her. The focus in this chapter is on the context in which Herbert writes and the reasons behind her decision not to publish. The writers on whom she models her work are all professional authors. She prepares her work for publication yet

never tries to have it published. It is this apparent dichotomy in her thinking that is explored in this chapter. Understanding the context in which Herbert writes clarifies this seemingly contradictory position. Chapter Five begins with an analysis of the Irish print industry in the eighteenth century and its evolution into a reprint trade. The particularities of the Irish reprint industry had far-reaching effects on the book trade in Ireland, on the kinds of books available and on access to publication for Irish writers. I then look at attitudes to the new flood of publications that emerge in the eighteenth century and the efforts writers made to separate themselves from the taint of association with the world of commerce, where books are reduced to another commodity that can be bought and sold by the general public. The easy availability of cheap Dublin reprints tended to reduce the cultural prestige of printed texts and I suggest that one reason for Herbert's reluctance to publish was to maintain her distance from cheap printed books. The position of a woman writer was undoubtedly more difficult than that of male writers as the experience of other women writers tell us. In particular, the stories of Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth, Mrs Leeson and Mary Tighe, highlight the difficulties encountered by women in the competitive world of commercial publishing. However, Herbert's decision to remain unpublished may have been because she belonged to an older world, where personal identity and relationships were formed by an intricate network of gift-giving and receiving, rather than by commercial transactions. In this closed literary community, people wrote novels, poetry and plays and circulated copies of these texts among a select group of family and friends.

Appendices

Appendix One: This contains copies of the thirteen watercolours that form part of the *Retrospections* manuscript and other illustrations relevant to this study.

Appendix Two: This contains a full list of the direct and indirect allusions Herbert employs in her three texts.

Appendix Three: This is a history of my research and of the discovery of lost manuscripts. It also presents a very limited view of the current state of Irish holdings of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century manuscripts.

Chapter One

The History of Herbert's Manuscripts and Published Texts and their Reception

History

This chapter begins with the history of Herbert's three extant manuscripts, *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity*, *Retrospections of an Outcast* and her *Journal*, 31 July 1806 - 31 December 1807. It then outlines the circumstances which led to the publication of *Retrospections* in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is followed by a survey of the reception history of Herbert's work. The richness and variety of her descriptions of life in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the genres in which she writes explain in part why her writings have been read primarily as biographical narratives and as historical sources. However, there are several reasons why reading Herbert's writings as unmediated sources for information about her life and the world she inhabits is both difficult and limiting. The first and most compelling is that there are very few extant external references to establish her reliability as a chronicler of her own interiority or of the history of her time. So in part this chapter is a story of frustrated searches for

other documentation that would authenticate Herbert's historical accuracy: public records, family history, letters and medical records. There is the added complication that when we can locate other sources we discover that Herbert has manipulated facts and dates to heighten the dramatic impact of her retelling of her life and times. This analysis shows that as biographical and historical records her work is inaccurate and misleading. It also highlights the need for a different approach to the study of her writing.

History of the Manuscripts

Retrospections of an Outcast⁴⁷

An aura of mystery and suspicion has surrounded the study of Herbert's work since the first volume of *Retrospections* was published in 1929. The mistaken belief that the original manuscript was unaccounted for gave rise to questions about the real authorship of the text. There is evidence to suggest that at least one leading Irish scholar was not convinced of its authenticity. The administration file attached to the Herbert deposit in the library in Trinity College Dublin has a note in the Keeper Bernard Meehan's hand recording a conversation he had with his predecessor William O'Sullivan: "William O'Sullivan says that Constantia Maxwell told him that there was 'controversy' about the book's authenticity at the time of publication."⁴⁸ The note is dated 1986 so can only refer to the 1929/30 two-volume edition of *Retrospections*. That Constantia Maxwell, the first woman to

⁴⁷ Dorothea Herbert, *Retrospections of an Outcast or the Life of Dorothea Herbert, Authoress of the Orphan Plays and Various Poems and Novels in Four Volumes Written in Retirement*. Dublin, Manuscript Room, Trinity College Dublin, Dorothea Herbert Deposit.

⁴⁸ Administration file for Dorothea Herbert Deposit, Dublin: Manuscript Room, Trinity College Dublin.

be appointed to a Chair in Trinity College Dublin, and a leading scholar in Irish economic and social history, had reservations about *Retrospections* is evident in her omission of Herbert as a source for her two major studies of eighteenth-century Ireland: *Dublin under the Georges* and *Irish Town and Country under the Georges*.⁴⁹ Reviews from 1929 also suggest the existence of controversy about the manuscript. *The Irish Booklover* review begins with an apology: "Being in some doubt, we adopt the safer attitude of accepting these *Retrospections* as genuine contemporary MSS. of the eighteenth century."⁵⁰ An article announcing the publication of the *Retrospections* in the *Sunday Independent* pre-empted accusations of forgery by quoting the publisher Gerald Howe: "It has come to us from a descendant of the family who prefers not to have his name disclosed. There is not the least doubt about authenticity, for we have the original."⁵¹ An anonymous review in the *Times Literary Supplement* also anticipates any accusations of forgery by confirming that "[t]he part of her memoirs here published, with a reassuring reproduction of the manuscript for an end paper, takes us from 1770 to 1789."⁵² Louis Cullen's "Historical Backdrop" to the 1988 Dublin edition of the text did not dispel doubts about the manuscript's authenticity. He draws attention to the fact that the "original manuscript now appears to be unaccounted for" (Ret., p. 454). The doubts about Herbert's text may have been suggested by the scandal surrounding the discovery that *The Diary of a Young Lady of Fashion in the Year the Year 1764-1765*, published to considerable critical acclaim in 1925, was not

⁴⁹ Constantia Maxwell, *Dublin Under the Georges* (London, 1937); *Irish Town and Country Under the Georges* (London, 1940).

⁵⁰ "Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert, 1770-1789," *The Irish Booklover* xvii. 4 (1929), 86.

⁵¹ *Sunday Independent*, 31 March 1929, p. 16.

⁵² "Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770—1789," Rev. *Times Literary Supplement*, June 1930.

an original eighteenth-century manuscript by the diarist Cleone Knox.⁵³ It was in fact a work of fiction, and Cleone Knox a fictional character created by an unknown writer Magdalen King Hall. Given this somewhat clouded history, my preparatory work for this thesis began with a search for Herbert's manuscripts.

Louis Cullen in his introduction to the 1988 and 2004 editions gives an account of the history of the manuscript: "On Dorothea's death in 1829, the *Retrospections* passed to her unmarried brother Nicholas, the clergyman, and from him to a Mandeville nephew" (Ret., p. xxvi). Since 1988 this has become the official version of the manuscript's history. However, the Mandeville Family Papers suggest a different history. Montague Marshwood Mandeville, the son of Rev. Nicholas Herbert Mandeville (Herbert's nephew) and Elizabeth Roe (daughter of John Roe) wrote, but never published, a piece called "Notes on and in Continuation of *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert*." ⁵⁴ It is dated 1935, and was written when he was seventy-eight years old. In this he gives the family account of the history of the manuscript.

⁵³ Cleone Knox, *Diary of a Young Lady of Fashion in the Year 1764-1765* (London, 1925).

⁵⁴ Marshwood Montague Mandeville, *Notes on and in Continuation of Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert*, 1935. MS of Mandeville Family of Anner Castle, Kilsheelan, Co. Tipperary, at present in private hands. These are currently being catalogued by Dr. Julian Walton and will hopefully, with the family's agreement, be available for research in the near future. Dr. Walton gave me access to these papers when they first came into his possession in April 2011.

The volumes of the *Retrospections* came up to Anner Castle direct from the Villa, Carrick-on-Suir when the last of the Herberts there passed away, and did not come down from G. Uncle Nick Herbert's parsonage at New Inn, as stated in the preface.⁵⁵

His nephew Desmond Mandeville, to whom ownership of the manuscripts descended, adds to the family history of the manuscripts of *Retrospections* and Herbert's *Journal*. He also explains why he came to deposit both manuscripts in Trinity College Dublin Library on 12 August 1986. In a letter to Louis Cullen, responding to Cullen's introduction to the 1988 edition of *Retrospections*, Mandeville corrected Cullen's factual errors and gave further details of the manuscript's history.

My late brother G.F.M. (Geoffrey – not George, a sorry publisher's slip) was a serving officer: he took away the text to transcribe it during long watches in the S. China Seas. This was in the late 20s and so, by chance, the manuscript survived a fire in Anner Castle, Co. Tipperary in 1926, in which virtually all of our family papers perished. Since then, it had never to my knowledge left its sanctuary the piano stool in my sister's home near Kilsheelan. When that house in turn caught fire in 1972, the piano stool and its precious contents were the first objects to be rescued. One does not tempt fortune a third time: and so, in clearing up my sister's home in 1985, I sought the family's agreement to deposit this fine manuscript in the TCD library, which was done, in June 1986. Dr. Bernard Meehan, as I brought it in told me that no scholar of any consequence had ever set eyes on it – there had even been doubt as to its authenticity!

⁵⁵ Desmond Mandeville, Letter to Louis Cullen, 17 Sept., 1988. MS of Mandeville Family, Anner Castle.

(No doubt because my sisters had guarded it like tigresses, from every “prying” eye.)

Three minutes with the ms. itself set his mind entirely at rest.⁵⁶

This letter is a model of old world politeness. Mandeville knew that, as professor of history in Trinity College Dublin, Cullen was writing his introduction only yards away from where the manuscript was already on deposit in the Keeper of Manuscripts Room in the Old Library.

The only “prying eye” who records seeing the manuscript before it was deposited in Trinity in 1986 is Peter Somerville Large. In 1982 while researching his travel book, *The Grand Irish Tour*, he followed in Herbert’s footsteps from Carrick-on-Suir to Cashel and Knockgrafton.⁵⁷ On this journey he visited Maurice Mandeville and his sister in Kilsheelan, where they lived in “a Georgian cottage up a muddy lane.”⁵⁸ Rev. Maurice Mandeville was then the Mandeville family custodian of the manuscript. Somerville Large describes the surroundings in which he found *Retrospections*.

In his sitting-room a grand piano took most of the space and there were books, Victorian watercolours, ferns and vases of daffodils....the manuscript of the *Retrospections*... lay among the flowers and books preserved under a glass bell. The even copperplate was faded but clear. I examined the writing peppered with capital letters, distinguished by

⁵⁶ Desmond Mandeville, Letter to Louis Cullen. 17 Nov., 1988. MS of Mandeville Family, Anner Castle.

⁵⁷ Peter Somerville Large, *The Grand Irish Tour* (London, 1982).

⁵⁸ Somerville Large (1982), p. 69.

her individual spelling and topped by her elaborate chapter headings adorned with verse.⁵⁹

Since June 1986 the manuscript of *Retrospections* and Herbert's *Journal* have been on "permanent deposit" in the Manuscripts Room in Trinity College Library. While myths about its authenticity and even its very existence perpetuated from 1929 onwards, the manuscript had, as Desmond Mandeville's letter to Cullen states, its own heroic history of foreign voyages, miraculous escapes and eventual survival. Doubts about the manuscript's provenance persisted even after the publication of the 1988 edition of *Retrospections*, possibly because of Cullen's failure to locate the manuscript. Added to this is the fact that both the 1988 and 2004 editions of the text are based on the 1929/30 London edition and not on the original manuscript. Cullen's "Historical Backdrop" to the 1988 edition is again used for the 2004 edition. The body of the text remains the same, the only addition being the inclusion of a footnote giving the location of the manuscripts of Herbert's *Retrospections* and *Journal*: "The manuscripts are now in the Manuscripts Room in Trinity College Dublin Library" (Ret., 2004, p. xxvi).

Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity⁶⁰

The second extant manuscript is a volume of poetry *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity*. Herbert wrote this poetry collection under the pseudonym Dorothy Strangeways. This is an earlier manuscript, dating from c 1793. Like *Retrospections* it too has a hidden life and strange history. According to Herbert's own writing, *Retrospections of an Outcast* and her *Journal* formed only part of what was a much larger body of work. On the title page of *Retrospections* she describes herself as

⁵⁹ Somerville Large (1982), pp. 69-70.

⁶⁰ Dorothy Strangeways (Dorothea Herbert), *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity*. MS in private hands.

the “Authoress of The Orphan Plays and Various Poems and Novels in four Volumes Written in Retirement.” She describes *Retrospections* as “Volume the Fourth” and concludes the text with a summary of her accomplishments as a woman of letters.

I have accomplished four large Volumes with Plates in my Prison viz Poems, Plays Novels and these Retrospections – They are the only amusements I had and I flatter myself are not uninteresting (Ret., p. 421).

In *Retrospections* Herbert refers to her book of poems as “1st Vol of these Works” (Ret., p. 321). The other two volumes she claims to have written, “The Orphan Plays and Various Novels,” now appear to have been lost or destroyed. The manuscript book of poems was also believed lost until I located it in July 2010. The account of this discovery is in Appendix II. A note attached to the *Retrospections* manuscript in Trinity College Dublin Library provides some information about Herbert’s book of poems.

The whereabouts of vols 1-3 are unknown: a MS book of poetry by an anonymous young lady in Waterford Cathedral Library may have been written by Dorothea Herbert but this volume has not been identified. Another volume, perhaps two volumes were, according to Mandeville tradition, destroyed by Dorothea Mandeville’s niece (i.e. Desmond Mandeville’s grandmother).⁶¹

⁶¹ Dorothea Herbert Deposit, Manuscript Room, Trinity College Dublin. This note is incorrect; the woman who is purported to have destroyed parts of Herbert’s work was Elizabeth Mandeville, wife of Nicholas Herbert Mandeville. Elizabeth was John Roe’s daughter and Nicholas was Herbert’s nephew.

In a 1956 article in the *Church of Ireland Gazette* Robert Wyse Jackson reported having found a “ms book of poems” in Waterford Cathedral Library. He identified Herbert as the author of the collection, and gave a vivid description of the manuscript.⁶² There was no further evidence of its existence between the publication of this article and my location of it in 2010. However, two events, coming very late in my research, have cast new light on the history of this manuscript. Firstly, the Mandeville Family Papers became accessible for the first time. Secondly, in May 2011 the National Library of Ireland’s new online search engine, *Sources*, was launched. In the Mandeville papers a letter from Desmond Mandeville to Louis Cullen ends with the following reference to Herbert’s poems.

Finally, as to the poems – Dr. Meehan can tell you how we believe the MS of these poems to have been extant, under the nom de plume of Dorothy Strangeways, at Waterford Cathedral in the 1950s. A recent search failed to locate it. And my own guess is that Dean Jackson, who reported discovering it there, may have felt justified in carrying it off to Cashel, as a more appropriate home for it. If so, it should come to light before long, for the cathedral library there, unlike Waterford’s, is now I’m told in very good order.⁶³

The aim of the National Library of Ireland’s search engine *Sources* is “to make hundreds of thousands of records of Irish manuscripts and periodicals freely searchable online.”⁶⁴ Using *Sources*

⁶² RWJ, “Introducing Dolly Herbert,” *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 26 Oct., 1956, pp. 9-10. RWJ is Robert Wyse Jackson (1908-1976). He was Dean of Cashel from 1946 to 1960 and Bishop of Limerick from 1961 to 1970 and a noted local historian and published writer.

⁶³ Desmond Mandeville, Letter to Louis Cullen, 17 Nov., 1988. MS of Mandeville Family, Anner Castle.

⁶⁴ *Sources*. Web. 16/06/12.

to trace reviews of the 1929/30 editions of *Retrospections* I found the following entry: “Herbert (Dorothea): “Poetical Eccentricities” by Dorothy Strangeways (Dorothea Herbert) ca 1785. N.5855, p. 6073.”⁶⁵ The National Library holding is a previously un-catalogued microfilm copy of the manuscript. It is at the end of a roll of film, it is upside down and inverted on a tape with a collection of other manuscripts.⁶⁶ There is a short note at the beginning of the Herbert text. “Original in possession of Rt. Rev. R. Wyse Jackson, Bishop’s House, N. Circular Rd., Limerick.”⁶⁷ Dean Jackson, given his knowledge of the condition of Waterford library, had the prudence to have the manuscript copied by the National Library and to keep the original safe among his own books. We now know that Dean Jackson found *Poetical Eccentricities* in Waterford Cathedral Library in 1956, and that it remained in his own library until 2010. How and when it arrived in Waterford remains a mystery. It is listed in the 1956 catalogue of the library but two earlier catalogues, both from the nineteenth century, are now missing.⁶⁸

A more recent postscript to this history has recently appeared in print. In 2011 Frances Finnegan published a fragmented version of Herbert’s carefully constructed “book of poems” based on a

⁶⁵ Herbert (Dorothea), *Poetical Eccentricities* by Dorothy Strangeways (Dorothea Herbert), Dublin: National Library of Ireland, Ca 1785. N.5855, p. 6073. Having searched the library thoroughly in 2009 and not found the manuscript, this came as a pleasant surprise. It highlights the value of the National Library’s *Sources*.

⁶⁶ One of the interesting manuscripts on the tape is *The Memorandum Books of George Stoney 1756-66 and 1780-81*, MS N. 5855, p. 6073. Stoney, of Greyfort and Portland, Co. Tipperary, was a neighbour of the Herberts. His diary, like that of Herbert’s cousin William Blunden, is a day-to-day account of his life. He was an experimental hobby farmer and his diary is concerned mainly with the fortunes of his tobacco plants and vines.

⁶⁷ Herbert (Dorothea), “Poetical Eccentricities.”

⁶⁸ See Appendix II for an account of my search for the nineteenth-century catalogues of Waterford Cathedral library.

“photocopy” of the manuscript.⁶⁹ While it is satisfying to see Herbert’s work in print, this publication does create further confusion. One of the problems with Herbert’s unpublished work has always been the questions of legitimacy that have overshadowed it. Basing the publication on a photocopy, without seeing the original manuscript or noting its location, rather than clarifying the authenticity of the manuscript, has further obfuscated it. The re-ordering of the poems into imposed themes denies authority to Herbert’s careful ordering of her collection and gives a distorted impression of the original manuscript.

Herbert’s *Journal*

The third extant manuscript is Herbert’s *Journal* dated 31 July 1806 to 31 December 1807. The history of this manuscript follows that of the manuscript of *Retrospections*. All indications are that the two manuscripts remained together, even on the journey to the South China Seas, as the *Journal* too survived the fire in Anner Castle in 1929. However, what the *Journal* did not survive was the purging zeal of John Roe’s daughter, Elizabeth Mandeville. According to her son Montague Mandeville she destroyed part of Herbert’s *Journal* because of the damaging references to her mother, the “mere strolling Miss” John Roe married in 1806 (*Ret.*, pp. 335-336).

There was a third vol of the *Retrospections* which my mother burned. I think my mother was quite justified in committing this vol to the flames.... it was a pity that at the time a copy of this was not made, leaving out all the offensive references to my G.M. Roe, as in this vol D.H. gave many more particulars of the Mandeville family etc. It seems to me that J/R. did not treat her well, he drew her on and then drew back himself when the

⁶⁹ Frances Finnegan. *Introspections: The Poetry and Private World of Dorothea Herbert* (Piltown, 2011), p. xi.

harm was done. In my heart I seem strongly drawn towards her in loving pity all through.⁷⁰

Desmond Mandeville's unpublished "Bibliographical Note" on the *Journal* also explains how some of it may have been destroyed.

The Mrs E. Mandeville, who is thought to have destroyed a good part of Dorothea's journal, had reason to be concerned with it. Herself, the daughter of John Roe, who played so disastrous a part in Dorothea's life, she was married to The Rev. Nicholas Herbert Mandeville, whose birth, around Christmas 1806, is recorded at the very end of *Retrospections* and also in the surviving fragment of the journal.⁷¹

Herbert's *Journal* forms part of the "Dorothea Herbert Deposit" in the Manuscript Room in Trinity College Dublin.

Publication History of *Retrospections*

⁷⁰ Montague Marshwood Mandeville, *Notes on and in Continuation of Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert*. 1935. MS of Mandeville Family, Anner Castle.

⁷¹ Desmond Mandeville, "Bibliographical Note," 30 Nov., 1986, MS of Mandeville Family, Anner Castle.

Volume One of *Retrospections* was published in 1929 on the centenary of Herbert's death. The circumstances surrounding the three publications of the text, in London in 1929/30, in Dublin in 1988 and then in Dublin again in 2004, are the subject of this section. In 1929 Gerald Howe of London brought out Volume One of what was titled *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert, 1770-1806*. Volume Two was published the following year. We know from the Mandeville Family Papers that GFM who wrote the introductory note to this first edition was Geoffrey Mandeville who transcribed the manuscript for publication. We also know that up until this time the text was kept away from "prying eyes" by the Mandeville family. The family papers contain no information about how Geoffrey Mandeville secured a publisher. However it appears from the kinds of publication popular at the time that both the publishing trade and public taste in reading were more receptive to texts of this kind than they had been in the past. John Brewer in his analysis of the period suggests that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century new ways of thinking about the eighteenth century emerged. He characterises this turn of the twentieth-century version of the eighteenth century as "a time of hierarchy and public stability, private pleasure, and good taste."⁷² The publishing trade responded to and fed this new interest with the publication of many volumes of eighteenth-century letters and memoirs.⁷³ Several publishing houses actively sought out this kind of material. The Bodley Head placed the following advertisement encouraging those who possessed "letters, documents, correspondence, Mss, scraps of autobiography and also miniatures and portraits relating to persons and matters historical, political, literary and social" to contact them.⁷⁴ It is in this climate

⁷² John Brewer, *Sentimental Murder: Love and Madness in the Eighteenth-Century* (London, 2005), p. 251.

⁷³ Even the memoirs of the notorious eighteenth-century Irish rake Buck Whaley were published at this time: Thomas Whaley *Buck Whaley's Memoirs* (London, 1906). So too were *Daniel O'Connell: his Early Life & Journal 1795-1802*, ed. Arthur Houston (London, 1906) and *The Autobiography of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-1798*, ed. Barry O'Brien (London, 1893).

⁷⁴ Brewer (2005), pp. 252-253.

of heightened interest in all things to do with life in the eighteenth century that Herbert's *Retrospections* was first published. This period also saw the invention and great commercial success of the Georgian era historical romance. Georgette Heyer dominated the field in the early years of the twentieth century. Her light-hearted romances became household familiars in Ireland as well as England. They are still the staple of most country town libraries in Ireland and are to be found in many homes having passed down from grandmother to mother to daughter, as they did in my own family. Barbara Cartland also set many of her flamboyant, but less decorous, historical romances in the same period. Some of the reviewers of *Retrospections* in 1929 and 1930 display a keen interest in stories of an idealised Regency period in the approach they take to the text. Mrs. Robert Hamilton gave her review three titles, a delicate balancing act for a reviewer whose mild enthusiasm for this eighteenth-century memoir is marred only by the fact that Herbert is Irish, not English. Her three titles: *An Irish Lady's Diary: Life in Georgian Times: Beauty's Ordeal*, give an idea of the main points of her review. Having found its way into print one hundred and twenty years after it was written, *Retrospections* remained out of print for close to sixty years.

The re-publication of *Retrospections* in 1988 by the Dublin publisher Town House can be seen as part of a late twentieth-century movement by academic historians to find new sources and new approaches to the study of Irish history. Among the most active and successful researchers were those who sought to recover the hidden histories of women. This was a necessary corrective to what had been up to then a version of Irish history that was dominated by male historians and their accounts of great public events and the activities of great Irish men. Leslie Clarkson in his essay "Love Labour and Life: Women in Carrick-on-Suir in the late Eighteenth Century" explains the new

process.⁷⁵ “Recent advances in women’s history have occurred, in part by looking at new sources but, more importantly, by examining old sources with new questions in mind.”⁷⁶ Clarkson includes Herbert’s *Retrospections* as one of the three “old sources” he examines in new ways. He uses Herbert’s text as a source document for an analysis of the role of marriage and work in the lives of women in Carrick-on-Suir in the late eighteenth century. Having used many references to Herbert to support his arguments, Clarkson justifies his choice of text: “To learn about women we ought to read what women say about themselves.”⁷⁷ To this new interest in recovering women’s history we owe the re-publication and, in some instances, the first publication of many women’s diaries and memoirs. The first publication of *The Diary of Elizabeth Richards*, *Mary Mathew’s Diary*, and the republication of *The Memoirs of Mrs Leeson* are among the publications from this time. The publisher’s note that introduces the 1988 edition of *Retrospections* confirms this theory.

When I first read these *Retrospections* I knew I had found a jewel..... I sensed that I had rediscovered a unique and personal historical record entwined with a tragic love story – a tale that demanded to be re-published. (Ret., p. iii)

Louis Cullen’s “Historical Backdrop” written for the 1988 edition is the work of an eminent Irish historian. The choice of an historian rather than a literary scholar says much about the impetus

⁷⁵ L.A. Clarkson, “Love, Labour and Life: Women in Carrick-on-Suir in the late Eighteenth Century,” *Irish Economic and Social History* xx (1993), 18-24.

⁷⁶ Clarkson (1993), p. 19.

⁷⁷ Clarkson (1993), p. 33.

behind the publication. Cullen presents *Retrospections* as an invaluable source primarily because of the insight women diarists provide into the social mores of the time.

“Diaries such as Dorothea’s and Mary Mathew’s unpublished diary for 1772, provide a perspective on the eighteenth century which can be obtained from no other source” (Ret., p. 454). Cullen does not allow the reader to forget this point and reiterates it several times in the short introduction.

Her diary is particularly invaluable because it documents the social conditions and relationships of the circle of gentleman farmers.... No other known account brings us so clearly into the heart and soul of this little world so pervasive in Ireland in the closing decades of the eighteenth century. (Ret., p. 455)

Apart from the newfound interest in women’s history at this time there was also the drive towards new publications to commemorate the bicentenary of the 1798 Irish Rebellion. However, despite the highly plausible nature of this account of the publication of the 1988 edition of *Retrospections*, it was not an historian who prompted the re-publication. The Mandeville Family papers document a very different impetus behind the re-publication of the text. In a short note on *Retrospections* Peter Somerville Large outlines a plan to publish extracts from the text in 1980.

I have always been interested in Dorothea Herbert. At present I am writing a book about Ireland for Hamish Hamilton in which I include a section about her. I have visited the houses where she and her friends lived and hope to recapture some of the atmosphere of provincial life at the end of the eighteenth century. I have also had the

opportunity of examining the original manuscript of her *Retrospections* which is in the possession of the Mandeville family.⁷⁸

There are three things to note about this extract. Firstly, the book he is writing at the time is one referred to in an earlier part of this chapter, *The Grand Tour of Ireland*. Secondly, his interest in the text is in its historical value. And, most importantly, he vouches for the authenticity of the text as he makes a point of claiming that he has “examined the manuscript.” This note was included in a letter from his sister Gillian Somerville Large to Maurice Mandeville, where she outlines their plans for publication. The letter is dated 8 May 1980. She gives a list of fifteen extracts that she believes “give the most vivid idea of her writing.” She concludes with an outline of her brother’s future plans.

We are not very hopeful, but think the idea is very much worth a brave try. I am sending all this stuff to Peter’s agents who will circulate it. If his own publishers Hamish Hamilton are not interested, we will try others, possibly an Irish publisher. There has been a spate of Irish reprints recently of books like Constantia Maxwell’s *Country Life in Ireland*. (She seems not to have been aware of the *Retrospections*).⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Note enclosed in Letter from Gillian Somerville Large to Maurice Mandeville, 8 May 1980, Mandeville Family Papers.

⁷⁹ Letter from Gillian Somerville-Large to Maurice Mandeville, 8 May 1980, Mandeville Family Papers. The reference to Maxwell is interesting here in the light of my earlier discussion about the doubts that surrounded *Retrospections* when it was first published.

Happily, Somerville Large did not succeed with this project as had sections only of the text been published then the full text might not have come out in 1988. However, a letter to the *Clonmel Nationalist* on 6 August 1987 set in train a set of circumstances that led to the 1988 publication. A local journalist, Tommy Cleary, sent a letter to the paper describing how he had found a copy of volume one of *Retrospections* in a jumble sale and asking for information about Herbert. Maurice Mandeville read the letter and replied on the same day.

I saw your letter in today's Nationalist and am writing to you directly... I would certainly like to see the book which my brother Geoffrey took to the publishers reprinted, but, being now in my eighties cannot take it around and hope to find an Irish publisher. Perhaps you would be ready to do this? ⁸⁰

Cleary responded on 17 August 1987.

Today I contacted a publishing firm with whom I am acquainted and arranged for an appointment next Monday (August 24th) to discuss the possibilities of having the book published again. The firm – Town House – will assess the potential and when they have done so, I shall ask them to communicate directly with you. ⁸¹

The *Clonmel Nationalist* did a follow-up article on 22 September 1988.

⁸⁰ Maurice Mandeville to Tommy Cleary, Letter 6 Aug., 1987, Mandeville Family Papers.

⁸¹ Tommy Cleary to Maurice Mandeville, Letter 17 Aug., 1987, Mandeville Family Papers.

A chance find by former Clonmel journalist Tommy Cleary, at a jumble sale in Dublin will lead to re-publication next month of one of the most fascinating narratives ever penned in Tipperary.⁸²

The re-publication was therefore initiated by a chance find by a local journalist, a letter to a local newspaper and the willing co-operation of the Mandeville family, and not by an academic seeking new sources for women's history or the history of the 1798 Irish Rising.

Town House brought out a paperback edition of the 1988 text in 2004. The editor's note was omitted and Louis Cullen's "Historical Backdrop" was moved to the beginning of the text to do duty as the "Forward." Although the "Forward" is dated 2004 it is identical to the 1988 "Historical Backdrop." The only addition, as I have noted, is a footnote giving the location of the Herbert manuscript (Ret. (2004), p. xxvi). Town House, who have since ceased to trade, describe themselves as "publishers of quality fiction, non-fiction and Irish Interest books." In their publishers catalogue they classify *Retrospections* as "General history of Europe - British Isles."⁸³ Interest in women's history had if anything grown between 1988 and 2004 and this interest saw the publication of texts like Harriet Kramer Linkin's *The Collected Poems and Journals of Mary Tighe*, Norma Clarke's *Queen of Wits: A Life of Letitia Pilkington*, Barbara Hughes *Between Literature and History: The Diaries and Memoirs of Mary Leadbeater and Dorothea Herbert* and Frances Finnegan's *Introspections: The*

⁸² *Clonmel Nationalist*, 22 Sept., 1988, p. 5.

⁸³ Town House have ceased to trade.

Poetry and Private World of Dorothea Herbert.⁸⁴ *Poetical Eccentricities* and Herbert's *Journal* have not been published to date. Finnegan's text does use lengthy extracts from both manuscripts but these are divided into themes and used to support a biographical reading of Herbert and do not constitute an edition of either work. There are also several lines omitted from *Poetical Eccentricities* due, Finnegan claims, to the illegibility of the photocopy used to transcribe the text.⁸⁵

The publishing history of Herbert's texts over the last century tells us much about the changing attitudes to women's writing and the often arbitrary circumstances that lead to the publication of any text. Changing styles and fashions, the discovery of out of print texts, and the interest of local enthusiasts all play a part in the publication of Herbert's work. One thing that emerges clearly from the family papers is that the majority of Herbert's descendants treasured her writing. But given the intimate details of family life it contained they showed no desire to have it published. Only after a century had elapsed did one member of the family transcribe it for publication and even he, as the publisher's note suggests, did not want to be identified. The published versions of Herbert's texts have abandoned many of the paratextual elements that Herbert used in the construction of her manuscripts. As I will argue in Chapter Three, these play a major role in the meaning of the texts as Herbert constructed them. They also influence the way we approach them as readers. The published versions, by changing the material aspects of the manuscripts, distort their complex meanings and

⁸⁴ Mary Tighe, *The Collected Poems and Journals of Mary Tighe*, ed. Harriet Kramer Linkin (Lexington, 2005); Norma Clarke, *Queen of Wits: A Life of Letitia Pilkington* (London, 2008); Barbara Hughes, *Between Literature and History: The Diaries of Mary Leadbeater and Dorothea Herbert* (Berne, 2010) and Frances Finnegan, *Introspections: The Poetry and Private World of Dorothea Herbert* (Piltown, 2011).

⁸⁵ Finnegan (2011), p. 8. The dangers of using a photocopy as a source are seen clearly when Finnegan omits ten lines from "Book the Fourth" of "The Buckiad" and notes, "The following ten lines are so faded that they are impossible to decipher" (p. 300). The lines are perfectly legible in the manuscript as the good quality paper and ink used by Herbert have stood the test of time.

create invisible barriers for the modern reader. Reading the original manuscripts brings the reader as close to Herbert and her purpose at the moment of composition as they can ever hope to be.

Examining the reception history of Herbert's writing highlights the extent to which the reception of a text is governed by the form in which it is presented and the period in which it appears in print.

Reception History of Herbert's Work

Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert, 1770-1806

There is no surviving evidence, apart from Herbert's own writing, and accounts in the Mandeville Family Papers, of any readers of her *Retrospections of an Outcast* before its publication as *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806* in 1929/30. Montague Mandeville's account of family readings of the manuscript on cold winter evenings gives insight into the private life of the manuscript and the important role it occupied as a family treasure.

I well remember, long before Uncle Nick's death in 1872 the *Retrospections* being produced and read aloud on winter evenings at Anner Castle by my elder sisters and my mother giving her explanations and comments thereon.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Montague Marshwood Mandeville, *Notes on and in Continuation of Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert*. MS of Mandeville Family, Anner Castle.

That the family regarded it as a valuable possession is evident from Desmond Mandeville's description of his sisters "guarding it like tigresses."⁸⁷ The meticulous preparation of the manuscript for publication by his brother Geoffrey Mandeville in 1929 shows his belief in its value.⁸⁸ Desmond Mandeville's recognition of the literary quality of the manuscript is evident in his letters and in his decision to get family agreement to deposit the manuscript in Trinity College Library in 1986. This care is in marked contrast to the behaviour of an earlier generation of the Mandeville family who kept the manuscript secret and appear to have purged Herbert's writing of material potentially damaging to the family's reputation.

Herbert records her own attitude to *Retrospections* in the text itself and in her *Journal*. At the end of the *Retrospections* she claims that the writing of her personal history has been her only comfort in the isolated and unhappy state in which she finds herself in 1806: "I have Accomplishd four large Volume(s) with Plates in my Prison viz Poems, Plays, Novels and these Retrospections – They are the only Amusement I had and I flatter myself are not uninteresting." (Ret., p. 420-421). She records completing the text in her *Journal* entry for Wednesday 13 August 1806: "I finished my history this morning." Her only record of her family's attitude to her writing is her claim that her brother Nicholas borrowed, or confiscated it. On 22 June 1807 she describes sitting in the garden of the Villa in Carrick-on-Suir with her manuscript: "I brought me my history which Mr. Nick carried off to Ballytobin to my great annoyance."⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Mandeville Family Papers.

⁸⁸ The text of the 1929/30 edition of *Retrospections* was transcribed accurately from the manuscript.

⁸⁹ Herbert's *Journal* is not paginated; all references are to dates of entries.

Responses to *Retrospections* have centred on the three published editions of the manuscript. There was a mild flurry of activity in the Irish newspapers after the publication of the 1929/30 editions of *Retrospections*. Gerald Howe, the London publisher of the first edition, placed an advertisement in *The Irish Times* in April 1929 describing the text as “A Work of Genius, The Literary Discovery of 1929.”⁹⁰ The advertisement goes on to describe it as “an unforgettable picture of the humours of Anglo-Irish society.”⁹¹ In May 1929 “An Irishman’s Diary,” again in *The Irish Times*, describes *Retrospections* as “a recent charming book, which treats of social life round an Irish Rectory.”⁹² In a letter to *The Irish Times* in August 1929, Thomas Bodkin describes the text as “a magic glass through which we can look into the past that seems the real substance and the present the shadow.”⁹³ Bodkin here suggests that the text is more real than the present reality in which he writes. W. M. Letts in an article on “Literary Associations” in May 1930 describes the second volume of *Retrospections* as “the diary of a terrible lovelorn miss, and harrows one as much as those anguished letters of Vanessa to her Swift. Broken hearts can send their cry over the centuries and the note loses nothing of its agony.”⁹⁴ Giving voice to his emotional response to reading the text Letts describes the possibility of the traveller seeing and hearing Herbert on the road between Cashel and Cahir. “O! modern motorist, if a coach passes you in the dusk and you see and hear a sobbing lady inside it, be sure it is Dorothea Herbert, still bewailing her faithless lover at Rockwell.”

⁹⁰ *The Irish Times*, 19 Apr., 1929, p. 3.

⁹¹ *The Irish Times*, 19 Apr., 1929, p. 3.

⁹² *The Irish Times*, 2 May 1929, p. 4.

⁹³ *The Irish Times*, 26 Aug., 1929, p. 5.

⁹⁴ *The Irish Times*, 1 May 1930, p. 4.

⁹⁵ One of the most interesting reviews is a short anonymous account of the text in the *Sunday Independent* in March 1929. This is the first review to comment on the structure of Herbert's text: "She played author very earnestly indeed, leaving behind her a homely tome of Ms duly chaptered with running heads illustrated by her own hand, and the title page (as monumental as a tomb)." ⁹⁶ With the exception of this review the responses are dominated by exaggerated claims of the faithfulness to the "real" in the text and the seductive power and haunting nature of the story Herbert tells of her happy childhood, lost romance and desolate later years.

Elizabeth Bowen, in her references to Herbert's *Retrospections*, is not at all troubled by its seductive power, nor does she show any compassion for Herbert. Bowen did not review *Retrospections*, but she does refer to it in her family history *Bowen's Court* (1941). *Bowen's Court* is a determined defence of her Anglo-Irish family's position in Ireland. Bowen explains how the Anglo-Irish "honoured, if they did not justify, their own class, its traditions, its rule of life" ⁹⁷ As I have noted in the Introduction, when measured against their toughness, Bowen finds Herbert a particularly poor representative of the Anglo-Irish woman. Not being able to "stay the course" is a severe judgment from Bowen who values the courage of her class above all other qualities. ⁹⁸ In a 1946 essay for *Vogue* magazine Bowen lists Herbert as one of the chroniclers of the Big House way of life. But again she highlights Herbert's mental fragility and inability to "stay the course."

⁹⁵ *The Irish Times*, 1 May 1930, p. 4.

⁹⁶ *The Sunday Independent*, 31 Mar., 1929, p.16.

⁹⁷ Allan Hepburn, ed. *People, Places, Things* (Edinburgh, 2008), p. 159.

⁹⁸ Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court* (Cork, 1998), p. 204.

Then we have the vivacious *Retrospections* of Dorothea Herbert, a late eighteenth-century lady whom non-stop party-going, throughout the South of Ireland, coupled with love trouble sent mad.⁹⁹

Bowen concentrates on the factual elements of Herbert's *Retrospections*, reading it as a record of her private life rather than as a literary text. This is surprising when we consider that Bowen regarded her own autobiographical writing as non-referential and literary. Describing it as "artist's work" she argues, "[i]t is as literature that autobiography makes its claims, not as a private document. It is the product of disciplined concentration, not a licensed ease, not an amateur affair."¹⁰⁰ It is interesting to speculate on why Bowen reads *Retrospections* "as a private document" rather than as literature, a right she claimed for her own autobiographical writing. One possible reason is Herbert's lack of reserve and her displays of uncontrolled emotion. Bowen's distaste for sentiment and self-revelation in autobiography blinds her to the literary qualities of the text. Bowen leans heavily on the work of other Anglo-Irish writers in her reconstruction of her family history in *Bowen's Court*, particularly on Jonah Barrington's colourful *Personal Sketches and Recollections of His Own Times*.¹⁰¹ This interweaving of the writing of other chroniclers of her class in her writing of their history makes the virtual exclusion of Herbert as a source difficult to understand. It seems that Herbert's inability to "stay the course," and her weakness in allowing herself to be driven mad by emotion, disqualify

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Bowen, "Ireland Makes Irish" *Vogue*, 15 Aug., 1946. See also Eibhear Walshe, *Elizabeth Bowen's Selected Irish Writings* (Cork, 2011), pp. 126-131.

¹⁰⁰ Bowen discusses this at length in her article "Autobiography As We know It Today Is Artists' work" in *Afterthoughts* (London, 1962), p. 200.

¹⁰¹ Jonah Barrington, *Personal Sketches and Recollections of His Own Times* (Dublin, 1997). In this Barrington gives a highly unreliable but entertaining anecdotal account of his own class.

her as an accurate recorder of her class's history. This is ironic when we consider that most reviewers tend to see her as an accurate source, while it is her failure to fit into Bowen's mythical version of her own and Herbert's class that disqualifies her as one of Bowen's sources. So perhaps for Bowen Herbert is too "real," she does not display the kind of Anglo-Irish esprit de corps that Bowen wishes to create in *Bowen's Court*. Thus there is no place for her in Bowen's idealisation of the Anglo-Irish.

To live as if living gave them no trouble has been the first imperative of their make-up: to do this has taken a virtuosity into which courage enters more than has been allowed.¹⁰²

As I have noted, Virginia Woolf, unlike Bowen, admired what she describes as the "randy and rollicking" in *Retrospections*. She seems to have read the first volume of *Retrospections* shortly after the first edition came out in London in 1929.¹⁰³ The responses of these two novelists are interesting. We know that Woolf visited Bowen in Ireland and found Bowen's Court dark and uncivilised. There may be some slight relish in her highlighting this bawdy episode in the writing of an Irish woman of Bowen's Anglo-Irish class, with its pretensions to gentility.

Robert Wyse Jackson in his 1956 article on Herbert's *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity* describes the 1929/30 edition of *Retrospections* as "a minor classic, and "a literary event." It is the

¹⁰² Bowen (1988), p. 56.

¹⁰³ Nigel Nicolson, ed., *A Reflection of the Other Person: The Letters of Virginia Woolf* (London, 1978) vol. IV, p. 40.

unusual quality of Herbert's text that he singles out for praise: "Of its period, the *Retrospections* are unique. They are quite the best reminiscences in existence of an Unimportant Person of the Irish Georgian era."¹⁰⁴ He professes himself charmed by Herbert's sense of humour and the vividness of her descriptions of local events.

Dolly was a born scribbler, with a natural and quite untutored power of capturing small contemporary events in vivid prose. Her diary is extraordinarily entertaining. She had an impish sense of humour, so that her accounts of little local happenings become extremely funny.¹⁰⁵

Benedict Kiely in a slightly later article entitled "All for Love or The World Well Lost" recognised that Herbert "wrote with originality and style" and that she was "the artist of the domestic interior, the perfect painter of bright living miniatures."¹⁰⁶ For Kiely, she is a painter of real life; he sees her style as a transparent art, one that shows life as it is.

What we have here is a little masterpiece, a picture of the past and its way of life so vivid as to be almost painful: a touching record of simple joys and hopes, of a

¹⁰⁴ Wyse Jackson (1956), p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Wyse Jackson (1956), p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Benedict Kiely, "All For Love or The World Well Lost," *Ireland of the Welcomes* 35.1 (1986), 31-35.

disappointment in love to which, perhaps, unwarranted hope may have contributed a great deal, and of a melancholy that led to a mental breakdown.¹⁰⁷

He concludes by praising her skill as a writer and the attractiveness of her prose style: “She was all sensibility, and music, and poetry and good reading.”¹⁰⁸

The responses to *Retrospections* in the English press were more varied. The 1929/30 edition was reviewed enthusiastically for “Country Life” by V.H. Friedlander who recommended it as it “Makes the most delightful reading. Loveable Dorothea.” Edith Somerville describes the text as “So vivid and amusing that I can most warmly recommend her book to all intelligent readers.”¹⁰⁹ By recommending it to all “intelligent readers”, Somerville may be responding to Edith Fowler’s earlier and very critical reviews. The English novelist Edith Henrietta Fowler reviewed Volume One of *Retrospections* in 1929, and Volume Two in 1930.¹¹⁰ Both reviews appear under her married name, Hon Mrs Robert Hamilton. Her review of Volume One appears under the title “An Irish Lady’s Diary – Life in Georgian Times – Beauty’s Ordeal.” She describes it as “a quaint and authentic autobiography” and reads it as “a key to national character which in some ways has not ‘grown up’ quite as quickly as modern times demand and expect.” Hamilton also finds that “[t]he lack of self-

¹⁰⁷ Kiely (1986), p. 31.

¹⁰⁸ Kiely (1986), p. 35.

¹⁰⁹ Used as puffs in the 2004 edition of *Retrospections*. The authors’ names are supplied and both are dated 1929.

¹¹⁰ I have not yet been able to trace these reviews. Copies of these were included in two first editions of the 1929 and 1930 copies that I bought second-hand.

control combined with a great amount of emotional vulgarity is amazing.” She particularly laments this as the Herbert family and their friends are “well-bred.” She states that Herbert’s tale of “emotional vulgarity” may help to “explain some of the Irish impetuosity of today.” For this reviewer Herbert as author conforms to the stereotype of stage Irishwoman. This English attitude to the Irish and indeed the Anglo-Irish does help to explain Bowen’s defence of her class and her critical response to what she regards as Herbert’s unguarded, even vulgar, display of emotion in *Retrospections*. Hamilton’s review of Volume Two, entitled “An Old Diary,” concentrates not on what the text reveals about the Irish national character but on Herbert’s account of her love affair which she describes as “boiling-over emotionalism.” Describing the romance as “pathetic and preposterous” and as “ridiculous in its excess” she continues: “In the first volume we laughed with Dorothea in the second we laugh at her.” One of the strangest parts of this review is what Hamilton finds humorous.

We are sorry for her when her brother dies but her description is exquisitely humorous.

“Oh! What a meal was our Dinner when the Darling who had so often render’d it cheerful and sociable was now a lifeless Body in the large Parlour of his own house at next Door.”

Hamilton concludes in censorial tone that *Retrospections* should teach us the lesson of “the folly and futility of pouring into anything more than it can hold for all overflow is waste.”

The anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* in June 1930 finds Herbert's account of life in Ireland humorous as it surpasses "the excesses of a hundred Castle Rackrents."¹¹¹ However, dismissive of her writing style as "an agreeable rattle" it continues "though she scarcely ever wrote anything that can be called prose, matter never seems to fail her." And finally: "She is certainly not to be trusted about her own accomplishments, since she speaks ridiculously enough of laying "the foundations of my future erudition."¹¹²

All of these reviewers, despite their varied responses to the text, have one thing in common, they all read *Retrospections* as factual. This has much to do with the genre. It is after all an autobiography, and therefore for many readers purports to be the truth. Kiely does comment on Herbert's "originality and style" but he does not pursue this in the rest of his article, concentrating instead on the details of the stories Herbert tells and not on how she tells them. Even the casual reader of the text cannot fail to notice the allusions to the poets and the pantheon of great writers on whom Herbert models her writing, refers to directly and quotes in *Retrospections*. Although some commentators allude to the artfulness of her writing in passing, none analyse the literary qualities of her work or the many ways in which those qualities might influence our reading of what purports, by its genre, to be a factual account of her life.

Louis Cullen in his introduction to both the 1988 and 2004 editions of *Retrospections* reads Herbert's work as a factual private diary. He compares Herbert to Jane Austen but makes a clear distinction between the ways we should read both authors.

¹¹¹ "Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1789," rev., *Times Literary Supplement*, June 1930.

¹¹² "Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1789," rev., *Times Literary Supplement*, June 1930.

Dorothea Herbert's account is, of course, autobiographical, whereas Jane Austen's writing, sharp and realistic in the quality of its penetrating social commentary, is fictional. (Ret., p. ix)

In making this distinction Cullen aligns autobiography with truth and thus reads *Retrospections* as an accurate historical document. As such he sees it as telling an unvarnished tale of life in a parsonage in rural Ireland. Cullen praises Herbert's "keen powers of observation" as they give us "much evidence of living conditions and social life." Praising the transparency of Herbert's account he states: "No other known account brings us so clearly into the heart and soul of this little world so pervasive in Ireland in the closing decades of the eighteenth century." He concludes his introduction by recommending that *Retrospections* remain in print as a "vivid introduction to the society of south Tipperary and as a still rarer guide to the mental world of an accomplished though ultimately anguished lady in rural Ireland" (Ret., p. xxxiv). Cullen's emphasis on the factual nature of Herbert's text overshadows his reference to the access it gives us to Herbert's "mental world." Clearly impressed by Herbert's accounts of public events he concludes, "Suffice it to say her historical accuracy is striking" (Ret., p. xxxiv). Like most other commentators on *Retrospections*, Cullen considers Herbert "somewhat deranged," but does not see this as a reason for doubting the reliability of her account of her life (Ret., p. xxiii).

"Vivid and Artless", "movingly candid," "Herbert was not writing stories – she was telling her own." These are some of the responses to the 1988 edition of *Retrospections*, continuing the general trend of the earlier responses. The reviews were, however, more meditative and considered. The novelist

Mary Morrissey reviewing *Retrospections* for *The Irish Times* describes it as “a poignant tale of unrequited love.” Unlike Hamilton who was so critical of the “ridiculous excess” of Herbert’s description of her love affair with John Roe, Morrissey finds that “[t]he description of her social alliance with John Roe is, to contemporary eyes, one of painful reserve.”¹¹³ Novelist Deirdre Purcell finds Herbert’s portrayal of John Roe romantic and compelling: “The moody but brilliant character of John Roe, so well drawn by the author is as intriguing as any fiction – as Darcy, Rhett Butler, Heathcliffe or Mr. Rochester.”¹¹⁴ From Purcell, a writer of romance novels, this is predictable praise indeed. It is worth noting, however, that although she suggests that Herbert’s construction of John Roe is worthy of a great novelist, Purcell does not suggest in any way that Herbert has told anything but the truth. The possibility that she had over-dramatised her story or made it into a romantic fiction is not considered. In a letter to *The Irish Times* in November 1988 Gillian Somerville-Large criticises Mary Morrissey’s failure to “emphasise the humour and the eye for eccentricity which makes the “Retrospections” so engaging.”¹¹⁵ Virginia Woolf and Wyse Jackson are the only other writers who comment on the whimsical and comic in Herbert’s work.

Reviewing the 2004 edition for *The Irish Times*, Eileen Battersby describes *Retrospections* as “[a] movingly candid account of one young woman’s tragic descent into the grief of a love promised then lost.”¹¹⁶ Andrew Carpenter reviewing for the *Irish Literary Supplement* finds it “neither mawkish nor sentimental” and concludes that “Dorothea Herbert’s sharp, vivid and artless description of the

¹¹³ Mary Morrissey, “The Lost World of Dorothea Herbert,” rev. *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806*. *Weekend Review*, *The Irish Times*, 12 Nov. 1988, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ Quote used as puff for 2004 edition of *Retrospections*, attributed to Deirdre Purcell but no reference given.

¹¹⁵ Gillian Somerville-Large, “Dorothea’s Humour.” Letter to *The Irish Times*, 17 Nov. 1988, p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Eileen Battersby, “A Vivid Diary of a Woman Scorned,” rev. *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806*. *The Irish Times*, 13 Sept. 2004, p. 13.

objects and events of her life has captivated any reader who has been lucky enough to come upon it.”¹¹⁷ Jenny Friel begins her review, “Diary of an 18th Century Bridget Jones,” with a Bridget Jones-style rewriting of Herbert’s version of her love affair.

After smoothing down her dress one final time, the pretty 18-year old stepped into the sunlit room. Straight away, her eyes were drawn to the tall, dark-haired young man who rose from the velvet-covered sofa – Mr John Roe. It took all her will to tear her attention away from the handsome stranger.¹¹⁸

The remainder of the review focuses on the love affair. None of these reviewers refer to the literary qualities of the text, perhaps allowing the genre, autobiography, to dictate their responses. This concentration on Herbert’s inner life, on her emotional dependency and ungovernable desires and failure to acknowledge her literary strengths and intellectual capacity is an approach that is frequently taken to women’s writing. Wollstonecraft scholars have remarked on this tendency in commentators on her work. E. P. Thompson in a review of Claire Tomalin’s *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* criticises Tomalin and other writers who focus on Wollstonecraft’s private life and do not take into consideration her considerable intellectual achievements. One of the reasons

¹¹⁷ Andrew Carpenter, *Irish Literary Supplement*, Mar. 22, 2005.

¹¹⁸ Jenny Friel, “Dairy of an 18th Century Bridget Jones” rev. *Retrospections of an Outcast 1770-1806. Ireland on Sunday*, 19 Sept. 2004.

for this, she suggests, is that “the moral confusions, or personal crises, of a woman are always somehow more interesting than those of a man: they engross all other aspects of the subject.”¹¹⁹

Writing in 2004, Elizabeth Grubgeld in her analysis of Anglo-Irish autobiography quotes Herbert out of context and with little sympathy. Again reading *Retrospections* as a factual account of life in an Anglo-Irish household, she quotes Herbert in support of a more general argument about women in the period. Attempting to prove that the Anglo-Irish home is often a prison for the female children of the household, she claims that Herbert expresses “horror at the memory of the family home.”¹²⁰ This is a misreading of the text as it fails to notice the narrative shape of *Retrospections*. Herbert models her life story on Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. This structure is predicated on establishing an idyllic childhood and the tragedy of its loss in later life. In consequence Herbert, until the very end of the text, devotes much time to amusing anecdotes and details of the happy family home of which she is part. And to reinforce this she constantly laments the loss of her happy and carefree childhood. In Grubgeld’s quotations from the first chapters of Herbert’s text, she fails to see the humorous tone that Herbert uses in her descriptions of her family home. This is surprising as Grubgeld devotes the last chapter of her book to comic Anglo-Irish autobiography. Her opening statement claims that “comedy has been integral to Anglo-Irish life writing since the eighteenth century,” yet she fails to

¹¹⁹ E.P. Thompson, “Solitary Walker,” rev. Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London, 1974) in *New Society*, 19 Sept. 1974, p. 749. See also Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 9-12.

¹²⁰ Elizabeth Grubgeld, *Anglo-Irish Autobiography* (Syracuse, 2004), p. 51.

see any comedy in *Retrospections*.¹²¹ Nowhere does she refer to the literary qualities of the text and how these colour Herbert's re-constructions of her own life story.

A brief discussion and an extract from Herbert's *Retrospections* are included in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, volume iv, under the heading "Sexual Expression and Genre." In her discussion of the text Siobhan Kilfeather highlights Herbert's "concern with disguise, identity and reading the sexual body." This is best seen, she suggests, in Herbert's descriptions of cross-dressing and mistaken identity.

The mother who mistakes a prostitute for her daughter, the family who 'adopt' the mysterious transvestite and the gentlewoman disguised as a seduced peasant girl all illustrate radical ambiguities within the culture about bodies and meanings.¹²²

¹²¹ Grubgeld (2004), p. 128. She also insists that "Elizabeth Bowen's autobiographies are rarely comic." *Bowen's Court* is in fact a very creative and humorous account of Bowen's family history. For a discussion of Bowen's autobiographical writing see Mary Breen, " 'Autobiography As We Know it Today is Artists' Work,' " in Eibhear Walshe, ed. *Elizabeth Bowen* (Dublin, 2009), pp.110-133.

¹²² Angela Bourke et al, eds., *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing Volume IV: Irish Women's Writing and Tradition* (Cork, 2002), p. 815.

It is interesting to note that the doubts that surround the authenticity of Herbert's work were still very much current when this volume was published in 2002. Kilfeather makes the following comment on Herbert's text.

There is also, of course a question about the fictiveness of Herbert's journal, clearly influenced by Gothic and sentimental fiction, which includes her own bizarre, sad claim to be John Roe's wife. The manuscript, which in the 1920s was in the possession of the Mandeville family, cannot now be traced.¹²³

It is not clear whether Kilfeather here is referring to the possibility that *Retrospections* is a forgery or to Herbert herself writing a fictive account of her life, under the influence of gothic and sentimental fiction. The biographical entry for Herbert in *The Field Day Anthology* perpetuates the myth by stating that the manuscript was "unaccounted for" in 2002: "When George Mandeville published *Retrospections* in 1929, it was the only manuscript volume he could find, and by 1988 it had been apparently lost."¹²⁴

The conclusion of the entry on Herbert in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* is brief and dismissive of her writing skills.

¹²³ Bourke et al (2002), p. 815.

¹²⁴ Bourke et al (2002), p. 824.

Comparisons to Jane Austen in the 1988 edition, based on the similarity of their social milieu, do Herbert no favours. Inadequately educated, hysterically romantic, and limited in expectations, Herbert emerges only as a victim of a society which Austen understood and defined.¹²⁵

There are several factual errors in the entry but it is this final assessment of Herbert's work in this standard biography that this thesis will challenge.

Barbara Hughes's reading of Herbert's *Retrospections* and *Journal* focuses primarily on Herbert's role as an "eighteenth-century chronicler."¹²⁶ For Hughes, Herbert's value as a writer lies in "the unique light she throws on little-understood aspects of middle-class society," and "in her eighteenth-century perspective."¹²⁷ In a chapter titled "Representing the Self" Hughes argues that Herbert's madness is a form of empowerment and singles her out as "a potent symbol of resistance."¹²⁸ "Self-reflexive madness," Hughes argues, empowers Herbert to become a writer and as such is "a pre-

¹²⁵ Bridget Hourican, "Herbert, Dorothea." Entry in James McGuire and James Quinn, eds., *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009).

¹²⁶ Barbara Hughes, *Between Literature and History: The Diaries and Memoirs of Mary Leadbeater and Dorothea Herbert* (Bern, 2010). Hughes does not discuss *Poetical Eccentricities*; she may have been unaware of its existence.

¹²⁷ Hughes (2010), p. 76.

¹²⁸ Hughes (2010), p. 111.

condition for writing.”¹²⁹ While this argument has certain merits when applied to *Retrospections* and Herbert’s *Journal* it is less persuasive when we consider all three texts. Had Hughes been aware of the existence of *Poetical Eccentricities* she may well have taken a very different approach to her reading of Herbert’s two later texts.

Responses to Herbert’s *Retrospections*, although varied, have one central theme: they all read the text as a factual account of Herbert’s life and times. Commentators, whether seduced or repelled by the nature of her tragic love story, have failed to notice the literary qualities of the text. The responses fall roughly into three categories. English responses, like those of Woolf and Fowler and the anonymous review in *The Times Literary Supplement*, view the text as an example of quaint Irish otherness. It confirms the stereotypical view of Ireland as a place where life is uncivilised and customs amusingly barbaric. The Anglo-Irish Bowen on the other hand dismisses Herbert from her canon of Anglo-Irish writers for not living up to her ideal characterisation of their class. Irish reviewers are much more sympathetic; they identify with Herbert’s story of loss and unhappiness and enter into her world with wholehearted enthusiasm. W. M. Letts in *The Irish Times*, for instance, suggests that the modern reader might well encounter the ghost of a weeping Herbert on the road between Cashel and Cahir. What none of the reviewers pay attention to are the obvious literary qualities of the text, the many quotations used and the frequent allusions to well-known literary texts. There is no recognition of the memoir as a performance that distances the text from a factual account of Herbert’s life or that the writing is the work of an accomplished literary mimic who models her texts on the major literary writers and books of her day.

¹²⁹ Hughes (2010), p. 114.

Responses to Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity

In *Retrospections* Herbert speaks about her “book of poems” on four occasions. She gives details about the writing of individual poems, describes her readers and their responses to her work and records her reaction to their reception. In 1793 she details the circumstances in which she wrote the poem “The Villa.”

I went to Carrick for a week beforehand and as Summer was now in its prime and the Sweet Serenity of our Abode struck me so much after the Noisy Turbulence of a seafaring Life that my Muse produced my poem call'd the Villa which may be seen in my book of poems. (Ret., p. 311)

Later the same year she describes the reaction to her poems among her Cashel acquaintances.

My poems were now carried to Cashel and read every Morning at Mr Hares to a Levee of Roscommon Officers and all the Literati of the Place – Mr Hare was pleased to commend them and Mrs Agar the Arch Bishops Lady sent for them – His Grace himself was much entertain'd with them and some Parts of them made him laugh heartily. (Ret., p. 324)

Herbert expresses no fears about the reception of her poems among the “Literati” of Bishop Agar’s educated circle in Cashel.¹³⁰ However, her anxiety is aroused when Mrs Walsh, who lives with the Roe family in Rockwell, asks to see them.

Mrs Walsh got Andrew Roe to apply to me for a Perusal of them – I gave them up with a Palpitating Heart but could never learn what Reception they met at Rockwell though I was rather curious about it. (Ret., p. 324)

Her poems achieve a wider circulation in 1794 when Herbert records them being read by her family and friends in Dublin.

My poems were shown to all the Circle of our Friends in Dublin who honoured them with great Applauses, but I soon grew tired of trite Eulogiums. (Ret., p. 328)

Herbert’s responses here are interesting; she appears unconcerned about the reception of her poems among the learned men and women in Cashel, perhaps knowing that such a readership would recognise her allusions to writers who form part of their shared reading. However she does not display the same confidence with regard to family and friends in Dublin, or to John Roe’s family. Her reaction to the different responses is also telling; she values those of the Cashel “Literati” and depreciates those of the Dublin party-going set. Her account of her “book of poems” and the reactions to them shows remarkable confidence for a self-taught young woman living in a remote

¹³⁰ Charles Agar was archbishop of Cashel from 1779 to 1801. He became archbishop of Dublin in 1801.

country parsonage. That she saw herself as a poet and did not fear the reaction of learned readers to her writing is evident. How she achieved this confidence is an important part of Herbert's life story. Writing poetry was in Herbert's world, the given preserve of men, and women were understandably nervous of the reception they would receive when stepping on such hallowed ground. In Herbert's own case, her education, such as it was, consisted of classes in dancing, drawing and music. Her informal education was received from the learned friends of her father who were the heroic figures of her childhood, and who were exclusively male and literary. She was taught to appreciate great writers and to love poetry in particular. All of the writers she was introduced to and taught to love and venerate were male. How she forged a place for herself in this august community is one of the most interesting aspects of her construction of herself as an "Authoress." I return to this discussion of Herbert's self-construction as an author in Chapters Two and Three.

There is one very valuable published response to Herbert's unpublished book of poems. In 1798 Edward M. Mandeville published a collection of verse called *Miscellaneous Poems*.¹³¹ Mandeville was a cousin of the John Mandeville who later married Herbert's sister Sophy. Born in 1756, he was a lawyer and Justice of the Peace, who lived a short distance outside Carrick-on-Suir and he died there in 1801. *Miscellaneous Poems*, printed in Waterford by John Veacock, was published by subscription. Mandeville clearly knew the Herbert family well as between them they subscribed for twenty-four copies of the text. But evidence of the relationship goes much further than a willingness to sponsor the publication. Mandeville dedicated one of his poems to Herbert and acknowledges that it was inspired by her poem "The Villa." The poem has a descriptive if convoluted title, "To Miss

¹³¹ Edward M. Mandeville, *Miscellaneous Poems* (Waterford, 1798).

Herbert on Reading Her Villa: A Descriptive Poem In Which the Family Characters are Introduced Particularly Mr & Mrs Herbert.” The poem begins with praise of Herbert’s youthful attempts at “artless” verse. The praise is fulsome, but slightly patronising as befits an older, and already published male poet.¹³²

Domestic scenes your youthful muse inspire

And glowing nature trembles on your lyre

No labour’s groves wave in your artless verse

Or fancy’s joys your flowing lines rehearse.¹³³

In verse three he advises Herbert to be modest and to curb any ambition she might have to change her way of life.

To shape your morals to the wisest ends:

To check ambition in the rising tide,

And blend submission, with becoming pride.¹³⁴

¹³² Mandeville had published a poetic sequence in 1794: Edward M. Mandeville, *Anarchic Reform, or, Freedom in France* (Waterford, 1794). This is a 34-page reflection on the atrocities of the French Revolution. The only extant known copy is in The Russell Library in The National University of Ireland at Maynooth. We do not know if this was also published by subscription as only the main text is extant.

¹³³ Mandeville (1798), p. 126.

He concludes by wishing her fulfilment, which he defines in terms of marriage, children and domestic duties. The best she can aspire to is a child who will continue to sing of domestic bliss.

As home felt joys first bade your numbers flow,
With such like joys may your kind bosom glow!
May some fond child resume the mother's lyre
To sing the pleasures of the social fire.¹³⁵

While praising Herbert's artless gift as a poet, Mandeville wishes her children and domestic happiness, not success as a poet. However, despite the qualified nature of Mandeville's praise, it is significant that he acknowledges her verse as the inspiration of his own. He also 'borrows' without acknowledgment, the title and subject matter of another poem, "The Humours of Bunmahon."¹³⁶ Herbert's collection clearly predates Mandeville's, as his was published in 1798, and Herbert's appear to have been completed in 1793. It is interesting to note that Mandeville here emulates Herbert's earlier poems. Ironically he advises her to remain in the domestic sphere while he models the poetry he writes for publication on her domestic verse. Mandeville's patronising praise and advice reflects his belief that real poetry is the provenance of male writers. If women stray, his poem

¹³⁴ Mandeville (1798), p. 127.

¹³⁵ Mandeville (1798), p. 127.

¹³⁶ Mandeville (1798), p. 35.

suggests, by some chance into that realm, their poetry should not be in conflict with their natural role as wives and mothers and their subject matter should be “home felt joys.”

Robert Wyse Jackson opens his 1956 article on Herbert by describing how he has found Herbert’s “manuscript volume... after it had long lain hidden in a church tower – in the library under the Georgian spire of Waterford Cathedral” ¹³⁷ It is ironic that his romantic story of this found manuscript is succeeded by its disappearance for another fifty-three years. Wyse Jackson prefaces his remarks on Herbert’s poems by asking for the reader’s indulgence: “The twentieth-century critic must needs be kind, for the Preface appeals rather touchingly to posterity to be kind.” He sees Herbert as having written “only for her own pleasure.” Wyse Jackson may be mistaken here for it can be argued that Herbert, in asking for posterity to be kind, and in presenting her poems in such a finished way, does in fact anticipate a wide readership for her work, if not publication. We have also seen how her poems were circulated among her circle of family and friends. Wyse Jackson locates many of Herbert’s chief “literary influences.” Among them he lists Milton, Pope, Goldsmith and Gray. He singles out Herbert’s “The Parson’s Fireside” as “Dolly at her best” and compares her to Swift in “her power of sketching from the life.” He concludes by describing the collection as “a charming thing in its old-fashioned unsophisticated way.” ¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Wyse Jackson (1956), p. 9.

¹³⁸ Wyse Jackson (1956), p. 9.

The most recent response to Herbert's work is Finnegan's *Introspections: The Poetry and Private World of Dorothea Herbert*. The title of the text is an indication of the approach Finnegan takes to *Poetical Eccentricities* and Herbert's *Journal*. Her readings are biographical and her search for Herbert's interiority relentless. The main sources for her biographical readings are Herbert's three texts. She uses *Retrospections*, *Poetical Eccentricities* and the *Journal* as self-reflexive documents, each establishing the truth of the other two. This ignores the different genres to which each text belongs and the different time periods in which each was composed. Reading Herbert's *Journal* as a biographical source is understandable. However, reading *Poetical Eccentricities* in this way is difficult to understand. Perhaps this is explained, at least in part, by Finnegan's preface to the lamentably short bibliography supplied.

My own inclinations – as well as limitations - have kept the following bibliography relatively short, and steered me clear of intimidating concepts and pretentious jargon.

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Unlike Finnegan, Wyse Jackson treats *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity* as a literary text; it is after all a collection of poems, presented with many of the poetic conventions of the time. Had the reviewers of *Retrospections* been aware of this earlier text, their responses to it may well have been different, less based on her accurate recall of her life and more on the varied literary styles she employs to present her version of her life. To read Herbert's work as "vivid and artless" is one way

¹³⁹ Finnegan (2011), p. 330.

to approach a critical analysis of the manuscripts.¹⁴⁰ However, such an approach of necessity fails to take account of the deliberate artfulness of her writing.

The overarching question of this thesis is how best to understand Herbert's manuscripts. The reception histories of *Retrospections* and *Poetical Eccentricities* and Herbert's *Journal* highlight the number of reviewers and critics who have read her work primarily as a biographical source for the mining of her interiority or as an historical source for facts about life in eighteenth-century Ireland. In many ways this is understandable. When *Retrospections* was first published it was already over one hundred years old, so it was in itself an historic document with its own historical baggage. Also, as an autobiography it purports to be the history of one woman's life. Historical commentary dominates responses to the text to such an extent that even when commentators foreground the difficulties with reading the text as history, they side-step the obvious inaccuracies, minimise or excuse them and read it as history anyway. As we will see, Louis Cullen minimises Herbert's unreliability, and reads her work as "a vivid introduction to the society of south Tipperary" (*Ret.*, p. xxix). The Irish historian Leslie Clarkson apologises for Herbert's unreliability, but only after he has drawn on her account of life in Carrick-on-Suir in his essay on women's lives in the town in the late eighteenth century.¹⁴¹ The title of Barbara Hughes' monograph on the autobiographical writings of Dorothea Herbert and Mary Leadbeater, *Between History and Fiction*, suggests that Hughes will take a different approach to the work. However, this is not realised in the analysis of Herbert's writing

¹⁴⁰ Wyse Jackson (1956), p. 9.

¹⁴¹ Clarkson (1993), pp. 18-24.

that follows.¹⁴² She reads through obvious inaccuracies as though they were not there. Insisting that *Retrospections* is literature she none the less reads it as history. Finnegan manages to read through the manuscript in a similar way, searching through it to find clues to Herbert's interior life.

Liam Harte in *Modern Irish Autobiography: Self, Nation and Society* presents a collection of essays on what he describes in his introduction as Irish Literature's "Cinderella genre."¹⁴³ In an effort to rescue this "Cinderella" Harte makes the following claim for the collection.

This book aims to situate the recent outpouring of Irish autobiography in its many forms, and the various analysis of it, in a longer historical perspective, with a view to offering readers an entrée into what is a large and richly varied literary corpus.¹⁴⁴

His isolation of the "master trope" of Irish autobiography as "the symbolic refraction of the life of the individual through the lens of nation and society" would not seem to offer the reader of Herbert's writing a productive way of approaching her work. However, as we shall see, although she deliberately tries to ignore the world around her and focus on the domestic life of her family and friends, her tragic life story mirrors that of her class and nation. Herbert, it would seem

¹⁴² Hughes (2010).

¹⁴³ Liam Harte, ed. *Modern Irish Autobiography: Self, Nation and Society* (Hampshire, 2007).

¹⁴⁴ Harte (2007), pp. 2-3.

unintentionally, refracts the nation and society through the lens of her individual self-construction. In this her narrative strategy conforms to what Michael Kenneally describes as “the central structural metaphor of twentieth-century Irish autobiography.”¹⁴⁵ Although Herbert does not foreground this in her writing, her personal history as she reconstructs it echoes what Kenneally defines as “the tendency to explore and define one’s development with national destiny and to equate one’s development with national destiny.”¹⁴⁶ In Herbert’s writing it is not her development she defines but her disintegration. Harte isolates “Irish autobiographers’ sensitivity to the unstable, illusory nature of self-narration.” as one of the pervasive themes of the genre.¹⁴⁷ Such self-conscious analysis of the limitations of language to express individual identity is not obvious in *Retrospections*. However, it is clear that when in doubt about her own ability to communicate emotion or imagine her state of mind, Herbert relies not on her own language but on that of other writers. Her obsessive use of allusion should not be seen as decorative excess but as an effort to overcome her distrust of her own language. She does not, like later autobiographers, doubt language itself, just her own ability to use language rich and varied enough to express her meaning.

The major difficulty with reading Herbert’s work as an historical source is that there is so little corroborating evidence to support her writing. There are very few public records to fill in the details of her life and the public and domestic events she records. Family history, as we have seen, is

¹⁴⁵ Michael Kenneally, *Portraying the Self: Sean O’Casey and the Art of Autobiography* (Gerards Cross, 1988), pp. 111-123. See also “The Autobiographical Imagination and Irish literary Autobiography,” in *Critical Approaches to Anglo-Irish literature*, eds. M. Allen and A. Wilcox (Gerards Cross, 1989), pp. 123-154.

¹⁴⁶ Kenneally (1988), pp. 111-131.

¹⁴⁷ Harte (2007), p. 4.

anecdotal and patchy. There is also the problem that at the time of writing her *Journal* and *Retrospections* she may have been suffering from some form of mental illness. My search for public and family records, like my search for Herbert's manuscripts, has had some success but it is also a sad catalogue of loss and misplacement, well-intentioned safe-keeping, and subsequent loss and some minor misappropriations and poor record-keeping. The burning of the Customs House in Dublin in 1921 and an explosion and fire at the Four Courts in 1922, the two most important repositories of Irish state papers, has left us with major gaps in our public records.¹⁴⁸ Thus the earliest Irish Census to survive intact is from 1901 making it impossible to trace Herbert through these sources.

Some historical documents however do exist. In 1799 Major William Morton Pitt, a British army officer stationed in Carrick-on-Suir, and two local men Patrick Lynch and Patrick White compiled an unofficial census of the town.¹⁴⁹ To them we owe one of the few public records of Herbert's existence that have survived. The census is a detailed and sophisticated document for its time. Census headings give surname, first name, age, religion, married state and occupation. Reference

¹⁴⁸ The Irish Public Records office was housed in the Western Block of the Four Courts and it was here that an explosion took place in 1922. The ferocity of the explosion and the subsequent loss of almost all state papers was caused by the fact that this block was also used as an ammunition store.

¹⁴⁹ *Tables of the Population of the Town of Carrick-on-Suir, giving names, ages, occupations, etc. of the Inhabitants, taken in 1799*. London: British Library, Add. MS. 11,722, and Dublin: National Library of Ireland, Mfilm N. 619, p. 28. The original manuscript was acquired by the British Library from a London bookseller in 1843. There is a facsimile in the Heritage Centre in Carrick-on-Suir. A database of the Census was compiled in the 1980s but this has since been lost.

01280356 contains the details of the Herbert family. It gives the number of occupants in the Herbert household as 20, eight males and twelve females. There are eleven family members, all Protestant and nine servants, all Catholic. The ages of the family members are, Nicholas 70, Martha 60, Dorothea 30, Rev John Otway 28, Thomas 27, Frances 26, Matilda 24, Nicola Sophia 21, Nicholas 20.

The first of many problems facing the biographical reader of Herbert's writing is arriving at a correct date of birth. Herbert gives her date of birth as 1770. However, Louis Cullen suggests that she was born earlier than this. "According to the *Retrospections*, she first started to learn to write from Thomas Wimpe, the parish clerk, on 2 March 1772. This suggests incidentally that the genealogy may be in error in giving 1770 as the year of her birth and that she was probably one or perhaps two years older" (Ret., p. xiii). Barbara Hughes argues for a much earlier date and gives Herbert's possible date of birth as 1767.¹⁵⁰ Turning to the public records the Carrick census gives her age in 1799 as 30, suggesting that she was born in 1769. On the subject of age the three male compilers of the Census explain laconically that "many, and especially females, were desirous of representing themselves as younger than they were."¹⁵¹ If there is difficulty in arriving at an exact date for Herbert's birth, there is a complete lack of knowledge about her life between 31 December 1807, when her *Journal* ends, and 18 June 1829 when she dies. We know that the Villa, where the family lived was not church property, so it would have remained the family home when Herbert's father died in 1803. Herbert in fact tells us what happens to the property after her father's death. "Our little Abode being a Lay Possession, luckily offered us a Refuge – My Mother has it during her

¹⁵⁰ Barbara Hughes, "Negotiating Identities in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: The Autobiographical Writing of Mary Leadbeater and Dorothea Herbert." (Unpublished Thesis, University College Dublin 2003), p. 121.

¹⁵¹ *Census of Carrick-on-Suir* (1799).

Life" (Ret., p. 407). We also know that her mother died in 1808, but it is unknown where Herbert lived after that time. The public records tell us very little. There are fragments only remaining of the 1821 national census. However, the Herbert name does not appear in the Carrick-on-Suir lists in these fragments. The other public record of Carrick-on-Suir that could provide us with some information about the last years of Herbert's life is *Pigot's Provincial Directory of Ireland 1824*.¹⁵² This is one of the first commercial directories of Ireland. It contains details about the commercial activities of each town and lists the inhabitants under their trades. It also has a section entitled "Gentry and Clergy." Although many of Herbert's old neighbours are listed as still living in Carrick-on-Suir, among them the Coxes, Jephsons, and Walls, there are no Herberts listed as living in the town in 1824. However, Herbert's two sisters Martha and Sophie are listed as resident in the Villa in the 1841-2 Directory and Martha was resident there at the time of her death in 1854.¹⁵³

Burke's *Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland* makes no reference at all to Herbert.¹⁵⁴ The Herbert family entry is as follows: "Nicholas (Rev) m Hon Martha Cuffe, who died 1808." The entry lists the following issue, "John Otway, his heir: Thomas: Nicholas (Rev): Lucinda, m William Bradshaw: Sophia, m John Mandeville Esq, Anner Castle and three other daughters who died unnamed." ¹⁵⁵ The daughters the directory describes, somewhat oddly, as "unnamed" at the time of their deaths are Dorothea and her two unmarried sisters Matty and Fanny. Herbert and her sisters,

¹⁵² *Pigot's Provincial Directory of Ireland* (London, 1824).

¹⁵³ *Pigot's Provincial Directory of Ireland* (London, 1841-2).

¹⁵⁴ *Burke's Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1894), p. 940.

¹⁵⁵ *Burke's Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1894), p. 940.

unmarried and unknown when this record was compiled, do not appear by name. However, a century later, after the publication of *Retrospections* in 1929/30, *Burke's Irish Family Records* is more complete. Here, Herbert, with her new-found public status, merits several lines.

Dorothea, accomplished diarist, authoress of *The Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert* (in which she describes the family of her brother-in-law, John Mandeville, as 'a very ancient family in the neighbourhood, but had of late years dwindled to decay in every branch by Extravagance and Eccentricities. b. 1770 died 18 June 1829.¹⁵⁶

The parish registers for St Nicholas's Church, Carrick-on-Suir, where Herbert's birth and death should be recorded, are now missing. The church where Herbert's father was rector for over forty years, having remained in ruins for over a century, is now an attractively untidy Heritage Centre. The parish registers were removed to the RCBI (Representative Church Body Library of Ireland) when the church was no longer in use. However the RCBI has now no record of them other than a note in their files to say they are missing. That the registers were in existence in the recent past is clear. There is a copy of a page from one of the registers on file in the Heritage Centre. This page, which records the parish deaths for the year 1829, lists among others Herbert's death as having taken place on June 18th of that year. There is no note attached to this copy to suggest where it came from or when it was made.

¹⁵⁶ *Burke's Irish Family Records* (London, 1977), p. 587.

William Shaw Mason's *A Statistical Account or Parochial Survey of Ireland*, published in Dublin in 1816, provides some information on Carrick-on-Suir and the Herbert family.¹⁵⁷ The survey contains a chapter on Rev Nicholas Herbert's united parishes of Carrick, Kilmurry and Kilsheelan. Mason's description of the landscape notes that, "There are some trees at Lindville, and some at the entrance to the town at Mr Herbert's."¹⁵⁸ From the "First Fruits' Records" he tells us that Nicholas Herbert held the parishes from 10th September 1761 until his death.¹⁵⁹ Under "Eminent men" he does not note the Rev. Herbert or any of the Herbert family but he does record the poet Edward Mandeville.

A gentleman named Mandeville: a few years ago published a collection of his poems; his friends admired them, but they have not fallen within the observation of the writer of this account.¹⁶⁰

Local custom has it that Herbert is buried in the family plot in the graveyard adjoining the Heritage Centre. The Heritage Centre website and information leaflet also claim that she is buried there. However there is uncertainty about this. Just as the St Nicholas' Church fell into decay, so too did the graveyard. When it was restored gravestones were moved and some that had been erect were cemented into the walls or laid flat on the ground. There are two tombstones in the Herbert plot,

¹⁵⁷ William Shaw Mason, *A Statistical Account or Parochial Survey of Ireland* (Dublin, 1816).

¹⁵⁸ Mason (1816), p. 108.

¹⁵⁹ Mason (1816), p. 122.

¹⁶⁰ Mason (1816), p. 120.

one records the death of Otway Herbert in 1800 and his infant daughter Martha and the other the Herbert parents, Nicholas in 1803 and Martha in 1811(?). Dorothea's name does not appear on either of these tombstones or on any other surviving stones. However, the inscription on her parents' tombstone may be Dorothea's work, as it bears a strong resemblance to her rhetorical style and is very close to the image of her parents she creates in *Poetical Eccentricities* and the first section of *Retrospections*.

This excellent pair, upheld by God, enriched by faith and guided by Charity in primitive simplicity pursuing a strait steady course journeyed blameless thro life's intricate maze. Few were their failings, their good deeds many.

This stone is dutifully inscribed by their affectionate children but memory and sighs will ever record their value.¹⁶¹

Public records therefore tell us little about Herbert. In a letter to the *Clonmel Nationalist* on 6 August 1987 Tommy Cleary lamented the lack of local knowledge about Herbert.

¹⁶¹ Hugh Ryan and Michael Coady, *Gravestone Survey of St. Nicholas Church of Ireland Burial Ground*, 1983 (unpublished).

Of the last 23 years of her life, after she related the experience of being tortured and ostracized by her family, nothing appears to have been told. Where was she buried? That is but one of innumerable other questions which call for answers to fill in the hiatus.¹⁶²

The Mandeville Family Papers contain few details of these last, silent years of Herbert's life. A letter from Desmond Mandeville to a family friend on 18 February 1986 comments on the lack of family knowledge about Herbert.

It is tragic about Dolly H, that none of us knows what happened between the end of the diary + annex (1807) & her death in 1829. Even Uncle Monty's notes say nothing about this - although with "Young Nick" being his generation when he was a boy, you'd think he must have known a thing or two.... D.H. must have continued to live in or near Carrick one imagines, & there may be records still to be tapped there.... The most likely thing, I feel, is she lived on quietly, and just a little mad, in the house of her nephew Walter; or else with her sister, Mattie, who still lived thereabouts till 1854. A search of census returns might reveal the bare facts, but would say nothing of her state of mind.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Letter from T. Cleary, *Clonmel Nationalist*, 6 Aug. 1987.

¹⁶³ Desmond Mandeville, letter to "My Dear Lal." 18 Feb. 1986, MS of the Mandeville Family, Anner Castle.

His brother Maurice Mandeville adds the following information in 1987: “She had become so mentally disturbed that she was kept almost a prisoner by her family.”¹⁶⁴

Searching Herbert’s life-writing for historical accuracy is a revealing exercise. Louis Cullen dismisses her inaccuracies as the excusable slips of a young girl. However, the difficulty with reading Herbert in this way is not just that we have so few records to check her accuracy against but that what we do know of actual events is quite often at odds with her retelling of them. We very quickly realise that Herbert is not a writer of history, rather she manipulates the history and events that she does know to create her own version of events. The most obvious example of Herbert’s reworking of historical events for dramatic impact is her account in *Retrospections* of an infamous and much publicised abduction. Catherine and Anne Kennedy, aged fourteen and fifteen, were abducted from their home in Co. Waterford on 12 April 1779. Their abductors were captured, tried and sentenced to death by the then Attorney General John Scott, Lord Clonmell.¹⁶⁵ Herbert describes the sisters’ appearance at a Fête Champêtre in 1785.

Nothing could exceed the Elegance of the Entertainment, and there was no counting the Company – But the chief Heroines were two Miss Kennedys both newly married –

¹⁶⁴ Maurice Mandeville, letter to Tommy Cleary, 6th Aug. 1987, MS of the Mandeville Family, Anner Castle. As I have noted, the family knowledge about Herbert’s state of mind during the last years of her life is based on Herbert’s own writing and not on any other sources.

¹⁶⁵ For further details of the Kennedy abduction, see James Kelly “The Abduction of Women of fortune in Eighteenth-Century Ireland,” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 9 (1994), 31-32 and A.P.W. Malcomson, *The Pursuit of Heiress: Aristocratic Marriage in Ireland 1740-1840* (Belfast, 2006).

They were just come from the assizes of Waterford where they prosecuted to Conviction three Men who ran away with them a Month before from whom they were rescued by their present Bridegrooms – the Men were hanged and everyone was disgusted at the Ladies appearing so soon in Public after so horrid a business. (Ret., p. 112)

The substance of the account is correct; the Kennedy sisters were abducted, and their abductors were hanged. However, the abductions took place in 1779, not in 1785 and the executions took place in 1780, not in 1785, in Kilkenny, not in Waterford. Herbert heightens her dramatic account of the story by collapsing all the dates together and so making abductions, executions and marriages all take place around the time that she sees the Kennedy sisters in 1785. Maria Edgeworth in her introduction to *Castle Rackrent* warns the reader about the “literary talents” of the writers of biography like Herbert.

The merits of a biographer are inversely as the extent of his intellectual powers and of his literary talents. When we see that a man has the power, we may naturally suspect that he has the will to deceive us, and those who are used to literary manufacture know how much is sacrificed to the rounding of a period or the pointing an antithesis.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent* (London, 1964), pp. 2-3.

Here Edgeworth sums up almost exactly how Herbert “sacrifices” facts in favour of literary manufacture. As I have noted, Cullen comments that Herbert gets the facts of the Kennedy abduction wrong but excuses her on the grounds of age.

A girl around seventeen years like Dorothea may easily have assumed from the excitement around her, provided by the Kennedy girls’ presence, that the executions as well as the marriages had taken place in the immediate past, and that the place of sentence had been Waterford. (Ret., p. xv)

This is one explanation for the error, however, although Herbert may have been seventeen in 1785, she writes *Retrospections* much later when she is in her early thirties. Given Herbert’s literary skills and her desire to heighten the events of her life that we see elsewhere in the text, a more lightly explanation is the deliberate manipulation of events for dramatic effect.

Cullen makes a somewhat similar point about the nature of Herbert’s narrative of her life.

By describing in recollection the high points of the family’s social life, the *Retrospections* tend to underplay the simple or even humdrum character of much of the year. (Ret., p. xv)

Here he highlights another difficulty with reading Herbert’s life writing as history. No writer can tell every detail of their life experience, so they choose the events to best suit the shape of the story they wish to tell. Herbert, in her desire to dramatise her childhood, and later her failed romance,

manipulates events to create the versions of her life that she presents in the manuscript. An example of this is how Herbert's account disguises the real economic conditions of Carrick-on-Suir in the period. In his statistical analysis of the 1799 Census, Clarkson's summarises his findings on living conditions in Carrick-on-Suir in the late eighteenth century.

Poverty and urban overcrowding coupled with high prices for provisions in 1799 generated disease and death. All of the demographic variables calculated from the Carrick census are consistent with a community suffering acute economic and social distress.¹⁶⁷

Clarkson suggests that the decline begins in the 1780s and lasts well into the nineteenth century. Shaw Mason, in his *Statistical Survey*, describes the conditions in the overcrowded town as a breeding ground for disease. He uses as his authority Dr John Brisco "an active and intelligent physician."¹⁶⁸

Agues too occur here frequently, occasioned most probably by the miasma exhaled from the putrid stagnant pools of water, which are in general opposite to the doors of their inhabitants.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ L.A. Clarkson, "The Demography of Carrick-on-Suir 1799," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 87 C (1987), p. 33.

¹⁶⁸ Mason (1816), p.111.

¹⁶⁹ Mason (1816), p.112.

He also notes that “Of the 1432 houses of which the town of Carrick consists, sixty three are occupied by people licensed to sell spirits.”¹⁷⁰

Neither *Retrospections* nor Herbert’s *Journal* give any indication of the poverty-stricken environment in which the family home the Villa is situated. Her father’s Church, which she attends regularly, is located on the main street of the town making Herbert more than familiar with life in the centre where “putrid stagnant pools of water” abound. Herbert’s world is sweet-smelling and beautiful, an artist’s representation of a rural idyll. Her idealised description of Carrick and its surrounding countryside and her visual representation in her painting of the town are seen through the eyes of a romantic tourist, eyes that do not look down at the squalor but gaze with the sensibility of a writer and artist. She uses language of the Romantic sublime in her descriptions of landscape. This is a language that precludes descriptions of the poverty and squalor of the town. However, Herbert’s accounts of events are not always distorted. A telling example is her retelling of public and private events in 1789. This is the year of her love affair with John Roe and the one to which she devotes so much space in the narrative. During this year, at the time when she realises that all her hopes of a future with John Roe are lost, she describes a devastating storm. On first reading it seems an elaborate piece of pathetic fallacy where nature responds in striking harmony to the turmoil of her emotions. But, *Finn’s Leinster Journal*, the local paper the family reads, also records this storm. And the language of the paper is just as dramatic as Herbert’s own. On 3 October 1789 the paper reports, “Last Wednesday night there was the most violent storm ever remembered, in town several

¹⁷⁰ Mason (1816), p.107.

houses were unroofed.”¹⁷¹ Herbert’s account also tells of the family’s fears that the roof of their house will be blown off. One of the unsettling things for the reader as we begin to check Herbert’s accounts for accuracy is the control of fact and detail that *Retrospections* evidences on many occasions and on others the distortion and overblown descriptions of events. This element of control is a feature of all Herbert’s writings. The narrator is at times the lively and accurate chronicler of family and public events and at others, the sentimental and at times a deranged and sentimental woman of feeling. The difficulty is that unlike this instance of the storm, it is almost impossible to tell them apart.

Finn’s Leinster Journal is a very rich historical and biographical source for the study of Herbert’s life and writing. It is also a revealing text for authenticating Herbert’s accounts of events. Herbert tells us in great detail of the very unhappy marriages of her two sisters Sophy and Lucy. It is tempting to read her accounts as exaggerations that recompense her for her own unmarried state. The main reason she gives for William Bradshaw’s unsuitableness as a husband for Sophy is his repeated attempts to borrow money from the family. However we can trace some of his complicated financial affairs in *Finn’s Leinster Journal*. Bradshaw and Sophy were married in the summer of 1793. Later that year he placed an advertisement in the paper soliciting money, this was repeated on 28 December 1793 and again on 15 January, 1794. Another incident that we can trace through both *Retrospections* and *Finn’s Leinster Journal* is Maddy Herbert’s dispute with the Carrick Yeomanry. In 1790 Herbert records this event.

¹⁷¹ *Finn’s Leinster Journal*, 3 Oct. 1789, p. 1. In the early days of this research I travelled between Waterford, Kilkenny and Dublin in search of copies of the *Finn’s Leinster Journal*. Thankfully, an almost complete archive of the paper is now available and searchable on the web at the Irish Newspaper Archive.

About this time a terrible Fracas happen'd between this family and the Carrick Yeomanry. Matty heard that a meeting of the Rebels had taken place in Bunmahon – she heedlessly mention'd the fact that some of the Yeomen were amongst them. (Ret., p.270)

Herbert tells us that “a terrible paragraph appear'd against her in the next newspaper” and that Matty responded with “a superiority of Wit and reasoning” in the next edition (Ret., p. 270). The paper does in fact carry both letters, not in 1790, as Herbert indicates, but on 17 and 21 June 1797. This is not the end of the affair as Herbert goes on to describe in detail how the row escalates into horsewhipping among the men and the threat of four duels. She uses this family trouble to intensify her feelings of depression in 1790, the year following the failure of her relationship with John Roe. The incident is moved forward seven years for dramatic effect as we can see in Herbert's conclusion of the chapter.

Indeed the variety of Alarms, disasters, and frettings we had latterly undergone between the fever, the rebels and the yeomanry business rendered us all invalids, worn down with fatigue and constant fretting, and the plague of the heart in addition rendered me not the least miserable Object amongst them. (Ret., p. 275)

Checking Herbert's accuracy as to dates and happenings makes it clear that she does not fabricate events but that she manipulates and moves them to create her dramatic sense of the world she reconstructs from memory.

James Ryan's account of the years 1787 to 1808 in his *Carrickman's Diary* highlights another reason why reading Herbert as an historical source is a challenging enterprise.¹⁷² Ryan, the Carrick-on-Suir land surveyor, is obsessed with numbers and dates and, unlike Herbert, rarely gets them wrong. A direct contemporary of Herbert and living in the same small town, his record of life in Carrick-on-Suir is radically different to hers. Although, he records the deaths of Herbert's father and the tragic hunting accident that leads to her brother Otway's death, he makes no reference to Herbert. He is concerned with the life of the town; it is a life that we get no indication of in Herbert's writing. The beautiful rural idyll that she describes and paints is, according to Ryan's account, a bustling, squalid and at times riotous place where bull-baiting, cock-fighting and the use of the stocks are a regular feature of daily life. Herbert's world is a narrow one confined to her family, class and interior life. Her task is not to record everything, or to give an accurate representation of the world she lives in but to give her version of life seen through an unreliable and confused memory that colours the past. However, Herbert and Ryan do record some of the same public events, and again Herbert has elements of truth but dates are telescoped for effect. In August 1787, Ryan and two friends take a walk to see the newly erected Le Poer Tower on Clonegam Hill. Ryan, with his attention to detail, provides a copy of the inscription in his diary.

Erected in the Year 1785

By George Early of Tyrone

To His beloved Son

His Niece

¹⁷² James Ryan, *The Carrickman's Diary, 1787-1808*. MS Waterford: Waterford County Library.

And His Friend.¹⁷³

Herbert records in her account how the three young people die tragically, and how the monument is erected, not in 1785, but in 1778.

The three deaths happened within three weeks – They were all buried in Clonegam Church in one grave – 1778 – One very handsome monument commemorates this event. (Ret., pp. 91-92)

This routine checking shows Herbert's dates to be sometimes as much as a decade out. However just as you learn to distrust her dates she gives an accurate one. In the paragraph following the error of eight years, she records "1783 The Bank of Ireland was established." And she is correct.

Mark Bence Jones, in his *Life in an Irish Country House*, uses Herbert's account of her visit to Galway as a source for his description of Ardfry Castle. But he has to correct Herbert's account of the family.

As young Joseph's marriage to Lady Louisa took place about three years earlier, and Elizabeth's to Lord Erroll did not take place until more than two years later, one

¹⁷³ James Ryan, *Carrickman's Diary*, p. 147.

suspects that Dorothea's memory played her false regarding the reason for the gathering.¹⁷⁴

Like Cullen he makes excuses for Herbert's errors.

Though she may have associated it with young Joseph's marriage because his father-in-law, Lord Louth, was present, and she may have heard on that occasion that Lady Erroll was already casting eyes at Elizabeth, whom she describes as "a great beauty" and also a wit."¹⁷⁵

The true limitations of *Retrospections* as an historical source are highlighted most clearly when we turn to it to find corroborating evidence for the accuracy of other historical sources. For example the Mandeville papers have two photographs of family paintings, purporting to be John Roe and his wife Elizabeth Sharkey. There is now no way of verifying this as the original paintings are missing. However, in *Retrospections* Herbert does record seeing a painting of John Roe, but we get no details of the painting or who the artist was. Instead she uses the occasion to compare the painting unfavourably with the original. John Roe asks her whether she prefers him or his painting. Herbert, not interested in such historical facts as who painted the portrait, is thrown into confusion by the question. She can find no answer. "The Question made me blush violently, for what artist indeed could paint him so charmingly as he that Moment appear'd to the trembling, lost Dolly Herbert" (Ret., p. 334).

¹⁷⁴ Mark Bence Jones, *Life in an Irish Country House* (London, 1996), p. 25.

¹⁷⁵ Bence Jones (1996), p. 25

It might be supposed that Herbert would be a reliable source for details about attitudes to the Carrick census of 1799 and its chief complier Major Morton Pitt. She makes no mention of the census, although she employs some of its tabulating techniques in her construction of *Retrospections*. Major Morton Pitt is one of the officers of the Dorset Regiment, then stationed in Carrick. Many of the officers frequent the Herbert home and their surgeon, Doctor Henning nurses Herbert through one of her first mental breakdowns. However, the only mention she makes of Morton Pitt is a satiric comment on his wife: “Lady Major Pitt’s wife a dashing fashionable piece” (Ret., p. 373).

To highlight the difficulties that arise when using *Retrospections* as an historical source it is useful to look at an essay that does just that. Clarkson in “Love, Labour and Life: Women in Carrick-on-Suir in the late Eighteenth Century” uses three primary sources: The 1799 Census of Carrick-on-Suir, James Ryan’s *The Carrickman’s Diary* and Herbert’s *Retrospections*.¹⁷⁶ Clarkson argues that “the task of bringing Irish women out of the historical closet is well under way.”¹⁷⁷ He reads *Retrospections*, *The Carrickman’s Diary* and the 1799 Census as source material in the continuation of this project. His stated methodology is somewhat unconventional. He describes it as follows: “With the aid of a little statistical method and rather more imagination we can use these sources to recreate the life of

¹⁷⁶ L.A. Clarkson, “Love, Labour and Life: Women in Carrick-on-Suir in the Late Eighteenth Century.” *Irish Economic and Social History* xx (1993), 18-24.

¹⁷⁷ Clarkson (1993), p. 18.

women in Carrick at the end of the eighteenth century.”¹⁷⁸ He seems determined to highlight the tentativeness of his project. Explaining the title of his essay he states “The words Love, Labour and Life in the title have been chosen more for their alliterative quality than their analytical quality.”¹⁷⁹ The most interesting part of the essay and where Clarkson seems most at ease in his work is in the statistical analysis of the census. It is here that the value of the essay is apparent. His treatment of the two diaries however is anecdotal and casual, probably arising from his unease with both sources. He treats the census as the serious document and the diaries as anecdotal backup to his findings. Only in the final paragraphs of his essay does he make clear his unease with using *Retrospections* as a source.

Turning to the testimony of Dorothea herself, her *Retrospections* are the most direct of our sources bearing on the lives of women, but they are the most difficult to interpret. They were written years after the events she describes, possibly when she was mentally ill, and she was vague about dates. On the other hand she was an acute observer of social and personal relationships.¹⁸⁰

The justification for using *Retrospections* as a source is heavily outweighed by the reservations Clarkson clearly has. His conclusion almost negates any value it might have as an historical source. “Dorothea was revealing about life in Carrick but enigmatic about the turmoils of her own

¹⁷⁸ Clarkson (1993), p. 20

¹⁷⁹ Clarkson (1993), p. 20

¹⁸⁰ Clarkson (1993), p. 33

emotions.”¹⁸¹ The reader can admire the historian’s stated aim of “using old sources in new ways.” But what this essay highlights is the difficulty of using *Retrospections* as an historical source. It is useful to quote from; but then it has to be so heavily qualified with disclaimers that it becomes virtually a nuisance and a distraction. Herbert deliberately plays with facts for effect, thus making them too multivalent and opaque to be useful as either biographical or historical sources. Clarkson’s earlier essay “The Demography of Carrick-on-Suir 1799” is by comparison a formidably accomplished analysis of the 1799 census.¹⁸² In this analysis there are no unsettling diarists to be contended with, or to be excused for having used them in the first place. Michael Kenneally in his article “The Autobiographical Imagination and Irish Literary Autobiography” makes the same point in his assertion that “[a]n autobiography is much more an accurate reflection of contemporary awareness than a replication of past selves.”¹⁸³ He explains how “several reasons unique to Irish autobiography account for this insistent seeking after factual truth and historical reliability.” He singles out two factors that contribute to this. Firstly, most “literary self- portraits overlap in their reference to major political and social changes” in Ireland and secondly, “the biographical and historical approach is a product of conventional perceptions of the autobiographical mode.”¹⁸⁴

A literary self-portrait does not attempt a representation of quotidian reality with all its concrete details, objective historical facts and chronological sequences. Thus, interest is

¹⁸¹ Clarkson (1993), p. 33

¹⁸² L.A. Clarkson, “The Demography of Carrick-on-Suir 1799” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*. Vol. 87C (1987), 13-36.

¹⁸³ Kenneally (1989), p. 117.

¹⁸⁴ Kenneally (1989), p. 111.

evinced in factual and chronological exactitude only to the degree that it contextualises thoughts and emotions and allows clarification of awareness and consciousness.¹⁸⁵

Undoubtedly there are many memoirs and diaries that provide invaluable source material for the study of the past; particularly for social history. However, some are more useful than others. Take for example Herbert and Ryan, both living at the same time in the same place and both writing about that place and time. Ryan's facts, when checked against contemporary sources are unfailingly accurate, while Herbert's are almost invariably wrong. This does not make one good and the other bad, but demands vigilance in how they are read. For the reader of Herbert's life-writing, what is important is not whether what she remembers is true or not but the way she now sees her past self. As Laura Marcus reminds us, "the accuracy of recall is less important than the reconstruction of the past in the present of memory and/or of writing."¹⁸⁶ In his essay "The Style of Autobiography" Jean Starobinski makes a similar point: "What is of primary importance is not historical veracity but the emotion experienced as the past emerges and is represented in consciousness."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Kenneally (1989), p. 115.

¹⁸⁶ Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory-Criticism-Practice* (Manchester, 1994), pp. 195-196.

¹⁸⁷ Jean Starobinski, "The Style of Autobiography" in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton, 1980), p. 198.

Chapter Two

Herbert and Authorship: The Making and Unmaking of the Author

The making and unmaking of a carefully constructed “Authoress” is the story Herbert’s three manuscripts tell. Read chronologically the manuscripts reflect Herbert’s literary version of herself as a confident and accomplished author who is driven to insanity and silence by the desertion of her lover and the deaths of her father and brother. In the historical sequence of their composition the most sophisticated and polished manuscript, *Poetical Eccentricities* is completed around 1793, the less polished, but overtly literary *Retrospections*, between 1806 and 1809 and the apparently unmediated ravings of a mad woman that make up the *Journal* in 1807. Herbert’s three texts decline in both literary quality and material elegance as she grows older and her mental health, from the internal evidence of the texts, appears to decline. Thus the chronology of the manuscripts substantiates Herbert’s account of her deterioration. However, I will argue that Herbert’s “authoress” can equally be understood as a literary persona that she constructs and as evidence of her active participation in a world of literary forms. The differences between the manuscripts are not

only an indication of her decline into melancholia but of her understanding of form and her knowledge of the conventions of literary style, self-representation and the materiality of literary texts. Because of lack of documentary evidence we will never know whether Herbert's madness is assumed or real. What is evident is that in each of her manuscripts she adopts the idea of the lady writer and constructs her own subjectivity through that persona.

The focus of this chapter is on Herbert's self-fashioning as an author. The chapter begins with an analysis of her self-construction as a poet, as a memoirist and as a diarist in her three manuscripts. This is followed by a discussion of her writing practices. Herbert's understanding of what it means to be an author can best be seen, not by looking at what she says about herself, but at what her manuscripts say about her as an author. She makes herself as an author in *Poetical Eccentricities*, in *Retrospections* she first constructs and then deconstructs this carefully made image and shows, in the text and the visual images, the unmaking of the author, and in her *Journal* we see the author unmade. I will argue, however, that this self-projection of the destruction of the author is belied by the textual competence and material aspects of the manuscripts themselves. In the second part of this chapter I compare Herbert's writing practices with the life-writing practices of published and unpublished contemporary Irish writers. Comparing Herbert, as author, with other writers allows us to see if indeed her writing practices are atypical and unconventional or part of a much wider set of writing practices in the period. Reading this prolific, but relatively unknown, body of writing provides a context in which to read Herbert's unpublished manuscripts and it also provides a window onto life-writing practices in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Life-Writing and the Textual Construction of the “Authoress”

As poet, as autobiographer and as diarist, Herbert creates a literary life, one that is in direct contrast to conventional understandings of her life as a mad, weak-willed, spinster who records a true version of her tragic life and is then locked away by her family for her own protection. In this discussion of Herbert’s self-fashioning as author I read her three works, as I have said, as forms of life-writing. I use the term life-writing in the fluid and inclusive sense defined by Lee, Jolly and Lejeune. More specifically, because of Herbert’s foregrounding of the aesthetic in her writing, I read her three texts as forms of literary life-writing. I also acknowledge the influence of the stylistic conventions of the three genres in which she writes on her self-creation as “Authoress” in her writing.¹⁸⁸ For Lee one of the problems with writing biography is that it “can tend to sound too knowing and firm about the shape of the subject’s life, to make it read too smoothly, to be too selective.”¹⁸⁹ There is nothing knowing or firm about the shape of the life that emerges from Herbert’s life-writing. This is due, in part, to the three different genres she chooses, to the different times in which they are written and also to internal conflicts within the individual texts.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ For a more detailed discussion of life-writing see Introduction, pp. 9-11.

¹⁸⁹ Lee (2005), p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ For further theoretical discussion of life-writing see: Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice*. (Manchester, 1994); William J. Spengermann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Genre* (New Haven, 1980); Paul de Man “Autobiography as Defacement,” *Modern Language Notes*, 94, 5 (Dec. 1979), 919-930; Philippe Lejeune, *Memory and Narrative* (Chicago, 1998); James Olney ed., *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, 1980).

Thus, Herbert invents different versions of the authorial self. This is not unusual if we consider that each text is in part a product of the conventions of the genre to which it belongs. As Bruner and Weisser remind us: “What is especially interesting about autobiography is that we can tell or write our own autobiography in one mode or genre and later read or recall it in terms of another or several others.”¹⁹¹ If one of the main aims of autobiography is the attempt to relate or understand the past in terms of the author’s present state, then at different times in life she will produce different versions of the self. In 1793, when Herbert completes *Poetical Eccentricities* she shows no signs of mental instability; the persona presented in the text is controlled, articulate, in command of her material and an amused and distant observer of her life. In 1806, when *Retrospections* is completed, the persona revealed is far more complex; the version of the self who narrates the first section is similar to that already witnessed in *Poetical Eccentricities*, but this unified image fractures as the story progresses and breaks down completely by the end of the text. In the 1806/7 *Journal* the version of the self constructed is deranged and disorientated and seeks to rewrite the past selves constructed in the earlier texts in its own image. The versions of the self are a product of genre and of her state of mind at the time each text is written. Herbert’s passionate interest in literature and reading produce a writer who imagines her own life in terms of her literary heroines so that the “truth” of her life is much less important than her ability to picture her life in terms of the poetic language and literary plots with which she is familiar. However, I do not read Herbert’s work as a form of narrative fiction. The critic Paul John Eakin in *Living Autobiographically* suggests that when we read autobiographical texts what we encounter are not works of fiction but “the various registers of fact that come into play.”¹⁹² Herbert’s texts are literary but they have a basis in fact. There are, as

¹⁹¹ Jerome Bruner and Susan Weisser, “The Invention of the Self: Autobiography and its Forms” in David R. Olsen and Nancy Torrence, eds., *Literacy and Orality* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 131.

¹⁹² Paul John Eakin, *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative* (Ithaca, 2008), p. x.

Eakin suggests, and as we have seen, various registers of fact in all of her writing. I read her texts as versions of the facts of her life reflected through the lens of her reading and her desire to represent herself as an author and a woman of letters.

Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity: Herbert as poet

In *Poetical Eccentricities* Herbert presents herself as a young and confident poet. She playfully hides her autobiographical identity in the vagueness of the title and in the use of a thinly disguised pseudonym. Dorothy Strangeways, is a whimsical alter ego, in keeping with the anonymous title of the manuscript. The use of pseudonyms was a common practice among published authors in the period, particularly among women writers who wished to disguise or hide their identity. Gerard Genette suggests that pseudonyms reveal much more about an author than the desire for anonymity.

Use of a pseudonym unites a taste for masks and mirrors, for indirect exhibitionism, and for controlled histrionics with delight in invention, in borrowing, in verbal transformation, in onomastic fetishism. Clearly using a pseudonym is already somewhat like a work, if you can change your name you can write.¹⁹³

As Herbert's manuscript was circulated among a select coterie of family and friends, all would have known her to be the author. The title and the name she adopts would have been transparent

¹⁹³ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Trans., Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997), p. 54.

disguises, designed to evoke amusement and to entertain, not to keep her identity hidden.¹⁹⁴ In this she is exhibiting much of the “delight in invention” that Genette ascribes to the use of pseudonyms. We will witness the same play on words in her suggestion of multiple alternative titles for her poem “The Dunciad” and the use of the names “Dorothea Herbert”, “Dorothea Roe”, “An Outcast” and “The Authoress” to represent herself as the author of *Retrospections*.

Poetical Eccentricities is an elegantly structured volume of verse. It is the work of a practiced and confident poet, one who is aware of the conventions of subject matter, theme and technique, of verse form, line length, and rhyming scheme. The twenty-five poems in the collection are grouped according to theme, so they appear in a carefully-designed sequence. The principle of selection and order of the collection moves from the personal to the public and from private reflection to public utterance. Herbert is concerned to present, not just a collection of her poems, but a polished manuscript where poems are grouped according to theme, complexity and length. The material aspects of the manuscript are themselves artful and performative and play a part in Herbert’s self-fashioning as a poet. Herbert makes her poems and her manuscript in the image of well-known published collections of poetry from the period. Her poetry is founded on the practice of emulation; we see this in her use of paratext and allusion in their construction. Herbert’s emulative aesthetic is the subject of Chapter Three.

¹⁹⁴ “Strangeways” would have been very familiar to Herbert’s readers as it was the name of a famous eighteenth-century racehorse that was held at stud in Kilkenny. His services as a sire were advertised regularly in *Finn’s Leinster Journal* in the early 1790s.

The poems in *Poetical Eccentricities* are autobiographical in that they are based on Herbert's own experience of life and that of her family. Using the literary conventions of her time she transforms this raw material into poetic form. The first poem, "Preface," introduces the collection. It is a thinly veiled allegorical account of the poet's reluctance to have her work exposed to public view. This could be read as an expression of Herbert's insecurity as a poet. However, it is also a literary convention of the time, one employed by the texts on which the collection is modelled. In this conventional introductory apology Herbert characterises her poems as "harmless chat and simple Naivete" (P.E., p. ii).¹⁹⁵ However the six short lyrics that follow show her understanding of the major philosophical debates of the time. They are meditative reflections on life, particularly on the lives of women. The titles are "Virtue", "Religion", "Modesty", "Melancholy", "Sensibility" and "Solitude." Poems on women's issues follow. They begin with the aptly named "The Rights of Woman." Here Herbert takes her knowledge of Enlightenment debates, the French Revolution and the sexual politics of her day and uses them to compose an allegorical poem. It is at once light-hearted and clever and yet carries a serious social critique. "An Address to Old Maids" criticises contemporary attitudes to unmarried women in Herbert's Anglo-Irish society. Anticipating Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, the poet concludes that all the woman poet needs for contentment is, "A small neat chamber to herself, Well chosen books upon a shelf" (P.E., p. 46). "Epitaph for an Old Maid, Author of the Above" is a thirty-eight line parody on the poet's own virtues as an old maid. She is of blameless virtue, has little learning and delights in gossip. The self-parody constructs what the poet characterises as a "singular" and "whimsical" person. Although this self-portrait of the poet appears to be modest it is also distinctive and singular and shows a playful mind at work.

¹⁹⁵ Page references for *Poetical Eccentricities* are to the original manuscript.

There are six poems whose subject is family life. In these the poet is an onlooker, a tolerant, but amused observer of her own way of life. The poems create an engaging group portrait of the Herbert family and their friends and contain much colourful social detail. The six are: "The Breakfast Table," "The Parson's Fireside," "Miss Herbert's Last Will," "Sally's Complaint," "The Villa" and "Sea-side Ball or The Humours of Bunmahon." "The Parson's Fireside" is the most detailed of these poems. It is 226 lines long and draws a picture of the family's nightly activities, their petty squabbles and noisy games. "The Villa" is a more serious poem. Gone is the humorous depiction of chaotic family life. The tone here is elegiac and nostalgic. The most satiric of the poems of family life is the "Last Will and Testament of Dorothy Herbert Spinster." Supporting this ninety-line poem there are one hundred and fifteen closely-written lines of explanatory footnotes.¹⁹⁶ Here the poet uses the conceit of a will to paint a satirical picture of herself and her family. She uses her bequests as a way of making mild fun of her own and her parents' and siblings' petty foibles and defects of person and character. Each person in turn is left a character-revealing set of gifts.

The last group of poems are satires on public life. There are three poems in this group. "Bon Ton or the New Whole Duty of Man," "The Riddle" and "The Buckiad." "The Buckiad" is the most ambitious poem in the collection (P.E., pp. 115-145). It consists of 1120 lines of rhyming couplet and is divided into four books. The poem is a satire on the silly behaviour of young Irish men of fashion who are shown to be stupid and without any moral judgment. The "Buck" of the title is Herbert's Irish version of the English "Rake" made notorious earlier in the century by William Hogarth's series

¹⁹⁶ See Appendix One, Figs. 20-25 for a full copy of the poem. I discuss the use of footnotes in Herbert's manuscripts in Chapter Three.

of paintings *A Rake's Progress*.¹⁹⁷ In these last poems as in the whole collection, Herbert constructs a coherent poetic persona, one that has authority over her subject matter and maintains at all times an artistic distance from the material. The authority and distance so apparent in *Poetical Eccentricities* does not prepare the reader for *Retrospections of an Outcast*, where Herbert constructs two distinct narrators with varying degrees of control and remove from the life stories they tell.

Retrospections of an Outcast: The Textual Invention of the "Authoress"

Herbert describes *Retrospections of an Outcast* in the text as her "memoir" and in her *Journal* it becomes "my history." However, her claims for the referential intentions of the work and its apparent naiveté are deceptive. It is a highly mediated work with its roots firmly in eighteenth-century literary practice. Herbert's invention of herself as author is signalled in the first instance by the two title pages which establish her not just as the author of this text but of three other volumes of work (Appendix One, figs. 1 & 2). The first title page lists "The Works of Dorothea Herbert" and the second gives the title of the present work and again describes her as "Authoress of Various Plays,

¹⁹⁷ There are many similarities between William Hogarth's visual representation of Tom Rakewell's career and Herbert's poetic version of the Irish Buck. Hogarth's series of eight paintings, *A Rakes' Progress* (1733) was bought by the London architect Sir John Sloan in 1802 for 750 guineas. They are now in the Sloan Museum, No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

Poems and Novels.” *Retrospections* is presented therefore not as the memoir of an unknown writer but as one of the many works of a versatile and established author.¹⁹⁸

There are two distinct sections in the text and Herbert has used very different voices and literary styles to present each. The first section, which covers the period of her childhood and adolescence, is narrated by an amused and observant, but distant narrator. The second, which is dominated by the story of her romance with John Roe and the consequences of its failure, is told by a romantic and at times hysterical narrator who is intimately involved with and affected by the events narrated. Despite the fact that there is a substantial overlap in the time period covered by *Poetical Eccentricities* and *Retrospections*, there is a marked contrast between the confident poetic self of the 1793 poetry collection and the narrator of the second section of the 1806 memoir. Herbert’s love affair, which begins and effectively ends in the summer of 1789, is neither directly nor indirectly referred to in *Poetical Eccentricities*, which is not completed until four years after the events of that year. *Retrospections*, on the other hand, which is not written until 1806, gives a highly emotive and romantic version of her brief love affair. This illustrates the point made earlier that the construction of the past self depends as much if not more on the state of mind at the time of writing than it does on the actual events of the time recorded.

Herbert begins *Retrospections* in conventional form with a genealogy. Starting in 1739 she presents the history of her father’s and then her mother’s families. She foregrounds the importance of the Herbert family connections thus placing them at the heart of Protestant Anglo-Irish society. The first

¹⁹⁸ For a discussion of the title pages, see Chapter Three.

section of *Retrospections* gives a colourful, closely observed and humorous account of her childhood in the family home in Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary. It abounds with details of her desultory home schooling and the slightly more formal education of her seven siblings, anecdotes about the games and practical jokes they played and family visits to Dublin, Bristol, and Killarney. There are lengthy excursions to nearby Big Houses, Dundrum, Desert, Castle Blunden and Lord Waterford's estate at Curraghmore. She also describes the many family and friends who come to live with them when she is a child and the affect they have on the household. The life she describes is bustling and happy, money is plentiful and life is devoted to pleasure and entertaining. She records marriages, births and deaths of family and friends and neighbours. Their acquaintances are many but all belong to their own class. The household is large; as well as the eight children and parents there are many servants and visitors. According to the 1799 Census of Carrick-on-Suir there are nine servants living in the house.¹⁹⁹ Herbert tells how the family and many visiting friends and relations spend idyllic days in childish games and indulging their twin passions for reading and music. *Retrospections* presents a flattering portrait of the Anglo-Irish rural gentry. Herbert celebrates all of their positive qualities and rarely refers to any negative traits. Hospitality and generosity are two of the traits she regularly applauds. In an attempt to create an interesting and colourful depiction of her class and to indulge her own sense of the ridiculous she introduces the reader to many eccentric characters.²⁰⁰ Her cousin Ned Eyre is "one of the greatest oddities that Nature or Art ever produced" (Ret., p. 156). He dresses in fine silks, wears cosmetics and jewellery and leaves what money he has not squandered on finery and lottery tickets to his two large water spaniels, Lady Dapper and Miss Kitsy.

¹⁹⁹ *Tables of the Population of the town of Carrick-on-Suir*, p. 28.

²⁰⁰ Herbert's whimsical representation of her idiosyncratic relations and Bowen's characterisation of her ancestors in *Bowen's Court* are remarkably similar.

Before the dramatic reconstruction of the love affair with John Roe that dominates the second section of the text, Herbert's accounts of the marriages of her family and friends are presented with some envy but mostly with tolerant amusement. The society she depicts is characterised by a fever of marriages, elopements, arguments over settlements and arranged matches. These, in turn, are set in the context of many unhappy marriages, runaway brides and abductions. The fever to get married is conducted in a culture that is riddled with unhappy and failed marriages. Despite the very mixed fates awaiting girls in marriage and the obvious traumas of even happy marriages, Herbert shows us a society where it is the duty of every young girl to marry. She sums up this first section of *Retrospections* with details of the marriages of most of her young friends and the number of times she has been bridesmaid. "I may say that the Marriages of my old acquaintances fixd the first Epoc of my Life" (Ret., p. 141).

The second section of *Retrospections* is narrated by a romantic version of the author as the innocent victim of a faithless lover. The confident, observant and witty narrator of the first section is superseded by a new version of the self, as an innocent girl, who lacks knowledge of the world and who takes sensibility to extreme lengths. This new narrator tells the story of her love affair with John Roe. He enters her life in 1789, when the family spend their first summer in her father's new rectory in the most distant of his parishes, Knockgrafton.

My father was compelled to lay out a thousand pounds on building a new Glebe House at Knockgrafton within five miles of Cashel and twenty miles from Carrick, which being now

just compleated the Bishop compelled him to reside there three months in every Year. (Ret., p.172)²⁰¹

The Roe family are Protestant gentleman farmers who live three miles from Knockgrifton on their substantial family estate at Rockwell.²⁰² John Roe, like many fictional heroes, is spoken about and anticipated long before he is introduced in the text: “At length the formidable John Roe returned - I heard of him everywhere” (Ret., p. 185). The reader has also heard of John Roe as his name first appears on the opening page of *Retrospections*. From the moment he makes his appearance the tone and quality of the descriptions become idealised and romantic. The irony and humour that have characterised the earlier narrative are replaced by the attempt to give a romantic and self-justifying record of Herbert’s side of the affair.

I was immediately struck with his interesting Appearance, as he had something of a Melancholy Cast about him – His Features were very intelligent His Eyes pierced the Soul – His person was much taller than his brother’s – He was infinitely handsomer, but seemed very silent, distant, and reserved. (Ret., p. 185)

When first introduced John Roe is presented as a conventional romantic hero.

Never were sentiment, and Animation so sweetly blended in One person – The fire of his Eye, his expressive Countenance, the bewitching Sound of his Voice, impassioned the Heart, and forced the Mind to Admiration – Nature had moulded him as if she meant to give a Perfect Model of Elegance and Perfection, but the Character of Goodness in his Countenance was his most prominent Charm, Whether Grave or Gay every turn of his features bore the Stamp of Amiability – and indeed it was hard to say which Gravity or Gaiety most became him. (Ret., p. 189)

²⁰¹ There was much criticism in the country at the time of Church of Ireland clergymen like Herbert’s father who held multiple livings and did not reside in the parishes that were under their care and from which they derived their income.

²⁰² The Roe home and lands were purchased by the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1864; it has been run since that time as a boys’ boarding school, Rockwell College.

This is one of many similar passages in the text. Herbert creates this highly romanticised ideal, thus constantly reminding the reader of John Roe's perfections. Her descriptions of their meetings, the language and the settings are the stuff of the much criticised circulating library novels of the time.

My God what a happy Evening did I spend! So happy! So bewitching! Few evenings have I pass'd like it, and these only could be spent in the Company of John Roe, the dear beloved object on my Delight and transport, but Equally the Author of my Misery and Woe! I was now fully convinced that my Heart was gone irretrievably for Ever. (Ret., p. 208)

Herbert spends 92 pages of her 421-page text detailing and analysing her relationship with John Roe in the three months of summer the family spend at Knockgraston in 1789. It is the quality of her love and of the love object that she attempts to capture in her writing. The greater her love and the more perfect and worthy the object of that love, the more exalted her tragedy, hence the reiteration of John Roe's perfections and the superhuman quality of her love for him: "Cupid God of Love never appeared half so charming as John Roe, nor ever knew so well how to manage the 'belle passion.'" (Ret., p. 247)

Herbert's self-fashioning as the romantic heroine of her own text is dependent not alone on the heightening of the intensity surrounding her one love affair but on the exclusion of many historical events. In *Rootprints*, Hélène Cixous makes just this point: "All biographies like all autobiographies like all narratives tell one story in place of another."²⁰³ To foreground the tragedy of her love affair Herbert employs many literary allusions to tragic love stories and thus represents her life in terms of literary heroines and their experiences. To make her personal tragedy more important than the

²⁰³ Hélène Cixous & Mireille Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints: Memory & Life Writing*, trans. Eric Prendwitz (London, 1997), p. 177.

tragedy of the violent times in which it takes place Herbert suppresses the public events of the time, or consigns them to a minor role in her narrative. Her account of her busy and happy childhood and teenage years in the parsonage in Carrick-on-Suir and her romantic version of her story of unrequited love are set against the background of violent social unrest. Her father as a Church of Ireland clergyman draws his income of eighteen hundred pounds a year in tithes. These were taxes imposed on the Catholic tenant farmers in his parishes. At each gathering-in of the tithes there are violent altercations. Herbert refers to these as the “Tythe business” and records several parish rebellions. They take place frequently from 1774 until 1798. The most violent event she records is the death of her father’s proctor and his wife in an attack on the parsonage in Knockgrafton in 1798.

Herbert does not make any connection between these events and her growing mental instability. The intention is to present herself as the victim of lost love; however it is significant that she records her first serious mental breakdown in 1798, the year of the rebellion, and a decade after John Roe’s defection.

In the Spring of this Year I was attack’d with one of the most frightful Nervous fevers that any mortal ever got over – brought on entirely by Grief and Despondency of mind – At the first onset I was taken with a violent fit of Screeching and continued that way for some Hours, from that I fell to singing Psalms .. But I soon sank entirely and remember I felt as if Soul and Body were sinking for ever and ever in some bottomless Abyss. (Ret., p. 370-371)

This is the first of many such periods of mental illness that she describes. Despite the intention to present herself as the victim of unrequited love the chronology of her deterioration tells a different story. Her own tragic history mirrors that of the nation and of her own class. Unknowingly it appears, Herbert constructs her history as a mirror of the political events of the end of the eighteenth century. The Act of Union in 1800 shifted the political and social power base from Dublin to London

and began the slow and painful demise of the Anglo-Irish as the governing class in Ireland. Herbert can be seen as an emblematic figure of that decline.²⁰⁴ The Cork doctor William Saunders Hallaran in his *Practical Observations on the Causes and Cure of Insanity*, published in Cork in 1810, listed “Terror from the Rebellion” as a major cause of insanity among the male and female patients in his private asylum between 1789 and 1818.²⁰⁵ Herbert recounts how one of her Herbert cousins “Peggy, a beautiful Girl died unmarried of fright in the late Rebellion 1799” (Ret., p. 21). However, she does not comment on the parallels between her own situation and that of her class and nation; on the contrary she suggests that the public affairs of the nation are secondary to her own private concerns.

The Year 1783 was rendered remarkable by the Declaration of Independence to the Irish Parliament and the fall of Fishamble Street Hall by which great numbers lost their lives – but what signaled it most fatally in our domestic Circle was the Death of poor Mrs Carshore. (Ret., p. 90)

It is the foregrounding of a romantic version of her own tragedy, the suppression of the public chaos and the reliance on other writers in the construction of *Retrospections* that makes it both a very literary text and a very unreliable biographical and historical source. Herbert constructs herself as author in the first section of *Retrospections*, the second section charts her destruction and she closes her text, it would seem prematurely, in fear of not being able to complete it. “Some years of my life

²⁰⁴ It is this decline that becomes the subject of the Irish Big House novels of Maria Edgeworth, Edith Somerville and Martin Ross, Elizabeth Bowen and Molly Keane.

²⁰⁵ William Saunders Hallaran, *Practical Observations on the Causes and Cure of Insanity* (Cork, 1810) np. For a discussion of Hallaran’s work, see Elizabeth Malcolm, “Women and Madness in Ireland, 1600-1850” in Margaret MacCurtain and Mary O’Dowd, eds., *Women in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1991), pp. 318-334.

remain undetailed but I finish at the year 1806 anxious to finish my Work though my chief solace in solitude" (Ret., p. 420). *Retrospections* concludes on this seemingly anxious note.

The Visual Invention and Destruction of the "Authoress" in *Retrospections*

Herbert's thirteen watercolours make visible the narrative that dominates all others in *Retrospections*, that is the making and unmaking of the author. The most revealing in terms of Herbert's construction of herself as an author are the first two images. The "Frontispiece" (Appendix One, fig. 3), the first illustration in the text, depicts the figure of a male muse who invites the reader into the world of *Retrospections*. As a muse figure he is authoritative and enabling in aspect. This image is in keeping with Herbert's textual representation of the "learned ecclesiastics" who provide the model on which she fashions herself as an author. The monk's dress and tonsure and the subtitle of the image "The Outcast" also evoke the figure of Abelard, the literary figure whose story of lost love plays such a major role in Herbert's textual representation of her love story.²⁰⁶ Herbert's use of the term "Outcast" to describe both this muse figure and her own persona as author of the text conflates the image of muse and author into an interestingly complex figure. This suggests that Herbert knowingly or unknowingly constructs herself as her own muse, in this instance imagined as a composite figure of authoritative teacher, guide, love object and well-known tragic literary figure. The second image, "The Authoresses Picture" (Appendix One, fig. 4), is the first of three self-portraits that stage the history of the authoress. In this watercolour Herbert presents herself visually as the author of the text. Seated at a table with an open book and inkstand she gazes out confidently at the reader. The authoress is captured in the act of composition with her left hand on the open book and

²⁰⁶ I discuss the importance of Pope's poem *Eloisa to Abelard* in Herbert's self-construction in Chapter Three.

a quill in her right hand. The image establishes her credibility as the author of the text and her authority over its contents. Her social standing as an Anglo-Irish lady is captured in her elaborate attire and elegant surroundings while her role as author of the text is established by her poise and composure and the symbols of her craft, writing desk, book, quill and inkstand. She is thus placed visually and symbolically as both a Lady and a woman of letters. There is a balance here between these two aspects of Herbert's career that does not exist in the text and is challenged by the two later self-portraits. In contrast to this realistic depiction, the caption under the portrait identifying the authoress as "Dorothea Herbert Roe" undermines the confident figuring of the authoress. John Roe's story and his name come to dominate the author's self-construction in the early parts of the text and his desertion is presented as the major cause of her destruction as a woman of letters in the closing chapters.

The confident authoress constructed in the first two images is challenged by three further images placed in the closing chapters of the manuscript. "The Lone Wanderer" (Appendix One, fig. 10), "A Farewell Piece" (Appendix One, fig. 12) and "The Mourning Muse" (Appendix One, fig. 15) tell the story of the unmaking of the author. Herbert represents the disintegration of the authoress visually in "The Lone Wanderer." No longer seated industriously at her writing desk, the author is figured wandering aimlessly in a barren landscape with a closed book under her arm. The confident woman of letters is replaced by a lonely and isolated figure. "A Farewell Piece" (Appendix One, fig. 12) takes the decline of the author one step further by placing her in a surreal landscape. Incapable of activity the reclining image is bathed in heavenly light and surrounded by images of approaching death. A male figure guided by a winged angel gazes down from the sky and illuminates the figure. This image, the last one in colour, anticipates the two graveyard scenes that follow in the text. The final illustration in the text "The Mourning Muse" is a black and white image of a female muse. Unlike the

colourful and confident male muse depicted in the frontispiece, this figure, with head downcast and sorrowful attitude, signals the death of inspiration and the closing of the visual narrative of the author's unmaking. The setting is barren suggesting that without the inspiration of the muse the author is no longer capable of writing. It is a very powerful closing image, both poignant and final.²⁰⁷

Herbert's *Journal*, 31st July 1806 – 31st December 1807: Herbert as Diarist

In *Retrospections* Herbert creates a finished narrative of her life. What Philippe Lejeune describes as the "rituals of closure" are fully realised in Herbert's final image "The Mourning Muse" and in the closing paragraph of the text: "Here I conclude my History a long and Arduous Task." (Ret., p. 420).²⁰⁸ Her *Journal* on the other hand is a record of her day-to-day activities as they happen. As a consequence it appears to be the least mediated of her texts. Herbert has not written verse or moulded her experience into a literary memoir, or presented it as a published book. The image of the author Herbert creates in the *Journal* is the embodiment of the unmade woman of letters. Seemingly no longer capable of reading or of writing a literary text the author recounts the events of her life. The daily entries over the two years are an account of a miserable existence. She gives repeated evidence of incarceration, of ill treatment at the hands of her mother, brothers and sisters, even of violence. She protests that she is often in fear of her life and gives several instances of attempted escape: "My good family have left off even the show of a decent behaviour to me" (J., 3

²⁰⁷ I discuss the visual and literary sources that inspire Herbert's watercolours in Chapter Three.

²⁰⁸ Philippe Lejeune, *On Diary*, eds. Jeremy D. Popkin and Julie Rak (Honolulu, 2009), p. 189.

Sept 1806).²⁰⁹ The accusations increase as the daily entries progress: “It is astonishing with what ease and facility they execute the most savage and atrocious barbarities on the heads of their victims. How could I have been so blind to their practices?” (J., 27 Sept 1806). Her fear of her family comes to dominate most entries for the rest of the *Journal*.

However, despite what appears to be the repetitive and random nature of the entries the events are staged in a series of dramatic tableaux. Her description of her attempt to post a petition to the Chancellor is dramatised in vivid detail.

After roaring some time I at last got to an open window and roared out for assistance from the passengers when my sister Matty came behind, violently dragged me off the window seat and laid me sprawling and panting for breath on the broad of my back. I thought I was dying so much was I exhausted by their violence. The amiable female then nailed down every window especially those of my poor solitary apartment so that I felt quite lost for want of air. (J. 13 Oct 1806)

This is a dramatic staging of the event told with skill and control by a writer who professes to be distracted to the point of madness but whose language remains poised and sane. The former mild irony with which she treated her family is replaced by savage satire in the retelling of this incident.

The language in the *Journal* appears to be much less literary than that of *Poetical Eccentricities* or *Retrospections*. Gone are all pretensions to gentility, sensibility and politeness. They are replaced by a sometimes savage wit and many vulgarities. “Sluts,” “tarts” “strumpets,” even “whore” become

²⁰⁹ Herbert’s *Journal* is not paginated so references are to dates of entries in manuscript.

common ways to describe her mother, sisters and their friends. Her record of her behaviour and her language also appear irrational and vulgar. There are no direct literary allusions, no quotations from the great poets in the *Journal*. It appears to be an unvarnished, harsh and often paranoid account of a mind in great distress. However, her madness is conveyed through an obsessive rationale. Over the two-year period the *Journal* entries remain consistent in tone and style and the *Journal* is faithfully kept each day. The events of her life are staged with a view to maximum dramatic effect so that even when the events described are grotesque the writing remains articulate and controlled. There are many other literary works in which madness is depicted and many examples of women who have been driven mad by the circumstances of their lives in the literature with which she is familiar.

Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* and Wollstonecraft's *Mary and Maria* all show signs of mental instability that they articulate in the aftermath of great stress. The author constructed in the *Journal* again highlights one of the central ambiguities that trouble Herbert's texts: the conflict between the rational author who narrates her own decline and the insane woman in the text. We have no way of knowing how in control Herbert is in her writing. Thus her creation of literary personae may or may not have been intentional but for the reader they create this effect.

One of the main challenges of reading Herbert's three manuscripts is that they are all forms of life-writing. They are presented as such, and like all life-writing they carry the expectation that the reader will believe that they are an accurate and truthful representation of the life of the author. The reader's expectations of the truth-telling of the *Journal* are much higher than for the other two texts where Herbert deliberately foregrounds her concern with the aesthetic qualities of the writing. In her *Journal* Herbert constructs a literary mad woman. We have seen her ability to create many different narrators in *Poetical Eccentricities* and *Retrospections*. She is also capable of constructing, knowingly or unknowingly, a literary madwoman. As her last known work to have survived, the

Journal confirms and seals Herbert's literary version of the death of the author foreshadowed by the image of the "Mourning Muse" at the end of *Retrospections*.

The Material Practices of Writing

"Nothing could exceed my agony, I write with this pen stuck between two of my fingers." (J, 25 Dec. 1807)

Herbert concludes the *Retrospections* manuscript by placing herself at the time of writing in the narrow confines of her attic bedroom where she claims she is kept prisoner by her estranged family. "Here I conclude my History a long and Arduous Task Plann'd and Accomplish'd in my Melancholy Confinement" (Ret., p. 420). She increases the dramatic impact of this statement by adding, "I have accomplishd four large Volume(s) with Plates in my Prison viz Poems, Plays, Novels and these Retrospections - they are the only Amusements I had and I flatter myself are not uninteresting" (Ret., pp. 420-421). Just as the confident "Authoresses Picture" presides over the visual representation of Herbert as author at the beginning of the text and is maintained until her unmaking is registered by the final image of the "The Mourning Muse", so too the textual representation of the confident woman of letters is sustained until the closing pages of the manuscript. This paralleling of the visual and textual construction and final destruction of the authoress increases the dramatic impact of the disclosures that Herbert makes in the closing pages of the manuscript. This deliberate concealment, or withholding of important information in order to

produce a climactic ending, shows the author at work purposefully shaping her life story into literary form.

Emulating the writing conventions of the time Herbert figures herself as a writer who depends for inspiration on a powerful muse. She creates this visually in the images of “The Outcast” who inspires her career and “The Mourning Muse” who prefigures her loss of inspiration at the end of *Retrospections*. She continues this conceit by representing herself as a muse poet in her description of the writing of her poems. Herbert also foregrounds the romantic image of the author who writes in melancholy isolation. She describes her writing as her “only amusement” and her “principle solace” in the “melancholy confinement” of her “prison.” She articulates the therapeutic possibilities of writing in the following extract.

My Heart was so convulsed with Sorrow and with having no other way of venting my internal conflicts I composed the following Poem in my Melancholy Saunters and felt some Relief in thus giving loose to my Despair. (Ret., p. 345)

Herbert’s *Journal* gives almost daily accounts of her writing practices. By 1806 she claims that as she is no longer capable of reading she devotes all of her time to writing. As author she depicts herself as constantly retreating to her room: “I thought it more prudent to stay at Work in my Room.” “Day spent as usual I writing in my room” (J., 11 Aug 1806). None of the writing she records doing at this time has survived, however she represents herself as an active and dedicated author of literary texts. The following *Journal* entries give some idea of her productivity at this time. Friday 10 October 1806, “Now and then I write a Poem or Draw a trifling picture – and thus contrive to pass My Solitary Hours when my head & health permit in a something like former felicity or rather

tranquillity;" Wed 12 November 1806, "Finished a little Opera Entitled May Day – I find some relief when I can think of anything but my misfortunes and My barbarous family;" 1 October 1807, "I have just finished a little play calld the Noble Robbers in Blank Verse, and five very elegant little pictures in Water colours." On the same day she records, "If I had Life before me now I should do great things that way – I have no other inducement to live." Her productivity is represented as heroic as it is produced in the bleakest of circumstances, thus reinforcing the image of the author as a romantic and misunderstood figure, whose potential is blighted by the circumstances in which she lives. On 25 December 1807 she records the painful task of writing with an injured hand.

Had like to die last night with a disorder in my (Head) and all over me brought on by the dreadful Pain in my thumb from the Whitloe – got up several times thinking I was dying – Nothing could exceed my Agony I write this with the Pen stuck between two of my fingers.

On the following 29 December she records "I was forced to send for Mr Barker to Lance my thumb it grew so alarming and now write without pain."

The last entry in the *Journal* is dated Thurs 31 December 1807. This would suggest that Herbert was consciously ending her *Journal* on the last day of the year and thus presenting a conventional ending to the text. Family history suggests however that much of the *Journal* was destroyed and the neat ending thus a result of later hands and not Herbert's work. This is supported by the contents of the entry itself which opens and closes with comments on the weather. "A very stormy wet day... Spent this day mostly below on account of the Storm blowing into my Room." There is no sense of an ending in the entry itself, no attempt to conclude or to comment on events. The truncated *Journal* is material corroboration of the image of the ambitious writer suspended in the very act of writing that Herbert creates in one of the final entries, "If I had life before me I could do great things" (J., 1 Oct 1807).

Herbert's Life-Writing in Context

I have argued that Herbert's three texts are forms of life-writing but that in each she deliberately figures herself as an author and presents her life in the form of literary texts. How unusual is this and how unique is Herbert? This next section looks at the life-writing practices of Herbert's contemporaries and compares them to her self-fashioning as an author. For the purposes of this discussion I have divided the diarists into three categories. The first contains those who keep their journals as private documents, who show no pretensions to the status of author and who are concerned primarily to record their lives in a manner that focuses on content rather than on style. The second are those diarists who do not publish their journals but who nonetheless see them as more than a record of the events in their lives and who fashion them into finished pieces of writing, often illustrating them with quotations and images and presenting them in bound texts, that resemble published books of the period. The third category contains the writers who turn their life-writing into published memoirs.

One thing that has emerged from my research is the surprising number of people in Herbert's immediate circle and in the wider community who kept diaries, journals and memorandum books. One of the difficulties with surveying this field is locating the diaries. No systematic cataloguing of this material has been carried out in Ireland to date. This is not surprising as the tracing of unpublished diaries, particularly as far back as the eighteenth century, is fraught with difficulty. Some preliminary work has been carried out on the critical analysis of well-known Irish autobiography but not on the cataloguing or reading of the diaries of ordinary people. Elizabeth

Grubgeld's *Anglo-Irish Autobiography: Class, Gender, and the Forms of Narrative*, Liam Harte's *Modern Irish Autobiography: Self, Nation and Society* and Claire Lynch's *Irish Autobiography: Stories of Self in the Narrative of a Nation* are recent examples of such work.²¹⁰ Melosina Lenox-Conyngham in *Diaries of Ireland, An Anthology 1590-1989* represents a valuable beginning to the task of locating the diaries of ordinary people.²¹¹ Other extremely useful projects have been carried out in recent years. Among these are the 1999 Women's History Project and its publication *A Directory of Sources for Women's History in Ireland*, the Munster Women Writers' Project and its publication *The Dictionary of Munster Women Writers 1800-2000* and Rolf and Magda Loeber's *A Guide to Irish Fiction, 1650-1900*.²¹² Irish historians have also written extensively on diarists who record their reactions to major historical events in particular those concerning the Irish rebellion of 1798. Philippe Lejeune who has spearheaded research on the location and discussion of the diaries of ordinary people in France links the development of the diary with the introduction of calendars, account books and memorandums.²¹³ In his essay "The 'Journal de Jeune Fille' in Nineteenth-Century France" he states that diary-keeping was "a collective writing adventure" among young women which began as early as the 1780s.²¹⁴ He also points out the difficulties he encountered when carrying out his research: "Obtaining diaries depends on two factors: the preservation of the

²¹⁰ Elizabeth Grubgeld, *Anglo-Irish Autobiography: Class, Gender and Narrative* (Syracuse, 2004); Liam Harte, ed., *Modern Irish Autobiography: Self: Nation and Society* (Basingstoke, 2007); Claire Lynch, *Irish Autobiography: Stories of Self in the Narrative of a Nation* (Oxford, 2009).

²¹¹ Melosina Lenox-Conyngham, *Diaries of Ireland, An Anthology, 1590-1989* (Dublin, 1998).

²¹² Maria Luddy, C. Cox & L. Lane, eds., *A Directory of Sources for Women's History in Ireland* (Dublin, 1999), published as a CD-Rom, also available on web; Tina O'Toole, ed., *The Dictionary of Munster Women Writers* (Cork, 2005) also available on the web; Ralph Loeber, Magda Lober with Anne Mullin Burnham, eds., *A Guide to Irish Fiction, 1650-1900* (Dublin, 2011)

²¹³ Lejeune (2009), p. 134.

²¹⁴ Lejeune (2009), p. 134.

documents themselves, and the knowledge and communication of their existence.” His research uncovered one hundred diaries “buried in the Bibliothèque Nationale and in family archives.”²¹⁵ Lejeune suggests that many more exist but remain hidden or have now been permanently lost. “The common practice in the late eighteenth century was the destruction of such documents. The diaries were lost or destroyed by the diarists themselves, or burned at their death or on the occasion of later inheritance transactions.”²¹⁶ One reason that Lejeune’s work on diaries is particularly useful as a way of thinking about Herbert’s life-writing is that he is not interested in the stories the diarists tell but in the rhetorical strategies the writers use to make sense of the events of their lives.

The following discussion of the diaries I have discovered to date shows the richness of this textual culture in Ireland in the period and places Herbert’s life-writing in its contemporary context. As we will see, the purposefulness and dedication with which many of these diaries were kept suggest how important this form of writing was in the period. The keeping of a journal would not have seemed at all unusual to Herbert as she is not the only author in the quiet rectory in Carrick-on-Suir or in her immediate family circle. Her younger sister Maddy keeps a journal as does her cousin and childhood playmate William Blunden. In her poem “The Parson’s Fireside” Herbert describes how important her journal is to Maddy. “Her Journal books and Harpsichord / A sure relief to her afford” (P.E., p. 53). When consigning her worldly goods to her family in her poem “Last Will and Testament of Dorothea Herbert Spinster” Herbert bequeaths her books to Maddy. A footnote explains the reasons behind this bequest.

²¹⁵ Lejeune (2009), p. 134.

²¹⁶ Lejeune (2009), p. 135.

She was much like our Author in disposition especially in being a great Book Worm. She also like our Author was forever writing tho' no one has ever been permitted to see her productions. The only thing yet to come to light is her having an exact and well-written Journal of every Incident in the Villa family. (P.E., p. 53)

Unfortunately neither Herbert's books nor Maddy Herbert's *Journal* have survived. However, although the original manuscript of William Blunden's *Journal* is now missing there is a microfilm copy in the National Library of Ireland.²¹⁷ In *Retrospections* Herbert paints a vivid picture of Blunden as a studious boy who retreats from all social gatherings to read and write in the schoolroom in Castle Blunden: "William was entirely devoted to his Books, and Was training himself to become a Farmer" (Ret., p.107). Although the rest of the family disapprove of his behaviour, "[e]veryone strove to detach William from his Books," Herbert aligns herself with his studious ways rather than with the rest of the family: "As we were the two Modest ones of the family We felt equally Awkward" (Ret., p.108). Blunden's Diary is a daily record of his farming methods, of planting and harvesting and the cultivation of exotic fruit and vegetables such as cucumbers, grapes, plums, broccoli and red cabbage. As an experimental and adventurous farmer he is interested in facts and figures and the success and productivity of his farming methods. There are no pretensions to authorship, no embellishments and no references to reading or other literary pursuits. There are few references to family events and although he records spending Sundays in his study he gives no details of its contents or the activities he carries out there.

²¹⁷ The original manuscript of William Blunden's Diary was in the Blunden family papers in Castle Blunden. In my lengthy correspondence with Lady Pamela Blunden, the present owner, she revealed that the family papers had been packed away during the renovation of the Castle. In her own words "They are (I hope) safely in a box which is heaven knows where!" Letter from Lady Pamela Blunden to Mary Breen, 1 Feb. 2010. Microfilm: William Blunden, *Diary of William Blunden*. 1789-1798. MS n. 3618, p. 3236 (Dublin: National Library of Ireland).

In 1789 Herbert describes an excursion her family and the Roes make to Dundrum House, the seat of Lord de Montalt (Ret., p. 239-242). Their friend Samuel Cooper, a local landlord and land agent was then living on the estate. Cooper was also a diarist. He began keeping a diary in 1782 and continued for most years until 1823.²¹⁸ Unfortunately no diary exists for the year 1789 when Herbert recalls her visit to his house. Cooper's diaries are rich in detail particularly of his travels in Ireland and England. He visits England at least once a year and travels extensively in Ireland in association with his work as a land agent. In 1785 he records "This year travelled 2,290 (miles), besides by sea 250 miles, 2,540 miles"²¹⁹ Given the state of the Irish roads in the eighteenth century, one of the journeys he undertook in this year gives an idea of his stamina. "Dublin to Kilkenny to Cashel to Dundrum. Local journeys. Dundrum to Fermoy to Cork to Bearhaven to Dursey Island"²²⁰ Cooper does not see himself as an author or writer; his diaries are daily accounts of his activities, his travels, the people he meets and the sights he sees. There is one striking resemblance between his writing and Herbert's. Despite the violent times in which they live and the threat it represents for the Anglo-Irish, Herbert downplays the importance of agrarian unrest and Cooper does not refer to it at any time in his diaries.

²¹⁸ Samuel Cooper (1750-1831), Diaries for years 1782, 1785, 1786, 1795, 1804, 1806, 1807, 1809, 1814 and 1823. MSS of Cooper Family, England. For discussion of Samuel Cooper's diaries, see Denis G. Marnane, "Samuel Cooper of Killenure (1750-1831): A Tipperary Land Agent and His Diaries" in *Tipperary Historical Journal* (1993), 102-127.

²¹⁹ Cooper (1785), np.

²²⁰ Cooper (1785), np.

James Ryan, Herbert's contemporary and neighbour, is the author of *The Carrickman's Diary*.²²¹ His diary records public events and the life of the town for the years 1787 to 1802. Organised under headings rather than daily entries, it acts as a documentary history of the town in the period. He records many events of consequence in the area to which Herbert does not allude. For example, he notes the opening of a Coffee House at the "end of May 1793." He is impressed when his friend "Mr John Stacy got a little printing press and began printing on Friday the 15th July 1791." He also notes the making of the unofficial Census in 1799, "the number of inhabitants was taken in 1799 by Major Pitt of the Dorset Militia."²²² Ryan's belief in the importance of his diary is attested by its formal presentation and his desire that it be continued after his death. In his will he bequeathed it to his friend William Hayes with the injunction that he continue to record the events of the town after his death.²²³ Unlike Herbert, Ryan seeks to give an unvarnished account of events that interest him. Ryan's choice of headings reveals his interest in his own profession and in the public affairs of the town, "Deaths, Accidents, Amusements, Calculations, Commercial (including Shipping and Bankruptcy) Excursions, Faction Fighting, Insurrection, Natural Phenomena and Political."²²⁴ Ryan prepares his work for a wider readership and for posterity if not for publication during his lifetime. The manuscript has not been published although edited extracts were published by Rev P. Power in

²²¹ James Ryan, *The Carrickman's Diary 1787-1802*. (Original missing until December 2011, see Appendix Two for a history of this manuscript). Original Manuscript now in Waterford City Library (not catalogued); Microfilm of Manuscript in Waterford City Library (not catalogued).

²²² *Carrickman's Diary*, pp. 29, 100, 166.

²²³ Unfortunately Hayes did not fulfil this request, and only records in a brief note on the first page of the manuscript his failure to do so as he had moved away from Carrick-on-Suir.

²²⁴ *Carrickman's Diary*.

The Journal of the Wexford and South East of Ireland Archaeological Society in the early nineteenth hundreds.²²⁵

Ryan was not the only one in his Catholic middle-class circle in Carrick-on-Suir who kept a diary. His friend and neighbour Patrick Hayden, a prosperous merchant in the town, modelled his *Journal* on Ryan's.²²⁶ Born in 1774 in Co. Kilkenny, Hayden moved to Carrick-on-Suir in 1791. He began keeping his *Journal* in 1802 and the last entry is dated 24 March 1851. Like Ryan his *Journal* entries are not in chronological order but are divided into a series of headings that cover the major happenings in the town. Under "Amatuer Theatricals" he records an 1802 performance in the small theatre in the town.

Friday night 28 June 1802. The Tragedy of Pizarro was performed by the young men of the town for the benefit of Mr. Patrick Lynch. Pissaro was played by Thomas Power, Rolla by me (Patrick Hayden), and Thomas Higgins played Alonzo. About £30 collected.²²⁷

Like Ryan, Hayden is interested in recording the life of the town, its history and commercial and cultural life. Neither Ryan nor Hayden, who were both well acquainted with John Stacy who opened his printing press in 1791, give any indication that they wanted to publish their journals. That they both valued them as documentary histories of their time and place is clear but they did not consider

²²⁵ Rev. P. Power, "A Carrickman's Diary – 1778-1809." *Journal of the Waterford and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*. XIV (1911), 97-102, 146-150; XV (1912), 30-37, 62-70, 124-137; XVI (1913), 18-27, 74-85, 176-182; XVII (1913), 4-16, 120-127.

²²⁶ Patrick Hayden, *Journal*, MS in private possession of Mr. A. McCan, Cork.

²²⁷ Patrick Hayden, *Journal*. 28 June 1802. For discussion and extracts from Hayden's *Journal*, see A. McCan, "Excerpts from the Journal of Patrick Hayden, Merchant of Carrickbeg," *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. 58 (2002), 73-87 and "Biographical Notes from the commonplace Book of Patrick Hayden, Merchant of Carrickbeg", *The Irish Genealogist*, vol. 9. 2 (1995), 195-202.

publication as part of this project. Ryan and Hayden and their friends the printer John Stacy and the school master and published author Patrick Lynch form a coterie of like-minded men, who write for and about each other and who engage in joint cultural projects like the amateur theatre company in which they have shares and in which they also perform. Unlike Herbert and her class, these are Catholic men of commerce who engage fully in the life of the town. Although Ryan records the deaths of Herbert's brother Otway in 1800 and her father in 1803 neither he nor Hayden mention Herbert in their texts.²²⁸

John Scott, First Earl of Clonmell, also a neighbour, and patron to Herbert's brother-in-law William Bradshaw, records his rise from humble barrister to Lord Chief Justice of Ireland in his diary.²²⁹ The diary covers the years 1774 to 1787. Lord Clonmell's belief in the importance of his diary as a record of his life is borne out by the fact that shortly before his death he destroyed all of his personal papers with the exception of his diary. Like Ryan, he groups his entries under a series of headings. However, unlike Ryan his diary contains few references to public events. His focus throughout is on self-improvement and the advancing of his career. His headings are a series of self-seeking and worldly maxims: "Make yourself pleasing by flattering all. Make every man your dupe by flattery;" "Carry your station constantly about with you with the decency and port that belong to it. It makes the meanest character passable and dignifies the greatest;" "Secure the aid of women in every

²²⁸ Patrick Hayden's granddaughter Mary Anne Power carried on the family tradition and kept a diary for the years 1868-1873. Mary Anne Power, *Diary 1868-1873*, MS in private possession of Mr. A. McCan, Cork. For extracts and discussion of Power's *Diary* see A. McCan, "The Diary of a Young Lady, Mary Anne Power, 1868-1873", *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. 57 (2001), 131-142.

²²⁹ William J. Fitzpatrick, *Curious Family History Or Ireland Before the Union: Including Lord Chief Justice Clonmell's Unpublished Diary; A Sequel to The Sham Squire and The Informers of 1798* (Dublin, 1869). See also *Retrospections*, p. 306 for reference to Lord Clonmell.

scheme;” “Avoid intimacies. Never be intimate with any man or woman but for the purpose of answering your purposes upon them;” and “Be always an actor – a man who would establish a great character in the world must be a constant actor.”²³⁰ He also uses his diary to record the success of his schemes and to prepare himself for the future. On 23 June 1784 he takes stock of his progress and plans his future.

Five years married this day – forty-five years old. Five years reading, at twelve hours a day, would establish my reputation on the Bench, and make the rest of my life easy. Cromwell would have done it, and did a thousand times more.²³¹

The most refreshing thing about this diary is its frank disclosure of the deceptions Clonmell believes necessary to succeed in public life in Ireland.²³²

Mary Mathew, unmarried like Herbert, and from the same Anglo-Irish social circle, kept her diary for one year only.²³³ The first entry on 1 August 1772 outlines her reason for keeping a record of her life. Her aims are similar to O’Connell’s and Clonmel’s but less worldly.

²³⁰ *Lord Clonmell’s Diary 1774-1787*, pp. 25, 29, 30.

²³¹ *Lord Clonmell’s Diary 1774-1787*, p. 34.

²³² *Lord Clonmell’s Diary* is a record of his remarkable success in public life. However, his failure to curb his enormous appetite for rich food and good wine meant that he died as he lived, a dyspeptic and grossly overweight man, despite his repeated resolutions in his diary to be abstemious.

²³³ *Cookery Recipes, Household Accounts and Diary by Mary Mathew, 1741-1777*. MS. 5102, Dublin: National Library of Ireland.

Tho' I am going now to write a journal of my life from this day August 1st 1772 I fear I shall by that only see how unprofitably I spend my time god grant it may be a means of my doing better another year.²³⁴

Mathew keeps her word and finishes her diary promptly on 31 July 1773.

This day ends the year of this journal. I think my time past in so trifling a manner tis not worth recording so here I end.²³⁵

Despite the brevity of the diary and of individual entries Mathew does give details of her reading practices and theatre-going as well as her daily routine and her twin obsessions, the weather and her garden. There is no attempt to make the diary literary and although she is an avid reader and believes in the educational benefits of reading, she shows no desire to be an author. She does not emulate the writers she reads or make literary allusions. Her daily accounts of her life remain factual throughout the year. Mathew's Household Accounts for the years 1747 to 1777 have also survived.²³⁶ These are a very rich source of information about Mathew's life, and are far more informative and revealing than her diary.

Like Mary Mathew, Eleanor Goddard appears to have kept her diary primarily as a form of discipline or duty. She may also have been influenced by the example of her more literary friends, Eleanor Butler, Sarah Ponsonby and Mary Tighe. The surviving entries cover the years 1774-1778 and

²³⁴ Maria Luddy, ed., *The Diary of Mary Mathew* (Thurles, 1991), p. 1.

²³⁵ Luddy (1991), p. 46.

²³⁶ *Cookery Recipes, Household Accounts 1741-1777*, MS. 5102 (Dublin: National Library of Ireland).

1782-1788.²³⁷ The combined journals make up one hundred and fifty- four folios. Goddard writes almost every day during these years but most entries are short and display if anything a reluctance to write at all. The first entries for January 1776 are an example of her style: "Monday Jan 1, New Year's Day and nothing new. Tuesday 2, took physic and thats all." The next week begins in a similar manner: "Sunday 4 went to Kells church, Monday 5, Tuesday 6, Wednesday 7, Thursday 8, Friday 9, Nothing." The two subjects on which Goddard is prepared to write at length are her health and gossip about her friends and relations. When Butler and Ponsonby leave Ireland secretly, Goddard gives lengthy daily accounts of the rumours that circulate in Dublin about the scandal. There are no pretensions to authorship in the diary and no references to reading. Despite her attempts to emulate her literary friends by keeping a diary she expresses very little interest in literature of any kind.

An even more reluctant journal-keeper than Mathew or Goddard was the Irish statesman Daniel O'Connell who kept a *Journal* for the years 1795 to 1802.²³⁸ O'Connell describes his *Journal* as "Containing Remarks on the Events of the Day; Thoughts on Various Subjects; Anecdotes; Speeches; Quotations, etc, etc, etc."²³⁹ Despite this ambitious description the *Journal* rarely refers to public events, anecdotes or speeches and becomes in the process of writing an exercise in self-discipline. The entries are a series of good intentions followed by recriminations for failing to fulfil them.

²³⁷ Eleanor (Lucy) Goddard, *Diary*, Oct. 1778 – Jan. 1782. Wicklow Papers, MS 3573, Dublin: National Library of Ireland.

²³⁸ *Daniel O'Connell His Early Life and Journal 1795-1802*, ed., Arthur Houston (London, 1906). Houston in his Editor's Note observes that the word "Journal is written in letters resembling print, on the cover, which is of cardboard, with a marbles pattern on it." (p. 59).

²³⁹ *O'Connell Journal* (1906), p. 61.

Saturday, December 3rd, 1796. I now resume my journal, after almost a year of neglect, with the resolution of continuing it with punctuality for the future Did I regularly record the reading of the day, shame would prevent me from being negligent. The perusal of my journal would be the best reward of diligence, the surest punishment of idleness.²⁴⁰

O'Connell has no pretensions to authorship; on the contrary he approaches his writing reluctantly and has serious reservations about his ability to write coherently: "My letters and writings in general have the appearance more of a jumbled mass than a united train of ideas."²⁴¹ He sometimes finds it difficult to fill in the assigned space in his *Journal*: "I am now at a loss for materials to swell out this number to the size of the others."²⁴² On Wednesday 16 December 1776 he describes how reluctant he is to write.

I would have written something yesterday but for the reason I am going to mention. After returning from town I put it off for a while, then deferred it till after supper. I found it oppressed me as a disagreeable task.²⁴³

Far from anticipating a wide readership for his *Journal* he feels self-conscious about writing such a personal document and fears the response should it be read even by those close to him: "Were this journal to fall into the hands of any of my acquaintance, how ridiculous would it appear!"²⁴⁴ For O'Connell the most valuable entries are those that record his reading.

²⁴⁰ *O'Connell Journal* (1906), pp. 75-76.

²⁴¹ *O'Connell Journal* (1906), p. 76.

²⁴² *O'Connell Journal* (1906), p. 76.

²⁴³ *O'Connell Journal* (1906), p. 84.

²⁴⁴ *O'Connell Journal* (1906), p. 112.

I have very little to say in my Journal at present of my private life and opinions....unfortunately I have nothing to write on. My life, though not in any degree insipid, is monotonous and unchequered. I spend the greater part of the day in the library. In perusal of a favourite author I feel not the time slip away.²⁴⁵

The last entry on 4 June 1802 continues the tone of the earlier entries; writing the *Journal* is a task to be completed, not a pleasure to be enjoyed. "I know not what subject to write upon. Yet I would fain eke out this page."²⁴⁶ Both Clonmell and O'Connell are ambitious public men and their *Journals* function as self-motivational texts. They are private documents but they focus on self-improvement and on making their way as men of the world. Thus, for both men the writing itself is less important than the use of their *Journals* in the service of their careers.

Sir Vere Hunt of Curragh Chase, Co. Limerick captured much of his flamboyant life in his diaries.²⁴⁷ An entrepreneur of enormous energy he developed many commercial and benevolent enterprises on his estates. His diaries, which cover the period 1776-1818, provide details of his love of books, particularly of their design and beauty. He spends long hours arranging and re-arranging them in his library at Curragh Chase and in packing them for travel. Although a self-confessed lover of books, and a man of energy and ambition, Vere Hunt does not represent himself as an author; it may in fact be one of the few professions to which he does not aspire.

²⁴⁵ O'Connell *Journal* (1906), p. 137.

²⁴⁶ O'Connell *Journal* (1906), p. 241.

²⁴⁷ *Sir Vere Hunt Diaries (1796-1818)*, De Vere Family Papers (Limerick: Limerick City Library).

Theobald Wolfe Tone's memoirs, journals and letters were edited by his son William and published in London in 1860.²⁴⁸ The text includes Tone's memoir of his early life written in Paris in 1796, his *Journals* from 1796 until his death in prison in 1798 and commentary on these by his son and editor. William Tone as editor of his father's *Journals* removed "a voluminous mass of flippant and uninteresting matter, only calculated to meet the eye of Mrs Tone, to whom it was addressed."²⁴⁹ The tone of the *Journals* is warm and intimate and they contain many shared jokes and amusing anecdotes. James Quinn describes Tone's *Journals* as "one of the finest examples of self-portraiture in Irish Letters."²⁵⁰ Despite severe editing, what remains of the *Journals* presents a very lively and gregarious account of Tone's personal life, his reading, theatre-going and social life. That Tone saw himself as an author is evident not alone from the literary tone of his *Journals* but also from the number of political pamphlets and reviews he published before he left Ireland in 1796 and the commercial success of his novel *Belmont Castle: or Suffering Sensibility*, published in Dublin in 1790.²⁵¹

Tone's close friend Thomas Russell also kept a series of *Journals*. Russell born in Co. Cork in 1767 was like Tone one of the founding members of the United Irishmen. He was executed for his part in

²⁴⁸ Theobald Wolfe Tone, *The Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone Written by Himself and Extracted from His Journals*, ed., William Theobald Wolfe Tone (London, 1860).

²⁴⁹ Tone (1860), p. 134.

²⁵⁰ James Quinn, "Theobald Wolfe Tone and the Historians," *Irish Historical Studies*, 32.125 (2000), 117.

²⁵¹ Theobald Wolfe Tone, *Belmont Castle: or Suffering Sensibility. Containing the Genuine and Interesting Correspondence of Several Persons of Fashion* (Dublin, 1790; Dublin, 1998).

the Irish rising of 1803. Three of his pocket-books and ten fragments of journals have survived.²⁵² They were published as *Journals and Memoirs of Thomas Russell* in 1991.²⁵³ Russell, like O'Connell and Clonmell, sees his diary as a way keeping a record of his progress in life. On 3 November 1794 he reflects on the usefulness of his *Journal*: "Should I live to old age they will be a pleasant mode of renovating the scores and ideas of youth and I hope (though hitherto it has not been the case) they may show a progression in virtue."²⁵⁴ One of the most interesting things to note about Tone's and Russell's *Journals* is that they are shared endeavours. Tone refers many times to Russell, even addresses him directly in his writing and he also compares Russell's journal unfavourably with his own. Writing to his wife Matilda in 1791 he remarks: "Russell is writing a journal but mine is worth fifty of his."²⁵⁵ Certainly Tone's *Journal* is far more extensive than Russell's and very different in kind. Russell's is short, introspective, self-critical and devoid of humour. There is evidence that both men shared their journals among a small group of intimate friends and family. Russell's friend Dr. James McDonnell, on finding Russell's *Journal* in his study in August 1791, inserted an entry of his own. He begins by describing how painful it is for him to write but continues with a lengthy meditation on the three ages of man.

²⁵² Russell's three pocket books (Dublin: National Archives, Bishops Street, Rebellion Papers, 620/15/6/3, 620/20/33. Ten Fragments of Journals, The Sirr Papers, MS 88/1, ff15-20v, 21-23v, 39(?), 40-43v, 52-53, 100-100v, 184-4v and 326-6v. (Dublin: Department of Manuscripts, Trinity College Dublin).

²⁵³ Thomas Russell, *Journals and Memoirs of Thomas Russell*, ed. C. J. Woods (Dublin, 1991).

²⁵⁴ Thomas Russell, *Journals*, p. 32.

²⁵⁵ Tone to Matilda Tone, 20 Oct 1791, *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone 1763-1798*. ed. T.W. Moody, R. B. McDowell and C. J. Woods (Oxford, 1998.), vol. I, p. 44.

I intended before sending it to you to write two or three pages in it, but I have got one of my fingers greatly injur'd yesterday searching for fossils in a quar(r)y and I write with great pain.²⁵⁶

Tone's novel *Belmont Castle* also appears to have been a collaborative work as the novel is attributed to Theobald Wolfe Tone and Diverse Hands. These are believed to be Tone's friends Richard Jebb and John Radcliffe. The novel satirises many of their friends and suggests that it was written as part of an elaborate joke and for the amusement of their wide circle of friends and acquaintances.²⁵⁷ I discuss the importance of collaboration and the circulation of manuscripts among literary coteries at greater length in Chapter Five.

Betsy Sheridan, Richard Brindsley Sheridan's younger sister, kept what she herself called a *Journal* for the years 1748 to 1786 and again from 1788 to 1790.²⁵⁸ Her *Journals* take the form of a series of letters written to her sister Alicia in Dublin. She has no pretensions to be an author and explains how the compulsion to write these regular letters dictates her style of writing.

My whole idea is to amuse when I can with any anecdote, scene, or character that may fall in my way, and at all times to prove my regard by punctuality to our agreement, whether I am supplied with entertaining materials, or not. But as I scribble a great deal I am forced to write the first word that occurs, so that of course I must write pretty nearly as I should speak, and as I am not famous for much deliberation on that occasion I fear it requires the

²⁵⁶ Russell, *Rebellion Papers*, 620/15/6/3, p. 90.

²⁵⁷ For an edited edition of *Belmont Castle*, see Theobald Wolfe Tone, *Belmont Castle or Suffering Sensibility*, ed. Marion Deane (Dublin, 1998). Deane identifies many of the fictional characters who are satirised in the novel.

²⁵⁸ William LeFanu, ed., *Betsy Sheridan's Journal: Letters from Sheridan's Sister 1784-1786 & 1788-1790* (London, 1960).

partiality of a real friend to find out much merit in my Epistles, but I am pleased with that partiality and will go on and prosper.²⁵⁹

Sheridan does not dedicate time to her writing: "From the kind of life I must lead here I think it best to snatch any moment I can to write, as I might otherwise be prevented."²⁶⁰ Although she records reading voraciously and being constantly in the company of literary friends of her father and brother, she has little interest in becoming an author. In fact she deliberately presents herself as unliterary in the very literary world she inhabits.²⁶¹ Walking with a friend in a reputedly "poetic" part of the countryside around Bath she paints an amusing picture of herself as living in fear of being inspired by a muse.

After breakfast we went with them to the Grove, where I was join'd by my old friend General Robertson, among other things he told me I was treading poetic ground, for it was in that Grove that Mr Cumberland composed *Carmellite*. I own I thought myself fortunate that when I reflected on the many solitary walks I have taken there, that the same Muse had never thought of inspiring me.²⁶²

Sheridan, Mathew, Goddard and O'Connell all have ambivalent attitudes to their *Journals* and are frequently perfunctory in their daily entries. These reluctant journal keepers are a testament to the popularity of the genre at the time when even those who did not want to keep journals did so in the belief that they were an important part of a cultured life. For these writers their *Journals* represented a valuable form of self-validation, a measurement of success and a relatively simple, yet

²⁵⁹ *Betsy Sheridan's Journal* (1960), p. 57.

²⁶⁰ *Betsy Sheridan's Journal* (1960), p. 130.

²⁶¹ Anna Seward, Vessimus Knox, Hester Chapone and Mrs Montague are among the writers who visit her father's and brother's homes where Sheridan lives.

²⁶² *Betsy Sheridan's Journal* (1960), p. 71.

highly visible way of emulating more learned friends and sharing in what they see as a valuable joint endeavour.

Some published authors made a deliberate distinction between their professional writing and their journals. Mary Leadbeater began keeping a journal in 1769 when she was eleven years old and continued her almost daily entries until her death in 1826. They comprise fifty-four books in all.²⁶³ The early entries are very brief and repetitive suggesting perhaps that they were seen as part of her duty as the daughter of a pious Quaker household. As she matures, Leadbeater describes how she becomes inseparable from her *Journal*; she keeps it with her at all times, steals ink and pens and finds time in every day to write. Her *Journals* act as a record of behaviour, of self-analysis and plans for improvement. They record Leadbeater's intimate life from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. Although she published eleven books during her lifetime, the majority on education, self-improvement and religion, and also edited her father's journals and letters, she did not prepare her own copious journals for publication.²⁶⁴ This suggests that Leadbeater makes a clear distinction between writing for publication and her journals which are essentially private documents. These have never been published.

²⁶³ Mary Leadbeater, *Diaries 1769-1789 in 13 Volumes*, MSS 9292-9314, *Diaries 1790-1809 in 15 Volumes*, MSS 9315-9329; *Diaries 1810-1826 in 17 Volumes*, MSS. 9330-9346. (Dublin: National Library of Ireland).

²⁶⁴ Mary Leadbeater, *Memoirs and Letters of Richard and Elizabeth Shackleton Late of Ballitore, Ireland, Compiled by their Daughter* (London, 1849).

The Diary of Elizabeth Richards 1798-1825 edited by Marie de Jong-IJsselstein was published in 1995.²⁶⁵ In the foreward to the diary Jong-IJsselstein describes it as “one of a relatively few diaries by women from this period.”²⁶⁶ My own research suggests that many ordinary women in Ireland were engaged in what Lejeune calls a “collective writing adventure.”²⁶⁷ Kevin Whelan in his Introduction to the text supports this view in his claim for the popularity of the diary form among women in the period: “We know of six other diaries kept by Wexford women in 1798 – Dinah Goff of Horetown, Jane Barber of Clovass, Isabella Brownrig of Greenmount, Barbara Lett of Killaligan, Alice Pounden of Monart and Jane Adams of Summerseat.”²⁶⁸ Elizabeth Richards’ original diary has not survived but a hand-written copy, made by Richards’ granddaughter in 1917 is held in the Municipal Archives in Rotterdam.²⁶⁹ Kevin Whelan describes the diary as “one of the most important documents we have concerning the 1798 Rebellion in county Wexford.”²⁷⁰ There are two sections in the diary, the first gives a detailed account of the rebellion in Wexford in 1798. Following a gap of over two years the second section opens on January 22nd 1802. This contains a lengthy account of Richard’s courtship by Count Fredrick Williem van Limburg Stirum and their marriage on 15 April 1802. Stirum was a Dutch officer in an infantry regiment stationed in Wexford. Richards’ account of the courtship is remarkably similar to Herbert’s account of her infatuation with John Roe. In fact

²⁶⁵ *The Diary of Elizabeth Richards 1798-1825*, ed., Marie de Jong-IJsselstein (Hilversum, 1995).

²⁶⁶ *Diary of Elizabeth Richards* (1995), p. 7.

²⁶⁷ Lejeune (2009), p. 134.

²⁶⁸ *Diary of Elizabeth Richards* (1995), p 12. For a discussion of these diaries, see John D. Beatty, “Protestant Women of County Wexford and their Narratives of the Rebellion of 1798” in Daire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong, eds., *The Women of 1798* (Dublin, 1998).

²⁶⁹ *Diary of Elizabeth Richards*, Archive Huis ten Donck, intr.nr. 326. (Rotterdam: Municipal Archives Rotterdam).

²⁷⁰ *Diary of Elizabeth Richards* (1995), p. 9.

there are many similarities between the two texts and the lives the authors describe. Both are readers, and although Richards does not consider herself an author as Herbert does, she writes poetry and stories for her children and her diary is a thoughtful and well-written text. Despite her frank disclosures of the unhappy state of her marriage, Richards has ten children with her husband and leaves the home she loves to live with him in Holland. She describes how she marries the man she loves only to discover that his attitude towards her alters when he has secured her hand in marriage and her considerable fortune.

Stirum and I live uncomfortably together, he is always ready to find fault with and to sneer at me. I am not sufficiently patient, hence arises coolness, distrust, cordiality is banished from our intercourse, it is as if we had never loved.²⁷¹

Unlike Herbert, Richards is married, an heiress and a fluent French speaker as is evident from her *Diary*. Herbert desires above all to be married; in later life she laments her lack of money and in her writing she frequently uses French phrases, but they are the conventional phrases of a school-girl and not those of someone fluent in the language. Given Richard's experience of marriage, perhaps Herbert's single state is preferable to that of a woman who marries for love and later finds herself despised by her husband and unhappy.

The journals and diaries discussed above represent a textual culture where writers are interested, for a wide variety of reasons, in keeping a written record of their lives but not specifically in representing themselves as authors. Neither do any during their lifetimes prepare their work for publication, although many, as we have seen, were published after their deaths. This next section

²⁷¹ *Diary of Elizabeth Richards* (1995), p. 88.

looks at writers who do not seek to publish their life-writing but who nonetheless style themselves as authors. Of these writers the ones whose writing practices most closely resemble Herbert's are Eleanor Butler, Sarah Ponsonby, Mary Delaney and Mary Tighe. They are concerned with their identity as authors and present their manuscripts as finished works, many modelled, as Herbert's are, on published books of the period.

Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, both well known to Herbert, saw themselves as authors, not just of letters and journals but also of poems and plays. Their papers are now held in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.²⁷² Many of their manuscripts are bound and some, like the *Plas Newydd Library Catalogue*, are elaborately decorated showing the writers' interest in their manuscripts as physical objects and decorative possessions. Sarah Ponsonby's first journal, *An Account of a Journey in Wales*, has an illuminated title page giving the date, May 1778, and identifying the authors as "Two Fugitive Ladies." It is dedicated to "Her most tenderly Beloved Companion." The frontispiece is a watercolour of Benton Castle. The manuscript is bound, the cover is marbled boards with blue leather back and corners.²⁷³ The Ponsonby and Butler papers also contain the manuscript of an unpublished verse drama, *Loves Frenzy, or the Garlands of the Faun* and miscellaneous poems with watercolour illustrations by Ponsonby.²⁷⁴ Butler's *Journals* record her reading, writing, farming methods, house improvements and financial difficulties and above all the

²⁷² Known as the Hamwood papers, these contain Butler's and Ponsonby's manuscripts and journals, five volumes of correspondence, a manuscript copy of Mary Tighe's *Psyche or the Legend of Love* (1804) and Eleanor Goddard's journals for the years 1774-78 and 1782-88. Extracts from the Hamwood papers were published in 1930. Eva Mary Hamilton Bell, ed., *The Hamwood Papers of the Ladies of Llangollen and Caroline Hamilton* (London, 1930). See also Elizabeth Mavor, *Life with the Ladies of Llangollen* (New York, 1984) and *The Ladies of Llangollen: A Study in Romantic Friendship* (London, 1971).

²⁷³ Sarah Ponsonby, *A Journey in Wales, 1778*. MS 22967C, Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales.

²⁷⁴ Sarah Ponsonby, *Love's Frenzy, or the Garlands of the Faun and Poems*, MS 22979C, Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales.

charm of the life she leads with Sarah Ponsonby. Like Ponsonby's manuscripts Butler's *Journals* and *Commonplace Books* are elaborately bound, in quarter or half leather and marbled limp covers over boards. That both women considered themselves authors is evident in the formal material presentation of their manuscripts and in their self-fashioning as ladies of letters. They come closer to Herbert's practices as an author than most of the other unpublished writers in this study. Butler and Ponsonby, who record in a variety of forms every aspect of their lives, have left a multi-dimensional record of their lives as women of letters. One of the most valuable manuscripts in the Hamwood papers is their 1792 library catalogue. I discuss the contents of this catalogue in Chapter Four.

Mary Delaney, more famous for her needle-work and tapestry than for her writing, was a prolific letter writer. She also wrote some fragments of autobiography and a sentimental romance called *Marianna*.²⁷⁵ The novel is an elaborately bound and illustrated text. Her fragments of autobiography and correspondence were edited by her great-great-niece Augusta Hall, Lady Llanover and published in London in 1861-2.²⁷⁶ In her Introduction Hall gives an account of Delaney's autobiographical writing.

At different periods Mary Granville had commenced a history of her own recollections of which two unfinished mss. still exist. They contain very interesting particulars of her early days. The

²⁷⁵ Mary (Granville) Delaney, *Marianna* 1759 (Bloomington: Lilly Library, Indiana University, Delaney MSS)

²⁷⁶ Mary Delaney, *Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delaney with Interesting Reminiscences of King George the Third and Queen Charlotte*, ed., Augusta Hall (London, 1925).

autobiographical fragment ... relates to her origin and earliest days, though it appears to have been written in the latter years of her life as it was dictated to a confidential amanuensis.²⁷⁷

There is no evidence to suggest that Delaney prepared these fragments for publication but there is no doubt that she saw herself as a woman of letters. Her correspondence shows her to be a dedicated and discerning reader. What brings her literary practice close to Herbert's is her elaborate presentation of her unpublished novella *Marianna*. She appears to have written this work, illustrated it and bound it as a gift for her sister Anne Dewes. I discuss this novella in more detail in Chapter Five.

The poet Mary Tighe, born in Dublin in 1772, died of tuberculosis in Woodstock House, just a few miles from Herbert's home in Carrick-on-Suir in 1810. During her lifetime Tighe was reluctant to have her work published, and only agreed after much persuasion to have a limited edition of fifty copies of her poem *Psyche or the Legend of Love* published for private circulation in 1805.²⁷⁸ Despite the reluctance to have her work published there is little doubt that Tighe thought of herself as an author. She completed the poem in 1802 and in 1804 she made a manuscript copy as a gift for Sarah Ponsonby and Eleanor Butler. This is an elaborate leather-bound manuscript, complete with

²⁷⁷ Mary Delaney (1925), *Autobiography*, p. vii.

²⁷⁸ Mary Tighe, *Psyche: or the Legend of Love* (London, 1805). Copy in Huntington Library (Rare Books, 328444) has author's inscription to William Parnell dated 1805 on title page. Inscription at the foot of the title page reads: "This copy was presented to W. Parnell by Charles James Fox, and returned after his death to M. Tighe at her earnest request." This shows both the wide circulation of the limited edition and the author's desire to retain as many copies as possible for herself.

decorated title page and illustration.²⁷⁹ Tighe began keeping a journal in 1787 when she was fourteen years old and continued it irregularly until 1800. After Tighe's death, her mother Theodosia Blachford, edited and wrote a commentary on what she describes as Tighe's "religious journal." The entries that have survived are a litany of regrets for the way she leads her life. The entry for 21 August 1790 is an example of the tone of many of the early entries.

Sometimes called off by vanity & led in the foolish trappings of the world in the paths of self admiration – sometimes my heart has been distracted by vain pleasures, false hopes, foolish disappointments, idle pursuits, trifling sorrows, fond desires, useless alarms & childish vexations.²⁸⁰

The daily accounts become darker in tone after her marriage to her cousin Henry Tighe. On 23 April 1800 she writes: "Spent the night at a gay party without any pleasure. Nor was that all – pain and mortification, self reproach & regret oppressed my heart & made my very existence a burthen."²⁸¹

Tighe's cousin Caroline Hamilton in her memoir *Mary Tighe* has left details of the family's attitude to Tighe's *Journals*.²⁸²

She was always in the habit of writing a journal, which was a practice recommended by her mother but tho' it gave fluency to her style, it only gave her survivors the painful trouble of burning it as it contained only trifling adventures of a gay life, interesting at the time to the writer, but to nobody else.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Hamwood Papers, MS 22983B, Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales.

²⁸⁰ Linkin (2005), p. 215.

²⁸¹ Linkin (2005), p. 223.

²⁸² *Mary Tighe*, MS 4810, Dublin: National Library of Ireland.

²⁸³ Linkin (2005), p. 258.

From reading Tighe's extant journal entries it would appear that constructing herself as an author or recreating her life as an author did not form part of the function of her life-writing. However her unpublished novel *Selena*, although presented as a work of fiction is semi-autobiographical.²⁸⁴ The central character Selena is presented as a woman of letters, has a controlling mother, marries her cousin and is torn between leading an active social life and one devoted to literature and study. Thus the novel offers a more complex view of Tighe as a writer than the heavily edited journals. Tighe's allusions to other writers in the novel are similar to Herbert's in *Retrospections* and the heroine, like Herbert, is subject to periods of melancholy.

The purposefulness and dedication with which many of these diaries were kept and the great variety of people who kept them show that Herbert was not at all singular in making her life the subject of her writing. However, her life-writing practices are very different from those in the first category of diarists I have discussed. Similarly, although the writers in the second category come closer to Herbert's practice in that they present themselves as women of letters, none produced manuscripts as finished as Herbert's or as closely modelled in both content and form on published books. Herbert's elaborate construction of herself as an author singles her out from both groups and brings her writing practice closer to that of published writers in the period than to the many people who keep diaries as private documents. The three most interesting and diverse Irish women writers who published their memoirs in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are Lady Morgan,

²⁸⁴ Mary Tighe, *Selena*, MS 4727-4746, Dublin: National Library of Ireland.

Letitia Pilkington and Margaret Leeson.²⁸⁵ Morgan and Pilkington focus their narratives on their development as authors, while Leeson, the most infamous and successful Dublin madam of her day, characterises herself as a reluctant author who, having repented and reformed owns her past errors and writes to “extend a public benefit” and “to caution others against falling into the like.”²⁸⁶

The editor of *Lady Morgan’s Memoirs*, W. Hepworth Dixon, claims in his preface to the work that, “Lady Morgan bequeathed her papers and Journals to me, with a view to their publication.”²⁸⁷ He also states that “A good part of the volume had been prepared under her own eyes for the press.”²⁸⁸ Unlike Wolfe Tone’s son and Mary Tighe’s mother, Dixon resists the temptation to edit the journals, despite their length and his observation that the “collection was large” and her “writing was one that neither she nor anybody else could read.”²⁸⁹ Morgan considers herself an author and a public figure of some note and as such she addresses her memoirs to the public. Like Pilkington and Leeson she claims the right to give her version of her life.

Caricatured to the utmost – abused, calumniated, misrepresented, flattered, eulogised, persecuted; supported as party dictated or prejudice permitted; the pet of the Liberals of

²⁸⁵ W. Hepworth Dixon, *Lady Morgan’s Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence* (London, 1862/63); Letitia Pilkington, *Memoirs of Mrs Letitia Pilkington 1712-1750, Written by Herself* (Dublin 1748-1754); (London, 1928).

²⁸⁶ Mrs Margaret Leeson, *Memoirs of Mrs Margaret Leeson: Madam 1727-1797*, ed. Mary Lyons (Dublin, 1995), p. 4.

²⁸⁷ W. Hepworth Dixon, *Lady Morgan’s Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence*, vol. I (London, 1862); vol. II (London, 1863).

²⁸⁸ *Lady Morgan’s Memoirs* (1862), vol. 1, p. iii-iv.

²⁸⁹ *Lady Morgan’s Memoirs* (1862), vol. 1, p. iv.

one nation, the *bête-noire* of the ultra set of another; the poor butt that reviewers, editors and critics have set up, - and that she may, perhaps be pardoned for wishing to speak a few words of herself.²⁹⁰

These “few words,” amounting to two large volumes, are literary in tone. They contain many references to works of literature, extracts from poems and plays and present Morgan as an author who has devoted her life to the making of her career as a professional woman of letters. The memoirs include many letters from publishers, other writers and admirers of her work. She is in many ways the opposite to Herbert in that her memoir records the making of what she describes as “a Successful Authoress”²⁹¹ Morgan is a self-publicist par excellence, a self-made, successfully published Irish woman of letters. Her memoir reflects her confident self-possession and is a detailed and at times extravagant account of the rise of a self-made and above all successful professional Irish woman author. Unlike Pilkington and Leeson, Lady Morgan’s autobiography was not published during her lifetime. However she edited and prepared it for publication before she died. This is the autobiography of a successful writer, and Morgan presents it as such.

Letitia Pilkington gives a high-minded reason for the publication of her *Memoirs*: “I think that my story may be instructive to the female part of my readers...so that I propose myself, not as an example but a warning to them; that by my fall they may stand the more secure.”²⁹² However, she also intends to expose all those who “spread of me the most improbable and notorious falsehoods” and thus deprived her of the means of “rendering my honest industry ineffectual.” She vows to

²⁹⁰ *Lady Morgan’s Memoirs* (1862), vol. 1, p.1.

²⁹¹ “A Successful Authoress” is the title of Chapter XXII of the *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 175.

²⁹² Pilkington (1748), p. 25.

expose all who have spoken ill of her and the weapon she promises to employ is the “truth.”²⁹³ The “honest industry” Pilkington is referring to is her work as a professional writer. Pilkington’s *Memoirs*, like Morgan’s, are the story of her career as a woman of letters. Presenting herself as an author who struggles to make her living by her writing, she is at pains to characterise her relationships with the men who become her patrons as literary and professional. Despite the questionable content and Pilkington’s disreputable reputation, her memoirs are staged and presented as those of a poet. She quotes frequently from other writers and includes many poems of her own composition in her text. She thus presents her *Memoir* as a work of literature.

Mrs Margaret Leeson’s *The Memoirs of Mrs Leeson, Madam 1727-1797*, published in three volumes, are her only published works.²⁹⁴ Leeson makes no claims about her writing and does not present herself as an author. When she retired from a very successful career as the proprietor of the most exclusive brothel in Dublin, Leeson found herself in difficult financial circumstances. To secure the payment of bad debts she threatened to write her memoirs thus exposing those who had frequented her premises in Pitt Street but not paid their accounts. She then published her memoirs volume by volume, each closing with the promise of further disclosures in the next. However, in the opening chapter of the first volume she claims to have much more public-spirited reasons for publishing her life story.

²⁹³ Pilkington (1748), pp. 25-26.

²⁹⁴ Mrs Margaret Leeson, *The Memoirs of Mrs Leeson 1727-1797: Written by Herself*, Vols. 1 and II (Dublin: Printed for the Authoress, 1795); Vol. III (Dublin, 1797); *The Memoirs of Mrs Leeson, Madam 1727-1797*, ed. Mary Lyons (Dublin, 1995).

A female, so much acquainted with men and manners as myself, and so often the subject of public and private conversation, cannot sit down to fill the ever open-ears, and feed the ever-gaping mouth of Curiosity without some reflections She must portray her own faults and condemn her own errors – but if thereby she cautions others against falling into the like, she extends a public benefit.²⁹⁵

Leeson, like Pilkington, vows to challenge “sundry falsehoods being propagated (perhaps published) concerning me.” To accomplish this she promises to set “forth the truth; and from it not swerve one tittle.”²⁹⁶ She does not represent herself as an author at any time in her memoirs. Books, reading and writing play no part in her identity formation. However, each chapter in the text begins with an extract from a well-known poem. There are also many lines of poetry within the chapters. These give to the text a literary veneer that is belied by the content, suggesting that they are included, not as an integral part of the text but as decorative excess. Thus, even this flamboyant, self-confessed non-reader is determined to present her memoirs as literary.

Both Pilkington and Leeson used very flattering self-portraits as frontispieces to their memoirs. Pilkington’s portrait, attributed to Nathaniel Hone, is of a woman of the world. Her very elaborate dress barely covers her breasts and is cut deliberately low over her right shoulder; she also wears jewels in her ears and on her gown. Leeson too is depicted as a beautiful woman of fashion in the frontispiece to her *Memoirs*. Her dress is more elaborate than Pilkington’s and similarly it is cut very low over her breasts. She wears pearls around her neck and in her beautifully styled hair. Both

²⁹⁵ Leeson (1995), p. 4.

²⁹⁶ Leeson (1995), p. 4.

authors are depicted as beautiful, alluring women of fashion but not as women of letters.²⁹⁷ There are no visual references to books or learning or the act of writing itself in the portraits. Thus in Leeson's and Pilkington's *Memoirs* the textual representation of the author as a reader and writer of serious literature is not supported by the visual representation. However, the images they present are fixed, there are no subsequent images to undermine the authority of the one that leads the reader into the text. This gives them a coherence that is lacking in Herbert's text where the visual representation of the rational woman of letters is challenged by the two subsequent portraits of the author defeated by the experience of unrequited love.

It is in a literary culture dominated by the increasing popularity and availability of published books and the existence of considerable numbers of ordinary people who record their life stories in unpublished journals and manuscripts and published memoirs that Herbert writes her three manuscripts. Like the memoirists and diarists discussed above, she uses her life story as the raw material for her writing. However, unlike many of these writers, Herbert in the process constructs herself as an author. And it is through this constructed persona that she presents the various versions of her life that we read in her manuscripts. Herbert's "Authoress" comes closer to the construction of the central characters in Mary Wollstonecraft's and Mary Tighe's novels than they do to any of the diarists discussed above. Mary and Maria, the two central characters in Wollstonecraft's novels *Mary A Story* and *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* are Herbert's fictional

²⁹⁷ On the representation of scholarly women in portraiture, see Lucy Peltz, "Living Muses: Constructing and Celebrating the Professional Woman in Literature and the Arts" in *Brilliant Women: 18th - Century Bluestockings* (New Haven, 2008).

counterparts as is Selena the central female character in Tighe's unpublished novella *Selena*.²⁹⁸

Wollstonecraft's two heroines face many of the difficulties that Herbert, as the heroine of her own texts, encounters in her reconstruction of the events of her life. All three heroines, Mary, Maria and Herbert, are represented as literary and intelligent and unsuited for the lives they lead. They are debilitated by the over-cultivation of sensibility, the betrayal of the men they love and the threat of madness. Wollstonecraft completed her novel *Mary, a Story* in 1788, while acting as governess to Lord Kingsborough's daughters in Mitchelstown, Co. Cork. Like Herbert, the central character Mary reads Thomson's *Seasons*, Young's *Night Thoughts* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* and both are strongly influenced by the texts they read. Wollstonecraft describes how Mary "entered with such spirit into whatever she read, and the emotions thereby raised were so strong, that it soon became a part of her mind."²⁹⁹ Like Herbert, Mary too finds the company of older intelligent men the most congenial: "The society of men of genius delighted her, and improved her faculties. With beings of this class she did not often meet; it is a rare genius; her first favourites were men past the meridian of life, and of a philosophical turn."³⁰⁰ Henry, the man Mary loves, has eyes like John Roe's where she can read what he is reluctant to say: "His eyes spoke the rest."³⁰¹ But it is in the voicing of her melancholy and despair that Mary most resembles Herbert's account of her isolation at the end of the text.

²⁹⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary, a Story* (London, 1788) and *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman or Maria* (London, 1798); Mary Tighe, *Selena*, unpublished novella, MSS 4742-4746 (Dublin, National Library of Ireland); Mary Delaney, *Marianna* (Delaney MSS, Lily Library, Indiana University, Bloomington).

²⁹⁹ Wollstonecraft (1788), p. 11.

³⁰⁰ Wollstonecraft (1788), p. 18.

³⁰¹ Wollstonecraft (1788), p. 28.

When overwhelmed by sorrow, I have met with unkindness; I look for someone to have pity on me, but find none! – The healing balm of sympathy is denied; I weep, a solitary wretch, and the hot tears scald my cheeks.³⁰²

Like Herbert, Maria, the central protagonist in *Maria or The Wrongs of Woman*, writes her own life story. When imprisoned by her husband she writes a journal in which she records her past life: “She lived again in the revived emotions of youth, and forgot her present in the retrospect of sorrows that had assumed an unalterable character.”³⁰³ Like Mary and Herbert she reads *Paradise Lost* “with eyes and heart”³⁰⁴ Mary Tighe’s Selena is also literary. She has “the most cultivated understanding, the most polished mind, and a judgment almost supernatural when compared with her years and inexperience.”³⁰⁵ Despite her polished mind she, like the other heroines, is melancholy and unhappy. She spends long hours reading the poetry of Young and Milton and through allusions to them and other writers she laments her past. Herbert creates a heroine in the same mould as Wollstonecraft’s and Tighe’s fictional characters; like them she is intelligent, literary, full of sensibility and above all wronged. Wollstonecraft was a successfully published author and well-known woman of letters, Tighe achieved a similar status shortly after her death and Herbert remained a private, unpublished author. However, Wollstonecraft’s and Tighe’s novels and Herbert’s unpublished life-writing all demonstrate very clearly how all three authors participated in the same world of literary forms. Thus Herbert’s life-writing texts emerge clearly as products of the literary culture of her time.

³⁰² Wollstonecraft (1788), p. 42.

³⁰³ Wollstonecraft (1798), p. 67.

³⁰⁴ Wollstonecraft (1798), p. 69.

³⁰⁵ Tighe, *Selena*, p. 3.

Life-writing, whether in the form of personal diaries and journals, or more elaborate published memoirs, as we have seen, was a common practice in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Ireland. What makes Herbert's life-writing different is that she does not simply record the facts of her life. She transforms the facts into three different literary genres, poetry, memoir and diary and in the process presents herself as an author. Herbert thus makes and remakes herself in her life-writing. Two Irish poets writing over a century after Herbert would have found much to sympathise with in Herbert's representations of multiple versions of herself in her life-writing. W. B. Yeats in "The Death of Synge" makes a claim for the creative purpose that is closely aligned to this reading of Herbert's work.

I think that all happiness depends on the energy to assume the mask of some other self; that all joyous or creative life is a rebirth as something not oneself, something which has no memory and is created in a moment and perpetually renewed. We put on a grotesque or solemn painted face to hide us from the terrors of judgment, invent an imaginative Saturnalia where one forgets reality, a game like that of a child, where one loses the infinite pain of self-realisation.³⁰⁶

The poet Louis MacNeice, writing about Yeats, makes similar claims for his own writing.

If you know what my whole self and my only self is, you know a lot more than I do. As far as I can make out, I not only have many different selves but am often, as they say, not myself at all. Maybe, it is just when I am not myself – when I am thrown out of gear by circumstances or emotion – that I feel like writing poetry.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London, 1980), pp. 503-504.

³⁰⁷ Louis MacNeice, *The Poetry of W.B. Yeats* (Oxford, 1941), p.146.

Yeats's belief that "all joyous or creative life is a rebirth" can be witnessed in Herbert's recreation of herself in her three manuscripts. Even when the contents of *Retrospections* and her *Journal* are tortured and gruesome the vitality and joy evident in the creative act of composition is unmistakable. That same playfulness is evident in her use of a pseudonym and enigmatic title in *Poetical Eccentricities* and her use of multiple authorial names in *Retrospections*. Like MacNeice, Herbert's writing is at its most intense and creative when she is by her own admission "not herself." Herbert may or may not go insane but as authoress she is not a madwoman but a writer who delights in invention and in the process creates a series of imaginary literary selves. However, unlike Yeats and MacNeice, she articulates her search for a coherent self by using plots, characters, events and the language from her reading to form her subjectivity. Thus she creates herself as an author in the image of the writers she reads and admires. She does this through emulating both the material and textual practices of published books. Herbert's emulative aesthetic is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Herbert's Practices of Emulation

In this chapter I discuss the ways in which Herbert emulates printed books through her use of paratext, allusion and the conscious citation of other works. In the previous chapter I mapped out the rich textual culture in which Herbert writes. Most journals, as we have seen, were kept as private documents while only a relatively small percentage were published. What singles Herbert's writing out is that her texts are private documents but they also mimic published books. No other writer in this study copies and mimics published books with the same minute attention to detail and finish that Herbert achieves in *Poetical Eccentricities* and *Retrospections*. The close study of the material aspects of Herbert's manuscripts and of her practice of allusion reveals the writer as an adept reader and emulator of printed books. The focus of the argument is on the materiality of her manuscripts and in particular on the paratext and the allusions she employs in their construction. It is through their use that Herbert makes her manuscripts into books. In Genette's terms she uses them "to make present, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its "reception" and consumption in the

form ...of a book.”³⁰⁸ It is the paratext of each of Herbert’s manuscripts that establishes their material identity as books and fulfils the reader’s expectations of what a book should be. Her use of paratext is a conscious attempt to emulate book production and follows, for the most part, the conventions of her time. Her individual appropriation and adaptation of this key aspect of the production of literary texts tells us much about the meaning of her texts and her relationship to the print culture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Most revealingly Herbert’s contrived and artful use of illustration and quotation reveal that her self-fashioning as an “authoress” and her fashioning of her manuscripts as published books, like her representation of self-madness, is controlled and purposeful or at least that is the effect they create. The chapter opens with a bibliographical description of Herbert’s three manuscripts. This is followed by a discussion of her use of paratext and the different ways in which the paratext of each of her manuscripts influences their meaning. Herbert’s use of allusion is the subject of the second section of the chapter. Her use of direct and indirect allusion to other writers tells us much about a provincial Irish woman’s reading in the period. The chapter closes with a detailed mapping of the writers and texts to which Herbert alludes in her writing.

There is no simple answer as to why Herbert was making her own books.³⁰⁹ At the time people were writing and publishing in Ireland even, as we have seen, in small towns like Carrick-on-Suir. Herbert wrote her manuscripts in the midst of heated debates over copyright between Dublin and London publishers, between authors and publishers and between those who argued over women’s

³⁰⁸ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997), p. 1.

³⁰⁹ I discuss this in detail in Chapter Five.

role in society and in print culture. By not publishing her work she avoided the difficulties awaiting authors in general, and women in particular, whose work entered the public domain. But there was no way to avoid the textual and print culture in which she operated. Her ideas about how to write, what to write about and how to present it were all drawn from the literary world she knew through her reading of published books. Herbert also found in print culture material ways to construct herself as an author. What she did with this knowledge in the production of her texts reveals much about her work and her relationship to the literary culture of her time. It also allows us to view that culture through the eyes of an observant and not uncritical contemporary reader and writer. Herbert's emulative practices are the physical embodiment of her understanding of the book in the period.

Bibliographical Details: "Along the Archival Grain"³¹⁰

I begin this chapter with a brief bibliographical study of Herbert's manuscripts firstly, because such a study has not been carried out to date, and secondly, because the bibliographical aspects of the manuscripts are fundamental to my readings of her work. Herbert designs and makes her manuscripts by hand. She fashions them on expensive English first editions and not on the cheaper Irish reprints that were such an important and contested part of the Irish book trade in the eighteenth century. We can see this in the dimensions she uses, the paper-weight and quality, the

³¹⁰ *Along the Archival Grain* is, as we have seen, the title of Ann Laura Stoler's study of the archives of the Dutch East Indies.

elaborate binding and the embellishments she employs in their decoration. The manuscripts therefore tell their own stories; they show her intentions as an author and her belief in the quality of her work. The materiality of the manuscripts testifies to Herbert's ambition as a writer and author and their very existence challenges her self-representation as a woman driven mad by emotional chaos. The writing and the making of the manuscripts establish Herbert as an author and make her texts part of Irish literary history. The state of repair of the manuscripts tell us how often they were handled and read and the state of preservation speaks of the ways in which they were viewed by succeeding generations. Their constructions show Herbert's skills as a bookbinder and illustrator of her own work, and the differences between them, her understanding of literary genre. They are, above all, material representations of a relatively hidden literary world that existed in rural Ireland in a class that was thought to be unliterary and uncultured.

The manuscript of *Poetical Eccentricities* measures 24 cm long by 19 cm wide and is two cm in depth. This is a quarto edition, the size of most English first-edition imports into Ireland. Irish reprints, printed in duodecimo and in soft covers, were much cheaper to produce and to purchase. Herbert's choice here is significant as it shows her ambition; her work is original and expensive, not a cheap reprint. The cover is leather over boards. There are no watermarks on the quality weight hand-laid paper and no evidence of folding or of cut papers at the edges of the folios. *Poetical Eccentricities* presents itself as a very finished book. One of the ways that we see this is in the non-functional decorative features. The headbands are sewn to the text block and so are functional rather than decorative. However, the five horizontal lines on the spine are pretensions rather than structural necessities as is the backing of the spine; this is where the edges of the spine are rounded off to give a finished appearance. This is a handmade book, but one made by a craftsman not an amateur. Herbert did not bind this book herself but purchased it, possibly in the offices of *Finn's*

Leinster Journal in Kilkenny or in Waterford city.³¹¹ Patrick Hayden records buying a leather-bound ledger in which to write his *Journal* in R. Farrell's Mirror office in Waterford in 1802.³¹² It was made by Chambers and Halligan of Dublin and cost of £5.11.6. The purchase of such an expensive book for his *Journal* shows how he valued his writing. It is significant that Herbert also chooses to write her poems in what was, for the time, an expensive and well-designed book. The book's elegant pretensions echo Herbert's pretence that this is not just an amateur collection of poems, but a polished and refined published book of the period. The book is not in good condition (Appendix One, fig.19). The front pastedown or liner is in place but the back pastedown is detached and exposes the board underneath and the leather foldover. The leather itself is worn, torn in many places and brittle to the touch. There are many water stains on the unused endpapers, but very few on the text block. These signs of extensive use suggest that the text had many readers in the past. We know that the manuscript remained in Wyse Jackson's study from 1956 until 2010, and was in Waterford Cathedral Library for many years before that, so the extensive reading would have taken place during Herbert's lifetime. This substantiates Herbert's own claim in *Retrospections* that her book of poems had a considerable readership among her family and connections.

The manuscript of *Retrospections* measures 33.2 cm long by 20.2 cm wide and is 3.5 cm in depth. It is bound in leather, most likely calf, it has a linen dust cover which is hand-stitched over the leather. The binding shows an unschooled hand, but one that has knowledge of binding techniques, even if they are unconventional. However, unlike *Poetical Eccentricities*, it is not the work of a craftsman but

³¹¹ Finn's *Leinster Journal* advertised books of this kind regularly from the 1770s onwards. Herbert tells us in *Retrospections* and in her *Journal* that she gets her paper and paints from Kilkenny and from Waterford.

³¹² Patrick Hayden, *Journal*, MS in private possession of Mr. A. McCan, Cork. p. 1.

of a gifted amateur. The paper is hand-laid and has slight ridged lines, both vertical and horizontal. The paper has a watermark; this can be seen clearly on the blank folios at the end of the manuscript. The watermark, a Fleur de Lis in a large oval surmounted by a crown, suggests that the paper was of French origin. James Phillips' study of watermarks used in Ireland in the eighteenth century shows "the dominant and extensive use of French paper" in the Irish print industry.³¹³ He also notes that one of the most common French watermarks was the grand Fleur de Lis.³¹⁴ Under the Fleur de Lis is printed FP 1809. The initials are probably those of the manufacturer and the 1809 may refer to the lot number of the paper or to the date of manufacture. Very few of Phillips's examples of watermarks have dates attached, so this may be a lot number. However, if this is the date of the manufacture of the paper, then it would suggest that these end pages were added later or that the manuscript dates, not from 1806, as Herbert tells us, but from some years later. Desmond Mandeville in his bibliographical note on Herbert's *Journal* argues that internal evidence from the *Journal* and *Retrospections* leads him to believe that *Retrospections* was put together later than 1806.³¹⁵ If Mandeville is correct, as the watermark might also suggest, then the date of composition is later than 1806. However, this is contradicted by Herbert's own dating of the last chapter of *Retrospections* and by two separate entries in her *Journal* in 1806 when she states that she has completed her "history." Whether Herbert completed the manuscript in 1806 or 1809 is uncertain. What we do know is she dates her final entry as Christmas of the year 1806: "I finish at the year 1806 anxious to complete my Work though my Chief Solace in Solitude" (Ret., p. 420).

³¹³ James W Phillips, *Printing and Bookselling in Dublin, 1670-1800* (Dublin, 1998), p. 186.

³¹⁴ Phillips (1998), p. 178.

³¹⁵ Desmond Mandeville, "Bibliographical Note 1986," MS. Mandeville Family Papers, Anner Castle.

The manuscript's binding is a replica of a published book of the period. It is shelf-bound, that is, the spine is designed to facilitate shelving in a book room or library, with the book's title and author's name written vertically on the spine. The handwriting is clear and even. The text fills up each page, there are no margins left at the sides and no space at the top or end of the pages. It would appear that Herbert bound this manuscript herself. This may have been because when she was writing she was virtually a prisoner in the family home and would have been unable to purchase a suitable bound book. It seems more likely however that the nature of the text made binding after completion more practical. The thirteen watercolours that are bound into the text would have been very difficult to paint in a book that was already bound. Unlike the *Journal* entries, there are no errors in penmanship and no corrections or mistakes in the text. This would also suggest that it was written on loose pages before it was bound, as there is no evidence of the removal of pages from the text block. The manuscript is in very good condition. Unlike *Poetical Eccentricities* it shows little evidence of use. This suggests that the readership was confined to immediate family members until it was deposited in Trinity College Library. Given the nature of some of the content it is understandable that the family guarded it closely; it is also clear that they took care with its preservation.

Herbert's *Journal*, 31 July 1806 – 31 December 1807

The very unfinished and untidy appearance of Herbert's *Journal* echoes the fragmented nature of the written text. It consists of thirty-seven pages of unbound closely written text. The first entry is headed "*Journal* for 1806." There is no cover, no title page and no name attached to the *Journal*. A pen and pencil drawing on the last page is a conversation piece depicting a group of five figures in

fashionable dress. It is in the style of the paintings in *Retrospections*, but is unfinished and does not appear to have any relationship to the text. The handmade folios, which measure 33.2 cm long by 20.2 cm wide, have slightly ridged lines, both vertical and horizontal. Although the handwriting is identical to that of *Retrospections* and *Poetical Eccentricities*, it is much less carefully controlled. The layout of the pages is often cramped and words and sentences abbreviated. There is no indication that Herbert wanted to create the impression that this was a published book. Desmond Mandeville's bibliographical note on the *Journal* states that the condition of the *Journal* "suggests the removal at some time of further sections (note the family tradition that part(s) of the journal were destroyed by Mrs. E Mandeville, as both being crazed and slanderous)." ³¹⁶ If this is the case, then the manuscript is only part of what was a much longer and possibly more finished text.

The manuscript is in very poor condition. The folios are soiled and have fragmented edges and spillage stains. The poor condition of the manuscript may not be an indication of extensive reading. The paper used was not of the same quality as the two earlier manuscripts and as the folios were unbound they were more liable to damage and deterioration over time. Extensive restoration work was carried out by the Manuscripts Department in Trinity in 1991. Despite this, a small number of the entries are difficult to read. This is partially due to the fact that Herbert left no margins, so where pages have become frayed, the writing has disappeared almost entirely.

³¹⁶ Desmond Mandeville, "Bibliographical Note" (1986), MS. Mandeville Family Papers, Anner Castle.

Herbert's decision to produce *Poetical Eccentricities* and *Retrospections* in quarto and their meticulous binding show her ambitions for the status of her manuscripts. This distinguishes them from cheap Irish reprints of her time and aligns her work with illustrated books and with expensive first editions. The decorative pretensions she adopts in her binding techniques show her desire to lift her manuscripts above the level of mere functionality. Mirjam Foot in "Bookbinding and the History of the Book" makes the point that "binding as a physical object, its form and its construction, as well as its decoration, can teach us something about the history of the book in general, its development, its use and its readership."³¹⁷ Herbert's presentation binding announces the importance, even the luxury of her texts and her belief in their status, not just as literary works of value, but as composite works of art. Thus the finished manuscripts show her skills as a writer, as a visual artist and as a book binder and illustrator and most importantly the full extent of her emulative practice. Her manuscripts are a material example of a provincial Irish writer's understanding of the meaning and significance of printed books in this period of rapid expansion in the book-publishing trade.

Herbert's Practices of Emulation and Paratext

The most prominent and visible example of Herbert's emulative practice is her use of paratext. She employs varied and extensive paratextual devices to present her unpublished manuscripts as printed

³¹⁷ Mirjam M. Foot, "Bookbinding and the History of the Book" in Nicholas Barker, ed., *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society. The Clarke Lectures 1986-1987* (London, 1993), p. 114.

books. She uses title pages, prefaces, indexes, epigraphs, arguments, footnotes and illustrations in the creation of her manuscripts. Thus Herbert seeks to create her identity as an author and her unpublished manuscripts as printed books through emulating the paratextual practices of established professional authors, printers, booksellers and the books they publish. Paradoxically, this makes Genette's detailed study of the paratext of printed books particularly appropriate to the reading of Herbert's hand-written manuscripts. In his analysis of the functions of the paratext in Proust's work, Genette claims that the paratext "not only marks a zone of transition between text and non-text but also a transaction."³¹⁸ The paratext of Herbert's manuscripts is important not just because of its visual impact but because, as Philippe Lejeune argues, the paratext is "the fringe of the printed text which, in reality, controls the whole reading."³¹⁹ Janine Barchas describes it well as "the liminal devices and conventions that mediate a book to the reader."³²⁰ The paratext is "liminal", in that it is neither inside nor outside the text, and yet it mediates the work because it is through it that we read the text. Paratextual elements, therefore, are not just important in themselves, they have a profound and often underestimated impact on how we read the accompanying text. As an example of this, Genette asks, "Reduced to its text alone and without the help of any instructions for use, how would we read Joyce's *Ulysses* if it were not called *Ulysses*?"³²¹ Barchas in support of Genette's understanding of the importance of such framing devices argues that they provide "loci of interpretation that compliment and complicate the narratives they

³¹⁸ Gerard Genette, "The Proustian Paratext," *Substance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism* 17. 2 (1988), 63.

³¹⁹ Quoted in Genette (1988), p. 262.

³²⁰ Janine Barchas, 'Grandison's Grandure as Printed Book: A Look at the Eighteenth-Century Novel's Quest for Status,' *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 14, 3-4 (2002), p. 673.

³²¹ Genette (1988), p. 262.

physically contain.”³²² What is interesting, therefore, is not simply the fact that Herbert constructs elaborate paratexts for her manuscripts, but how these complicate the meanings of the main texts. Close analysis of the subtle ways in which the paratext works is important for as Genette reminds us: “The effect of paratext lies very often in the realm of influence – indeed manipulation – experienced subconsciously.”³²³

For Genette the paratext can be divided into three categories, the textual, the iconic and the factual. The textual consists of title, name of author, preface, and epigraphs and the “iconic” of illustrations, frontispieces, author’s portraits, family groups, landscapes and metaphorical images. Genette’s third category, the factual, he describes as follows.

I call factual that paratext which consists, not in an explicit message (verbal or other), but in a fact whose existence, if it is known to the public makes some commentary on the text and bears on its reception.³²⁴

The following discussion examines Herbert’s use of paratext and the influence this has on our reading of her work and our understanding of her relationship to the literary culture of her day.

³²² Barchas (2002), p. 10.

³²³ Genette (1988), p. 409.

³²⁴ Genette (1988), p. 265.

Because Herbert borrows such a wide variety of devices and conventions to present her work, I use Genette's three categories of paratext: the textual, the iconic and the factual in my discussion of her manuscripts.

The conventional paratextual devices Herbert uses in the construction of *Poetical Eccentricities* shows her meticulous emulation of the printed books of her day. It has a title page, an index, a preface, introductory arguments to the poems and very comprehensive footnotes. The title page gives the name of the collection, *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity*, and the author's name, Dorothy Strangeways.³²⁵ As I have argued in Chapter Two these are transparent disguises and are evidence of what Genette describes as the "delight in invention" which characterises much of Herbert's writing. The Index page of *Poetical Eccentricities* is formally presented and accurate. When two poems have the same page number Herbert uses the formal term "ibid" rather than repeat the page number. The first poem "Preface" introduces the author and the collection. It establishes the author's amateur status and her reluctance to have these verses read by others. It also anticipates any criticism of the poems by pointing out their defects in advance. This is a very conventional device of the period that many writers use in presenting their work to the public.

Herbert has annotated all of the poems in the collection. Her annotations or "Notes" are placed at the end of each page. For the poems at the beginning of the collection she uses a variety of symbols, crosses, squares and star shapes to distinguish the notes. Some poems have such extensive

³²⁵ The full title reads: *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity And Inscribed to all those who are Lovers of Whimsical Performances by their Most Obedient Humble Servant Dorothy Strangeways* (Appendix One, fig. 20).

footnotes that she is driven to create new symbols from the old, for example, drawing a circle around a cross to use it again as a new symbol. Later in the collection she uses the less graphic but simpler letters of the alphabet to indicate her footnotes, and finally in her “Last Will and Testament” she numbers her footnotes. In this poem, where some pages have up to nine footnotes, using symbols would have taxed even Herbert’s inventiveness. Her footnotes vouch for the accuracy of the content of her poems and link the poems to the details of her daily life.

It is not surprising to discover how closely Herbert’s use of footnotes resembles Pope’s heavily annotated poem *Eloisa to Abelard*. James McLaverty, commenting on Pope’s extensive use of footnotes, remarks that “the history of his notes proves Pope one of the great literary annotators.”³²⁶ He makes the point that *Eloisa to Abelard* is the first poem where Pope realises that “he could use his annotation to free his poem of certain responsibilities to reveal information.”³²⁷ The following extract from “Sea-Side Ball or the Humours of Bunmahon” is representative of Herbert’s use of footnotes. The poem gives a very humorous account of a ball the Herberts give for their friends in their new seaside cottage.

Now all dispense with eager haste

In order to display their Taste

And ev’ry dirty hole ransack

³²⁶ James McLaverty, *Pope, Print and Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 209.

³²⁷ McLaverty (2001), p. 232.

That they may bring some fine thing back

One brings a great large Iron-pot

Some kettle skillets and what not

I'm for a Chamberp-t quoth Nell (b)

Ah fie you dirty beast cried Bell (c)

You're only fit with beast to dwell

At length one wiser (d) than the rest

A clumsy Arch of Pasteboard dresse'd

With wither'd Heath and oe'r it wrote

Two lines (e) which welcome did denote

At once this stopp'd all further search

All hail with glee the Royal Arch.

(b) Truth all truth all. (Nell) Miss Eleanor Butler of famous memory.

(c) Miss Isabella Blunden. (d) Miss Herbert.

(e) The lines here mention'd were from Goldsmith's Retaliation.

"Let our landlord supply us with beef and with fish"

"Let each guest bring himself and he bring the best dish." (P.E., p. 74)

Here Herbert uses her footnotes to prove the truth of the incidents in the poem. She also uses them to identify characters referred to in the poem. Note (b) above identifies Nell as Eleanor Butler one of the famous Ladies of Llangollen. And finally she gives the lines of poetry from Goldsmith that are written on the Royal Arch.

Herbert extends the truth-telling function of the footnotes to include confessions of her own. Having quoted some Latin phrases in “The Parson’s Fireside” she explains that they are not her own.

I assure the reader I am no learn’d lady tho I have here quoted Latin as I was forced to take those scraps from the Mottoes in *the Spectator*. This will account for their not being properly connected for which I crave pardon. (P.E., p. 38)

She admits her lack of classical education and confesses to borrowing phrases from more scholarly writers in the composition of her poems. Her emulative practice is seen clearly here where she deliberately calls attention to her dependence on her reading, in this case *The Spectator*, and the role it plays in her writing. She also uses the footnotes to correct mistakes in the text. This is a handwritten manuscript where the poems are written into a book that is already bound. When an error does occur the poet corrects it in the footnotes. For example in the poem “To Melancholy” the poet indicates where she has omitted two lines. The point at where these are missing is marked with the symbol ⊗ and the note “Verse wanting more see bottom of this page.” The footnote reads “Errata Read at this mark ⊗.” She then writes the two missing lines. It is a very practical solution that also

shows Herbert's concern for the materiality of the text as it maintains the overall neatness of the page structure (P.E., p. 5). Herbert's use of footnotes gives her work a literary context. By emulating the techniques of the great writers of her time she places herself in a select group of learned and professional men. This gives her manuscript a literary standing that their unpublished status does not afford. Herbert's footnotes make us aware of the connections between her poetry and the life she leads by supplying the family stories on which the poems are based. In the footnotes we also hear the voice of Herbert commenting on her writing, on her method of composition and on her life.

"The Buckiad" is the most ambitious poem in the manuscript. It also has the most extensive paratext of all the poems. It has a full title page, "The Buckiad: An Heroic Poem in Four Books." The text of the poem is framed by "Preface to the Buckiad" which acts as a general introduction to the poem. Each of the four books also has its own title page, and each is prefaced by a page-long prose argument explaining its purpose. The poem concludes with a two-page prose epilogue. Herbert describes the first as "Advertisement the 1st – To All Gentlemen whom it may Concern." Speaking in the third person the poet explains her method of composition: "it is entirely a Creature of her own Brain but she acknowledges that it is formed of Materials which she has gather'd from observations on the Reigning Vices of the Times which appear in Retail tho not in Wholesale in Modern fine Gentlemen" (P.E., p. 144). It is revealing to notice Herbert's familiarity with the modern language of commerce and how easily she adapts it to her purpose. "The Buckiad" has extensive footnotes; some work as a glossary on words and phrases used, others debate the style of the poem itself and poetry in general. She openly acknowledges lines borrowed from other sources. In the poem these are indicated by inverted commas, even when she has altered the lines to her own purpose. For example, she misquotes lines from Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad*. Her footnote is an open acknowledgment of her emulative aesthetic and shows her confidence in it as a legitimate form of

composition, one that shows her extensive reading and knowledge of literature rather than weakness as a writer.

The lines enclos'd with inverted Commas beginning with 'Now Mighty Scape Grace' are a parody of Homer's description of Patroclus' Ghost appearing to Achilles. (P.E. p. 140)

Herbert here displays knowledge of classical literature, albeit in translation, and the confidence as a poet to parody and play with such canonical texts in the construction of her poetry.

There is no iconic paratext in *Poetical Eccentricities*; unlike *Retrospections* Herbert has not included any illustrations in her manuscript. However, the factual paratext of *Poetical Eccentricities* has a particular resonance for the reading of this manuscript. There is no record of the poems being read between 1806 and 1957 when Wyse Jackson discovered them in Waterford Cathedral Library. Before that it is likely that they were seen only by Herbert's family and friends. Like *Retrospections* the mystery that has surrounded the manuscript adds to its mystique. The fact that it was missing for over a hundred years and unknown to most readers of Herbert's work has coloured both the reception history of *Retrospections* and her reputation as a writer. As I have argued earlier, had readers of *Retrospections* known of the existence of *Poetical Eccentricities*, they might have been more alert to the literary qualities of the text.

Herbert's use of paratext in *Poetical Eccentricities* makes this handmade manuscript a replica of published collections of poetry in the period. It presents her work formally and places her in the context of the other published poets. There is little material difference between the presentation of her manuscript and that of published texts. This shows Herbert's knowledge of the popular texts of her time and her desire to be part of the literary culture out of which they emerge. It also shows her confidence in her own ability and her ambition to be part of a world that is dominated by published male writers. Herbert's models are a formidable collection of poets who are major public figures. She shows little anxiety in her use of their work in the composition of her own texts. Also, as we have seen, she is bold enough to copy and to parody the work of classical writers like Homer. In her references to Goldsmith she suggests that she writes the poetry that he, as an Irishman, should be writing. Her belief that her own somewhat common-place life story is the stuff of great tragedy says much about her belief in the transformative possibilities of her emulative aesthetic. By mimicking these writers she can create literature using her own limited experience of life as her subject matter. That she can do this shows the power and influence of the published book in the period.

I have argued above that the paratext in *Poetical Eccentricities* makes Herbert's manuscript of light verse into a book. However, as in the *Retrospections* manuscript where the careful control of the paratext challenges Herbert's presentation of her decline in the text, so too there is a discordant relationship between text and paratext in *Poetical Eccentricities*. The difficulty here lies in the fact that the paratexts, which Herbert mimics, come from the published texts of well-known poets and are more sophisticated than the poems they support. The use of such elaborate paratexts is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it shows Herbert's knowledge of the literature of her day and her ability to mimic it, while on the other, there is the danger that it will highlight the amateur quality of the verse itself and the differences between it and the poetry of the great writers it emulates.

Retrospections of an Outcast has the most elaborate and extensive paratext of all three works. The first encounter the reader has with the textual paratext is the title and name of the author. As we have seen, these are printed on the spine of the manuscript to facilitate shelving. Thus Herbert defines her text visually as part of a community of books. The two title pages perform a similar function, presenting the texts as one in a series of works (Appendix One, fig.1). The listing of her other works establishes the author as a woman of letters, not a single-text author. The second title page is specific to *Retrospections* itself but also lists the author's other works (Appendix One, fig. 2). This is a much more elaborately decorated page; it is delicately coloured and mirror- framed. It gives the title, or more correctly, the two titles of the text. We have the metaphorical title, *Retrospections of an Outcast* and the literal, *The Life of Dorothea Herbert*. This is the first indication the reader gets that there may be different stories told in the manuscript. The lines of poetry beneath the title "Vive Lamour La Belle Amour/ Creative Love Still bade Eternal Eden shine Around" are the first of the many poetic allusions that Herbert uses in the text.

The text is divided into eight books and these are subdivided into 142 chapters. The first book has the title "A Help to Memory Or Retrospections of an Outcast by Dorothea Roe." Herbert shortens the title of each of the subsequent chapters to "Retrospections of an Outcast by Dorothea Roe." Even the most factual passages are inscribed under the name of the fictitious Dorothea Roe. This ghostly image broods over the whole text and influences the reader's understanding of the reliability of the narrator and questions her ability to tell the story of her life. By substituting the names "Outcast" and "Dorothea Roe" for her own name she challenges her credibility as author and her authority over the text. However, she also displays the same playfulness that we encounter in her

use of a pseudonym in *Poetical Eccentricities*. The level of uncertainty produced by the use of multiple names is in marked contrast to the disciplined structure of the text itself.

Herbert has included many footnotes in the text. They give information that would otherwise disrupt the flow of the narrative, but yet are necessary to support and explain it. She indicates each footnote in the text with the phrase “See note” and gives each a symbol. In the footnotes she includes lists of names of family members and names and occupations of notables who live in the district.³²⁸ She also uses them to explain words that the reader may not understand. Footnotes augment the information given in the text and give it stability and control. They also announce the work as scholarly and place it firmly in the ranks of serious published works. This highlights how the paratext of *Retrospections*, in its adherence to order, research and accurate knowledge, is at variance with the romantic and at times hysterical content in the second half of the text.

Herbert does not include a dedication or a preface in the text. This is one significant difference between her text and printed books of the period. Almost all published books contained dedications, mostly to patrons who had supported the authors in the past or whom they hoped would be of material assistance in the future. Prefaces were also a staple of the eighteenth-century printed book. These mostly took the form of apologies for a work’s inadequacies and pleas for tolerance from the reader. The omission of both dedication and preface may suggest that Herbert was confident enough in her writing not to seek the support of a patron, to apologise for the quality of her work, or

³²⁸ Herbert’s use of footnotes in *Retrospections* suggests that she has modelled them on the listing and tabulating methods used in the 1799 Carrick-on-Suir census.

to beg for tolerance from her readers. It is more likely, however, that the omissions signalled Herbert's belief that *Retrospections* was not destined for publication but would remain a private document. This contrast between the conventional form of the manuscript and the intimate nature of the content comes into sharp focus when we examine in detail the paratextual devices that formally present *Retrospections* as a work of literature.

The Iconic Paratext

Herbert's thirteen watercolours are part of the iconic paratext of the manuscript. They are paratext rather than text for although they are bound into the text block and illustrate some of the themes and scenes depicted in the text, they are also separate to the text, and, as we will see, create sets of meanings that undermine the authority of the text in subtle ways. That the modern publishers of the manuscript regarded them as a non-essential even an undesirable part of the paratext is evident from their virtual omission from the published editions of the work. Herbert, in her use of illustration, is following a development that she would have come in contact with through her reading. Illustrated texts were available in Ireland from as early as the mid-1700s. There are two late eighteenth-century texts with illustrations by William Blake that Herbert is likely to have known. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* published by Joseph Johnson in 1791 has five engravings by Blake.³²⁹ Wollstonecraft's text was reprinted in Dublin in 1792 and again in 1799.³³⁰

³²⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories from Real Life: With Conversations Calculated to Regulate Affections, and Form the Mind to Truth & Goodness* (London, 1791). Illustrations designed and engraved by William Blake.

However, neither edition is based on Johnson's illustrated London edition.³³¹ But it is possible that Herbert has a copy of the London edition because her manuscripts, as we have noted, are modelled on London originals, never on cheap Dublin reprints. Blake's illustrated edition of Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* was published in London in 1798.³³² Again this illustrated edition was not reprinted in Dublin, possibly because of the cost of reproducing the engravings. Blake's illustrations in both of these texts combine image and poetry on the same page, a technique that Herbert adopts in her illustrations. The similarity between the last three plates in *Retrospections* and those of Blake also suggest that Herbert may well be familiar with these texts. In his introduction to Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, the publisher draws attention to the increased importance of the visual arts and the growing popularity of reissuing classics in illustrated editions. In his praise of Blake he suggests that the function of the illustrations is more than decorative: "Of the merit of Mr Blake in those designs which form not only the ornament of the page, but in many instances, the illustration of the poem, the editor conceives it unnecessary to speak."³³³ Herbert may also have been influenced by Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy*. She alludes to it many times in her work, even comparing the length of her nose to Tristram's on one occasion (P.E., p. 53). Richard Macksey describes Sterne as "that pioneering anatomist of the physical body of the text."³³⁴ Herbert could not be described as a

³³⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories from Real Life* (Dublin, 1792); (Dublin, 1799).

³³¹ We know that Blake also illustrated a London edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Herbert makes extensive use of this poem in her construction of *Retrospections*. However, it is unlikely that she came in contact with the illustrated edition as it was not published until 1808.

³³² Edward Young, *Night Thoughts* (London, 1796), p. viii.

³³³ Young (1796), p. viii.

³³⁴ Richard Macksey, in Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997), "Introduction," p. ix.

pioneer; however in emulating Sterne's experimental novel she too shows her awareness of the importance of the physical body of the text.

The illustrations fall into four distinct groups: self-portraits, landscapes, conversation pieces and surreal images. Viewed in these composite groupings the images collectively construct distinct narratives, narratives that are, at times, at variance with those articulated in the text. As we have seen in Chapter Two, Herbert employs the images of two muse figures and three self-portraits to stage visually both the birth and death of the woman author. As the first and last illustrations in the text, the muse figures frame the narrative; the frontispiece shows the active and welcoming intellectual male muse while the "The Mourning Muse" who closes the text is female and inactive. The male muse signals the birth of the authoress and the female muse, her death. The use of muse figures is important as it represents the death of the author as a significant tragedy and not the commonplace story of a young woman's decline on the desertion of her lover. Within the symbolic frame of the muses Herbert's three self-portraits literally re-enact the making and unmaking of the authoress. However, the confident and deliberate control of the visual depiction of the unmaking of the author challenges the authenticity of the story it tells. Thus the competence with which Herbert constructs the visual paratext challenges the unmaking of the author and shows the author to be in charge of her own account of her decline into silence.

Why does Herbert place her self-portrait as the second image in the text and not as the first? The answer to this question may lie, at least in part, in her knowledge of the use of frontispieces in contemporary texts. In "The Dunciad," Pope, who was himself pioneering in the use of frontispieces

in his own texts, ridicules Eliza Haywood's use of an engraved portrait of herself as the frontispiece of her 1725 four-volume edition of her novels and poems.³³⁵ The main focus of the attack, as Janine Barchas points out, is on her slightly risqué portrait.³³⁶

Fair as before her works she stands confess'd
In flowr'd brocade by bounteous Kirkall dress'd
Pearls on her neck, and roses in her hair
And her fore-buttocks to the navel bare.

Barchas suggests that what Pope is doing here is using Haywood's engraving as a "particularly ludicrous example of popular print-culture kitsch"³³⁷ Herbert, who models her mock epic "The Buckiad" on "The Dunciad," avoids similar criticism by making the Abelard figure the frontispiece to her manuscript and placing her self-portrait later in the text as Plate 2. Herbert's awareness of the print culture of her time thus guides not only her choice of image but also her placing of those images in her manuscript.

³³⁵ Eliza Fowler Haywood, *Secret Histories, Novels and Poems* (London, 1725). Haywood's portrait is indeed slightly risqué as she is depicted as a fashionable woman of the world with a very low-cut gown. (The portrait is very similar to those used later in the century by Pilkington and Leeson in their *Memoirs*.)

³³⁶ Janine Barchas, *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 22.

³³⁷ Barchas (2003), p. 24.

Herbert is not alone in imagining and picturing herself as a victim of lost love. While there are many literary models for her to draw on, there are also examples from the life she knows and the world around her in Carrick-on-Suir. Richard Mansergh St George, Herbert's contemporary and near neighbour, loses his young wife in childbirth in 1791. He is consumed with grief and that grief is captured visually in Hugh Douglas Hamilton's full-length portrait of St George (Appendix One, fig. 16).³³⁸ In August 1791 St George wrote to the artist Henry Fuseli commissioning a portrait. The long and detailed letter describes his melancholy state and gives minute instructions for the portrait he wants painted.

...your knowledge of my face and your imagination you will make a sufficient historical resemblance conceiving the expression of convulsive horror and Incurability, Delirium, I should say, in my countenance.³³⁹

Although no record of Fuseli having fulfilled the commission survives, Hamilton's painting captures much of the emotion that St George requests in his letter. Fintan Cullen describes St George's public

³³⁸ Richard Mansergh St George's full-length painting is now held in storage in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. NGI 4585, purchased 1992. For discussion of the painting, see Anne Hodge, ed., *Hugh Douglas Hamilton 1740-1808: A Life in Pictures* (Dublin, 2008) pp. 90-92; Fintan Cullen, "Hugh Douglas Hamilton: Painter of the Heart" *The Burlington Magazine* 125. 964 (1983), pp. 417-421 and Fintan Cullen, *Visual Politics: The Representation of Ireland, 1750-1930* (Cork, 1997), pp. 104-115.

³³⁹ David H. Weinglass, ed., *The Collected English Letters of Henry Fuseli* (Millwood, New York, 1982), p. 68. See also Mary F. McAteer, *Grief and Mourning in Richard Mansergh St George*. Unpublished M.Phil, (Dublin: TRIARC, Trinity College Dublin, 2007)

display of grief in his letter to Fuseli and Hamilton's portrait as exposing his "mental instability."³⁴⁰ Mary McAteer offers a very different reading of the letter and painting. In her unpublished M.Litt., "Grief and Mourning in Richard Mansergh St George," she argues that what was normal in grieving in the eighteenth century must be taken into consideration. Commenting on St George's account of his grief, McAteer concludes, "It would be deemed to fall within parameters which by today's standards would not be atypical."³⁴¹ However critics read him today, St George was not regarded as mad by his contemporaries. On the contrary he was an icon of style for many women. Eleanor Butler describes him in her *Journal* as "one of the most pleasing men I ever conversed with, very pretty, slight figure, pale genteel Face, his appearance is rendered even more interesting by the black silk cap he wears upon his head to conceal the terrible wound he has received in the American war."³⁴² In Lady Morgan's *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys* he appears as the embodiment of the Anglo-Irish ideal: "Manser St George one of the last and best of the Irish fine gentlemen in Ireland's most brilliant day."³⁴³ St George's portrait was exhibited in the Irish House of Parliament in 1801 and was commented on in the newspapers. The reviewer in *The Hibernian Journal* found the painting very moving: "This fascinates the eye, that reaches the heart..., it is a painting of a soul expressed by a body."³⁴⁴ Thomas Mulvaney in "Memoirs of Native Artists" argues that St George's painting singles

³⁴⁰ Cullen, *Visual Politics* (1997), p. 108-109.

³⁴¹ McAteer (2003), p. 61. McAteer is a retired psychiatrist whose research was mainly in the area of bereavement and melancholia.

³⁴² Mavor, (1971), p. 146. Extract from Eleanor Butler's *Journal*, 4 Feb. 1788.

³⁴³ Lady Morgan, *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys: A National Tale* (London, 1988), p. 96.

³⁴⁴ *The Hibernian Journal*, 6 June 1801.

Hamilton out as “the painter of the Heart.”³⁴⁵ St George is a very public figure, one that Herbert would have known, as they were neighbours and from the same class. Accounts of him are featured several times in the *Finn’s Leinster Journal*, and there is extensive coverage of his murder in 1798 in the paper.³⁴⁶ This image of the man of suffering would have had a profound effect on a young writer like Herbert who was seeking in her reading and the world around her a way of capturing and expressing her own suffering and mourning for a lost love.

There are three landscape paintings in *Retrospections*, “My idea of Killarney sketched from Memory” (Appendix One, fig. 5), “A North West View of Carrick-on-Suir” (Appendix One, fig. 6) and “A View of the Village of Bunmahon drawn from Memory.” (Appendix One, fig. 11). These are idealised views of locations that are important to the author. The first shows the small town of Carrick-on-Suir nestling peacefully in a valley between woods and mountains. This is a sylvan grove to match the description in the text.

The town is situated in a Delightful Valley by the Banks of the Suir – It has a good large Church, a Chapel, a fine old Castle and the remains of a Curious Ancient Abbey it is delightfully chequer’d with hanging woods verdant hills Old Castles and Gentleman’s Seats. (Ret., p. 19)

³⁴⁵ Thomas James Mulvaney, “Memoirs of Native Artists: Hugh Hamilton,” *Dublin Monthly Magazine* (Jan. to June 1842), p. 72.

³⁴⁶ Mansergh St George was murdered while defending his estate in Co. Cork in February 1798. His unpublished account of the conditions of the tenants on his estate in Co. Galway, “Account of the State of Affairs in and about Headford, County Galway” 1741, has survived. Dublin: Trinity College Dublin. MS 1-6.24. An article on St George in *Finn’s Leinster Journal* praises “the elevation of his sentiment and the goodness of his heart,” 4 Apr. 1788.

The second landscape, a view of the Lakes of Killarney, is in keeping with Herbert's description of Killarney on her visit there in 1786: "It was a delightful sight which has drawn travellers from all parts of the World – We had that day a party of Spanish grandees come purposely to see the lake and its environs" (Ret., pp. 149-150). The third landscape is a view of Bunmahon, the seaside village in Co. Waterford where the Herbert family built a seaside cottage in 1791. The cottages are not those of the native Irish but the seaside cottages of the gentry who create a summer season at the resort. All three landscapes reflect the descriptions in the text. Herbert's landscapes are those of Anglo-Irish Ireland. Its topography is one of verdant woods and valleys with castles, gentleman's houses and ancient abbeys. There are no poor thatched cottages, no small farms, none of the poverty that Arthur Young or Coquebert de Montbret described in their accounts of Ireland in the period.³⁴⁷ Herbert's are romantic views of an Irish countryside populated by the Anglo-Irish that belie the reality of poverty and political conflict that characterised Ireland in the period.

Three of the paintings are depictions of family life. The first, "The Beautiful Eves" (Appendix One, fig. 7), shows Herbert and her sisters eating fruit in an orchard and her brothers harvesting apples. The rural and the comic are depicted here in a happy domestic scene where the siblings are in sympathy with each other and the world around them and with its rich bounty. Like Herbert's

³⁴⁷ Arthur Young, *A Tour of Ireland 1776-1779: With General Observations on the Present State of that Kingdom* (Dublin, 1780). Coquebert de Montbret was appointed French Consul to Dublin in 1791. He toured the country extensively and left descriptions of the many places he visited. His notebooks and memoranda are in various French archives. For discussion of these, see Sheila Kennedy, "Coquebert de Montbret in Search of the Hidden Ireland," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 82. 1 (1952), 62-67.

evocation of her childhood in the text this is a comic scene but also one that is full of harmony.³⁴⁸

The second family portrait is titled “A Landlord Proclaimed” (Appendix One, fig. 8). The painting suggests cordial feelings between landlord and tenant. This simplifies what is a very complex social and political situation. The religious and political conflicts in Ireland in the period are belied by this image where the tenants are depicted as humble and submissive, and their landlord benign and courteous. In reality, as Herbert tells us, the tenants refuse to pay tithes and murder her father’s Proctor and his wife in 1798. In the third scene of family life “The Parsonage at Knockgrafton” (Appendix One, fig. 9), there is a deliberate undermining of the image by the text that accompanies it. The Herbert family sit outside their new home in Knockgrafton and receive gifts from their tenants. Herbert has numbered each of the rooms in the house. Underneath the painting she identifies the numbered rooms and describes the murder of her nurse and her father’s proctor there in 1798. Room No. 4 she explains is “the breakfast parlour where my nurse was murdered some years after.” No. 5 she describes as “The Hall door light where her husband was murdered some years later.” While the image and text are out of harmony here, they do reflect the basic structure of the text, that of *Paradise Lost*. The image captures what is lost and the text records the loss.

The two graveyard scenes that precede the final image in the text are a radical departure from the previous ten (Appendix 1, figs.13 & 14). Gone are the idealised landscapes, and the happy family scenes. They are replaced by surreal monochrome images. They are a combination of gothic landscapes and ghostly figures. No longer, it appears, is Herbert trying to illustrate the text in any

³⁴⁸For a discussion of visual depictions of the sentimental in fiction, see W. B. Gerard’s, “Benevolent Vision: The Ideology of Sentimentality in Contemporary Illustrations of *A Sentimental Journey* and *the Man of Feeling*,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 14 (2002), 533-575.

realistic way. These images attempt to explore a hidden consciousness. They can be understood as an attempt to show the psychological disturbance of the writer but they can also be read, in keeping with the rest of the text, as an elaborate set of allusions to other images with which Herbert is familiar. Plate 13 has no title (Appendix One, fig.11). In the foreground is a graveyard scene. A body is being lifted from the tomb by an angel. On the tombstone over the grave is the inscription, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." An angel with outspread arms waits to receive the body. In his right hand he carries the key to paradise. Behind the angel a stairway lined with angels leads to a blazing sun. This image does not relate to the text in any direct way. Herbert's desires, as expressed in the text, are not for eternal salvation but for earthly love. The image suggests resignation and the desire for religious fulfilment while the final lines of the text suggest that her desire is to revisit her former lover John Roe: "Oh that I could fly where love and the Muses lead me – then should I hover over the dwelling of my dear John Roe – Perhaps he would relent if he knew his Unfortunate Wife Dorothea Roe" (Ret., p. 421).

The desire to see John Roe and not God, to have his pity and not eternal salvation are introduced by the next image (Appendix One, fig. 14). This shows the same graveyard scene, this time illuminated by moonlight. A male figure mourns over the now closed tomb. It is worth noting the resemblance between this visual depiction of male grief and that in Mansergh St George's portrait (Appendix One, fig. 16). Gone are the angels and the stairway to heaven. In their place loom threateningly the ruins of a large gothic church. Herbert imagines John Roe's sorrow at her death, and his return to her graveside. By picturing him in this moonlit graveyard, head hung in grief over her tomb, she creates an alternative ending to her story, one where in death she regains John Roe's sympathy and love. This is a highly romantic scene where the slighted lover can picture her betrayer returned to her graveside full of remorse for his past behaviour. In the surreal world of these strange

images Herbert creates the illusion of marriage to John Roe by imagining an afterlife for them. She realises this visually in these two graveyard images. The paratext here offers an alternative ending to the text, one where the sufferer from unrequited love has at last obtained the sympathy of the lover who has deserted her. These appear particularly strange and seem to support Herbert's own assertion that she is mentally unstable until we realise that she is merely continuing her practices of emulation. Herbert finds her inspiration for the strange scenes depicted in the graveyard illustrations, not in her own deranged mind, but in the final stanzas of Pope's poem *Eloisa to Abelard*. Herbert's triptych, is a visual realisation of Eloisa's final dream of being united in death with Abelard,

"May one kind grave unite each hapless name." Fig. 10 shows Herbert asleep in the surreal landscape Eloisa imagines: "To dream once more I close my willing eyes / Ye soft illusions, dear deceits! arise." These lines are among the eleven direct allusions to the poem used by Herbert in the text (Ret., p. 265). She captures the atmosphere of the poem in the image of the sleeping figure and the surrounding landscape: "I come, I come prepare your rosate bow'rs / Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flowers." Her lover, guided by an angel is pictured in the sky above her: "Sudden you mount, you beckon from the skies / Bright clouds descend, and angels watch thee round / From op'ning skies may streaming glories shine." Herbert has captured the fine details of Eloisa's dream from the "ever-blooming flowers" to the figure bathed in celestial light. The dream sequence is then reproduced in Figs. 11 and 12. In Fig. 12 the two lovers are united in death as the mourning man sits head bowed between two tombs with a hand resting on each. Herbert's emulative aesthetic opens up the study of her manuscript in ways that are startling at times and further strengthen the argument that she may not be mad but actively participating in a world of literary allusions.

There are no images of Herbert and John Roe together. Only here at the end of the text do we find a visual suggestion of a connection between them. Even here they are pictured in separate images; and they are further separated by death. The relationship that dominates the contents of more than half of the *Retrospections* is virtually absent from the images. It is only in the final surreal images that we get any suggestion of the lost love that dominates the text. Herbert describes John Roe in minute detail in the text; she includes three self-portraits but the only image of him we get is the shadowy figure in the graveyard. The only visual representations of the lover and the love story are the ghostly graveyard scenes.

Given how carefully Herbert constructed her own manuscripts, and the important role the iconic paratext played in their making, it is ironic that the 1929/30 and 1988 published editions retained only two of the images, the author's portrait and a view of Carrick-on-Suir. The 2004 edition retained both of these illustrations, but they are reproduced in black and white rather than in the original colour. On the front cover of this edition the publishers have placed the portrait of a beautiful young woman, but it is not Herbert nor has it any connection with the text (Fig. 17). The image is itself distorted; what appears to be a miniature portrait has been taken from a much larger painting of *The Ladies Catherine and Charlotte Talbot*.³⁴⁹ Painted by Michael Wright in 1679, the image predates the composition of the manuscript by over a century. Herbert's self-portrait is reproduced in black and white and placed inside the front cover that features the younger and prettier Miss Talbot. This is an ironic posthumous cruelty as Herbert pictures herself many times in the text as the plain young woman outshone by her attractive friends, the Jephsons. This fracturing of text and

³⁴⁹ *The Ladies Catherine and Charlotte Talbot* by John Michael Wright (1697). Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland. Appendix One, Fig. 17.

image is an example of how the print industry alters and distorts the meaning of the original manuscript by omitting what are, in this instance, essential parts of the iconic paratext of *Retrospections*. Herbert's illustrations were not added later by an editor or printer but were designed, executed and placed in the text by the author as an important part of her construction as an author and her manuscripts as books. For Genette the paratext "is at the service of a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading of it."³⁵⁰ Thus the published editions, by omitting the iconic paratext, have altered the meaning of the text itself.

The factual paratext of *Retrospections* includes the strange history of the manuscript, the possibility that Herbert was not of sound mind when writing it, and the differences between the original manuscript and the published editions. The most troubling aspect is the question of Herbert's sanity. Our understanding of her mental state when writing *Retrospections* influences our reading of her work. There is internal evidence in the text and particularly in the final chapter that she is no longer sane during the final stage of its composition. Is the author mad or is she knowingly constructing the persona of a blameless heroine who is driven distracted by the loss of her lover? Is the madness literary and assumed or real? I return to this question at the end of the chapter.

Unlike *Retrospections* and *Poetical Eccentricities*, Herbert, on the surface at least, appears to have used few paratextual devices in the construction of her *Journal*. It consists of thirty-seven unbound pages of closely written text. It has no cover, no title page and no footnotes. However, it is highly

³⁵⁰ Genette (1997), p. 2.

organised, each entry giving the day of the week, date and month. Above the first entry Herbert has written "Journal for 1806." The entries are chronological, and the *Journal* is faithfully kept each day. The daily entries vary in length, from very short summaries that give little detail to lengthy and very graphic accounts of the writer's sufferings. The significance of the paratext here is in the contrast between the very conventional and organised nature of the layout of the *Journal* and its histrionic contents. The controlled nature of the structure would suggest that the contents too are a controlled literary construction rather than the ravings of a writer who is out of control. As with Herbert's other manuscripts it is the paratext that complicates the reading of the *Journal*. In this case it alters significantly the way we interpret the text by changing it from what appears at first to be the writing of a mentally disturbed writer to the artfully controlled construction of the diary of a literary mad woman, or some subtle or bizarre combination of the two.

There is no iconic paratext in the *Journal*. There is however a loose page at the end of the *Journal* with an incomplete pen and ink drawing of a group of fashionably dressed people. It does not appear to have any relationship to the text. As to the factual paratext we know that Herbert was keeping her *Journal* during the time she was writing *Retrospections*. The same writer at the same time therefore produced an accomplished and polished version of her life in *Retrospections* and a *Journal*, which purports to be the work of a madwoman. This has a significant bearing on the reader's approach to the reading of both manuscripts, further illustrating the point that the paratexts of Herbert's manuscripts frequently produce meanings that contradict those articulated in the texts.

Herbert's Emulative Practices and the Art of Allusion

Direct allusion to well-known writers is both the most common form of textual paratext in Herbert's writing and the most revealing aspect of her emulative aesthetic. Herbert foregrounds her inclusion of allusions to a carefully chosen pantheon of successful writers as an important part of her construction as a woman of letters and of her manuscripts as books. Michael Wheeler in *The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction* argues that the importance of studying a writer's use of allusion is that it is "a crucial indicator of the relationship between a given work and a literary tradition."³⁵¹ Samuel Johnson describes the use of allusions to other writers as forming "a community of mind." For him it is an important part of a refined literary language: "Classical quotation is the parole of literary men all over the world."³⁵² The ability to quote is a mark of class, a sign that you belong to a coterie with an exclusive set of references. Women like Herbert did not own many books but those they did own they knew well, sometimes by heart. Books were shared, borrowed, given as gifts, read aloud to each other; they were a shared experience. We see many instances of this rich book culture in Herbert's own writing and in that of her contemporaries. Books of quotations and poetic miscellanies were popular and learning favourite poems by heart an accomplishment.³⁵³ Making extracts of well-loved poems and lines was a valued pastime. Living in a world where books, reading and literary quotation are so highly regarded it would be natural to become attached to certain texts and quotations, and to see everyday life reflected in those texts. Examining Herbert's use of allusion

³⁵¹ Michael Wheeler, *The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction* (London, 1979), p.1.

³⁵² James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson* (London, 1791); reference is to (London, 1952), p. 1143.

³⁵³ One of the most popular books of extracts was Vicesimus Knox, *Elegant Extracts: or Useful and Entertaining Passages in Poetry selected for the Improvement of Scholars in the Art of Speaking, Reading, Thinking, Composing and in the Conduct of Life* (Dublin, 1789).

makes it possible to form a better understanding of the relationship between her unpublished manuscripts and the published writers of her time.

Herbert expresses no reservations about her use of other writers' work in her own writing. On the contrary she foregrounds her allusions as an indication of her knowledge and versatility as a writer. She employs allusion in the way Dryden, Pope and Goldsmith did. It signals therefore, not her inability to compose original verse, but her active participation in the literary culture of her day. There is, on the surface, a difference in scale between Pope alluding to Milton or Ovid in his poetry and Herbert, the unknown and unpublished woman writer alluding to these great literary figures in her poetry and prose. But there are several things to bear in mind when making this distinction. Herbert's introduction to these writers and her reading of their work was guided by her father's well-read intellectual friends.³⁵⁴ Both *Finn's Leinster Journal* and *The Spectator* regularly carried articles on the skills of literary interpretation.³⁵⁵ Milton and Pope and even Goldsmith were distant from Herbert in skill, in location and in time but not in terms of familiarity. Intimate knowledge of their writing was part of her everyday life. They were well-loved writers that she admired and had no fear of emulating. What to a modern reader would be lofty and difficult was to Herbert well known and loved. Allusions to these poets, who themselves used allusion as an art form, was a natural way to progress from being a reader to becoming a writer. Thus by openly using allusions to other writers, Herbert forged a place for herself as an author in the literary tradition of her time.

³⁵⁴ See Chapter Four for a discussion of Herbert's reading practices.

³⁵⁵ Between 1770 and the late 1790s *Finn's Leinster Journal* had a weekly column titled "Poet's Corner." This featured both well-known poets and poetry submitted by readers of the paper. There are several poems by unnamed young ladies, but none that resemble Herbert's work. The column also features extracts from Hester Chapone's and James Fordyce's conduct books, and hints on how to read popular poems.

Herbert's knowledge of poetry is based on the poets she reads. It is natural therefore when she comes to write her own poetry that she imitates the work of the poets she knows and admires. This places her right at the heart of Augustan practice. For Herbert's contemporaries most, if not all, of her allusions would have been familiar. Recognising well-known lines and phrases would have added to the pleasure of reading her work. It invited readers to participate in the shared nature of reading that was part of the literary culture of the time. An example of a reader's demand for quotations in a text is Betsy Sheridan suggestion that the addition of quotations to George Anne Bellamy's *Memoirs* would make it more appealing.³⁵⁶

I wonder that she who is so fond of quotations from her favourite Shakespeare did not think of a very applicable passage to the description she gives of her intention of drowning herself. Certainly the Grave-digger's reasoning about Ophelia might come in here with very good grace.³⁵⁷

Playing with and incorporating well-known poems in her work are techniques Herbert learns from her reading and knowledge of poetry. We know that her book of poems was read and praised not

³⁵⁶ The text Sheridan is referring to is George Anne Bellamy, *An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy* (Dublin, 1785). George Anne Bellamy (1731?-1788) was a popular and successful Dublin-born actress, who made her career on the London stage.

³⁵⁷ Sheridan (1960), p. 64.

just by her family but by Archbishop Agar's literary circle in Cashel and among the Herbert family acquaintances in Rockwell and Dublin. Her neighbour, the poet Edward Mandeville, also read, admired and emulated her work.

Herbert's themes are drawn from the world she knows. There is no striving after loftier themes or scenes with which she is not familiar. When she alludes to poets of far greater stature than herself, who inhabit a more cosmopolitan world, she adapts their work to suit her world. Alluding to their work may enhance the artistic merit of her own poetry but her themes remain those of everyday life: family, home, sorrow for a lost idyllic past, the plight of unmarried women and the satiric portrayal of the silly behaviour of young men and gossiping women. "The Villa" is a representative example of how Herbert imitates the theme, verse form and tone of a very well-known poem and yet within these constraints creates a distinctive and localised poem of her own. In the opening lines Herbert openly acknowledges Goldsmith as her muse and his poem *The Deserted Village* as her inspiration. She writes "The Villa" in celebration of her own home because there is no Goldsmith in Ireland to undertake the task. "Alas no Goldsmith dwells within thy Bowers / To paint those blooming scenes those blissful hours" (P.E., p. 58). Herbert defines her writing not as the idle pastime of an accomplished young lady but as a serious contribution to the literature of her day. The poem pointedly outlines the contrast between poets like Goldsmith, who become celebrated public men and the amateur lady of letters, who occupies and celebrates the domestic sphere in her unpublished verses. The reprint industry in Ireland at the time by forcing Irish writers to seek publishing opportunities in London created a vacuum in Ireland that Herbert recognizes and attempts to fill. She adapts Goldsmith's structure and themes to suit her own purpose. He laments what he sees as a vanished rural idyll while Herbert's "The Villa" is written in the present tense about what she presents as a real place. In Herbert's poem the pastor still sits by his fireside, "the

pattern of the perfect man.” But Herbert has difficulty with the setting of the poem. Unlike Goldsmith’s village which is populated with happy peasants at their work, Herbert’s poem does not move outside the boundaries of the family demesne. As she has done in *Retrospections* Herbert constructs an idyll of the Anglo-Irish gentry and not an inclusive Irish rural village. When the poet views the countryside it is from the confines of her own garden. “Let’s take our stand against that Eastern Gate/And yonder verdant Vista contemplate” (P.E., p. 62). From the safety of the family estate the poet hears the sound of military drums that point to the isolation and fragility of her world: “Hark from the town I hear the martial drum” (P.E., p. 68). Carrick-on-Suir, in Herbert’s day, was a garrison town. The garrisons were a symbol of the English military presence in Ireland and of the instability of Herbert’s Anglo-Irish world. The poet can only create an “Auburn” in Ireland if she confines it to the family home; if she moves outside this protected area, then the romantic idyll is impossible. The threat to Herbert’s idealised Villa is not the relentless march of progress but the political situation in which the poet’s family find themselves. She may use Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village” as her source of inspiration and as a model for the shape and many of the themes of “The Villa” but her adaptation gives insight into the vulnerable political and social situation of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland.

Herbert may have written her poetry in the rectory in Carrick-on-Suir far away from the centres of literary production and having little contact with literary circles but the themes, styles and even titles of her poems attest to how much her writing was part of that world. One poem in particular demonstrates her immersion in the print culture of the time. Herbert uses the then topical “The Rights of Woman” as the title for her first poem on women. This suggests that she has read Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man*, issued as a reprint in Dublin in 1792. She is familiar with Edmund Burke’s writings as she refers to him in “The Parson’s Fireside” as one of the authors the family read around

the fireside at night. (P.E., p. 72)³⁵⁸ She may also have read Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which was issued as a reprint in Dublin in 1792. She was not alone in responding to Wollstonecraft's text or in her use of the "The Rights of Woman" as the title of her poem. Mrs Barbauld wrote her poem "The Rights of Woman" in 1790.³⁵⁹ Herbert's "The Rights of Woman" is a fourteen-line lyric, with a two-line refrain. Like all of Herbert's poems in this collection it is written in rhyming couplet. Herbert's witty subtitle "Or fashions for the year '93 – being the era of Women's literally wearing the Breeches – Health and Fraternity!" shows how, unlike the serious polemic of Paine's, Burke's and Wollstonecraft's texts, she takes a more humorous look at the rights of women (P.E., p. 19).

Herbert's use of allusion in her poetry shows her confidence as a young poet who is not afraid to mimic the great literary giants of her day and to quote from, parody and criticise them in her own poems. Through the practice of emulation she announces her place in the literary culture as practiced by these men. She also reveals how necessary she believes she and her poetry are if Ireland is to be immortalized in verse. Thus it is through a study of the paratext of the collection that we see Herbert's assured self-fashioning as a poet in the poetic tradition of her time.

³⁵⁸ Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (Dublin, 1791); Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Dublin: Printed by and for Sarah Cotter, 1766); *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Dublin, 1791).

³⁵⁹ For a discussion of this poem, see *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, eds. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Slater and Jon Stallworthy, (London, 2005).

By the time Herbert comes to write *Retrospections* in 1806, she has become even more dependent on the practice of emulation than she had been in *Poetical Eccentricities*. In *Retrospections* she uses the plots of literary texts as a way of thinking and writing about her own life. The manuscript is structured around three main texts: Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* and Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*. The relationship between *Retrospections* and these parallel texts is a complex one. Herbert's allusions to all three are not confined to direct quotation. The structure and many of the themes of her text are also modelled on those of her chosen literary texts. Her constant references to these very well-known texts give her unknown story a context and a set of familiar references. The trajectory of her story, the construction of character, the themes of lost happiness and innocence, of a past idyllic childhood and of lost love, all find echoes in the works of literature on which she models her work. Herbert's use of these texts supposes a well-read and well-educated readership. The reader's knowledge of the texts to which she alludes places Herbert's own story in a familiar literary context. If *Retrospections* has an implied reader then that reader is one who belongs to Herbert's intimate circle of friends and relatives. As I will argue in Chapter Five, this small coterie read and shared the same material, gave and receive gifts of books and manuscripts, and would have been familiar with Herbert's allusions and be capable of fully understanding and appreciating her literary skills. The plots and literary motifs of these well-known and loved texts provide Herbert with the knowledge to re-make and transform her life story into a work of literature. In the process she also emphasises her own literary gifts. *Paradise Lost* and *The Deserted Village* overtly shape the whole text, while *Eloisa to Abelard* provides the structure for the love story that is embedded in the text. Her ability to read and use creatively the works of great writers can be seen as placing her work on a higher plane. However, as I have already argued, there is a noted disparity between the story Herbert tells and the lofty allusions she uses to conceptualise and articulate it. So rather than elevate her tragic story to the heights of great literature, her emulative practices do carry the risk of calling attention to its triviality.

Herbert's most visible direct allusions are the quotations she uses to introduce each of the chapters of *Retrospections*. She rarely identifies these lines, knowing that her small readership will be as familiar with them as she is. The lines are accurately transcribed so we must presume that she knows them by heart or has copies of the poems and plays she quotes from close at hand when writing. She quotes from a wide variety of poets and playwrights but the most often quoted are Goldsmith, Pope, Milton and James Thomson. The others include Mark Akenside, Robert Blair, Edward Young, Thomas Gray, Thomas Otway, George Farquar, William Congreve, John Langhorne, Nicholas Rowe, Fanny Greville, Laurence Sterne and William Shenstone. A full list of the writers and works to which Herbert alludes can be found at the end of this chapter.

In keeping with the structure of the texts she emulates, Herbert presents her life story as one of lost innocence and defeated hopes. She describes her childhood as one of great happiness. The family group with her father the Rev. Nicholas Herbert at the centre is modelled on Dr. Primrose and his family circle in *The Vicar of Wakefield*.³⁶⁰ We see this in the early chapters of *Retrospections* where Herbert represents her family as emotional and sentimental, often resorting to tears and palpitations on the slightest pretext, men and women alike. She marks the end of the narrative of her happy childhood with a pivotal allusion to *Paradise Lost*. Her concluding sentence looks forward with apprehension to the future: "We were in Ourselves a happy family and the Rubs of Life did not then wound deeply whilst "The World was all before us where to chuse / Our place of Rest – and

³⁶⁰ Herbert does not quote from Goldsmith's novel or acknowledge that she has read it. However, there are many parallels between *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Herbert's representation of her childhood.

Providence our guide" (Ret., p. 142). These lines depict Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden. Herbert has made the lines refer to her situation by substituting "us" for "them" in Milton's first line. By formulating her life story in parallel with *Paradise Lost*, Herbert gives it a structure that she can follow and one that she can anticipate in the text; it is a pattern well known to her and to her readers. With this quotation she marks the end of childhood and anticipates the unhappy ending of her story. Thus Herbert uses Milton as her guide and muse, alluding to his lines to give authority to her own writing. Her anxieties about writing about her own life are eased by quotations like the following one that opens Book the Second of *Retrospections*: "Sing Heavenly Muse / Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme" (Ret., p. 63). Here Herbert uses Milton to sanction her writing, he is an enabling path maker, who has himself broken the rules in the past by writing about things that were not written about before.

Herbert uses *Paradise Lost* as the overall structure of her story; it gives shape and meaning to the text. She also uses it internally in character construction and dramatic scene making. The villain in *Retrospections* is John Roe; like Lucifer, in Milton's poem he is beautiful but enigmatic, his motives are unknown and his actions incomprehensible. In Herbert's story he is presented as the agent of destruction, the fallen angel who orchestrates the fall of the confident "Authoress" and leaves behind the powerless figure of the "Outcast." To signify the enormity of her loss Herbert transforms an ordinary domestic scene into one of apocalyptic grandeur and destruction.

How terrible was the moment that joined us! And how terrible were we both to each
Other at that black instant when you infamously resolved to forsake me and I as

desperately Abandon'd Myself to Despair! I swear by the Great God of Heaven I think that hour united us in Bonds that were indissoluble – In an Eternal Union sacred and sure – That Bolt of Heaven or Hell struck him a determined Villain but all its Terrors lighted on me and left me as a stiffend Corpse – Blasted – Undone for Ever. (Ret., p. 250)

Herbert closes this dramatic scene by comparing John Roe to Lucifer.

Well might I that Night have cried to my Destroyer, How art thou fallen! Oh Lucifer! Son of the Morning! – No other Idea could be so applicable to his Conduct and Physiognomy at that decisive Moment. (Ret., p. 251)

Here Herbert states clearly one of the reasons why allusions are so important in her writing and in her construction of her text. When she cannot find the language to express the emotions she feels she looks to Milton, not just for inspiration but for the ideas and the words with which to express them. She explains her use of the lines by admitting that, “No other Idea could be so applicable.” She finds in other texts ways to think about her experience and ways to understand and write about it. Herbert continues to use allusions to *Paradise Lost* when giving the details of John Roe's marriage.

Thus ended an Acquaintance that conferr'd on me as Exquisite a Bliss and as Acute Misery as the human Soul is capable of feeling – with shuddering horror I am forced to relate that the perjured Wretch has sense married another – Joined himself in execrable

Union with a common Drab of the City – a mere strolling Miss – Daughter to one
Counsellor Shankey of Dublin. (Ret., pp. 335-336)

Herbert maintains the intimate link between Milton's poem and her narrative. Having repeatedly positioned John Roe as the Lucifer of her story, it is logical to characterize the woman he does marry as one of the harlots from *Paradise Lost*.

Surely to my beloved she can be no more than one of those harlots Milton describes
whose Venal smiles "Are loveless, joyless, lifeless, unendear'd." (Ret., p. 336)

She closes this story of John Roe's marriage with a striking image of her bad angel: "too well did my
Viperous Foe wreath around me his Snaky Torments – With insidious treachery he ensnared me to
my Doom, and gloated in my Ruin with horrid joy" (Ret., p. 336). To emphasise the attractiveness
that disguises John Roe's villainy and the fatal consequences of having loved him, Herbert uses two
lines from Edward Young's "The Last Day:" "All that is lovely in the Noxious Snake / Provokes our
Fear, and bids us fly the Brake" (Ret., p. 336).

Herbert also uses *Paradise Lost* in less emotionally fraught circumstances. For example, to capture
the horror of a storm that takes place in 1789 she again borrows from Milton's poem.

The family in every Room started from their Beds and ran down half naked to avoid the showers of crashing glass flying about us – Whilst like Milton’s fallen Angels “With horrible Combustion down we fell” beneath the pelting Storm – We groped and wept in ‘darkness visible” till we formed a miserable groupe below but there it was equally affrighting and a hideous Crash from above stairs convinced us that the Roof had fallen in. (Ret., p. 231)

The allusions to *Paradise Lost* here seem much too lofty and the comparisons ludicrous until we realise that this storm anticipates the separation scene with John Roe, which follows shortly after it in the text. This violent and unnatural disturbance in nature prefigures Herbert’s dramatic figuring of her parting from John Roe. It is also worth noting that this storm did take place in 1789.³⁶¹ The fact that the storm did occur is significant as it highlights its metaphorical and literal meaning in the text. Herbert’s story may be an overly dramatic one that often relies on borrowed imagery, but that does not mean that it is not on some levels based on events that actually happened.

Milton’s *Paradise Lost* informs Herbert’s understanding of the overall pattern of her life story, the metaphorical descent from the Garden of Eden to Hell, the characterisation of John Roe and the re-creation of the fateful parting of the lovers. But it is Pope’s *Eloisa to Abelard* that Herbert uses as her

³⁶¹ *Finn’s Leinster Journal*, 3 Oct. 1789.

parallel text for the heroine's love story. John Roe is a Miltonic villain but the heroine of *Retrospections* is the embodiment of Pope's innocent Eloisa. By employing allusions to Pope's poem Herbert can make herself in the image of Eloisa. Herbert describes herself as incapable of articulating her "terrible Passion." This does not prevent her from devoting one third of *Retrospections* to trying to find a suitable language to describe her great love. To do this she relies heavily on Pope's articulation of Eloisa's passion for her lost love Abelard. Herbert finds in Eloisa's expression of her recollected passion and sorrow not just a structure within which to frame her own story, it also provides the vocabulary with which to articulate the fearful passion which obsesses her as she looks back at her life. She uses thirteen extracts from *Eloisa to Abelard* to create the heightened atmosphere and elevated tone of her characterization of her passionate love for John Roe. The quotations parallel the development of her relationship with him from its innocent beginning to the fateful ending.

From Lips like his what Precept faild to move

Too soon they taught me 'twas no sin to love. (Ret., p. 208)

Dim and remote the Joys of saints I see

Nor envy them the heaven I lose for thee. (Ret., p. 209)

Unlike most other quotations, which are used as chapter headings, both of these are placed in the body of her work to substantiate the points she is making. Her prose in turn is elevated by the lyrical nature of the poetry and reflects its high tone.

Those smiling eyes attemp'ring every Ray

Shone sweetly lambent with celestial Day

John Roe's smiles were never forced or unnatural - His wit was fine, delicate, and redundant- his sentiments natural, and his Benevolence unaffected - Every emotion sprang from the Heart - nothing forced or affected-Love, Joy, Sensibility, play'd in each beauteous feature. (Ret., p. 223)

The transition from Pope's verse to Herbert's prose is seamless when she constructs John Roe as the hero of her love story. As she recounts the early stages of the romance she briefly creates him in the image of Abelard. His qualities even outshine those of the literary character on which he is modelled. Herbert's obsession with John Roe's name and her descriptions of his many beauties find echoes in Eloisa's narrative. He is never referred to familiarly as John, always John Roe. She appropriates his name from the beginning of the text when she describes herself as Dorothea Roe. And as we have seen, it is under the assumed name of Dorothea Roe that she recounts her story. His name is "for ever Dear" to her as is Abelard's to Eloisa. She repeats it many times throughout the text and in this

way she echoes Eloisa's fascination with her lover's name: "John Roe's name was the sweetest music I could hear." (Ret., p. 258)

Herbert uses the dramatic intensity of Pope's poem to stage the magnitude of her own relationship. She also uses it to describe the devastating effects of its failure: "Oh come! Oh teach me Nature to subdue / Renounce my Love, my Life, Myself – And you" (Ret., p. 313). There is an attempt, at least in the allusions, to reconcile herself to the loss of John Roe. However the resignation Eloisa achieves at the end of Pope's poem is beyond Herbert's desire or imagination. The end of the love affair comes when she learns of John Roe's marriage. However, this does not mean the end of the affair for Herbert. She presents herself, not as the slighted but resigned lover, but as an innocent victim driven mad by sorrow and loss. Her only consolation is in the re-imagining and re-telling of her tragic story and in this she does echo Eloisa's last thoughts.

Such if there be, who loves so long, so well;

Let him our sad, our tender story tell;

The well-sung woes will sooth my pensive ghost;

He best can paint 'em, who shall feel 'em most. (Ret., pp. 362-366)

By embracing the world of literary allusions Herbert also opens her poetry to its influences. Her allusions to Pope allow his poetry to create meaning in her writing. Pope too used literary allusions in his composition of the poem so, by extension the poetry to which Pope alludes leaks into Herbert's writing and adds an extra dimension to the meaning of her texts. Ruben Brower in *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion* describes Pope as "taking pleasure in imitating the poets he read and admired."³⁶² Brower argues convincingly that Pope's Eloisa is based on Ovid's heroine Sappho.

Most of "Eloisa to Abelard" is Ovidian poetry of sharp oppositions between values and logical positions, between emotions, or characters or scenes. We go from melancholy to ecstatic remembrance, from innocent communion to guilty love, from assertions of freedom to the horrors of imprisonment and damnation, from visions of pure faith to passionate abandonment.³⁶³

Brower sees Eloisa, like Sappho, as a "passionate sufferer" who literally "burns with passion."³⁶⁴ Just as Pope bases his Eloisa on Ovid's Sappho, Herbert bases her representation as a "passionate sufferer" on Pope's Eloisa. Eloisa and Sappho burn with the passion that Herbert cannot find the words to express.

³⁶² Arthur Reuben Brower, *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion* (Oxford, 1959), p. viii.

³⁶³ Brower (1959), p. 83.

³⁶⁴ Brower (1959), p. 66.

But injurious indeed would it be to judge of what my young Heart then felt by any description I can give in the present Mutilated state of my Senses and Affections – Surely there is in Love a Mysterious Law that chains the Soul to silent Endurance, and baffles even the Imagination of those who have felt the full Rigour of that fixt and terrible Passion – Yet delightful as it is terrible! The most luxuriant Mind can give no account of what perforce it feels, And sinks resistless under Sensations it can never satisfactorily define. (Ret., p. 209)

There is no hint of overt sexual passion in *Retrospections* but by alluding to Pope and by extension to Ovid, this repressed sexual passion seeps into Herbert's representation of herself in the text.

In the parallel world of *Recollections'* literary allusions John Roe is not Abelard, or only very briefly so; he is Lucifer, the beautiful but fallen angel. As the love story reaches its climax Herbert needs new literary models to articulate her emotional state. Here she draws on the heroines of tragic drama. Thomson's tragic heroine Sigismunda provides many lines that Herbert cannot utter: "Is there kind Heaven no constancy in man?" (Ret., p. 265). Sigismunda's lines also provide an explanation for Herbert's persistence in loving John Roe even when he has married someone else: "Once my Delight now even in Anguish Charming." (Ret., p. 283) Finally, on hearing of John Roe's marriage, Herbert uses the vengeful words of Sigismunda to express the feelings for which she cannot find the words.

Oh may the Furies light his Nuptial Torch

Be it accurs'd as mine – for the fair Peace

The tender Joys of hymeneal Love

May Jealousy awaked and fell Remorse

Pour all their fiercest Venom thro' his Breast. (Ret., p. 335)³⁶⁵

She also quotes from Thomson's play *The Tragedy of Sophonisba* to give voice to her suppressed anger.

Oh save me from the Tumult of the Soul

From the Wild Beasts within!

Rack'd by a thousand mingling Passions, Fear,

Hope, Jealousy, disdain, submission, grief,

Anxiety, and Love in every Shape. (Ret., p. 239)

³⁶⁵ James Thomson, *Tancred and Sigismunda*, (Dublin, 1745). Although rarely performed today, this was one of the most popular plays of the eighteenth century. There were twenty-nine editions of the text published between 1745 and 1792; four of these were Dublin reprints. Printed copies of plays were far more popular in the eighteenth century than they are today. My research of private libraries in the period shows a substantial number of copies of popular plays. As we have seen, Herbert's family and their circle read and performed many plays.

Just as Ovid's Sappho infects Pope's characterization of Eloisa, here Herbert's vision of herself as an innocent girl, devoid of sexual passion, is challenged by her allusions to Thomson's passionate Sophonisba.³⁶⁶ The calm resigned voice of Eloisa is disturbed by the passionate cries of Sigismunda and Sophonisba. Using these contrasting voices to articulate her position creates a more complex heroine than the text itself would suggest. What emerges is a more emotionally complicated woman, one who voices active rather than passive desire and who seeks revenge rather than resignation. Herbert's allusions to Pope's and Thomson's heroines alter our view of her text as the writing of a defeated and powerless figure. Through the allusions the text becomes a protest against the social conditions in which Herbert lives. Like Wollstonecraft's heroines Mary and Maria, Herbert's cry, when read through the allusions, is for freedom, autonomy and revenge.

The failure of the love affair is soon followed in the text by Herbert's accounts of the tragic deaths of her brother and father. In her retelling of these events Herbert turns for literary parallels to Hugh Blair's "The Grave" and Thomas Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," while still retaining allusions to her two main parallel texts *Paradise Lost* and *Eloisa to Abelard*. There are five extracts from "The Grave" and two from Gray's "Elegy" in these chapters. She opens Chapter 133 with four lines from Blair's "The Grave."

³⁶⁶ James Thomson, *The Tragedy of Sophonisba* (Dublin, 1730). Fifteen editions of the play were printed in 1730, two of them in Dublin.

Tell us Ye dead! Will none of you in Pity

To those you left behind, disclose the secret

Oh that Some courteous Ghost would blab it out!

What tis you are, and we must shortly be! (Ret., p. 394)

Consumed with her inability to communicate with her dead father and brother, Herbert returns to her primary parallel text *Paradise Lost* for her prose description of the melancholy state of the family.

A long and dreary Winter of Woe succeeded – Barren of anything but our Supreme
Misery – We were indeed like the fallen Angles tumbled from our happy Height into the
Abyss of the most dreadful Wretchedness torpor inactitude and Silence reignd
gloomy as in the Vault that entombd our lost Delight. (Ret., p. 394)

Lengthy extracts from Gray's "Elegy" and Blair's "The Grave" link the main text to the two poems Herbert uses to complete *Retrospections*. Both poems are titled "A Dirge." The first is in memory of her brother Otway who died following a riding accident in 1800. The second is dedicated to the memory of her father who died in 1803. By using her verses to close the narrative, Herbert places herself, as a poet, in the company of the many writers to whom she has alluded in *Retrospections*.

Herbert does not prepare the reader for the disclosures of the final pages of *Retrospections*. What she describes in the last pages of the manuscript as her “Diabolical Tragedy” is characterised by descriptions of physical brutality, isolation and incarceration.

No words can describe the ill usage I now experienced from my Guilty Family –
Continually was I haled up by my Brothers with brutal Violence and almost Masacred in
my bedchamber - Continually did my barbarous Mother and still more Cruel Sisters
stand insulting over me to see the work completed.... In short every insulting Cruelty
that the black Malice of Man or Woman could invent was put in Practise against me
whilst my Mangled Body often testified to the Violence they offerd. (Ret., p. 417)

Not satisfied with this seemingly exhaustive account Herbert inserts an allusion to Thomson’s tragedy *Agamemnon* to fully articulate the horror of the final dramatic scenes of her life as it is recounted in *Retrospections*.

Th’ Avenging Sisters trace my footsteps still

The hunters still pursue the trembling Doe

Where am I? – God’s – Black heavy drops of Blood

Run down the Guilty Walls. (Ret., p. 417)

As I have remarked, except where she deliberately changes a word in an extract, Herbert's quotations are surprisingly accurate. It is possible that she used a book of extracts for this purpose. As I have noted, such books were very popular at the time, and were to be found in many private eighteenth-century libraries. By far the most popular of these texts in Ireland at the time was Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts: or Useful and Entertaining Pieces of Poetry, Selected for the Improvement of Youth, in Speaking, Reading, Thinking, Composing and in the Conduct of Life*.³⁶⁷ The first Dublin reprint came out in 1785, just a year after the first London edition. While *Elegant Extracts* may have been one of Herbert's sources her allusions range far wider than the verse extracts quoted in Knox's book. And although all of the poets she refers to are included in *Elegant Extracts*, Thomson's tragedies are not. Neither does it contain the text of Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*. Would it make a significant difference to our assessment of Herbert's writing if she had used Knox's *Elegant Extracts* as the source for her allusions? Similar questions were asked about Samuel Richardson's use of allusions when in 1936 Alan McKillop suggested that Richardson used a popular book of extracts as the primary source for the quotations he used in the composition of his novels.³⁶⁸ The suggestions were that using such a source rendered the allusions decorative rather than scholarly and meaningful.³⁶⁹ As we have seen in this chapter, where Herbert obtained her extracts is less important than the way she uses them in the composition of her own texts. It should be added

³⁶⁷ Vicesimus Knox, *Elegant Extracts: or Useful and Entertaining Pieces of Poetry, Selected for the Improvement of Youth, in Speaking, Reading, Thinking, composing and in the conduct of Life* (London: Charles Dilly, 1784) and Dublin reprint 1785.

³⁶⁸ Alan Dugal McKillop, *Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist* (Chapel Hill, 1936). McKillop was referring to Edward Besshe's *Art of English Poetry: containing I rules for making verses. II A dictionary of rhymes. III a collection of the most natural and agreeable and noble thoughts* (London, 1702).

³⁶⁹ For a commentary on this controversy, see Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 39-42.

that Herbert's knowledge of the texts from which she quotes seems to extend much further than the short extracts she quotes.

The use of direct literary allusion in *Retrospections* and *Poetical Eccentricities* presents both manuscripts as polished literary performances. Herbert's *Journal*, on the other hand, is devoid of overt literary allusion. Gone are the quoted lines and phrases, the references to other writers and their works and the references to characters from literature. However despite its apparent naiveté Herbert continues to emulate other texts in the construction of her *Journal*. *Paradise Lost* is the governing conceit in the *Journal* as it is in *Retrospections*. *Eloisa to Abelard* is again the most influential parallel text for the heroine's story, making the speaker in the *Journal* a familiar and easily identifiable literary figure. *Paradise Lost* is evoked throughout the *Journal* as Herbert constantly laments the loss of an idyllic past: "But oh how different are my feelings now from what they once were, little did I think that I should ever be what I am in this house" (J, Fri., 5 Sept. 1806). Although, as I have said, there are no direct quotations from *Paradise Lost*, Milton's poem is still very much part of how Herbert thinks about her life. In an 1807 entry she laments, "but I cannot help feeling the Melancholy Idea of paradise lost when I compare My present and past state" (J, 9 July 1807). If *Paradise Lost* is the governing conceit for *Retrospections* then in the *Journal* not alone has Paradise been lost but Hell is in sight. The writer believes that she is being prepared for Hell: "A bold and general assault made by the whole family to deprive me of my life and blow me to hell" (J, Fri. 10 July 1806). The image of Hell is evoked many times in the text. It is used to describe character: "He looked black as Hell." The writer sees herself as being treated like a devil: "I am to take it for granted that I am an obliged person or a devil?" Her brothers have been transformed into "demons" and "villains" and her sisters and mother into "whores" and "sluts." The descriptions grow more and

more lurid as the daily accounts proceed. The family so lovingly described in *Retrospections* is now pictured as vicious and even murderous.

In keeping with the construction of a household that resembles hell, the language has become coarse, the imagery brutal and the hellish home is peopled with demons and villains.

How are we to read this *Journal*? Are these the distracted writings of a pathological woman, who has lost all touch with reality? Or is this the creative and inventive writer using all her emulative skills to create a recognisable literary madwoman? There are several reasons to believe that this is in fact a literary text and that the persona created is a literary creation. Herbert is certainly skilled enough to do this, as we have seen from her other two texts. The *Journal*, despite the story of madness it tells, is a controlled and well-structured document. The coarse language and imagery used are in keeping with the subject and Herbert still employs the same parallel texts she has used in *Retrospections*. The mad persona she creates in the *Journal* can be seen as a believable development of the persona created in the final chapter of *Retrospections*. However, we must also take into consideration the fact that Herbert presents *Poetical Eccentricities* and *Retrospections* as finished books and works of literature. The *Journal* has none of the paratext that marks the other two texts as literary. There is no title page, no author's name, and no introduction. It is a diary in the way *Retrospections* is not. The unadorned and very private nature of the *Journal* does prompt the reader to believe Herbert's story of abuse and incarceration. Unlike *Retrospections* it also has all the immediacy of being written at the same time as the events described take place. If we take this approach then we must also believe in Herbert's accounts of mental disturbance, which occur at frequent intervals in the daily entries: "My head disordered – Most cruelly insulted by the Ghost;" "Head so disordered I can do nothing with any pleasure;" "Day spent as usual lonesome ill and

distracted ;” “I feel I am undone by long doubts, terror and anxiety;” “My feet all blistered with my Wandering about with a Wandering Head.” She confesses to being unable to attend Church on Sundays or other public events because of “distracted brains.” However, if we read Herbert’s *Journal* entries alongside Mansergh St George’s accounts of his melancholy state after his wife’s death, they do not appear so unusual. He recounts sleepless nights and restless days and an inability to concentrate on anything other than his melancholy state.

I am daily visited with convulsive attacks – three this very day – melted down also by nightly hallucinations and dreadful visions and suggestions – sudden delirium also – yesterday one terrible to recollect. ³⁷⁰

Despite this and many other graphic details of his disturbed state of mind, Mansergh St George’s doctor, the aptly named Dr. Brain, assures him that he will not “settle into melancholy madness” ³⁷¹ As I have argued earlier, Herbert’s accounts of her distraught state of mind would have been viewed indulgently by her contemporaries. Where does this leave the reader? Is the *Journal* the writing of a madwoman who has infrequent moments of lucidity? Or it is a very conscious construction of a literary madwoman? As I have said earlier, this is a question which we cannot answer. Herbert may have been suffering from some form of mental illness but she did not lose her ability to write or her apparent desire to capture her emotional turmoil using all the emulative skills at her disposal.

³⁷⁰ Weinglass (1982), p. 71.

³⁷¹ Weinglass (1982), p. 71.

This chapter foregrounds the important role the materiality of Herbert's texts and her emulative practices play in our understanding of her writing. The detailed study of Herbert's emulative practices shows how much she was part of the literary culture of her day. The full listing of her allusions, contained in Appendix Two, adds to our knowledge of the books available and the relative popularity of writers and these works in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Herbert's use of direct and indirect allusions to writers and their works also tells us much about a provincial Irish woman's reading in the period. To develop this further, Chapter Four discusses the material practices of reading and Herbert's construction of herself as a reader in her manuscripts.

Chapter Four

Cultures of Reading in Dorothea Herbert's Works

In *Retrospections* Herbert lists the books she owns and cherishes as a young girl. All of these, as I have noted, were gifts from family members and friends.

Parson Young at this time made me a Present of 8 volumes of *the Spectator* bound in red leather, gilt - A Valuable Edition not to be had in Print - Mr Cuffe gave me Lord Lyttleton's History of England and many other small Books - Mr. Rankin gave me *Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia*- Mrs English a set of pocket Voyages and Travels and Mrs

Larry Smyth 'The Death of Abel. With this little library and my Bible and French Books I laid the foundations of my future Erudition (Ret., p. 35).³⁷²

In her writing Herbert repeatedly establishes the important role that books and reading play in the making and shaping of her subjectivity. However, she presents more than one version of herself as reader in her texts. There is the official reader, the one she foregrounds, but there is also a hidden romantic reader. In the construction of the official reader, she acknowledges reading books she believes will distinguish her as an intellectual within the coterie of friends and relations among whom her texts circulate and are read. However the romantic reader that is also constructed in the writing is a product of the reading of sentimental novels that she does not acknowledge. This chapter examines the book culture which nurtures Herbert's practice of reading and her ambition to be a writer. Her love of books, reading and writing is developed under the guidance of her father's literary friends who visit the house regularly during her childhood. Her reading and the ambitions it fosters are also a product of the wider literary culture in Ireland at the time. This chapter begins with a discussion of book- collecting and the development of private, circulating and public libraries in

³⁷² None of the books Herbert had in her little library have survived. The first eight-volume edition of *The Spectator* was published in London by S. Buckley and J. Tomson in 1712-1715. The first Irish edition was published in Dublin by George Grierson in 1728. There were seven new editions published in Dublin between 1728 and 1737. It is interesting that Herbert is reading Lyttleton's *History of England* and not the much more popular *History of England* written by her countryman Oliver Goldsmith. Twenty separate editions of Goldsmith's history were published in Dublin between 1764 and 1800. Sir George Lyttleton's *History of England during the Reign of Henry the Second in Five Books* was published in London by J. Dodsley in 1767-71 and again in 1772-73. No Dublin editions of the work were published. Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia: A Tale in Two Volumes* was published in Dublin in 1759 by G. and A. Ewing & H. Bradley; there were four further editions published in 1777, 1787, 1795 and 1798. Mary Collyer's translation of Solomon Gessner's *The Death of Abel in five books. Attempted from the German of Mr. Gessner* was an extremely popular text in Ireland. It was first published in Dublin in 1762 by George Faulkner. There were three further Dublin editions published between 1762 and 1767. There was also a Waterford edition published by Hugh Ramsey in 1764 and a Cork edition published by William Flyn in 1767. London editions of this work were illustrated from 1763. The Irish editions of the work were not illustrated.

Ireland in the eighteenth century. This section also looks at the contents of private libraries and readers' attitudes to their book collections. Against this background I examine Herbert's complex visual and textual representations of herself as a reader in her three texts. I then compare Herbert's construction of herself as a reader with other versions of the reader in the published and unpublished works of her contemporaries.

Self-improvement was part of many agendas in the eighteenth century, and particularly so in Ireland. Book-buying and collecting, and reading were a major part of this movement. One of the main outcomes of this was the new interest in acquiring books and creating private libraries. Herbert gives detailed descriptions of the family homes in Carrick-on-Suir and Knockgrafton but does not suggest that either home has a library; neither does she represent her father as a serious reader or collector of books. However, by listing her own "little library" she participates in a book-collecting trend that was becoming increasingly popular in Ireland. Comparing the contents of Herbert's "little library" with those of larger private libraries indicates how much Herbert was part of this growing interest in everything to do with the printed book. Richard Cargill Cole in the 1980s carried out extensive research on the contents of private libraries in Ireland in the eighteenth century.³⁷³ His research was based on an analysis of the contents of the auction catalogues of 203 private libraries.

Analysing the owners of the catalogues examined in the study, Cole found that the largest group of library-owners were landowners, peers and gentry; they made up sixty-seven of the group. The second largest category were the clergy, thirty-nine were Protestant clergymen and twenty five

³⁷³ Richard Cargill Cole, *Irish Booksellers and English Writers, 1740-1800* (London, 1986), and "Private Libraries in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," *Library Quarterly* 44. 3 (1974), 231-247.

Catholic. Law accounted for thirty-six, government twelve, arts and letters eleven, medicine five, commerce four and military four.³⁷⁴ Cole also looked at the correspondences between the different professions and the books they owned. Protestant clergymen were educated in Trinity College Dublin, and their libraries contained many of the texts studied there. However, because of the Penal Laws, Catholic clergy were educated abroad, in Irish seminaries in France, Italy and Spain. This accounts for the many books in French, Spanish and Italian found in their libraries. Cole remarks that none of these clerics had any collections of poetry or novels in their libraries. Cole, summarising the contents of the libraries, concludes as follows.

The library owners preferred works of discursive prose, lexicography, biography and the essay, works to be consulted rather than read. History rates especially high. They read Gibbon, Smollett (the history works) and Goldsmith almost always in Dublin editions. Novels and Belles letters were not purchased except Smollett's *Don Quixote* and part of Sterne's Works.³⁷⁵

What has not been noted before is that Cole's oversight is to read the catalogues as though they represent the complete collections of the working libraries of the men concerned, while all they really give us is the titles of the books the family wished to sell and/or the compilers of the auction catalogues believed would sell. Thus his findings, while very interesting, need to be treated with some caution. They are such a small sample that they are by no means representative of the country as a whole or of the contents of all private libraries. Most of these auctions took place on

³⁷⁴ Cole (1986), pp. 23-27.

³⁷⁵ Cole (1986), p. 31.

the death of the original owner of a library and there is evidence to suggest that, when a library was being prepared for auction or for donation to a public library, the families of the deceased tended to retain their favourite books. For example, Bishop Charles Este of Waterford left his books to Christ Church Cathedral library in Waterford. When making his will in 1745, he made one proviso.

To the Mayor and corporation of Waterford, after my wife's decease, I bequeath my picture painted by Vanloe, as I do all my books (except such as my wife shall choose to keep) towards making a library for use of my clergy, my successors to have the regulation of said library and to direct how the books may be best preserved.³⁷⁶

Relatives would not have wanted to offer for public sale any text that would damage the reputation of the former owners. Also as we have seen, novels and books of poetry were read many times and would not have been in good condition. Despite these reservations we can learn a great deal from Cole's research.

We can also gain information about the contents of private libraries from other sources. These sources include subscription lists, newspaper advertisements, editions surviving in libraries, and the private libraries that are still extant. We also have the records kept in the journals and memoirs of the period and some very valuable catalogues of private libraries. Two of the most important catalogues to have survived are the library catalogue of the Reverend James Hingston, the Anglo-

³⁷⁶ Quoted in Julian Walton, "The Library of Christ Church Cathedral, Waterford" *Decies*, 1X1 (1980), 6. This is the library in which Robert Wyse Jackson found Herbert's *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity* in 1957.

Irish Vicar of Clonmeene in Co. Cork and Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby's *Plas Newydd Catalogue*. Hingston's library was systematically catalogued in 1774, and is as close as we can come to an understanding of what might have been in a rural Protestant clergyman's library in the late eighteenth century.³⁷⁷ The Reverend James Hingston was Vicar of Clonmeene from 1751 until 1775. During his lifetime he collected approximately 2,500 books. An analysis of the titles listed suggests a far more interesting and less studious library than Cole's analysis of the auction catalogues would suggest. Although books on theology, grammars, dictionaries and Greek and Latin classics are there, so too are over 70 novels and 269 plays, two categories missing from Cole's study. Among the novels are *Tom Jones*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Pamela*, *La Nouvelle Heloise* and *Roderick Random*. There is also an eight-volume edition of *The Spectator*. Hingston's collection is very diversified. Toby Barnard suggests that Hingston acquired his collection by a variety of routes, inheritance and gifts as well as more purposeful buying.³⁷⁸ Many were over one hundred years old at the time the catalogue was compiled. Barnard also stresses the point that the library contains many novels and plays that are unrelated to Hingston's profession.

The professional preoccupations of a clergyman are reflected in the collection, but so too are those of the women and children of the household. The library included, for example, two copies of *the compleat housewife* – hardly the staple of a grave minister of religion. In addition, as will be stressed, the library was rich in printed novels and

³⁷⁷ *Catalogue of Reverend Hingston's Library, 1774*. Dublin, Representative Church Body Library Dublin, MS 521.3.

³⁷⁸ Toby Barnard, "Gathering Ideas: A Clerical Library in County Cork, 1774" in Martin Fanning and Raymond Gillespie, eds., *Print Culture and Intellectual Life in Ireland 1669-1941* (Dublin, 2006) pp. 24-52.

plays. Serendipity, opportunism, gifts, even plunder, may explain some of the contents; so too, do the accumulations and changing tastes of several generations.³⁷⁹

Sarah Ponsonby's and Eleanor Butler's library catalogue has two titles *Plas Newydd Catalogue* and *A Catalogue of Our Library*. It was compiled with much thought and care by Sarah Ponsonby in 1792.³⁸⁰ The catalogue is bound in leather with gold fillets and decoration. "Catalogue" is stamped in gold on the spine. A note on the first page describes her citation methods.

The titles of Books written in Blue Ink & Roman Print denote their having been the valued **Gifts of Friends**. Those written in *Italick Print* with *Red Ink* were given by the Authors.³⁸¹

Of the 1,922 texts listed in the catalogue, 323 are gifts. Distinguishing texts that are gifts in the catalogue testifies to the important role gift-giving played in the economy of their lives and the value they placed on texts received in this way. Books are organised into the following categories: Dictionaries, Theologie, Gardening, Geography, Heraldry, History, Italian, Letters, Memoirs and Lives,

³⁷⁹ Barnard (2006), p. 28.

³⁸⁰ *Plas Newydd Library Catalogue* (1792), MS 22980C, Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales.

³⁸¹ *Plas Newydd Library Catalogue*, p. 1.

Miscellanies, Ouvres Mêlées, Natural History, Histoire Naturelle, Novels and Tales, Nouvelles & Contes, Periodical Publications, Plays, Oeuvres de Théâtre, Poetry, Poésies, Romances, Romans, Spanish, Travels and Descriptive Works, Voyages and Books of Prints.³⁸² French texts are listed according to category rather than in a separate entry as are the Spanish and Italian books. Butler was educated in a convent in France and her familiarity with the language is testified by the number of French texts in the library. The library contains sixty five memoirs written in French and only twenty-three in English. There are sixty-eight novels in the library and it also contains the eight-volume edition of the *Spectator*. Among the extensive collection of 281 volumes of poetry in English and French are all of the poets and poems that Herbert alludes to in her texts as are the novels and plays that form part of the pantheon of writers on whom Herbert bases her emulative aesthetic.

Among the eighteenth-century private libraries that have survived is the Cooper Penrose Collection in Cork. In 2008 John and Helena Mooney donated this collection to the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork city. The collection consists of eighteenth-century paintings, furniture, ceramics and books.³⁸³ The Cooper Penrose family were wealthy eighteenth-century merchants with extensive commercial interest in Cork city. The family were also patrons and collectors of art. Two of the mahogany cabinets that came as part of the bequest held the family's private library. They now form part of a permanent exhibition in the gallery. The majority of the texts date from the late eighteenth century and have the name of the family owner on the title page. They are all handsomely bound and show much evidence of use. The collection contains approximately 300 books which were published

³⁸² *Plas Newydd Library Catalogue*.

³⁸³ Peter Murray, *The Cooper Penrose Collection* (Cork, 2008).

before 1800. The majority were published in London. The collection includes the following novels: *Tom Jones*, *Gil Blas*, *Amelia*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Don Quixote*, *Humphrey Clinker*, *The Female Quixote* and *A Sentimental Journey*. Copies of plays are *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* and *The School for Scandal*. Poetry is represented by James MacPherson's *Ossian* and *The Works of Alexander Pope* in ten volumes. This is one of the few Dublin reprints in the collection. That the Cooper Penrose family were readers is evident from the condition of the texts. But they were also interested in their books as material objects. As I have noted, they are all leather-bound and many are embellished with gilt and gold leaf; they are also arranged in two very elegant mahogany bookcases. Cheaper Dublin reprints do not feature in the collection with the exception of the ten-volume collection of Pope's works. Unlike most Dublin reprints these are leather bound and have gilt decorative features.³⁸⁴ They are also illustrated, each volume has four plates. The printer J. Potts of Dublin advertises the merits of this 1764 Dublin edition in his preface to the first volume.

The Works of Alexander Pope in 10 volumes Complete with his last Corrections, Additions and Improvements Together with All his notes, As they were delivered to the Editor a little before his Death. Printed Verbatim from the Octavio Edition of Mr. Warburton.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ Their binding is in harmony with the rest of the library suggesting that the family had them bound after their purchase from the publisher as was common at the time.

³⁸⁵ Alexander Pope, *The Works of Alexander Pope* (Dublin, 1764).

The library also contains Volumes II, III and VII of the eight-volume edition of *The Spectator*; the remaining volumes are missing. Published in London in 1726, the edition, like Herbert's, is bound in leather and has elaborate gilding on the cover and spine.³⁸⁶ There are a number of books in French, translations by Pope of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Dryden's translation of Virgil and Goldsmith's *History of England* in four volumes. This, as we can see, is a small collection in comparison with the libraries of Ponsonby and Butler and the Rev. Hingston. However, with the exception of the Rev. Hingston's books on theology, there is a similarity between this collection and the Belles Lettres in the two larger libraries. Herbert's own small collection of texts and the evidence of her reading that we gain from the study of her allusions show a similar range of reading to that suggested by holdings of these three libraries. Her concern with the physical appearance of her manuscripts is also reflected in the holdings of these libraries.

Many of the memoirs and diaries that form part of this study record book collections and libraries and give us valuable information about the books they contain and the writer's attitude to them. Elizabeth Bowen in *Bowen's Court* lists the books that were in her ancestor Henry Bowen's library.³⁸⁷ Henry Bowen included a library in his plans for the building of the family mansion at Bowen's Court. The house was completed in 1776 and the library stocked with books. The Bowens, like the Herberts, were a Protestant, Anglo-Irish family, with connections to the major landed families in Ireland and England. Bowen's Court was situated less than thirty miles from Herbert's home in Carrick-on-Suir. In terms of the visiting practices of the Anglo-Irish, they are neighbours, yet there is no record of any

³⁸⁶ *The Spectator* (London, 1726).

³⁸⁷ Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court* (London, 1942).

connections between the families. Discussing the contents of the library, Bowen tells us that most of the books had Henry Bowen's autograph, and some sets of poetry had his wife's initials M.B. stamped in gilt on their spines. She makes the point that these were gifts, thus suggesting similar modes of book circulation to those we have observed in Herbert's writing and Ponsonby's and Butler's library catalogues. She also tells us that Henry sent his book orders directly to Dublin booksellers. The list she compiles is a valuable example of what we might find in a country-house library in the period.

The (now) more or less complete works of Pope, Gay, Dryden, an eight-volume set of *The Spectator, the Guardian, Addison's Poems, Young's Works* (the Young of *Night Thoughts*) dedicated to Mr Voltaire, *The Faerie Queen, written by Edmund Spenser, with a Glossary explaining old and Obscure Words. Lord Chersterfield's Letters to his son,* translations of *Madame de Sevigne's Letters* and of *Sully's Memoirs, Johnson's Dictionary, A Description of England* (in eight volumes, with plates of religious ruins and notable country seats). *A Tour Through France* (Anon). *Goldsmith's animated Nature, a Nouveau Traite de Venerie, Smollett's History of Emgland,* six volumes of *Dodsley's collections* (Poems by Several Hands). *Manners in Portugal, Vertot's Revolution in Sweden, Crevier's Roman Emperors, Memoirs of the Portuguese Inquisition, with Reflections on ancient and Modern Popery, Essex's Letters* (from Ireland), *Observations on the Turks, Tissot on Health, a Life of Gustavus Adolphus, Arthur Young's Tour through the North of England, Collins' Peerage* (eight volumes, 1779) and *a Peerage of Ireland* are among the books that bear Henry III's autograph, and that testify to a taste not less pious for being orthodox. The greater part of them are in Dublin editions, very finely

produced. Some of the sets of poetry and the histories have Margaret's initials, M.B. stamped in gilt on their backs: they must have been gifts to her.³⁸⁸

Bowen believed that the Library was purged by her great-great-grandmother Eliza Bowen (Galwey) sometime soon after she arrived in Bowen's Court in 1817.

Her reforms were moral as well as practical; she is said, among other things, to have purged the library - the absence, from among Henry III's fairly representative stock of eighteenth-century books, of any novel has been traced to her.³⁸⁹

If Mandeville family belief is correct and John Roe's daughter, Elizabeth Mandeville, did destroy parts of Herbert's *Journal*, then it is plausible to assume that she was driven, not just by family pride, but also by the same moral fervour as Bowen's ancestor. The language of the *Journal*, with its vulgar vocabulary of "whores" and "sluts" would certainly have caused offence.

There is evidence to suggest that it was not just the members of the well-to-do Anglo-Irish and the wealthy merchant classes in Ireland who owned libraries. The Irish portrait painter James Dowling Herbert in his memoir *Irish Varieties of the Last Fifty Years* records a farmer named Robin Berrell

³⁸⁸ Bowen (1942), p. 192.

³⁸⁹ Bowen (1942), p. 244.

who owned a substantial library.³⁹⁰ In his introduction of this “reading farmer” Herbert makes the ungracious remark that “farmers and peasants were better employed in fields of corn than in the fields of Parnassus.”³⁹¹

A farmer named Robin Berrell, who lived in the county Meath. He was commonly called the Knight of the Boyne from his tall figure and gaunt appearance, also from a habit of reading ancient and obsolete works.³⁹²

Herbert recounts a conversation between his father and Berrell. His father asks Berrell if he is still continuing to read, to which he replies:

“Oh yes, it is my only occupation,” “And What do you read – novels, of course?” “Oh, no! My daughter of an evening, perhaps to excite laughter, reads a little in that line – No: I read ancient histories, in every known language, belles letters, lives of great men. Travels, everything worthy.” “Why Sir you must have a great collection of books.”

“I have, for the last forty years I have been purchasing and seldom leave town without some additional work.”

³⁹⁰ J. D. Herbert, *Irish Varieties of the Last Fifty Years* (London, 1836), p. 104. James Dowling Herbert is no relation of Herbert. His real name was James Dowling; however as a young man in pursuit of a career as an actor he adopted Herbert as a stage name.

³⁹¹ Herbert (1836), p. 104.

³⁹² Herbert (1836), p. 92.

“How do you manage to keep them in a farm house?”

“Oh! I have a house built for the purpose, it is filled with them; there I spend my day,
and never feel a vacuum.” ³⁹³

J. D. Herbert also gives an account of Berrell’s “book house.”

He received me with great cordiality, took me to his book-house or library and enjoyed my astonishment, for such an immense collection I have never seen together before: he showed me several in Hebrew, Hindustanee, and Persian: many with curious illustrations: he had some in the German and Spanish languages. He left me amongst the books to amuse myself. ³⁹⁴

This “reading farmer” like the other owners of private libraries is concerned not just with the contents of his books and library but with their physical beauty and display.

Lord Clonmell does not include a list of the books he reads in his diary. However, he, like Herbert, acknowledges the importance of reading in his achievements. He credits his rise from humble country attorney to Lord Chief Justice of Ireland to the many hours he devotes each day to serious reading.

³⁹³ Herbert (1836), pp. 92-93.

³⁹⁴ Herbert (1836), p. 98.

After his death his library was put up for sale. *The Freeman's Journal* of 3 Feb. 1808 carried an advertisement announcing the sale by Mr Vallance, 6 Eustace Street, Dublin: "They consist of upwards of 6000 volumes in the various branches of literature – among them are many very curious and scarce, particularly of English, Irish and Scottish history." ³⁹⁵

Some journals do not list the books their writers own but do record how much they are valued. When Theobald Wolfe Tone was leaving Dublin for Paris in 1795 he described how he parted with all his possessions except his books: "Sold off all my property of every kind, reserving only my books, of which I have a very good selection of about 600." ³⁹⁶ Other journals record people's responses, particularly criticism, of their book collections. The poet Mary Tighe was impressed by John Wesley's comments on her books. Tighe records Wesley's visit to her home in April 1789 in her *Journal*.

When he rose from his knees he took hold of my hand & said "dear Molly, expect that there are blessings in store for you." He turned to my bookcase & said "there are many books here, Molly, not worth your reading" & he observed a good deal on idle books, particularly fine poetry. Said that History and religious books were the best study. Praised French Historians & condemned Hume & Abbe Raynal as an enemy to all power human and divine. ³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ William J Fitzpatrick, *Curious Family History Or Ireland Before the Union: Including Lord Chief Justice Clonmell's Unpublished diary; A Sequel to The Sham Squire and The Informers of 1798* (Dublin, 1869), p. 61.

³⁹⁶ Barry R. O'Brien, *The Autobiography of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-1798* (London, 1893), p. 212.

³⁹⁷ Linkin (2005), p. 215.

Tighe is impressed by this great man's judgment and his recommendations. However, on his departure she chooses as her reading, not one of the serious texts he recommends, but the most sensational sentimental novel of the age.

Looking over Mr Hume's books I am sorry to say my study was *The Sorrows of Werther* & still sorrier that my taste was so vitiated, that notwithstanding I abhorred the sentiments & moral from my heart yet I could not avoid admiring it. Indeed the language is very pretty & the tenderness that runs thro' it very captivating.³⁹⁸

Many are so impressed by other people's libraries that descriptions of them feature frequently in their correspondence. Margaret King, the Earl of Kingston's daughter and one of Mary Wollstonecraft's pupils, describes Lady Moira's library in a letter to Mary Delaney.

Recesses where you may sit and read books of all kinds, to amuse the fancy as well as improve the mind – telescopes, microscopes, and all scientific apparatus. Everyone chooses their employment; it is the land of liberty, yet of regularity.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ Linkin (2005), p. 216.

³⁹⁹ Janet Todd, *Rebel Daughters: Ireland in Conflict 1798* (London, 2003), p. 526.

Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby were, as we have seen, very proud of the books they collected and spent much of their time in the library they had built and decorated to accommodate them. In her *Journal* Butler describes a typical day in Llangollen: “Monday 4 Oct 1784, Cold Wett day. Staid in our Library the Entire day, reading – writing, and sharing a delicious day.”⁴⁰⁰ Visitors to Llangollen were often impressed by what they found there. After one such visit in 1807 the poet Anna Seward wrote a vivid description of their library.

This saloon of the Minervas contains the finest editons, superbly bound, of the best authors, in prose and verse, which the English, Italian and French languages boast. Contained in neat wire cases. Over them the portraits, in minature, and some in larger ovals, of the favoured friends of these celebrated votaries.⁴⁰¹

The painting of Butler’s and Ponsonby’s library (Appendix One, fig. 19) shows the elegance of the room and substantiates the accounts both give in their writing of the attention to detail in its appointments and the many hours they spend there each day.

When short of money, as Butler’s *Journals* and Ponsonby’s letters tell us they often were, they stinted themselves on many things but never on food or books. They had standing accounts with at

⁴⁰⁰ Lady Eleanor Butler, *Life with the Ladies of Llangollen*, ed. Elizabeth Mavor. (Harmondsworth, 1984), p. 181. See also Elizabeth Mavor, *The Ladies of Llangollen: A Study in Romantic Friendship* (London, 1971) and Mrs. G. H. Bell, *The Hamwood Papers* (London, 1930).

⁴⁰¹ Butler (1984), p, 173.

least six booksellers in their locality. Butler's journals records regular visits to booksellers and her accounts reveal how much they actually spend on the purchase of fine books. Almost all of their excursions to local towns include visits to bookshops. On 21 Oct. 1807 Butler tells of one such outing: "Went at six to Oswestry – went to Vaughans, then Eddowes, then to two other filthy Booksellers shops." ⁴⁰² And on 23 Dec. in the same year: "Next to Edwards the Booksellers. Got some things there." ⁴⁰³ She also records deliveries from Booksellers: "almanacks from that civil Sandford, Kept an Atlas, a Repository with a Tuck, a Ladies new Royal Pocket Companin, a Housekeprers Accompt Book, a Royal Kalendar for the year '90." ⁴⁰⁴ Butler's accounts show relatively extravagant spending on books for women in such precarious financial circumstances. Her accounts for 1791 show how much they paid one book-seller: "Mr Appleyard in full of all demands £26.13.6." ⁴⁰⁵ In 1795 they settle another account, "Sandford the Shrewsbury Bookseller in full and for ever £11.2.2."

⁴⁰⁶

The influence of *The Spectator* on the reading public in Ireland should not be underestimated. ⁴⁰⁷ Many of the libraries we have looked at contain the eight-volume collection. Herbert herself has the

⁴⁰² Butler (1984), p. 198.

⁴⁰³ Butler (1984), p. 231.

⁴⁰⁴ Butler (1984), p. 227. Appleyard is one of their main suppliers of books.

⁴⁰⁵ Butler (1984), p. 101.

⁴⁰⁶ Butler (1984), p. 213.

⁴⁰⁷ The influence of *The Spectator* was not confined to England and Ireland. In his autobiography Benjamin Franklin describes in detail how he taught himself to write by copying and then imitating essays from *The*

collection as does Henry Bowen. We also find copies in the Cooper Penrose library, in the Rev Hingston's library and in Butler and Ponsonby's library. Addison's description of a lady's library touches on many of the debates around women's reading, book ownership, education and writing that were part of a more general debate about the place of women in the emerging print and text culture in the eighteenth century. Addison begins his essays on the subject of women's reading in 1711 with a detailed description of a lady's library. The essay opens with Sir Roger's request to *the Spectator* to deliver a letter to his friend Leonora. On arrival he is asked to wait in the lady's library.

I had the Opportunity of turning over a great many of her books which were ranged together in a very beautiful Order. At the end of the Folios (which were finely bound and gilt) were great Jars of China placed one above the other in a very noble Piece of Architecture. The Quartos were separated from the Octavos by a Pile of smaller Vessles, which rose in a delightful Pyramid. The Octavos were bound by Tea Dishes of all Shapes Colours and Sizes, which were so disposed on a wooden Frame that they looked like one continued Pillar indented with the finest Strokes of Sculpture, and stained with the greatest Variety of Dyes..... I was wonderfully pleased with such a mixt kind of Furniture, as seemed very suitable both to the Lady and the Scholar, and did not know at first whether I should fancy myself in a Grotto, or in a Library.⁴⁰⁸

Leonora's library is the work of an interior decorator, not of a reader. Books are bound with an eye to taste and colour scheme and many "counterfeit" books fill up empty spaces. Leonora is ridiculed

Spectator. See James Green and Peter Stallybrass, *Benjamin Franklin: Writer and Printer* (New Castle, 2006), pp. 149-150.

⁴⁰⁸ *The Spectator*, 12 Apr. 1711.

because her books are arranged like ornaments. Her library does contain serious texts but they are used to hold her cosmetics, “Locke on Human Understanding” has a “Paper of Patches in it.” The many novels the library contains show evidence of repeated reading.

Tales in Verse by Mr. Durfey: bound in Red Leather, gilt on the Back, and doubles down in several Places And Celia: Which opened of it self in the Place that describes two Lovers in a Bower and The New Atlantis, with a Key to it.⁴⁰⁹

His analysis of Leonora’s books and taste is also a judgment on her character and the harmful influence of light reading.

Leonora has turned all the Passions of her Sex into a Love of Books and Retirement As her Reading has lain very much among Romances, it has given her a very particular Turn of Thinking, and discovers it self even in her House, her Gardens and her Furniture. Her house and garden are like “a little Enchanted Palace. The Rocks about her are shaped into Artificial Grottoes, covered with Wood-Bines and Jassamines.”⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁹ Durfey was a writer of licentious plays and songs. Mary de la Riviere Manley’s publication of *The Secret Memoirs and Manners of several Persons of Quality of both sexes from the New Atlantis, an Island in the Mediterranean* led to proceedings for libel.

⁴¹⁰ *The Spectator*, 15 Feb. 1722.

Addison manages in this seemingly harmless and witty description of a lady's library to introduce many of the debates that surrounded the emergence of the reading woman in the eighteenth century.

The Spectator returns many times to the problem of what women should read. Addison asks for help from his readers in compiling a suitable "catalogue of books" for his Lady's library. On 15 Feb. 1722 he discusses the responses he has had to his request and organises them into three categories, all of them unsatisfactory. The "first class" he gets from "eminent booksellers who everyone of them mention with respect the authors they have printed." In the "second class" he puts books recommended by husbands. These include titles like "The Government of the Tongue and The Countess of Kent's Receipts." In his "third class" he lists recommendations by ladies. They ask for books written "against prudes:" "All for Love is mentioned in above fifteen letters. The Innocent Adultery is likewise highly approved of." Wisely Addison decides to delay printing his recommendations and to proceed with greater caution.⁴¹¹

The Dublin publisher George Faulkner published a similar satiric piece on the pretensions of the owners of private libraries, who collected books but never read them.⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ *The Spectator*, 15 Feb. 1722.

⁴¹² George Faulkner, *To the Nobility, Gentry and Clergy of Both Sexes in the City of Dublin, The Humble Petition of George Faulkner and George Grierson Printers and Booksellers*, (Dublin, 1745).

Your Petitioners humbly conceive, that as reading is by no means the necessary consequence of buying books, Persons even of the first Rank might encourage Trade, without the least danger to themselves, many valuable Libraries having formerly been purchased by Persons of Rank infinitely above looking into 'em. Your Petitioners take it upon 'em to prove that a certain number of Books, if well chosen, are cheaper Furniture and wear longer, than a good Genoa Damask. One thousand Books, if collected by the Joyner, will together with the proper Wainscot Ornaments, Shelves and Partitions, completely furnish one large Room, which Books one with another, need not exceed two shillings a piece, amounting in all to one hundred Pounds.⁴¹³

Faulkner goes on to describe the many uses to which books can be put. They can be used to “lap around candles; or to light the Tea-Lamp: to make bottoms to wind Worsteds upon; or to pin up Miss’s Hair; or to make Kites for young Masters.”⁴¹⁴ Thus the importance of the printed book is seen not just in the number and variety of readers and collectors but also in the many public debates that surrounded the benefits and dangers it represented.

Public and Circulating Libraries

⁴¹³ Faulkner (1745), pp. 4-5.

⁴¹⁴ Faulkner (1745), p. 5.

The interest in private book-collecting was mirrored in the wider community. Public and circulating libraries began to proliferate in Ireland in the later half of the eighteenth century.⁴¹⁵ Many booksellers advertised books on loan as well as for sale. Newspapers carried advertisements for such libraries in Dublin, Cork and Belfast, as well as in the smaller country towns. For example, Spotswood's Circulating Library in Dublin advertised regularly in the Dublin newspapers. In April 1784 in an advertisement in *The Hibernian Journal* Spotswood claimed to have more than ten thousand volumes in his library. He also claimed that his charge, 16s 3d, compared favourably with that of the most famous circulating library in Bath.⁴¹⁶ Circulating libraries were criticised for providing an undiluted supply of sentimental novels and thus polluting the minds of their readers. They were frequently featured in the work of contemporary writers. Sheridan in *The Rivals* lampoons Lydia's obsession with the novels she borrows from the Circulating Library in Bath. Wolfe Tone claims that he and his friends wrote *Belmont Castle*, which he describes as a burlesques novel, "to ridicule the execrable trash of the Circulating Libraries."⁴¹⁷ Vincent Dowling's Apollo Circulating Library was set up in 1794. Aware of the criticism often levelled at the contents of circulating libraries, his advertisement in *The Hibernian Journal* on 22 January 1794 claims that his holdings extend to far more serious reading than sentimental novels.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁵ For further reading in this area, see Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago, 1957); William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge, 2004); Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and the Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, 1994); Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hatfield, eds., *The Irish Book in English 1550-1800* (Oxford, 2006).

⁴¹⁶ *Hibernian Journal*, 23 Apr. 1784.

⁴¹⁷ Wolfe Tone, *Autobiography*, p. 16.

⁴¹⁸ See for example Richard Brindsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* and Austen's *Northanger Abbey*.

This collection is by no means confined to mere Novels and Romances, the usual furniture of Circulating Libraries, but includes the Best Authors in History, Biography, Natural History, Philosophy, Chemistry, Poetry, Dramatics, Politics and Belle Lettres.⁴¹⁹

Public libraries also began to appear in the major towns in Ireland in the late eighteenth century.

Daniel O’Connell records in his *Journal* how on 7 Dec. 1796 he joined the Dublin Public Library.

I yesterday subscribed to the Dublin Library, in Eustace Street. I paid two guineas – a great sum of money for me. But I think I shall have very ample value for it. I mean to spend four days a week in it.⁴²⁰

The Dublin Library Society, Eustace Street was founded in 1790. For O’Connell it became not just a place from which to borrow books but a haven for study.

I spend the greater part of the day in the library. In the perusal of a favourite author I feel not the time slip away. Was the library to remain open till one o’clock, I am sure I

⁴¹⁹ *Hibernian Journal*, 22 Jan. 1794.

⁴²⁰ Arthur Houston, *Daniel O’Connell: His Early Life and Journal, 1795-1802* (London, 1906), p. 129.

should frequently be there at that hour. As it shuts at ten, I am forced very reluctantly to leave it at that hour.⁴²¹

The opening of the First Public Library in Cork in 1792 was seen as a testament to the importance of reading in a civilised society.

The progressive amelioration of the public mind since its original formation, in the year 1790 to its present state of vigorous maturity, affords incontestable evidence of the happy effects of judicious reading, not only on the individual character but on the very fame of society. Cork can now boast of as many well informed men in the different walks of life, as any other city in its extent, while our fair townswomen are more proudly distinguished for their intellectual acquirements than for acknowledged personal attractions to extend and perpetuate the benefits of this excellent establishment, being the great object of its proprietors.⁴²²

As well as public libraries, many booksellers set up lending libraries of their own. Catherine Finn, the publisher of *Finn's Leinster Journal*, opened a lending library in Kilkenny in 1778. She advertised the library and its contents regularly in her paper. She also gave monthly lists of "New Books" she had for sale. Many wealthy and influential landowners also set up lending libraries for their tenants.

⁴²¹ Houston (1906), p. 127.

⁴²² O'Connor's Cork Directory, 1826. Quoted in "The Cork Library in 1801," *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* xi (1907), 82.

Caroline King, the Earl of Kingston's youngest daughter, and another of Mary Wollstonecraft's pupils, established a circulating library for useful books and a school for orphans in Mitchelstown.⁴²³

Although confined for the most part to the gentry and wealthy middle classes there is, as we can see, a vibrant book culture in Ireland in the period. It is this general interest in reading and the high visibility and availability of books that nurtures young minds like Herbert's and makes writing like hers possible. Herbert sees her love of books and reading as formative in her construction of her identity as a writer. Her reading she claims lays "the foundation of My Future Erudition" (Ret., p. 35). The reading woman provides Herbert with an image of herself both as a rational bluestocking and as a reader of sentimental fiction, both roles which she wishes to perform. But it is the discordance between the two that highlights one of the principal ambiguities of the text, and that is the disjunction between herself as the author of the text, in control of her own self-representation, and herself as the subject of a narrative that is about her psychological decline, to an eventual state of insanity. In this section therefore, I wish to chart the ways in which the motif of the reading woman opens up a contradiction that infiltrates the text between the rational author of her passage from sanity to insanity, and the insane woman who inhabits the final stages of the text.

If Herbert poses as a published author in *Retrospections* she also presents herself as a reader of other published works. Indeed the representations of herself as a reader provide the cornerstone for the production of her sense of self. There are, as I have said, two readers in the text, one who is

⁴²³ Todd (2003), p. 314.

rational and controlled, who reads philosophy, poetry and drama and the other the solitary reader of romantic or sentimental fiction, who inhabits a fictional world of fantasy and desire, detached from the realities of everyday life. These dual readers are endorsed by her visual depictions of herself in her three self-portraits where she charts her decline from confident author and reader to romantic heroine. But while the visual representations use these images of the reading woman to stage Herbert's decline from rational reader to romantic heroine, the written text is always more ambivalent about the implications of each model of reading. The written text of *Retrospections* is a troubled narrative full of conflicts and unresolved contradictions that contribute to Herbert's representation of herself declining into madness. The analysis of Herbert's representation of herself as a reader allows us to see this conflict in operation.

The textual representation of the reader in *Retrospections* shows Herbert's concern to represent her interest in books and reading as a serious undertaking that singles her out as exceptional among her family and friends. Her creation of the fashionable woman of letters, the Irish bluestocking, is conventional as we shall see when we read it alongside other narratives from the period. One of the first indications of the importance of reading in Herbert's self-fashioning is her contention that she learns to read and write at the precociously early age of two: "March 2nd 1772 I began to learn writing from Mr. Thomas Wimpe parish Clerk" (Ret., p. 18). She is not alone in foregrounding this early affinity with the written word; both Letitia Pilkington and Lady Morgan make similar claims. Pilkington tells us that although her mother, fearing for her health refused to teach her to read, she taught herself and was an experienced reader by the age of five. Lady Morgan too, according to her own account, learns to read at an unspecified early age. Herbert gives several lists of the books she reads, where she gets them and gives details of how and where she reads. She also quotes repeatedly from her reading. Her reading is in fact far wider than she would have us believe. In her

detailed listing of the books, Herbert includes the names of works she wishes to be associated with, never those that she does not value. Her official reading list does not include novels which she indirectly alludes to in passing. Neither does she use direct quotations from novels in the text or as headings for chapters. In making this distinction between serious and frivolous reading, Herbert may in fact be influenced by the opinions expressed in the novels she does not want to admit she reads. On one occasion she compares her favourite cousin John Blunden to Richardson's hero Sir Charles Grandison.⁴²⁴ The heroine of Richardson's novel, Harriet Byron, "is applauded for a young woman of reading."⁴²⁵ Her reading is similar in its seriousness to the texts that Herbert openly admits to reading in her construction as a serious woman of letters. Harriet's reading includes *Paradise Lost*, the Bible and the poetry of Edward Young. As a serious reader she becomes a suitable bride for Grandison, who acknowledges this in his gift of the keys to his library on their marriage. Harriet's serious reading makes her a strong and admirable character. The opposite is true in the case of another of the novels Herbert reads. Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* is a novel with which she is very familiar, but again she uses no direct quotations from the novel, nor does she list it among the texts that she owns.⁴²⁶ When Dr. Primrose questions his wife about their daughter Olivia's reading, he asks: "Why, dear, what controversy can she have read?" Olivia admits to having read *Tom Jones* and *Robinson Crusoe*: "I have read a great deal of controversy. I have read the disputes between Thwackum and Square; the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday the savage."⁴²⁷ Dr. Primrose, with his customary irony, replies that she seems to be "perfectly qualified" and he

⁴²⁴ Samuel Richardson, *The History Sir Charles Grandison* (Dublin: Re-printed and sold by Irish Booksellers, 1753). References are to modern edition (London, 1972).

⁴²⁵ Richardson (1972), p. 70.

⁴²⁶ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (Dublin, 1770). References are to modern edition (Oxford, 1974).

⁴²⁷ Goldsmith (1974), p. 37.

suggests she “go help your mother to make goosberry-pye.”⁴²⁸ Olivia’s novel reading unfits her for the moral dilemmas she faces later in the novel. Herbert may not acknowledge reading these novels but their implied judgments on what constitutes good reading are reflected in her desire to be seen as a serious reader of improving literature.

As she receives no formal education Herbert’s early interest in reading develops in a household where her father and mother are not represented as readers. Although her three brothers attend Rev. Hare’s boarding school in Cashel and later go to university, and her younger sisters go for a time to Miss English’s school in Carrick-on-Suir, she is educated at home. This home schooling is haphazard at best.

The first Rudiments of my Education and the Girls were also laid under Mrs Charles an Anglo French Governess – Signore Tassoni an itinerant Dancing Master, and Monsieur Debeard a blind drunken french Music Master - I had an old spinet with about half a dozen Keys - thus prepared we had we thought nothing to do but receive the last Polish to our Education. (Ret., p, 41)

Herbert is no serious pedant; she is often light-hearted and sometimes ironic about her accomplishments as a young lady. In 1779 when her brothers are sent to boarding school, she spends a year with her aunt Herbert in Dublin. Here she is groomed for the future, she learns to

⁴²⁸ Goldsmith (1974), p. 37.

dress, dance, play music, draw and conduct herself as a lady of fashion. The experience is wittily described.

In short I experienced the greatest Mortification whilst they dissected my Carrick finery of which I was not a little proud - Mrs Fleming immediately bought me two or three Morning gowns - I was then deem'd decent to appear before my Dancing Master my drawing Master and my Music Master - Here I underwent fresh mortification as they declared I was quite spoiled by my country Teachers, and must quite unlearn all that I had learn'd from the Carrick Brogueneers as proud Mr Barnes the Musician call'd them.
(Ret., p. 44)

This Anglo-Irish world of fashionable accomplishments is the one prescribed for Herbert, and she is expected to marry well within this social group. Unlike her brothers she is not educated for anything else. But Herbert tries to define herself against this society that values a woman's looks and manners and not her intellect. She identifies with her father's learned friends and not with the role of women in her society. Early in the text she highlights the inadequacy of her education and shows how she fosters her education through her reading. Her reading distinguishes her from the many other accomplished young women seeking to make an advantageous marriage.

Herbert's first encounter with the world of books is not with books themselves but with the stories of books she hears when her brothers return from boarding school and recount what they have been reading. She describes how these stories turn them all "Book Mad."

When the boys returned from School it gave a new turn to Affairs – They spouted to us
and we stood gaping round till we were all Book Mad – Dido and Aeneas – Hestor and
Paris fired our Brains, a Sixpenny Voyage of Lord Anson, and Old Robinson Cruesoes
Tale completed our Mania. (Ret., p. 16)

These heroic stories have such a profound effect on the children that Herbert describes how they act out many of the plots. Enchanted by the adventures of Robinson Crusoe they spend "whole weeks in an old blue bed under cure for Sea Scurvy and eat such quantities of cabbage stumps, celery and other Antiscorbutic trash that we really got scorbutic disorder with worms and a variety of complaints" (Ret., p. 16).

Herbert describes the moment when she is first introduced to books as life-changing. As we have seen in 1777, when she is seven years old, she tells us of the books she receives as gifts.⁴²⁹ Later she gets a gift of 'Xenophone's Life of Socrates' (Ret., p. 260). Again Herbert is anxious to represent herself as a reader of substantial texts, also to suggest that even at the age of seven she is capable

⁴²⁹ Opening quote in this chapter.

not alone of understanding these texts but of learning from them. She identifies her reading of these texts with her 'erudition' and credits her 'little library' with laying the foundations of her future status as a writer of plays, novels and poetry as well as an autobiography. She also identifies the people who give her the books. These, we learn later in the text, are all men she admires for their learning and standing in the community.

The model Herbert uses to construct the official reader in *Retrospections* is derived in part from the way she obtains her reading material and the way in which she is taught to read it. All of the books she has in her collection are gifts, mostly from men, and almost all are well-educated Church of Ireland clergymen. Many of these men come to stay for long periods with the family. According to Herbert her parents kept open house for all comers, many of whom stay for months. Most are very learned men, or so Herbert tells us. These men do not merely give her books but also guide her reading of them. Describing her cousin Joe Cuffe, who comes to live with them in 1782, she points out his influence on her reading.

He was a mighty good Creature and was much pleased with his new abode – I was then a very young child but a great pet of his and as he had a great taste for Music, drawing and the Belle Lettres he strove to engraft a little taste on my young mind – He lent me all his books, gave me some chosen volumes and began to teach me to draw.
(Ret., p. 89)

Dr. Hercules Young comes to live with the family in 1777.

At this time Parson Young came to live with us – He had quarrelld with his wife who besides being mad jealous, had too equal a Portion of learning to Obey her learn'd husband. (Ret., p. 35)

He is her first teacher and role model and she finds him “wonderfully agreeable.”

Witty and Sensible and so learnd that his friends calld him the Walking Dictionary – He was very satirical, had a wonderful fund of wit, wrote and published very clever essays, and was on every occasion consulted as Lawyer, Physician and Clergyman – so versatile his genius – He was besides fraught with Anecdote, Repartee, and all the Brilliancy of Wit and Humour. (Ret., p. 34)

But Dr. Young is not the only older man she admires for his learning. “Besides Doctor Hercules Young we had Doctor Daniel Cuffe and Doctor Thomas Rankin both Justly esteemd for their learnd and agreeable qualities” (Ret., p. 34). She describes in great detail the Rev. Patrick Hare, the headmaster of the school in Cashel where her brothers attend as boarders. He is a man of learning and also a successful man of the world. She admires him greatly as she does all of her father's friends. In her descriptions of him she emphasises his great learning: “He was a very handsome comely looking man – amazingly clever and sensible.” She also attributes his success in his career to his cleverness.

Smart at repartee and clever in his opinions he made his own way amongst the great and got the Vicar-generalship of Cashel when Charles Agar became Archbishop there besides other good windfalls. (Ret., p. 40)

These learned and generous men provide a model from which to fashion herself as a rational reader. They not alone guide her reading by giving her gifts of books but also influence the way she interprets this reading. This in turn informs her understanding of what it means to be learned and admired. Her concept of what it means to be an intellectual is derived from her contact with these well-read and successful men from her childhood. Through describing their gifts to her she affiliates herself with them and mimics their style of intellectual learning. We can see the influence of these role models in Herbert's depiction of herself as 'Authoress' in the first self-portrait in *Retrospections*, and in her self-representation as a rational reader in the text.

Herbert's emulative aesthetic contributes to the creation of the rational reader. As we have seen, *Retrospections* is framed by quotations from male authors of literary standing, men with very strong views on life in general, on women and on male/female relationships in particular. In this elaborate maze of overlapping allusions we witness Herbert's rational reader in the act of performance. This is the kind of reader she wishes to present. Her allusions to canonical texts show clearly the operations of the rational reader, the one she wishes to be seen, the attentive and knowledgeable reader of poetry and classic drama, the writer who can embed this wide-ranging literary knowledge into her own writing and the cultured woman who reads and speaks French. She embeds her story in reading

she considers important and in turn gives importance and status to what could be considered her own somewhat commonplace story of unrequited love.

In *Retrospections* Herbert gives us valuable insight into her own reading habits and those of her family and friends. She makes a deliberate distinction between reading as a form of entertainment that is carried out in family parties and the guided reading in which she engages. One is frivolous, lively and communal, the other is pedagogic, intense and carried out in the intimate communion of teacher and pupil. The latter is the serious pursuit of knowledge and self-improvement. But it is the former, the reading of novels, that she dismisses as a mere pastime, that comes to dominate her idea of herself. As the eldest daughter in her family, she does, in the early years when her mother is indisposed either through childbirth or her recurring mental illness, have some housekeeping responsibilities, but even these are minor, as the family employ eight household servants, and nursery maids for each of the children.⁴³⁰ Apart from this Herbert is at leisure and has a great deal of time at her disposal. *Retrospections* contains much detail of family life, of parties and dinners, of visitors and visits paid to friends and relations and endless family gossip. But for long periods of her life the dominant activities for Herbert are reading and writing. Although books and reading are the most important part of her young life, they play little or no part in the few years when she hopes for and then despairs of marriage to John Roe; in her final years she no longer reads but devotes her time to writing and drawing.

⁴³⁰ In *Retrospections* Herbert gives an account of her mother's recurring mental illness. The first occurs in 1775, after the birth of her youngest daughter Sophy. She is ill again in 1776, following the birth of her youngest son Nicholas. The doctors order her to Bristol to drink the waters. Herbert and her father and mother spend the month of June 1776 at Bristol. Her mother recovers but according to Herbert her constitution remains delicate, and she is frequently subject to fainting fits and mild hysteria (Ret., pp. 28-32).

Her description of the reading habits of her childhood are complex. Those that are conducted in groups of family and friends are described as social and great fun. But the important reading moments, the ones she foregrounds in the text, are those which she spends alone with her mentors. Here the reading is serious and controlled. But as private activities between the young woman reader and a male mentor, these intense experiences are erotically charged. It is in the suggestion of a frisson of desire in these encounters that the model of the rational reader starts to become more complicated. It is not what is being read but the intimacy of the act of reading itself with an older man that contributes to the creation of the romantic heroine. This aspect of the creation of the rational reader plays a part in the apparent collapse of Herbert's subjectivity at the end of the text. Herbert's representation of her development as a rational reader and a woman of letters are derived from her emulation of the model represented by the relationship between Abelard and Eloisa. The male teacher and guide who teaches his pupil not just how to read but also how to love is mapped onto Herbert's version of her own life story in *Retrospections*.

There are many descriptions of periods of carefree and enjoyable communal reading. During her year in Dublin when not learning to dance, play music and draw, Herbert spends hours with her cousins.

Whenever my two Aunts were out we clubd and had a feast in the Summer House – there we read, wrote novels, and romantickixed with the Muckross Girls who were as fantastic as Romance and the Wilds of Muckross could make them. (Ret., p. 50)

Back in Carrick-on-Suir most evenings in the Parsonage are spent reading.

Every Evening Miss English used to come up to Tea and a Reading Party consisting of Mr Rankin the Carshores and Mrs Cooke who was a great Amateur and Transcriber of Poetry – Miss English being a remarkable Reader was chief Lecturer. (Ret., p. 83)

Herbert's mother, no reader herself, finds these evenings tedious, even annoying. As Herbert and the others read aloud, she tells us, "my Mother and Mrs Careshore wished their Belle Lettres at the Devil as it interrupted all Vulgar chat and Social Converse" (Ret., p. 83). As children she and her siblings read a wide variety of material: "We read poetry, novels, Sermons, History, hickeldy pickeldy as they came our Way without any regular System except a smattering of English and French Grammar" (Ret., p. 115). This reading is represented as part of the fabric of family life, like dressing up or playing games or riding ponies. The description of this social and haphazard reading is very different to the descriptions of the controlled reading Herbert does with the various mentors who guide her reading.

These scenes of controlled reading are also the sites of erotic encounter. Herbert's first flirtation is conducted through reading. At about the age of fifteen she is courted by a young curate, Mr Gwyn, who uses his knowledge of books to attract her:

He commonly brought a book in his pocket to read to us - finding I had a taste for Poetry his chief care was to select such poetry as he thought I would like - he often lent me books and pointed out to me the chief Beauties in each volume - The cool Arbours and fragrant Bowers made our Book double delightful in Summer. (Ret., p. 131)

She goes on to describe how "Gwyn had great Sensibility and was charmed to find me susceptible of the Beauties he rapturously indexed" (Ret., pp. 131-132). Unable to speak to her directly of his affection he writes a long poem in her praise, which she includes in the text. This is an extravagantly sentimental piece. So too is the letter he sends her. Herbert concludes, "in short his whole letter seem'd dictated by the wildest Phrenzy" (Ret., p. 138). His attentions become so marked and his manner so violent that he terrifies her. As her father disapproves of the match the young man is quickly dispatched. He is easily consoled as Herbert records how three months later he marries a "Lady of large fortune." This early exposure to this young man's "Sensibility" foreshadows the way she comes to view her own failed love affair. But unlike Mr Gwyn, who is soon satisfied by a woman with a large fortune, Herbert has nowhere to turn for consolation when she in turn is disappointed in love. Her only recourse seems to be the world of romantic literature to which Gwyn himself introduces her. And it is in these terms that she describes her first encounter with this young man. The language and setting of her account of this episode belong to the literary world of sensibility and romance.

By the time Herbert comes to write *Retrospections* in 1806, all family reading parties are at an end. Herbert's texts charts a passage from herself as communal reader, to solitary one, a progress which appears to match the history of reading practices as documented by book historians like Richard Altick and Roger Chartier.⁴³¹ In Herbert's own account of her reading practices this movement is caused not by a gradual maturing of her reading practice, thus keeping her in line with the trends of the time, but by her altered view of herself and her representation of her deterioration from rational reader to romantic heroine.

Unlike the confusion between the rational and the romantic reader in *Retrospections*, in *Poetical Eccentricities* we witness Herbert's consummate construction of the rational reader and writer. The reader we encounter in the text is confident, witty and clever. As we have seen in the last chapter, Herbert's poetry has its roots in her reading of the poetry of canonical writers. All of her poems are based in the poetic practices of her day. They allude to, parody, borrow from quote and misquote from a chosen group of celebrated works. So although she does not directly foreground her reading in the poems, they are so firmly embedded in her reading that it is only possible to read them in the context of the poems on which they are based. However there are some direct references to reading practices that I would like to point out. For example, she uses her reading as a way of distinguishing herself from other characters represented in the poems. We can see this in a poem already discussed, "Sea-Side Ball or the Humours of Bunmahon," where each friend displays their character

⁴³¹ Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago, 1957); Robert Chartier, *The Order of Books* (Cambridge, 1994).

by the article they bring to the ball.⁴³² Herbert associates Eleanor Butler with the slightly vulgar chamber pot as an allusion to her rather doubtful reputation as one of the Ladies of Llangollen. In contrast to this commonplace gift, the poet's offering distinguishes her as a reader. Her gift is an ornamental banner with two lines of Goldsmith's poetry inscribed: "Let our Landlord supply us with Beef and with Fish / Let each Guest bring himself and he brings the best Dish." Herbert's characterisation of Eleanor Butler here is ironic, as we know from Butler's own *Journals* that she has a far more extensive library than Herbert could ever hope to possess, and that serious reading is one of her main occupations throughout her life.⁴³³ In her poem "An Address to Old-Maids By one of the Sisterhood" Herbert recommends reading as one of the chief consolations of the single state. She advises three kinds of reading: philosophy, history and poetry.

Let Socrates thy soul inspire

Heroic calmness to acquire

And in Example's useful School

Be taught thine own frail Heart to rule

And Thou sweet Poetry design'd

By Heav'n to humanize the Mind.

⁴³² See Chapter Three, p. 151.

⁴³³ Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby are more savage in their judgment of one of Herbert's favourite relatives Mrs. Herbert of Muckross. Herbert tells of her disgrace when she leaves her husband for a young soldier. In a letter to Mrs Tighe, Ponsonby writes: "Mrs. Herbert's conduct has shock'd us. My B thinks that if all ladies who were guilty of that Crime, were Branded, with its initial, a Great A in the Forehead – it would be the most likely means to deter others, from following the example" (Butler 1984, p. 40).

This is the reading of a rational woman, one whose calm and disciplined mind rules her "frail Heart." The ideal single woman is a reader of philosophy, history and poetry, her ideal environment is "A small neat chamber to herself / Well chosen Books upon a shelf." Thus Herbert's ideal reader is the opposite of the romantic reader of sentimental fiction whose reading encourages rather than subdues her "frail heart."

Herbert's father, despite his university education, is represented as a compulsive but not a serious reader and his interest in books is undisciplined and disorganised. In her "Last Will and Testament" Herbert leaves him some of her books, but like her other bequests, it reveals his weaknesses rather than his strengths as a reader.

Nine good Volumes of Milot for which I know he has a Zest

A grammer and old Almanack wherein he constantly may pore

And an old broken spelling-Book which he may twenty

Times read o'er

His cousin Georges poems too and my old Newspapers

With this Collection he may bid defiance to the Vapours.⁴³⁴

Her footnote reveals the irony of her gift.

This gentleman delighted in reading the same book over and over 'till it was quite worn out. He read the first Vol. of Milot's *Histoire* above twenty times, hardly allowing himself time for his Meals. He cared not what kind of Book he had and has been known to pore over an old Latin grammer or Spelling Book for 6 months together.⁴³⁵

The Rev. Herbert's idiosyncratic reading habits are regularly relieved by long periods of sleep by the fireside: "His Book beguiles the dreary Winter's Eve / Tween whiles his spirits kindly Naps relieve" (PE., p. 50).

To see Herbert's official or constructed reader as an idealised self-projection, is to raise questions about what lies behind this performance. What kind of reader lurks beneath the ideal? What motivates this desire to be seen as a serious reader, not an idle reader who uses books, particularly novels, to pass the time, or stimulate desire, but a serious reader who reads for self-improvement

⁴³⁴ Herbert does not identify this cousin George in any of her writing. It is possible that she is referring to the Welsh-born poet George Herbert (1593-1633) who could be regarded as a distant cousin. However she does not allude to Herbert or his poetry in any of her writing.

⁴³⁵ Herbert is probably referring to Abbe Claude Millot's *Elements of Ancient History*. This was a very popular history and was reprinted in Dublin in 1771 and again in 1779.

and understanding? In her preparation of *Retrospections* for publication it is clear that Herbert foregrounds her public self as a serious reader, never a reader of novels. For the serious reader the act of reading is not listless and idle. It is an act of discipline and intellectual growth. While Herbert, as we have seen, participates in lively family reading parties when she is young, she rarely tells us what they are reading, or places any emphasis on them. The reader that she clearly wishes to dominate is the serious author of *Retrospections* who is not only familiar with the best literature available but can use it intelligently in support of her own writing. She wishes to present herself as a learned woman, exceptional in her family, their circle of friends, her class in general and the area in which she lives. She presents herself as an erudite, rational reading woman. But there is another reader in the text, the romantic one, the one that is hidden from view but comes to dominate the narrative.

Given the very negative image of the idle woman reader that existed in the period, it is easy to understand how a woman, who wished to be taken seriously as a reader would be anxious to guard herself from accusations of idle novel-reading and its potential harmful effects. Picturing and representing herself as a reading woman gives Herbert distinction, a distinction she respects and one that is valued by the people she respects. The two readers that we see in Herbert, the hidden romantic reader and the visible rational reader are well illustrated in Richard Brindsley Sheridan's play *The Rivals*. Lydia Languish reads voraciously, she obtains her novels from the Circulating Library in Bath. Sheridan gives us a long list of the novels she wants to read, they include titles such as *The Reward of Constancy*, *The Mistakes of the Heart*, *The Tears of Sensibility*. But, like Herbert, she does not want to be seen to read these so when expecting visitors she tells her maid Lucy to hide them from view.

Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick, quick. Fling *Peregrine Pickle* under the toilet. Throw *Roderick Random* into the closet. Put *The Innocent Adultery* into *The Whole Day of Man*. Thrust Lord Aimworth under the sofa. Cram *Ovid* behind the bolster. There put the *Man of Feeling* into your pocket. So, so. Now lay *Mrs Chaptone* in sight, and leave *Fordyce's Sermons* open on the table.⁴³⁶

Unlike Lydia Languish, Herbert does not thrust her illicit reading behind the toilet or under the sofa but just as surely she does hide it beneath her more serious reading. Just as Lydia hides *The Innocent Adultery* in the cover of *The Whole Day of Man*, Herbert camouflages her frivolous reading behind the veneer of the serious. By not mentioning novel-reading, Herbert guards herself from accusations of idleness and boredom which were associated with women readers. But her non-acknowledged novel reading is what gives her the vocabulary and the structure within which to fashion her story of lost love. The stories of the tragic heroines of literature, Eloisa, Sophonisba, Sigismunda and Clytemnestra form a large part of her acknowledged reading but the vocabulary used to describe John Roe, and her attempts to read the “language of his eyes” are from the pages of novels of sensibility. This hiding of what Herbert wishes to ignore or gloss over is a familiar pattern in *Retrospections*. For example, the very often impolite world of the Anglo-Irish gentry is hidden beneath Herbert’s polite narrative. We get rare glimpses of it in *Retrospections*, such as the incident of the overturned chamber pot that attracted Virginia Woolf to the text. Herbert also hides the reality of living conditions in Carrick-on-Suir behind her representation of a life of leisure and plenty

⁴³⁶ Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Rivals* (Dublin, 1775). References are to *The School for Scandal and Other Plays* (Oxford, 1998), p.19.

in the Villa. Herbert has to take liberties with the truth to create the official reader, to lie about her age, her knowledge of French and to deny that she reads novels.

We first witness the breakdown in the credibility of the rational reader when we examine Herbert's representation of herself as a reader of French. When listing her reading Herbert includes her French books as part of her collection, but she does not include any titles. We know that the Herbert children had at least three French governesses, one of these "Madame Bondagee being a Parisian had a remarkable good Accent and a good Notion of teaching French Grammatically." However, like many of the part-time teachers who come to the parsonage, her stay is brief: "she fell into drink and there was then no bearing her Temper and Vagaries" (Ret., p. 84). Herbert uses French phrases repeatedly in the text, but they are the phrases any schoolgirl would know. There is no evidence that she is a fluent reader or speaker of French but it is obvious that she wishes to be seen as such. French language and literature were important parts of cultural life in eighteenth-century Ireland, as indeed were French fashions, manners and cooking. Knowledge of French was an important symbol of the educated and cultured man or woman, and a highly esteemed social accomplishment. Betsy Sheridan tells us that in Bath Irish visitors speak French to "avoid their Brogues."⁴³⁷ Maire Kennedy's research in this area suggests that there were substantial quantities of French books in private libraries and a vigorous trade in French books in eighteenth-century Ireland.⁴³⁸ Church of Ireland clergy, like the men Herbert admires, who were educated in Trinity

⁴³⁷ Sheridan (1960), p. 16.

⁴³⁸ Maire Kennedy has done extensive research on book history in Ireland and particularly on the availability and use of French books and language in Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Kennedy, *French Books in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Oxford, 2001).

College Dublin and Oxford and Cambridge, were taught to read and write in French. Unlike Mary Delaney, Elizabeth Richards and Betsy Sheridan whose diaries attest to their fluency in French, Herbert's writing gives no indication that she either speaks or writes French fluently.

The most obvious example of the illicit reader in *Retrospections* is seen when Herbert borrows stereotypes from the literature she has read but not acknowledged and uses them to describe the people she encounters in her life. She describes one young man as a gay Lothario, a character from Nicholas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*. Similarly she describes as Sir Roger De Coverleys the many men who pay assiduous attention to an attractive widow who comes to stay with the Herberts. She is also an unacknowledged reader of Richardson, describing her cousin as the Sir Charles Grandison of the family. However, frequently the romantic reader is more hidden and works in more subtle ways in the text.

Although Herbert thinks of her love affair, such as it is, with John Roe as the stuff of tragedy, and finds its counterpart in the great tragic love stories she reads and emulates, he is never associated with books or reading. There is no indication that he is at all interested in reading; his time is consumed with farming and building projects. Their conversation is about the things that interest him, never about books. John Roe never speaks of his feelings for Herbert, but she, great romantic reader that she is, reads his emotions in his eyes: "The word Love never entered our Vocabulary, but if ever Mans Eyes spoke its Language his did that night" (Ret., p. 224). Herbert must interpret his emotions through reading the expression of his eyes. As she becomes more uncertain of his feelings for her she reads complete narratives in his countenance. John Roe is a practical man who is

interested in farming and building bridges, but when Herbert reads his mind it is the mind of a romantic lover of great sensibility that she invents. She imagines him as a version of her first lover Mr Gwynn. Here the romantic reader is at work; this is no serious woman of letters but a woman who turns her own life into a romantic text.

But how shall I Describe his looks at that moment – They conveyd a thousand meanings equally severe and terrible He seemd to say, ‘I love you past utterance I feel a shock of passion beyond any thing I had formd of it – But I am resolved to tear it from my Heart, and discard you as artful and dangerous – as a Viper inimical to my Happiness! – Resolving henceforth to become a Villain sooner than risqué the Calamities you would bring upon me.’ – Oh John Roe! Too adorable Man! These were the very Sentiments your looks expressed at that Moment – I could not be mistaken. (Ret., p. 250)

This is not the vocabulary or the controlled tone of the rational and clever reader of philosophy but that of a delusional woman living in a tapestry of literary allusions. On a rational level Herbert realises that Joe Roe will never marry her, but she chooses not to accept this and constructs another version of her love story that does include marriage to John Roe.

Ungrateful John Roe! – How terrible was the moment that joined us! And how terrible were we both to each Other at that black instant when you Infamously resolved to forsake me and I as desperately Abandon’d Myself to Despair! I swear by the great god of Heaven I think that Hour united us in Bonds that were indissoluble – In an Eternal Union sacred and true – That Bolt of Heaven or Hell struck him a determined Villain but

all its terrors lighted on me and left me as a stiffend Corpse – Blasted! – Undone for ever. (Ret., p. 250)

As noted earlier, Herbert refers to herself as Dorothea Roe on many occasions in the text. This lends credibility to her fictional marriage and the construction of her identity as an abandoned, but married, romantic heroine.

There are moments in *Retrospections* when Herbert herself seems to recognise how much in conflict the two readers in her text are. During one period of despair when she is gradually coming to understand that John Roe will not offer for her hand in marriage, a friend gives her a gift of a copy of “Xenophon’s Life of Socrates.” But Herbert finds no comfort in its promise of consolation: “The Arguments for consolation were so strong and convincing that I resolved to make it my future companion and fence against rising misfortunes – foolishly resolved,” as she concludes: “for Alas I found no reasoning can cure the pangs of love” (Ret., p. 260). Later the following winter she again takes up Xenophon “in the hope of acquiring some fortitude.” But she hears that John Roe is about to call to see the family and her response is immediate: “Away flew Xenophon and all my stock of philosophy” (Ret., p. 265). For Herbert the problem is that no matter how well-read she is, reading offers no protection from her “frail heart.” But the issue is more complicated. How responsible is her reading for her belief in the romantic heroine? All the tragic love stories she reads tell her that there is no consolation for the death of the heart and the loss of love. For Eloisa, Sigismunda, Clytemnestra, Sophonisba, and Leonora, their highest expectation is the desire for honourable death.

There is a hierarchy of texts for Herbert. When moments of crisis occur, she is less open to the influence of the text when the meaning is out of sympathy with her position. In consequence the romantic reader proves too strong for her attempts to create a strong subject position for herself as a rational reader. By the end of the text Herbert presents the image of the romantic heroine as more seductive and more durable than the woman of letters. Both readers are visible in the final paragraphs of *Retrospections*. In her concluding paragraph Herbert's lists the works she has written and claims that they have been the "only Amusements I had and I flatter myself are not uninteresting." Here the woman of letters sums up her work and voices her belief in its worth. But departing from this seemingly objective stance, it is the voice of the romantic reader who concludes the narrative.

Oh that I had wings to fly wherever Taste, and the Muses led me; but Poverty Chains me
to my prison – Oh that I could fly where love and the Muses lead me – then should I
hover over the dwelling of my Dear John Roe – Perhaps he would relent if he knew his
Unfortunate Wife Dorothea Roe. (Ret., p. 421)

It is this reader who subsumes the rational figure into the crazed world she appears to fully inhabit at the end of *Retrospections*. This movement from rational to romantic reader is pathologised as part of her psychological decline.

Herbert concludes *Retrospections* with two poetic dirges, the first dedicated to the memory of her brother Otway and the second to her father. The poems are addressed to the dead but the real subject is the speaker in both poems. The construction of this speaker is the closing image of the self-absorbed romantic heroine. Self-pity and sensibility dominate both the language and imagery of the poem.

Oh Wretch Tis now indeed thou art undone

Quite lost indeed, to ev'ry Hope quite lost

Long hast thou harrass'd been and tost

On wild Misfortunes Stormy Seas

Knowing no peace. (Ret., p. 426)

In *Poetical Eccentricities* Herbert represents herself as a rational reader, one whose reading teaches her to discipline her "unruly heart." In *Retrospections* we have seen how the rational woman reader is gradually replaced by the romantic reader, who is incapable of exercising control over her emotions. Finally in the *Journal*, Herbert no longer represents herself as a reader, romantic or rational. She presents herself as a romantic heroine, and that figure is derived from her reading. However, to fully realise the tragic status of that literary persona, she represents herself as a woman incapable of reading. Not being able to read is the defining moment for the dissolution of the rational woman reader. There are no accounts of reading in her *Journal*; the only reference is the

dissolution of the rational reader. On 14 June 1807 she records: "I am not able to read with attention as I used to."

Reading plays a pivotal role in Herbert's self-construction as a woman of letters. It is the act of reading that offers her real access to subjectivity. Reading is essentially a private act, so no matter where Herbert gets her books and no matter how she is taught to understand them, she is alone when reading and free to make judgments for herself. Alone with a book she can misread. Nowhere else in her life is she allowed to make decisions; she is the daughter of the house, her first offer of marriage is refused for her by her parents, she has a very limited private income, her books are chosen for her, most of her clothes are gifts and she lives as part of a family where her parents make all the decisions. Even in her love affair she has no agency, no opportunity to make choices. So her first taste of the power to make decisions comes when she reads. Later this is channelled into her writing when she uses her autonomy as a reader to give her the confidence and belief to become an author. In fact her sense of herself is so strong that she believes that her life story is worth recording. This autonomous position that she believes she achieves is actively contested in the text between the rational woman reader of serious literary texts, who is seemingly in control of their meaning, and the idle woman reader of romantic fiction who is susceptible to its influence. It is the romantic heroine, the crazed woman, who believes she is married to a man, who she freely admits has never cared for her, who dominates at the end of the text. In this delusional world she achieves tragic status as the romantic heroine and we witness the collapse of her subjectivity.

Herbert's *Retrospections* embodies many of the major conflicts of her age, in particular the tension between the Enlightenment quest for rationality and reasoned argument and the demands of the age of sensibility. Through her construction of her identity as a serious reader, Herbert

attempts to impose a rational and reasoned structure on her own history. It is in this attempt that the text slips from reason to sensibility when she finds that reasoned argument cannot explain what has happened to her. For Herbert the language of reason is inadequate, it cannot express the anguish of her disappointment when her love affair ends. The messy thing that life is cannot be contained in rational discourse. The form of *Retrospections* is determinately literary, as is her depiction of herself as a literary woman. But competing with this is the sentimental sometimes even cheap novelistic rhapsodies and traumas of her romance with John Roe. It is this confusion, the failure of life to fit into rational patterns, that precipitates Herbert into the deranged state we find her in at the end of the text when the narrative becomes dominated by images of torture and isolation.

The *Journal* entries which are written at the same time as *Retrospections* continue the construction of the romantic heroine and the destruction of the rational reader. The fact that both texts were written during the same time period brings me back to the problem we encountered at the end of the last chapter. Is Herbert knowingly constructing both the rational and irrational or romantic heroine? Or as I have argued here, is the rational or official reader the one she knowingly constructs as the ideal version of the self and the irrational reader the subversive one that her language constructs almost without her knowledge. This is a very fine distinction to make and although I appear to have made it here, I am not sure that it is the only argument that can be made. The fact that both texts were written at the same time must make us reconsider this position, so too must the very controlled structure of both texts. I return to the position that I took at the end of the last chapter; Herbert may be suffering from some form of mental illness but the effect created by her three texts is that both the rational and the romantic reader are literary constructions that she creates from her extensive acknowledged and unacknowledged reading. It is from her readings and

misreadings of canonical works and light sentimental novels that she creates her idea of herself both as a rational and learned woman of letters and as the romantic heroine of a common tragic love story. Ironically the fears expressed by men and indeed some women in the period about the susceptibility of women readers to the power of the written word may be justified in Herbert's case. She is not however an idle woman reader; on the contrary as a reader she is too active and attentive. It is her susceptibility to the power of the written word, the capacity to imagine herself into the text that gives her the language and the model for the construction of her sense of self as an isolated and abandoned love-mad woman. It is her official reading that underpins her sense of herself as a woman of letters while it is her unofficial romantic reading that provides her crazed sense of who she is at the end of the text.

Herbert's Reader in the Context of Unpublished Journals and Letters

The conventional nature of much of Herbert's self-representations as a rational reader can be seen when we compare her with the other unpublished diarists and letter writers in this study. The findings of my research into the reading practices of published and unpublished journals and letters in Ireland in the period provide a backdrop to understanding Herbert's account of her own reading practices. Taken together, these works provide valuable source material for a history of reading in Ireland in this period. The single most striking similarity between Herbert's *Retrospections* and the Journals of Sir Vere Hunt, Betsy Sheridan, Elizabeth Richards, Lord Clonmell, Daniel O'Connell and Mary Mathew and the letters of Mrs Delaney is the importance of reading in the day-to-day lives of

the writers. Sir Vere Hunt's diaries make constant reference to books and reading. On leaving England for Curragh Chase in Co. Limerick in 1811, he "packed up the greater number of the books in the large trunk and packed some books and charts and papers and other articles in the white deal cart for Ireland." Sorting out his library is a matter of some importance once he reaches home. On 25 March 1811 he spent the evening "assigning the books in the library" and on 7 April 1811 he "arranged the library and put all books in their respective shapes and places." On 17 April 1811 he tells us, "Aubrey and I gave up the entire day to clasing books in the library and we new modelled and completely arranged them to our satisfaction." Not satisfied with this on 28 April 1811 we find him again admitting that he; "stay(ed) within all the day arranging in the library all books."⁴³⁹ The Delaneys too in their home in Delville have an extensive library where the Dean spends much of his time. Mary Delaney describes many happy evenings spent reading: "Yesterday, peacefully at home. At candlelight D.D. and I read by turns, and what do you think has been part of our study? Why truly, Peregrine Pickle!"⁴⁴⁰ For Mary Mathew reading is a natural part of each day. She refers to it as often as to the weather. It is not a leisure activity but is associated with self-improvement and work. "Mrs Mathew and I were kept hard at duty as we read aloud in turn till we went to bed,"⁴⁴¹ and again, "I read out every night from nine till supper when I am at home."⁴⁴² Regularly she tells us, "Spent the day in my usual employments working and reading and very little walking the day being

⁴³⁹ Sir Vere Hunt's Diaries are not paginated, I have identified the quotations by date in the text. MSS Vere Hunt Family Papers, Limerick City Library.

⁴⁴⁰ Mary Delaney, *Letters from Georgian Ireland: The Correspondence of Mary Delaney 1731-68*, ed. Angelique Day (Belfast, 1991), p. 282.

⁴⁴¹ Mathew (1991), *Diary*, p. 6.

⁴⁴² Mathew (1991), *Diary*, p. 4.

uncommonly windy.”⁴⁴³ Another entry reads, “A stormy dry, day. I did not go out but sat at my book the whole morning.”⁴⁴⁴ She repeatedly mentions reading for improvement. When a friend comes to stay she gets her daughter to read for them to improve her way of reading: “I made her daughter Bell read an hour to me, not for my amusement but for her improvement for I have never heard so bad a reader for her age. After, Martha, my maid reads for about two hours.”⁴⁴⁵

Despite her busy family life Elizabeth Richards reads at all times of the day. “Eliza and Thomas playing by the window, I read by the fire.”⁴⁴⁶ Her husband Stirum reads to her most evenings and sometimes during the day as well: “Stirum is pleased with me, he reads to me, we talk of our children, and the time passes much quicker than I wish.” She is often at work while her husband reads out loud. “Stirum read French aloud whilst I worked. This reminded me of “halcyon days”, when love and life were new.”⁴⁴⁷ Betsy Sheridan recounts in her *Journals* how much of her time is taken up with her invalid father but how she still finds time to read and search for the books she wants. She describes a typical day in her life at that time: “After breakfast go to my room – don’t

⁴⁴³ Mathew (1991), *Diary*, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁴ Mathew (1991), *Diary*, p. 17.

⁴⁴⁵ Mathew (1991), *Dairy*, p. 23.

⁴⁴⁶ Richards (1999), *Diary*, p. 52.

⁴⁴⁷ Richards (1999), *Diary*, p. 63.

chuze walking in the heat of the day. Write, read, work a little, new dress my hair and clean shirt.”⁴⁴⁸

She searches constantly for books she wants to read.

Made one more unsuccessful attempt to get Mrs Bellamy’s Memoirs. At Bath the Booksellers said they were sixty deep in their list before we had a chance and here I find I am at least ten too late in my application so that it will be like reading an old newspaper by the time I get it.⁴⁴⁹

Eleanor Butler records in her *Journals* how she and Sarah Ponsonby spend much of their leisure time reading. “Thursday, 31 Jan 1788 - My beloved and I went into the new garden. Reading, Drawing. Read Davila. Then my beloved read La Morte d’Able. Nine till twelve in the bedchamber reading;” “22 Jan 1788 - Read Betula Liberata to my beloved. Explained all the difficult passages – how delightful to teach her.”⁴⁵⁰ They continue this practice through the years. Butler records a typical evening in the library in Plas Newydd: “7 Jan 1790 Returned to the library and our evening occupation of writing, reading, working.”⁴⁵¹ For both Daniel O’Connell and Lord Clonmell reading is a daily activity that is pursued with diligence and intensity. There are no apparent hidden readers, or conflicting representations of the reader lurking in any of the above texts. As private documents,

⁴⁴⁸ Sheridan (1960), p. 55.

⁴⁴⁹ Sheridan (1960), p. 55. This is an interesting view of the lending libraries, their popularity and the material condition of the books they contain.

⁴⁵⁰ Butler (1984), pp. 26-27.

⁴⁵¹ Butler (1984), p. 31

meant at most to be read by family and friends, there was little need for pretence about reading habits or texts.

The group of writers in this study who prepared their work for publication foregrounded their reading as an important part of the public persona they created in their writing. From the opening of his text Jonah Barrington proclaims himself a reader: “I had an insatiable passion for reading from my earliest days, and it has occupied the greater portion of my later life.”⁴⁵² As a young man he wasted his time “riding, drinking, dancing, carousing, hunting, shooting, fishing, fighting, racing, cock-fighting etc.” But even with this crowded schedule of dissipation he managed to read: “I had a pretty good assortment of books of my own, and seldom passed a day without devoting some part of it to reading and letter-writing.”⁴⁵³ Lady Morgan, always anxious to name drop, declares that it is the poet Thomas Dermody who teaches her to read and write.⁴⁵⁴ Once she learns to read she rarely has a book out of her hands. On the day her mother dies the only people in the house are “a drunken gardener and myself seated in the open window of my mother’s room, reading and watching.”⁴⁵⁵ Like the heroines of her novels Morgan often pictures herself in interesting, liminal positions, on the thresholds of windows and doors with a book in her hand. She represents herself as a voracious reader, often staying up late at night to finish a book: “Dr. Higgins has lent me the

⁴⁵² Barrington (1997), p. 2.

⁴⁵³ Barrington (1997), p. 25.

⁴⁵⁴ Morgan (1863), p. 86.

⁴⁵⁵ Morgan (1863), p. 94.

Memoirs of Lavoiser, and I sat up reading them until one o'clock." ⁴⁵⁶ Her first novel *St Clair: or The Heiress of Desmond*, she claims is based on her reading of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Werther*.⁴⁵⁷ Her favourite books she reads over and over; speaking of Goldsmith she says: "what I learned of his poetry I have never forgotten, and his *Vicar of Wakefield* I still know by heart." ⁴⁵⁸ Untroubled by distinctions between novels and more serious works, Morgan pictures herself as a consumer of all kinds of writing. Mrs Leeson never once presents herself as a reader; reading forms no part of a life crowded with incident. Although she receives gifts of books and poems she never suggests that she reads them. The first reference to reading does not come until mid-way through volume two of her *Memoirs*. One of her young women, returning from England, brings her as a gift: "A beautiful edition of *The Woman of Pleasure*, with some of the finest cuts I ever beheld." ⁴⁵⁹ The text she is most likely referring to here is John Cleland's notorious novel *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*. The London edition of 1766 does indeed contain "a set of elegant engravings." ⁴⁶⁰ These are fourteen erotic images, all suitable for a brothel but not for polite reading. Even when she reforms, Leeson does not see reading as part of the new image she wants to present. However, she does tell us of women in her profession who are literary, who read and write poems and novels. She describes how one of the inmates of her brothel in Pitt Street had "a charming taste for poetry and the Belle Lettres." ⁴⁶¹ It

⁴⁵⁶ Morgan (1863), p. 132.

⁴⁵⁷ Morgan, *St Clair or The Heiress of Desmond* (London, 1812); Johann Wolfgang Van Goethe, *The Sorrows of Werther, A German Story* (Dublin, 1790).

⁴⁵⁸ Lady Morgan (1863), p. 106.

⁴⁵⁹ Leeson (1995), p. 154.

⁴⁶⁰ John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure. From the Original Corrected Edition. With a Set of Elegant Engravings* (London, 1766).

⁴⁶¹ Leeson (1995), p. 184.

may be the cause of her present position as Mrs Leeson tells us how her seducer had “enamoured her with his rhymes.”⁴⁶² A charming taste for the Belle Lettres Mrs Leeson suggests may be the road to ruin. Letitia Pilkington presents herself as a voracious reader. Writing and reading are crucial to her self-presentation in the text. She tells us that she is “a perfect devourer of books, loving their sweet and nourishing food.”⁴⁶³ In this published work all of the authors, with the already noted exception of Leeson, display their knowledge of texts and give detailed accounts of their reading practices.

The writers of unpublished diaries and journals highlight the importance of reading in the construction of their subjectivity. Correspondingly authors of published memoirs foreground the importance of reading in the formation of a public selfhood. In *Retrospections* and *Poetical Eccentricities* Herbert’s representation of herself as a reader performs both functions. She shows how reading is instrumental in the construction of her subjectivity but it also serves as the foundation block of her public selfhood. It is in this confusion of purposes that the conflict between the rational and the romantic reader arises. Herbert’s desire to represent herself as a rational reader and woman of letters comes closer to the practice of published memoirs than to the diaries of private individuals. Like Herbert, Mrs Leeson, Letitia Pilkington and Lady Morgan use literary quotations in the composition of their memoirs to represent themselves as readers of serious literature. Morgan opens her *Memoirs* by quoting and then challenging one of the most popular writers of the period. The quote is from Goethe’s *Autobiography*: “That when weak women go

⁴⁶² Leeson (1995), p. 184.

⁴⁶³ Letitia Pilkington, *Memoirs of Mrs Letitia Pilkington* (New York, 1928), p. 13.

astray their stars are more in fault than they.” Morgan then comments, “For myself I reject the doctrine altogether, and stand on my own responsibility.”⁴⁶⁴ Unlike Herbert, Morgan is very much in control of her subject position as reader and shows how it can be manipulated in her favour. She admits to using the trope of the idle woman reader to her own advantage when wishing to impress an important visitor. For the description of an encounter with the Right Honourable Charles Sheridan, Secretary-at-War for Ireland, she sets the stage with artistry and an eye to dramatic affect: “I was dressed very nicely, and seated on the sofa all in good time, and I took up Locke, ‘to call up a look’, as Lady Pentweasle says, when I heard his knock on the door.” The Secretary is, as she anticipates, surprised to find her reading something as serious as Locke: “ ‘Upon my word,’ says he laughing, ‘this is a very grave study for so young a lady.’ ‘Now’ says he ‘let me hear your definition of an innate idea.’ ” Morgan supplies a learned definition, one flattering to Sheridan, and he is impressed. “ ‘Well you are the most flattering little logician I ever coped with.’ ”⁴⁶⁵ This anecdote shows the persona Morgan presents in her *Memoirs* in action; she is an intelligent flatterer who uses the various props available to her in her self-representation. Here we see her actively using the stereotype of the idle woman reader to disconcert and impress her male visitor and her reader.

Mrs Leeson, who suggests that reading may be a threat to a woman’s virtue, presents her *Memoirs* as those of a learned reader. As her *Memoirs* are written to make money she needs to frame them to make them appeal to her intended readers. She therefore dresses them in the cloud of literary allusions that decorate her texts. Each one of the three volumes of her memoirs contains

⁴⁶⁴ Morgan (1863), p. 6.

⁴⁶⁵ Morgan (1863), pp. 146-147.

learned allusions, each chapter begins with lines of poetry and there are many quotations interspersed within the chapters. By far the most lines are from Shakespeare, but she also quotes Southern, Gay, Fielding, George Barnwell, Dryden, and Ben Johnson. Most of the direct allusions are used to support her position as a repentant woman. For example when condemning jealousy, that, “wild and insatiate fiend,” she borrows lines from Dryden to lend authority to her opinion. “Well did the poet, Dryden, say it: ‘False in thy glass all objects are.’ ”⁴⁶⁶ There is a marked contrast here between the way Mrs Leeson presents herself and the way her *Memoirs* are presented. This forces the reader to recognise the difference between the text which creates the image of the writer and the writer herself. We get a self-confessed, non-reading Madam’s *Memoir* supported by elegant and learned quotations.

Pilkington is the one writer among this group who overtly links reading with sexual pleasure. She uses the language of desire to present her relationship to reading. She describes herself as being, “ravish’d” by poetry. In one episode she describes the Duke of Wharton “using his mistress’s posteriors as a writing desk.”⁴⁶⁷ Jacqueline Pearson suggests that part of Pilkington’s success as a writer is her “naughty and knowing identification of reading with sex.”⁴⁶⁸ Despite the fact that there is no overt connection made between reading and sex in Herbert, it is possible to make connections between her descriptions of the intimacy of reading with an older man and Pilkington’s foregrounding of the erotic nature of the act of reading.

⁴⁶⁶ Leeson (1995), p. 45.

⁴⁶⁷ Pilkington (1928), p. 171.

⁴⁶⁸ Jacqueline Pearson, *Women’s Reading in Britain 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge, 1999) p. 124.

The authors who prepare their work for publication, Pilkington, Leeson, Barrington and Morgan represent themselves as precocious even voracious readers. Even Mrs Leeson sees the value of including allusions to canonical writers in her *Memoirs*. This official or constructed reader is an idealised self-projection. It demonstrates the writer's desire to be seen as a serious reader, not an idle reader who uses books, particularly novels, to pass the time, or stimulate desire, but an intellectual reader who reads for self-improvement and understanding. Herbert's texts show how she too is anxious to construct herself as an ideal reader. However, her self-presentation as a reader shows how the ideal rational reader has in its construction the seeds of its own destruction. The rational reader is created in the intimate and erotic relationship between the older mentor and the young and impressionable girl. Herbert adopts the values of these men and thus sees the reading of serious literature as the ideal. However, she encounters both the idea of the rational and the romantic reader in this experience and both are mapped onto the text. The men who teach her to value the rational reader she emulates also create the possibility of the romantic reader.

Chapter Five

Manuscript Culture: A Sanctioned Field of Operation

The focus in this chapter is on one of the strange anomalies of Herbert's career as a writer. The composition and preparation of her manuscripts suggests that she considers herself an active member of a professional writing community. The writers she models her work on are all successfully published authors. Yet, although she presents her two main texts as though they were published books, there is no evidence to suggest that she ever sought to have them published. Understanding the context in which Herbert writes helps to clarify this seemingly contradictory position. The chapter begins with an analysis of the Irish print industry in the eighteenth century and its evolution into a reprint trade. The particularities of the Irish reprint industry had far-reaching affects on the book trade in Ireland, on the kinds of books available and on access to publication for Irish writers. It then looks at attitudes to the new flood of publications that emerged in the eighteenth century and the efforts writers made to separate themselves from the taint of association with the world of commerce, where books are reduced to another commodity that could

be bought and sold by the general public. I place my examination of Herbert's unpublished manuscripts and her decision not to publish her work against the background of attitudes to the professional writer, and in particular to the professional woman writer. The experiences of contemporary women writers who do publish their work, in particular, Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth, Mrs Leeson and Mary Tighe, highlight the difficulties encountered by women in the very competitive and public world of commercial publishing.

The Irish Book Trade in the Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth century was one of the most colourful and frenetic periods in the history of the Irish print industry. Printing and publishing thrived in the major cities and towns, particularly in the latter half of the century. For the first time a wide variety of books became freely available at remarkably low cost to the purchaser. As I have noted, lending libraries opened up in small as well as large towns and book- collecting and reading became for many a feature of daily life. This created an atmosphere where reading and writing were no longer the preserve of a highly educated elite but the natural occupation and preoccupation of many. This should have opened up rich publishing opportunities for Irish writers but in fact, as we will see, the reverse was true. Irish writers found it almost impossible to get published in Ireland. It is in this contradictory environment, where reading and writing are held in high esteem and books are cheap and readily available, but opportunities to publish almost nonexistent, that Herbert writes and prepares her manuscripts as replicas of published books. Circumstances peculiar to the Irish book trade play a major part in her construction

of herself as an author, and may also be partially responsible for her remaining unpublished during her lifetime.

The study of the Irish print industry in the eighteenth century, like so many other parts of this research, is hampered by the destruction in the 1920s of most Irish public records. This has left major gaps in the records of the book trade, making the recovery of information about the period a matter of detective work and of piecing together information from many different sources. The records we do have paint a lively, if controversial, picture of what was happening in the print trade in Ireland. The Irish print industry in the eighteenth century was essentially a reprint industry. How did this situation arise? Clerical or political error in the drafting of the 1703 English copyright legislation was at fault. The act failed to mention Ireland in its wording. Technically the law covering copyright did not therefore extend to Ireland. This meant that Irish publishers could within the terms of the act publish English texts without copyright. This situation pertained for almost one hundred years and came to an end only with the Act of Union in 1800 when English copyright law was extended to Ireland. This anomaly in the law had far-reaching consequences for the Irish print trade and for Irish readers and particularly for Irish writers.

English printers, booksellers, and authors alike saw the Irish trade as taking unfair advantage of the copyright situation. As Irish printers and booksellers did not have to deal with troublesome and demanding authors, or pay for copyright they could and did reprint books published in England at much less cost and trouble to themselves. They printed, smaller, cheaper editions for the most part. The main complaint was that these cheaper editions then found their way onto the English market,

and because of the price difference had an unfair advantage over the English editions. Nicholas Barker in his study of the book trade in Ireland comments that the stereotype of the Dublin booksellers was of “cunning cost-cutters, using their exemption from the Copyright Act to undercut virtuous, author-paying London trade.”⁴⁶⁹ The debate raged in the English print media throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century. The following article printed in *Lloyd’s Evening Post* in March 1785 is an example of the arguments used against the Irish printers.

The piracies so daily practised by the Irish booksellers, call aloud for redress, as there is scarce a production of merit brought out this side of the water, which they do not contract into a smaller work, and publish at a lower price, which soon finds its way here, to the great detriment of men of genius and science.⁴⁷⁰

Samuel Richardson in 1753 claimed to be afraid that the Irish publishers of his novel *Sir Charles Grandison* would sue him for breach of copyright as their reprinted editions of his novel came out before his own first edition in London.⁴⁷¹ The Dublin printer George Faulkner had paid Richardson for the copyright of the book, but several other Irish printers reprinted it without consultation or payment. As a counter move Richardson sent English copies of the novel to Ireland but the cheap Irish reprints had already saturated the market. As the English edition was more elaborate but also more expensive this move would not have been a commercial success. In response to this situation

⁴⁶⁹ Nicholas Barker, *Form and Meaning in the History of the Book* (London, 2003), p. 298.

⁴⁷⁰ *Lloyd’s Evening Post & Daily Universal Register*. March 1785. Quoted in Cole (1986), p. 4.

⁴⁷¹ Samuel Richardson, *Sir Charles Grandison* (London, 1753) Dublin reprint, *Sir Charles Grandison* (Dublin, 1753).

Richardson wrote and distributed a pamphlet entitled, “*An Address to the Public, on the Treatment Which the Editor of the History of Sir Charles Grandison has Met With From Certain Booksellers and Printers in Dublin. Including Observations on Mr. Faulkner’s Defence of Himself, Published in his Irish News-Paper of Nov. 3. 1753.*”⁴⁷² He also added an “Address to the Reader” in the second edition of *Sir Charles Grandison*, which came out in London in 1754.⁴⁷³ In this he criticised, and named the Dublin printers who had issued reprints of the novel.⁴⁷⁴ This was just one of the many celebrated and widely publicised disputes about copyright that plagued the Irish and English print trade throughout the eighteenth century, particularly between 1750 and 1800.

The persistent call from British publishers was for the copyright law to be extended to Ireland, but attempts to do this met with strong resistance. The main argument was that it would destroy the Irish industry without giving much advantage to the English trade. Many authors also complained. Thomas Sheridan went as far as to offer a reward for anyone reporting a bookseller who had a reprint of his *Dictionary* for sale.⁴⁷⁵ Dublin reprints sold for as little as a quarter of the price of the London editions.

⁴⁷² “*An Address to the Public, on the Treatment Which the Editor of the History of Sir Charles Grandison has Met With From Certain Booksellers and Printers in Dublin. Including Observations on Mr. Faulkner’s Defence of Himself, Published in his Irish News-Paper of Nov. 3. 1753* (London: Printed by Samuel Richardson, 1754).

⁴⁷³ Samuel Richardson, *Sir Charles Grandison* (London: Printed by Samuel Richardson, 1754).

⁴⁷⁴ For a discussion of Richardson’s protracted public disagreements with the Dublin printers, see James E. Tierney, “Dublin-London Publishing Relations in the 18th Century: The Case of George Faulkner” in *The Book Trade and Its Customers 1450-1900; Historical Essays for Robin Myers* (Winchester, 1994), pp. 133-140 and Nicholas Barker, *Form and Meaning in the History of the Book* (London, 2003), pp. 298-318.

⁴⁷⁵ *Edinburgh Advertiser*, 6 July 1784. Quoted in Cole (1986), p. 70.

The situation, needless to say, looked very different from the Irish perspective, and was consequently represented very differently in the Irish press, and by individuals who saw the English demands as just another form of colonial oppression. Jonathan Swift is one of the first on record to comment on the way English publishers flooded the Irish market with their over-priced publications. He may in fact be the prophet, if not the inspiration, for the future development of the Irish reprint industry, as his comments on the situation precede the mid-century blossoming of the Irish reprint industry.

Only one thing I know, that the cruel Oppressions of the Kingdom by England are not to be borne. You send what books you please hither, and the Booksellers here can send nothing to you that is written here. As this is absolute Oppression if I were a Bookseller in this town, I would use all Safe Means to reprint London books, and run them to any Town in England that I could, because, whoever neither offends the Laws of God, or the country he liveth in commiteth no Sin.⁴⁷⁶

Swift here anticipates the point that the Irish book historian Mary Pollard makes some two hundred years later. The Irish were not breaking the law; they were merely taking advantage of a loophole in the law that was to their commercial advantage. English printers were protesting about the loss of the lucrative Irish market for their overpriced books. The real reason English booksellers conducted such a heated campaign, Pollard points out, had very little to do with cheap imports. Pollard supports her argument by showing that British customs records contain very little evidence of this

⁴⁷⁶ Jonathan Swift, Letter to his publisher Benjamin Motte. 25 May 1736. *The Works of the Rev. Jonathan Swift*, ed. John Nichols (London, 1808), vol. 1V, p. 493. Quoted in Pollard, (1989), p. 75.

trade during the eighteenth century.⁴⁷⁷ Although records show that very few of these reprints made their way to England, Richard Cole's research has shown that large numbers were exported to North America: "There are a profusion of Irish reprints of eighteenth-century English writers in the institutional libraries in the US."⁴⁷⁸ As an example, he has found, "eighteenth-century Irish reprints of Oliver Goldsmith's works in 37 institutional libraries in the US with a total of 153 copies."⁴⁷⁹ He also makes the point that these Irish reprints were valued in their own right judging by "the number and state of preservation of those found in the libraries of Ireland, England and the US."⁴⁸⁰ What really antagonised the English publishers and booksellers was the loss of the Irish market, a place where they could sell their more expensive editions of the same texts. This represented more than an attack on booksellers, it was a direct attack on the newly emerging British market culture, in which booksellers and writers played such a significant part. Margot Finn in *The Character of Credit* highlights the important role played by writers in the development of the new and vibrant commercial world.

In feeding the growing market for literary products, novelists played an instrumental role in the evolution of market culture; the history of the novel in this period is in many ways a history of the commodity told through commodified fictions. But in helping to

⁴⁷⁷ Mary Pollard, *Dublin's Trade in Books 1550-1899*, Lyell Lectures, 1986-1989 (Oxford, 1989), p. 74.

⁴⁷⁸ Cole (1986), p. xi.

⁴⁷⁹ Cole (1986), p. xi.

⁴⁸⁰ Cole (1986), p. xi.

create market culture novelists also continually explored market values, and repeatedly found them wanting.⁴⁸¹

Despite attacks from British booksellers and printers the Irish reprint trade flourished, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century. Irish booksellers and printers, in their turn, played an important role in the creation of a market culture in Ireland, but it was a lucrative market from which Irish writers were systematically excluded. There was little or no money to be made by writers in Ireland, there were few publishing opportunities and when their books, published in England, were reprinted in Ireland they received no revenue from them. James Phillips calculates that there were thirty-three printers and forty-six booksellers in Dublin in 1760.⁴⁸² From his search of the “English Short Title Catalogue” in January 2006, Richard B. Sher estimates that Dublin printed approximately 14,000 items between 1751 and 1800.⁴⁸³ Many booksellers were also printers and they used their newspapers and journals to advertise and review their reprints. John Exshaw, publisher of *Exshaw’s Magazine* and James Hoey, publisher of the *Dublin Mercury*, both used their magazines to advertise their reprints. They published reviews and advertisements and sometimes extracts from the texts they reprinted.

⁴⁸¹ Margot C. Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740-1914* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 26.

⁴⁸² James W. Phillips, *Printing and Bookselling in Dublin 1670-1800* (Dublin, 1998), p. 29.

⁴⁸³ Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland and America* (Chicago, 2006), p. 446.

Many Irish printers simply produced the English text without altering it in any way. But some made corrections and additions to their reprints, and used these improvements as a way of advertising their publications. All wanted to produce cheaper editions of the English originals but a significant number also aspired to producing better editions by improving presentation and correcting errors. The 1777 Dublin reprint of *Poems and Plays by Oliver Goldsmith to Which is Prefixed a Life of the Author* carries the following advertisement on the first page.

This edition contains several ADDITIONS and CORRECTIONS never before printed; being the only perfect copy ever published by this celebrated author.⁴⁸⁴

This Dublin reprint edition was printed for thirty-two Dublin booksellers. This was a common arrangement among booksellers when they wished to avoid several editions of a popular work coming out at the same time. Encouraging subscriptions for his 1772 edition of Hume's *History of England*, the Dublin printer James Williams stated that the text would be an improvement on the English edition.

Page for page with the London quarto Edition, on a new Type cast on Purpose, the same fine Paper as the Specimen ... neatly bound in Calf, and double-lettered. No Expense will be spared, in order to render it worthy of the Encouragement of the public. Two

⁴⁸⁴ Oliver Goldsmith, *Poems and Plays by Oliver Goldsmith* (Dublin, 1777).

correctors will be employed to read every sheet: and a head of the Author, finely engraved, will be prefixed to the first volume.⁴⁸⁵

Unlike the English booksellers who liked to take credit for encouraging great works of art, Williams takes credit for being able to put “a work of merit, beautifully printed, into everyone’s hands.”⁴⁸⁶ He suggests that one of his main reasons is that his self-worth as a bookseller is enhanced because “thro’ me, my countrymen will be gratified with this charming repast.”⁴⁸⁷ Sher concludes that Williams, like many ambitious Dublin booksellers, was not driven merely by the desire for profits but by a mixture of “patriotic, cultural and personal motives.”⁴⁸⁸

Dublin editions were often smaller than the English originals. This made them cheaper to produce and had the added advantage that they could be carried in a pocket and read on journeys and when out walking. London quarto editions were reprinted in octavo in Ireland and octavo became duodecimo. Nicolas Barker suggests that the Irish reprints were “the paperbacks of their time.”⁴⁸⁹ Booksellers advertising their wares pointed out the practical benefits of these changes; they could be carried comfortably and consulted with ease. So they were working texts, the ones readers used

⁴⁸⁵ Sher (2006), p. 486.

⁴⁸⁶ Sher (2006), p. 486.

⁴⁸⁷ Sher (2006), p. 486.

⁴⁸⁸ Sher (2006), p. 486.

⁴⁸⁹ Nicholas Barker, *Form and Meaning in the History of the Book* (London, 2003), p. 298.

every day, or carried around with them. However, many writers publicly criticised the quality of Dublin reprints. The poet William Preston in the introduction to his *Poetical Works* lamented that “nature and fortune have conspired to fix my residence unalterably in Ireland” thus making him dependent on Dublin printers.⁴⁹⁰ He complained bitterly that Dublin reprints were “filled with those mistakes, and gross errors of the press, which too generally disfigure, and indeed render unintelligible, Dublin editions of books.”⁴⁹¹

As we have seen, Herbert creates her texts in quarto, not octavo. They are not replicas of cheap Dublin reprints but of the more elaborate and expensively produced English originals. This decision shows, among other things, Herbert’s unwillingness to participate in the emerging and at times frenzied Irish commercial world, with its emphasis on marketing devices, competition and cheap sales. By keeping her texts in manuscript form, she distances herself and her writing from demeaning contact with trade and retains her position as a talented woman of letters. Her manuscripts are originals, not mass-produced copies of a text that could debase their author’s status by being sold cheaply to the general public. Yet, in mimicking published books, even if her manuscripts are modelled on more expensive English editions, Herbert does come into contact with the taint of commercialism. This is the liminal position Herbert’s manuscripts occupy, caught as they are between manuscript and print culture.

⁴⁹⁰ William Preston, *The Poetical Works of William Preston Esq.* (Dublin: Printed for the Author, 1793), p. xv.

⁴⁹¹ Preston (1793), p. ix.

The long-lasting dispute between the English and Irish print industries had serious consequences for Irish readers and purchasers of books, for authors and for printers and booksellers. Many English printers did not consider it commercially viable to export their books to Ireland. This limited the number and variety of English books available to the Irish public. Sher estimates that about a third of original British titles were reprinted in Ireland in the eighteenth century. Dublin printers decided what to reprint, and despite their claims to benevolent, public-spirited printing, many based their decisions purely on commercial considerations. Irish booksellers had agents in London whose job it was to obtain the earliest copies of books or indeed if possible to get them before they went to print. Many Irish reprints appeared just a few months after the London editions, or as in Richardson's case, before the first edition in London. Some Irish booksellers kept agents in London to monitor the trade; they also read the English reviews, particularly the *Critical Review* and *Monthly Review*. From this they learned what was commercially lucrative and based their publishing decisions on these market indicators. The English booksellers felt they had the high moral ground in this publishing war. Thomas Cadell, Sr., a leading London bookseller, provides a fine example of the polemic used by the more high-minded English printers. He saw his role as a patron and producer of great works of literature. He stated this position before a parliamentary committee set up to investigate the copyright dispute.

The very great encouragement given to literary productions has certainly produced a number of Capital publications vis Robertson, Hume, Gibbon, Blackstone, Lyttleton, Blair, Johnson, Sterne etc etc which do honour to the country.⁴⁹²

Sher believes that Cadell and publishers like him saw themselves as “the first cause of great literature and learning.”⁴⁹³

Irish booksellers tended to take a more pragmatic view, some indeed, like George Faulkner, have left us with self-deprecating and satiric views of the print industry in Ireland. We have already seen his satiric portrayal of the Irish reading public in *The Humble Petition of George Faulkner and George Grierson*. Reading this pamphlet we can see why Swift described Faulkner as the “inventor of grave irony.”⁴⁹⁴

Your petitioners can with truth assert that they have not for a considerable Time past sold any Books, (though they have at a very great expense provided themselves with the worst) excepting some few old sermons against Popery and the newest Country Dances.

⁴⁹² Sher (2006), p. 446.

⁴⁹³ Sher (2006), p. 446.

⁴⁹⁴ Robert Barton, Marcus A. McCorison and Donald Oresman, eds., *The Humble Petition of George Faulkner and George Greirson Printers and Booksellers* (Denver, 1993), p.iv.

Your Petitioners are as sensible as any of your Honours can be, of the little use, and importance of that Learning and Knowledge that is contained in Books, and would not be misunderstood to recommend to your Honours the useless drudgery of reading, which would too much break in upon your precious time. But your Petitioners beg leave to suggest that, as the reputation of some Learning is as honourable to a Nation abroad, as the reality of it could be prejudicial at home; it might possibly not be amiss to keep up the outward appearances of it, by not suffering your Petitioners to shut up their Shops for want of Customers.⁴⁹⁵

The Irish print industry in the eighteenth century was one of the few commercial businesses where women worked side by side with men, thus generating the impression of equal opportunity. The fact that women worked in the business and often indeed took over the running of printing houses when their husbands died should have opened up opportunities for women writers, even if these working women were to act only as role models. Most printer/booksellers were family businesses that passed down through several generations in the eighteenth century. Because of the family nature of the business, women were often directly involved in the trade, even when they were not in charge.

⁴⁹⁶ Pollard's research shows that although the numbers listed were very small, women had found their way into all sides of the book trade. C. J. Mitchell in *Women in the Eighteenth-Century Book*

⁴⁹⁵ *The Humble Petition of George Faulkner and George Geirson, Printers and Booksellers* (Dublin: Faulkner and Geirson, 1745), p. 4.

⁴⁹⁶ M. Pollard, *Dictionary of the Members of the Dublin Book Trade* (Oxford, 2001).

Trade, estimates that women may have made up as much as “half of the book trade.”⁴⁹⁷ This is very difficult to prove, as frequently only owners are listed in the Guild. Pollard’s *Dictionary of the Members of the Dublin Book Trade* lists close to two thousand entries and of these only ninety-four are women. The majority of these women entered the trade on the deaths of their husbands. When women took over the businesses they felt it necessary to justify their position as head of the business. Most cited financial reasons, primarily the need to support themselves and their children. Anne Colles and Ann Mitchell are good examples of this. Anne Colles succeeded her husband William, a bookseller and Lottery Office Keeper, in 1790. On assuming control of the business, she put a notice in the *Dublin Chronicle* of 3 July 1790: “Anne Colles continues bookselling and stationary business to support her 8 dependent children.”⁴⁹⁸ This acts as both an advertisement for her business and a plea for sympathy and understanding. Ann Mitchell on the death of her husband John, a bookseller, printer and Lottery Office Keeper, states that she has been “advised to continue business for the support of her numerous family.”⁴⁹⁹ Clearly, like the other widows who put similar notices in the newspapers and journals of the day, Mitchell and Colles represent themselves as women who are driven into unconventional roles by the force of circumstances. We see no similar notices from men in the period. Given their attitude to their own careers, it is unlikely that women booksellers would have encouraged women writers into the market place.

⁴⁹⁷ C. J. Mitchell, “Women in the Eighteenth-Century Book Trade” in O. M. Brack, ed., *Writers, Books, and Trade: An Eighteenth-Century Miscellany for William B. Todd* (New York, 1994), p. 28.

⁴⁹⁸ Pollard (2001), pp. 111-112.

⁴⁹⁹ Pollard (2001), p. 412.

One of the most learned and famous women editors of the eighteenth century was Constantia Greirson, wife of the publisher George Greirson. She inherited the family business on the death of her husband in 1724 and continued on as editor until 1732. As a Latin and Greek scholar of some note she had no need to apologise for being part of the business.⁵⁰⁰ Catherine Finn took over her husband's business in Kilkenny in 1776. She not only carried it on but built it up into a highly successful enterprise. She published *Finn's Leinster Journal* for many years and was also a very successful printer and bookseller. From her bookshop in Kilkenny she sold lottery tickets and paper and ran a circulating library. Herbert would have been familiar with Catherine Finn's success as the family take in the paper from the late 1770s and she refers to it many times in her writing.

Although the industry flourished in the latter half of the eighteenth century and many fortunes were made, publishing could be and sometimes was a dangerous occupation, not because of the difficulties associated with reprint activities but because of the political situation in Ireland, particularly towards the end of the eighteenth century. Several prominent booksellers spent time in prison for their alleged activities. This was mainly due to their willingness to publish the political writings of the United Irishmen. A prominent United Irishman, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, records how the publisher Byrne, who was bringing out Rowan's report of his own trial, was brought to trial for publishing seditious material.⁵⁰¹ The trial judge was the flamboyant Lord Clonmell whose diary

⁵⁰⁰ Pollard (2001), pp. 252-254.

⁵⁰¹ William H. Drummond, ed., *The Autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan* (Dublin, 1840). Rowan was sentenced to two years in prison for seditious libel, escaped to America, where he kept his diary for his wife and children. He spent the last thirty years of his life in Ireland. Before he died he wrote to his friend Thomas Kennedy Lowry asking to have the diaries published: "I have therefore been induced to request you to accept the manuscripts, and undertake the publication of them at some future time" (Autobiography, pp. vi-vii).

forms part of this study. The altercation between the judge, Lord Clonmell, and the printer Byrne is both amusing and revealing. The judge warns Byrne in very plain terms: "Take care, sir what you do. I give you this caution; for if there be any reflections on the judges of the land, by the Eternal G-!!! I will lay you by the heels."⁵⁰² Byrne's reply was disingenuous, but also the acceptable voice of the new commercial man of business.

Your Lordship knows I have but one principal in trade, which is to make money of it; and that, if there were two publications giving different features of the trial I would publish both.⁵⁰³

Byrne was not being entirely truthful here as he was a member of the United Irishmen and was given a prison sentence for his political activities at a later date.

Despite the undoubted success of the Irish reprint industry, it was limited in scope and, despite claims to the contrary, dominated by commercial interests. One of the major consequences was that it offered almost no access to publishing for Irish writers, male or female. None of the Irish booksellers actively encouraged authors. There were none of the opportunities in Ireland that aspiring writers found in London. Neither, Dublin, the centre of publishing in Ireland, nor any of the provincial towns, produced a publisher like William Lane and his thriving if much criticised Minerva

⁵⁰² Fitzpatrick (1869), p. 63.

⁵⁰³ Fitzpatrick (1869), p. 63.

Press in Leadenhall Street, London. Lane published over eight hundred books, most of them novels, between the years 1790 and 1820. Charles Lamb described “the common run of Lane’s novels as “those scanty intellectual viands of the whole female reading public.” But Lane created opportunities not just for reading, he publicly encouraged women to write and send him their manuscripts.⁵⁰⁴ He placed an advertisement in *The Star* (his own newspaper) on 24 January 1791. In this he describes the Minerva Press as “now unrivalled in the public estimation, for Novels, Tales, Romances, Adventures etc.” He goes on to state that he has placed five hundred pounds at an eminent bank “for the sole purpose of purchasing literary productions.” He concludes that all “works of a general nature” would “find an asylum” with the Minerva Press.⁵⁰⁵ He regularly placed such notices in the novels he published, using them both to advertise new publications and to call for new writers and manuscripts. In a note to the novel *Adeline: or, the Orphan* (1790) Lane makes the following offer.

The Editor respectfully informs his Literary Friends and the Public, that his Repository is now open for Manuscripts of Merit against the next Season; and that a sum, from Five to One Hundred Guineas, is ready for such Favours as may be presented to his Press.⁵⁰⁶

The growth in novel-reading and in particular the phenomenal growth in the popularity of the lending libraries led to a feverish demand for new novels. This demand and the promise of monetary

⁵⁰⁴ Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press, 1790-1820* (London, 1939), p. 3.

⁵⁰⁵ *The Star*, Advertisement, 24 Jan. 1791. Quoted in Blakey (1939), p. 18.

⁵⁰⁶ Blakey (1939), p. 73.

reward brought many women into publishing, the majority it must be said hidden behind the featureless “Written by a Lady.” This atmosphere of possibilities did not extend to Ireland, or only indirectly. One Irish woman writer who made her name in the Minerva Press was Regina Maria Roche, from Waterford, whose novel *The Children of the Abbey* was a publishing sensation in 1796.⁵⁰⁷ It had reached its eleventh edition by 1832. Roche left Ireland for London in 1794 and it was in London that her life as a published author began. She published sixteen novels, all of which remained in print during her lifetime. Two related points should be made here. We do not know how many Irish women authors are hidden behind the anonymous “Written by a Lady” although some titles suggest Irish authorship such as *The Reconciliation; or the History of Miss Mortimer and Miss Fitzgerald In a Series of Letters, An Hibernian Novel, By an Irish Lady* (1784). Most respectable literary ladies, who wanted to publish their work, would not be attracted to the Minerva Press. However, while a successful and popular press actively encouraging women to write novels for money opened up a very critical flood of abuse on women novelists, it also opened up possibilities for authorship previously unknown. In fact some aspiring male authors, attracted by the opportunity also concealed their identity behind the decorous and anonymous “Written by a Lady.”

The main result of the copyright dispute between England and Ireland was that very few books were actually published in Ireland first. This had far-reaching consequences for the Irish trade and for Irish writers. Without copyright restrictions the industry became overcrowded. This led to internal disputes and often to price wars when several publishers published the same popular text at

⁵⁰⁷ Regina Maria Roche, *The Children of the Abbey* (London: Printed for William Lane at the Minerva Press, 1796). This is one of the novels Jane Austen ridicules in *Northanger Abbey*; it is also among those Sheridan satirises in *The School for Scandal*.

the same time. The consequences for Irish writers was even more serious and left a legacy that carried on well into the twentieth century, when writers like Joyce and Beckett followed the trail blazed by Irish writers in the eighteenth century, out of Ireland and on to England and the continent, in search of publishers. Oliver Goldsmith is one example of an ambitious Irish writer who built a successful career in London. One of the most popular and best published writers of his time, he left Ireland in 1752, was published, as we know in London and then ironically, his books sold in much cheaper editions at home in Ireland. There were ten Dublin reprint editions of *The Vicar of Wakefield* before 1800. Irish writers, with rare exceptions, did not get published in Ireland. William Carlton looking back in 1842 at the difficulties faced by Irish writers in previous decades, summarises the position Irish writers faced.

Until within the last ten or twelve years an Irish author never thought of publishing in his own country, and the consequence was that our literary men followed the example of our great landlords, they became absentees, and drained the country of its intellectual wealth precisely as the others exhausted it of its rents.⁵⁰⁸

The Dublin trade did not compete with English publishers for the right to publish Irish authors as there seemed no financial reasons for doing so. So both authors and publishers suffered. Authors had to emigrate or at least establish contacts with the English trade to get published. Cole argues that no Irish authors actually suffered from the Irish reprint industry, and that on the contrary they

⁵⁰⁸ Quoted in Charles Benson, "Printers and Booksellers" in Charles Benson and Siobhan Fitzpatrick, eds., *That Woman: Studies in Irish Bibliography* (Dublin, 2005), p. 47.

enhanced their reputations by reaching a far wider readership.⁵⁰⁹ This argument is misleading.

Leaving Ireland to find a publisher was not an option open to everyone. We have seen how the poet William Preston complains that because his “residence is fixed unalterably in Ireland.” he has to rely on Irish publishers. The situation also created an environment that did not encourage publication and Ireland gained a reputation as a country that could not support its writers. Herbert’s complaint in the opening lines of her poem “The Villa” that there is no Goldsmith in Ireland to celebrate the natural beauties of the countryside is a realistic one. The Irish print industry did not nourish Irish authors unless they had been successfully published in England first and more importantly that they had been a commercial success. Irish printers embraced the commercial viability of reprinting and ignored, for the most part, any obligations they might have had to foster the industry in Ireland by promoting publishing at home. This played a significant role in the collapse of the industry in 1800. When reprinting English texts was no longer profitable, printers had nothing to fall back on. Aspiring Irish authors without connections in the industry or without powerful patrons found it almost impossible to get published in Ireland. Had Herbert wanted to publish her work in Ireland the obstacles would have been almost insurmountable.

When the Act of Union led to the extension of the British copyright law to Ireland, the Irish industry, with its focus on short-term gain, virtually collapsed. This resulted in the mass emigration of Dublin printers to North America, where many prospered and quite a few became leading figures

⁵⁰⁹ Cole (1986), pp. 193-194.

in the emerging American reprint industry.⁵¹⁰ However, despite its shortcomings, while it lasted there were some advantages to the Irish reprint trade. It made copies of many English texts available in Ireland at a price that many could afford. One of the most positive and important consequences of the Irish reprint industry was the introduction of so many authors into Ireland, in particular Scottish Enlightenment authors. In fact, as Sher points out, many of the leading authors of the Scottish Enlightenment were household names in late eighteenth-century Ireland.⁵¹¹ Books that were popular and successful in England and Scotland flooded onto the market in Ireland in cheaper reprint editions thus making them affordable for a wide range of readers. The availability of books that English and Scottish readers found to their taste fostered similar tastes in reading in Ireland, thus creating a community of readers and forming subtle cultural links between the countries. Viewed more negatively, the imposition of English and Scottish reading tastes on Irish readers could be seen as a form of cultural colonialism, even though the situation was created by the commercially driven decisions of the Irish printers and booksellers. One of the contradictory and ironic outcomes is that Herbert inhabits a culture of reading that includes the published work of successful English, Scottish and Irish writers, but that reading takes place in an environment that offers no opportunities to publish for the readers of those texts. Herbert's literary world is out of balance: printed books are readily available. Her little library of treasured texts is material proof of that, but there seems no possibility of her becoming a published author.

⁵¹⁰ For a discussion of the collapse of the industry and its rebirth in North America, see Cole (1986), pp. 149-190.

⁵¹¹ Sher (2006), p. 456.

Just how important a role did the inhospitable nature of the Irish reprint industry play in Herbert's decision not to publish her work? Why were none of her books published for over one hundred years after they were written? And why, when she was first published in the twentieth century, did this happen in London and not in Dublin? Undoubtedly the structure of the Irish print industry contributed to the negative environment in which Herbert constructed herself as an authoress. However, the answers to these questions do not lie simply with the eighteenth-century print industry. Herbert's failure to publish is a product of her own particular circumstances as a member of an Anglo-Irish family and of a complex blend of attitudes to women's place in society and in literature. Herbert not only models her writings on the texts she reads; she is also influenced by the attitudes to women and to women writers and their place in the world of letters that she finds in her reading and in the world around her. Imitative as she is, she cannot help but be formed by the opinions that she daily imbibes in her reading. She presents her texts as those of a professional writer but does not seem able or to have a desire to inhabit the role of a professional writer herself. I will argue that she inhabits an older and more traditional world where manuscript culture still thrives and where the commercial world with its emphasis on financial gain, competition, self-promotion and exposure to the public gaze has made few inroads.

Women writers were emerging into the public sphere in increasing numbers in the eighteenth century. However, in Ireland these numbers were small. For the most part only women from privileged literary backgrounds with the support of male patrons found their way into print. Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan are the two most successful published women writers from the period. Edgeworth comes from a strongly supportive literary background, while Morgan, self-made, ambitious and controversial, fully embraces and exploits the new market economy and stands out as one of the great literary entrepreneurs of her time. For Herbert, lacking Edgeworth's enabling

background, and Morgan's force of character, the barriers of class, education and gender remain in place and prevent her from ever thinking of herself as a published author. While Mary Wollstonecraft considers herself a woman "bold enough to advance before the age," Herbert remains in the domestic world of the Anglo-Irish gentlewoman, her identity modestly hidden behind pseudonyms and misleading titles and the readership of her books confined to a small coterie of family and friends.⁵¹² Like Morgan, Wollstonecraft wrote from financial necessity. Barbara Taylor describes her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* as "first and foremost a pot boiler – written to satisfy Wollstonecraft's commitments to her publisher, and to keep the wolf from the family's door."⁵¹³ Herbert had no such financial imperatives to motivate her, at least not before her father's death in 1803.

The world of printed books in which Herbert forms her subjectivity is one fraught with anxiety for writers who wished to publish their work. Some of the difficulties Herbert faces as an author are those particular to her class, gender and location, but others are general to all writers. One is the rapid growth in the number and variety of books published. This was a major concern for the professional writer who viewed with dismay the proliferation of new books flooding the market. One of the dominant fears was that cheap print would displace more important books and make print available to everyone. This anxiety was heightened in Ireland by the quantity of cheap reprints available and by the threat posed to the ruling authorities by the flood of publications coming from

⁵¹² Mary Wollstonecraft, letter, probably to Mary Hays, c summer 1797, in Ralph Wardle, ed., *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Ithica, 1979), p. 413. See also Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 11.

⁵¹³ Taylor (2003), p. 17.

the United Irishmen. Kevin Whelan argues that one of the main aims of the United Irishmen was to “make everyone an informed politician and in the process to democratise print and make it available to all.”⁵¹⁴ To this end they published cheap pamphlets, ballads, articles in newspapers, journals and memoirs. This threatened not only established texts and reading patterns but the very stability of the nation.

Prospective authors themselves had two related fears. The first was how to publish for money and still remain respectable. The second was how to protect themselves and their work from being misread and misunderstood by an ever growing and often critical reading public. Many, like Herbert, chose not to publish at all. It was enough to write and to feel themselves part of a community of writers. Herbert’s emulation of Pope, Milton and Goldsmith makes her, like them, a participator in the highest form of cultural expression of her day. To be a good amateur, to make no money from writing could be seen as a higher calling than entering the sordid world of writing for financial gain. For those who did decide to publish, there were other measures they could employ to safeguard themselves from accusations of commercialism. Horace Walpole, who did not want the taint of writing for money to tarnish his view of himself as a gentleman, set up his own printing press in 1757 and published over thirty books, including the first imprint of his very successful *Castle of Otranto* in 1764.⁵¹⁵ But this was not an option available to many writers who entered the profession precisely to make a living. However, there are examples of men in much poorer circumstances doing just

⁵¹⁴ Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830* (Cork, 1996), p. 71.

⁵¹⁵ For a discussion of Horace Walpole’s printing press, see Stephen Clarke, *The Strawberry Hill Press and its Printing House* (New Haven, 2011).

that. The classics scholar and teacher Patrick Lynch who set up a boy's school in Carrick-on-Suir in 1785, also set up a printing press with his friend John Stacy to publish his own books.

In concert with a barber in the town, he procured some types, and by means of a bellows press, he set and printed his work with his own hands, and established the first printing press ever in that town. His publication was *The Chronoscope, containing the rules of Chronology in Memorative Verse for the Use of Farmers and Mariners*.⁵¹⁶

Lynch also wrote and published a *Pentaglot* grammar, in which he made a comparison between English, Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Irish. In his grammar he pointed out many errors in Johnson's dictionary.⁵¹⁷ Once Lynch had established his reputation as a writer he was able to find a Dublin printer willing to publish his texts. In her writing Herbert never refers to the life of the town in which she lives or the ordinary inhabitants; nor does she mention Lynch and Stacy or their printing press. Thus although there is an active literary and cultural life in the town, it is not a life in which she participates.

⁵¹⁶ Seamus Casaide, "Patrick Lynch, Secretary to the Gaelic Society of Dublin," *Journal of Waterford and South East of Ireland Archaeological Society* xv (1912), 48.

⁵¹⁷ P. J. Dowling, "Patrick Lynch Schoolmaster." *Studies, An Irish Quarterly Review* 20. 79 (1931), 461-472.

Writers developed many strategies to protect themselves from the general reading public. Some, like the Irish poet Mary Tighe, choose to have their texts printed privately in limited editions.⁵¹⁸ This confined the circulation of their texts to a relatively closed circle of close friends and relatives. Others wrote long prefaces to their texts, giving their reasons for offering their work for sale. William Shenstone, in his introduction to *The Works in Prose and Verse of William Shenstone*, published by George Faulkner in Dublin in 1764, explains why authors include apologies in their writing.

It is taken for granted that on every publication there is at least a seeming violation of modesty: a presumption, on the writer's side, that he is able to instruct or to entertain the world; which implies a supposition that he can communicate, what they cannot draw from their own reflections.⁵¹⁹

Shenstone does not regard publishing as a form of self-indulgence. On the contrary, he claims that it is the duty of men of intelligence to publish.

A man possessed of intellectual talents would be more blameable in confining them to his own private life, than the mean spirited miser, that did the same by his money.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁸ Mary Tighe, *Psyche: or The Legend of Love* (London, 1805).

⁵¹⁹ William Shenstone, *The Works in Prose and Verse of William Shenstone* (Dublin, 1764), p. 2.

⁵²⁰ Shenstone (1764), p. 2.

An approach adopted by some authors was to publish anonymously. *The Fair Hibernian*, published anonymously in London in 1789 and reprinted in Dublin in 1790, was a successful sentimental, epistolary novel. Taking a brave stance behind his/her anonymous status, the author places a four-line poem on the first page. The poem dismisses the ignorant reader and looks for affirmation to the reader who can recognise the genius behind the work.

What ignorance shall think, or malice say,

To me are Trifles, if the knowing few,

Who can see Faults, but can see Beauties too,

Applaud that Genius which themselves partake.⁵²¹

This not only dismisses an ignorant public on mass, but also imagines that treasured hope of the aspiring author, the ideal reader.⁵²²

⁵²¹Anon, *The Fair Hibernian* (London, 1789) Dublin re-print (Dublin, 1790). For discussion of the novel, see John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997), p. 91.

⁵²² Mary Wollstonecraft, clearly not the imagined “ideal reader” envisioned by the author, was highly critical of *The Fair Hibernian* in her review for Joseph Johnson’s *Analytical Review*. It begins “It has been sarcastically said by a snarling poet (Pope), that most women have no character at all: we shall apply it to their production – Novels.” Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, eds., *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London, 1989), vol. 7, p. 191.

Given these concerns, how did writers who chose to risk accusations of degrading their art by writing for money get published? The first step was to find a patron or publisher. For some, this was relatively easy. Maria Edgeworth's father and his influential friends guided her early steps as an author, and his reputation guaranteed her access to publishing for her own work. However, her emergence as a published author was marked by some difficulties. Her early career was dogged by the strong disapproval of her father's friend Thomas Day.⁵²³ Marilyn Butler describes Day as Edgeworth's "bad literary father," and the relationship between his work and hers as "personal, emotional and conflicted."⁵²⁴ Out of this conflict, Butler argues, emerge Edgeworth's first seven works. The most important response to Day's influence and writings was her *Letters for Literary Ladies*.⁵²⁵ This begins with what Butler describes as a "version of a letter from Day to R. L. Edgeworth objecting to female authorship, it looks like the manifesto of a silenced author, even a silenced generation."⁵²⁶ The letter sets out Day's desire to "enumerate the evils, and ridicule the foibles, incident to literary ladies."⁵²⁷ These are a summary of the attitudes of many to the emergence of women into the commercial world of published texts. His list of objections is long and detailed. Among them are the beliefs that women "wits are more likely to be spoiled by admiration than beauties," that they will be unable to bear the attacks of "malignant critics," or to see

⁵²³ Thomas Day's most successful publication was *The History of Sandford and Merton* (London, 1783-1789). This was first intended for inclusion in a text for children that R. L. Edgeworth was preparing; however Day later expanded it into three volumes.

⁵²⁴ Marilyn Butler, "Edgeworth's Stern Father: Escaping Thomas Day," 1795-1801, in Alvaro Ribero & James J. Basker, eds. *Tradition in Transition: Women Writers, Marginal Texts and the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1996), p. 78.

⁵²⁵ Maria Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies to Which is added an Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification* (London, 1795).

⁵²⁶ Butler (1996), p. 83.

⁵²⁷ Edgeworth (1795), p. 22.

“premature memoirs and spurious collections of familiar letters published by needy booksellers or designing enemies.”⁵²⁸ He describes as “imprudent exhibitions” those ladies who “publish their private letters, select maxims, secret anecdotes, and family memoirs.” Most telling, he roundly concludes: “Literary Ladies will, I am afraid, be losers in love as well as in friendship, by their superiority.”⁵²⁹ Edgeworth’s response is a defence of women’s right to education and autonomy: “I wish to give her the habit of industry and attention, the love of knowledge and the power of reasoning: these will enable her to attain excellence in any pursuit of science or of literature.”⁵³⁰ Edgeworth’s most telling and authoritative response to Day is, as both Butler and Clóna Ó Gallchoir argue, the writing and successful publication of her work, and the confident manner in which her early texts engage with Day’s published work.⁵³¹ If Edgeworth was critical of the negative role her “bad literary father” played in her early career, she acknowledged the very positive influence of her real father. In a letter to her stepmother Frances Edgeworth, she details a family reading of Lady Morgan’s commercially successful *Florence McCarthy*. She describes it as containing “the most despicable, disgusting affectation and impropriety.” For Edgeworth, Lady Morgan’s faults as a writer, and the travesty that is her novel *Florence McCarthy* are due to her lack of fatherly guidance: “Oh that I could prevent people from ever naming me along with her – either for praise or blame.

⁵²⁸ Edgeworth (1795), p. 29.

⁵²⁹ Edgeworth (1795), p. 34.

⁵³⁰ Edgeworth (1795), p. 74.

⁵³¹ For a discussion of Day’s relationship with R. L. Edgeworth and his influence on Edgeworth’s early writing, see Clóna Ó Gallchoir, *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 40-42.

God forbid as my dear father said that I should ever be such a thing as that, it was for want of such a father that she has come to this.”⁵³²

Lady Morgan’s father as she describes him in her autobiography was “an actor!” and his life story “a romance in itself.”⁵³³ That Morgan idolised her father is evident from her *Memoirs*. However, despite the loving portraits of him that Morgan repeatedly paints in the text, he emerges as a careless and inadequate provider of material and moral guidance for his two motherless daughters. Flamboyant and improvident, his financial affairs in disarray for most of his career, he was, as a parent, a total contrast to R.L. Edgeworth. Charlotte Brooke in her writing admits that her career developed under her father’s shadow. Her father Henry Brooke was a successful and well-published novelist and dramatist.⁵³⁴ In the preface to her *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, published in Dublin in 1789, she pays tribute to the number of learned men who have supported her work. Among them are Sylvester O’Halloran, Joseph C. Walker, and Theophilus O’Flanagan. She also acknowledges the many people who added their names to the subscription list that enabled her to find a Dublin publisher.⁵³⁵ What she does not say is that in 1788 she had printed an eight-page book proposal, *Proposals for Printing by Subscription Reliques of Irish Poetry*, as a way of attracting subscribers to the publication

⁵³² Christina Calvin, *Maria Edgeworth: Letters from England 1813-1844* (Oxford, 1871), pp. 166-167. Letter to Frances Edgeworth, 28 Jan. 1819.

⁵³³ Morgan (1866), pp. 40-41.

⁵³⁴ Betsy Sheridan gives a very different view of Brooke’s father: “I think him a disagreeable Animal and unfortunately for Miss Brooke that is the general opinion” (*Journal*, p. 47).

⁵³⁵ Charlotte Brooke, *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (Dublin, 1789), pp. ix-x.

of the text.⁵³⁶ Brooke needed the support of her father and his friends and a substantial subscription list to get her work published.

Marilyn Butler, discussing Edgeworth's reliance on her father and his "impressive intellectual network," makes the point that most well-known women writers emerged from such "well-defined social groupings."⁵³⁷ She cites Inchbald, Wollstonecraft, Robinson, Baurbald and Opie as products of such environments. Elizabeth Eger argues that the intellectual community loosely defined as the Bluestockings that gathered around Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Vesey and Frances Boscawen in London, "propelled little-known female writers, who might not otherwise have ventured forth, into the literary public sphere."⁵³⁸ Eger highlights the importance of community and mutual support in the Bluestockings circle: "Their feelings of the expansive possibilities of self were inseparable from their sense of belonging to a group providing mutual support, identity and friendship."⁵³⁹ Herbert, although she had access to reading, had no circle of enabling literary women around her who might have encouraged her out of her isolation and into a more public world. Neither did she have a father to encourage her writing. Herbert represents him as genial and hospitable but not as a man of letters. Herbert is embedded in her world of limited possibilities and there are no lines of escape other than that of marriage, and when that possibility fades there is only her writing. If we read her

⁵³⁶ Charlotte Brooke, *Proposals for Printing by Subscription Reliques of Irish Poetry* (Dublin, 1788).

⁵³⁷ Butler (1996), p. 76.

⁵³⁸ Elizabeth Eger, "The Noblest Commerce of Mankind: Conversation and Community in the Bluestocking Circle." In Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, eds., *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*. (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 289.

⁵³⁹ Eger (2007), p. 289.

unpublished manuscripts from this perspective, then they are a manifesto of her enforced isolation and entrapment in a culture where writing does not provide a means of escape, like it does for Morgan and Wollstonecraft, but only a means of protest.

Mary Wollstonecraft, having failed at the polite occupations of teacher, paid companion and governess, found her way into the world of publishing through the London bookseller and printer, Joseph Johnson, who became a lifelong employer, patron and friend. However, family connections and patrons did not always guarantee publication. William Godwin, who published Wollstonecraft's novel *Maria*, did not publish his daughter Mary Shelley's novel *Matilda*. The autobiographical nature of this novel and its hints at incest between a father and daughter may have been Godwin's reason, one that would not have deterred a publisher who was not related to the novelist. Shelley's *Matilda* was not published until 1959.⁵⁴⁰ Writers who numbered publishers among their friends also had access to publication. Wolfe Tone had his novel *Belmont Castle* published by his friend and fellow United Irishman Patrick Byrne in 1796. Many women writers found patrons outside their family circles. The novelist Frances Sheridan found a very supportive and powerful patron in Samuel Richardson, who played an active part in getting her work published. Letitia Pilkington, moving to London in search of a career as a writer, found two illustrious patrons in Colley Cibber and Lord Kingsborough. Such patronage however came at a price. A letter from Pilkington to Lord Kingsborough dated 18 April 1748 suggests the part that she had to play to retain his good-will and financial support.

⁵⁴⁰ Mary Shelley, *Matilda*, ed., Elizabeth Nitchie (Chapel Hill, 1959).

As you desire me to be merry, whether I will or not, my duty obliges me to comply with your injunction, and rattle out everything I think entertaining.⁵⁴¹

One of the most popular ways to get published was by subscription list. But a writer needed a wide circle of friends or a patron to take this route to publication. There was also a commercial aspect to subscription lists that made authors reluctant to use them. The editor of *The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq.* Mr. Warburton, in his “Advertisement” to the ten-volume edition, explains why he does not publish the edition by subscription.

The editor hath not, for the sake of profit, suffered the Author’s Name to be made cheap by a *Subscription*; nor his Works to be defrauded of their due Honours by a vulgar or inelegant Impression; nor his memory to be disgraced by any pieces unworthy of his talents or virtue. On the contrary, he hath, at a very great expense, ornamented this Edition with all the advantages, which the best Artists in Paper, Printing, and Sculpture could bestow upon it.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴¹ Letitia Pilkington, *Memoirs of Mrs. Letitia Pilkington 1712-1750* (New York, 1928). Letter to Lord Kingsborough 18 April 1748, p. 231. For a recent biography of Pilkington, see Norman Clarke, *Queen of the Wits: A Life of Mrs Pilkington* (London, 2008).

⁵⁴² Alexander Pope, *The Works of Alexander Pope Esq in Ten Complete Volumes* (Dublin, 1764), p. ii. This edition of Pope’s works was very popular in Ireland. It is in the Cooper Penrose Library in Cork and Bowen also lists the ten-volume edition among the books in the library at Bowen’s Court. We do not know if this is the edition that Herbert owns. However, her knowledge of Pope’s writing and her accurate allusions to many of his poems would suggest that she had access to the complete works.

Not wanting to be thought “vulgar” or “inelegant” was only one of the problems that authors faced when considering a subscription list. The Dublin publisher and wit George Faulkner describes how difficult it was to organise a subscription list in Ireland at the time.

You know that Dublin is the poorest Place in the world for Subscriptions of Books. It is much easier to get a hundred Dinners, with as many dozens Bottles of Claret, than a single Guinea for the best author, few or no People caring to subscribe.⁵⁴³

To attract reluctant contributors to a subscription list an author needed to have a reputation as a writer of some merit. But sometimes having a celebrated name and pedigree was not sufficient recommendation. The Dublin publisher George Greirson warned Edmund Spenser, the great-great grandson of the poet Edmund Spenser, that he would need five hundred subscriptions of one guinea to persuade him to publish his work. The text was never published.⁵⁴⁴ In Leeson’s case, merely having a reputation, even though not for literary merit, was enough to encourage subscribers. Many writers record their dislike of asking for subscriptions. Leeson admitted to feeling unable to ask people directly for subscriptions for the publication of her *Memoirs*. As the madam of the most notorious and successful brothel in Dublin in the late 1700s, one would not expect to find her bashful. However, she describes her efforts to get published as a public ordeal.

I was determined to send my proposals every where; accordingly thro’ the medium of the Penny-post, enclosed them to every creature whose name I found in Wilson’s

⁵⁴³ Robert E. Ward, *Prince of Dublin Printers: The Letters of George Faulkner* (Lexington, 1972), p. 52.

⁵⁴⁴ Toby Barnard, *Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents* (Dublin, 2004), p. 292.

Directory and Watson's Almanac; and from numbers received very handsome subscriptions: - I often wished I had as much bronze in my face as Mrs J-E-M the English poetess, who certainly is a credit to the kingdom she came from; then should I by my exertions, have realized a handsome fortune; But poor Mrs B-tt-r herself, that elegant charming sentimental writer, was never more timid or backward in forwarding a subscription than I was, I could certainly address any person by letter, but it was death to me to make a personal application.⁵⁴⁵

If the flamboyant leader of the demi-monde in Dublin was reticent about asking for subscriptions, how difficult it must have been for women with more pretensions to gentility. The "Mrs B-tt-r" mentioned by Leeson in the extract above is the poet Henrietta Battier (1751-1813). Battier's *Protected Fugitives: A Collection of Miscellaneous Poems* was published by subscription in 1791.⁵⁴⁶ Despite Leeson's reference to Battier's shyness, the long list of subscribers for *Protected Fugitives* contained many well-known Irish and English names including Lord Clonmell who subscribed for twelve copies, John Fitzgibbon, The Lord Chancellor, Joshua Reynolds, Samuel Johnson, Henry Grattan and Samuel Whyte. Ironically Leeson is not listed. Early in her career Battier had circulated her satiric verse in manuscript and this had already established her as a talented amateur. The publication of this collection made her a very popular poet in the 1790s. Her popularity was short-lived, however, and she died penniless and in obscurity in Dublin in 1813. Leeson employed a very effective method of attracting contributors to her subscription list for her *Memoirs*. When she

⁵⁴⁵ Leeson (1995), p. 243.

⁵⁴⁶ Henrietta Battier, *Protected Fugitives: A Collection of Miscellaneous Poems* (Dublin, Printed for the Author by James Porter, 1791). The subscription list, which is eighteen pages long, is not paginated.

retired from business in the late 1790s hoping to live a virtuous life on the accumulated proceeds of her brothel, she discovered that many of the IOUs she had in her possession were worthless. She published her *Memoirs* as a way of shaming her former clients into honouring their debts. The first volume of her *Memoirs* was published in Dublin in 1795.⁵⁴⁷ They were “Printed for the Authoress, and sold by the principal booksellers.”⁵⁴⁸ Leeson numbered several printers among her acquaintances. She mentions Amyas Griffith, Bartholomew Corcoran and William Watson in her *Memoirs*.⁵⁴⁹ It is very likely that Leeson availed of their advice and her connections in the print industry when publishing her text. The infamous London courtesan Harriette Wilson employed similar tactics when she decided to publish her memoirs in 1825. Wilson was more forthright in her demands than Leeson. She asked for £200 from each of her famous former clients to keep their names out of print. Constantia Phillips could not find a publisher for her scandalous memoir, *An Apology for the Conduct of Mrs Teresia Constantia Phillips, more particularly that part of it which relate to her Marriage, with an eminent Dutch Merchant* (1748). She had them printed and then sold them from her own home. After the success of this venture her *Memoir* was published in London and Dublin.⁵⁵⁰ Despite the success of their memoirs, Leeson, Phillips and Wilson, all published authors, died in poverty.

⁵⁴⁷ Leeson published her memoirs in three volumes, threatening to name her former patrons and debtors in each of the three volumes. Each publication promised more interesting disclosures to come in future volumes.

⁵⁴⁸ Leeson (1995), p.1.

⁵⁴⁹ Leeson (1995), pp. 145, 167, 198, 251.

⁵⁵⁰ For a discussion of Phillips’ career, see Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* (Cambridge, 2006).

Ellen Taylor had her *Poems by Ellen Taylor, The Irish Cottager* published by subscription in 1792.⁵⁵¹ She was promoted in much the same way as Anne Yearsley was by Hannah More. Her patrons included the Countess of Bective and members of the La Touché family. But this kind of patronage often ended unhappily for all concerned. Hannah More's patronage of Anne Yearsley, through mistakes on both sides, ended in bitterness and accusation. The Irish poet and playwright Elizabeth Ryves (1750-1797) had her first volume of poems published by subscription in London. One of her most interesting texts *The Hermit of Snowdon; or, Memoirs of Albert and Lavinia* was published in London in 1789.⁵⁵² As a semi-autobiographical account of her experience as a struggling playwright in London, it makes harrowing reading. The life she paints is one of hardship and drudgery. As we have seen Herbert's neighbour Edward Mandeville had his poetry published by subscription in Waterford. The novelist Anna Milliken from the small village of Castlemartyr, Co. Cork had her novel *Eva, An Old Irish Story* printed by subscription in Cork in 1795.⁵⁵³ In her "Advertisement" to the text she thanks the many subscribers who had enabled her to get her work printed.

The Authoress.... avails herself of this opportunity to offer her most grateful thanks to those friends, who have so kindly exerted themselves in her favour, as to enable her to produce the following list, without having recourse to the public Prints.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ Ellen Taylor, *Poems by Ellen Taylor, The Irish Cottager* (Dublin, 1792).

⁵⁵² Elizabeth Ryves, *The Hermit of Snowdon; or, Memoirs of Albert and Lavinia* (London, 1789).

⁵⁵³ Anna Milliken, *Eva, An Old Irish Story* (Cork, 1795).

⁵⁵⁴ Milliken (1795), np.

She is particularly grateful as their contribution means that she does not have to print a prospectus or proposal in advance of the printing of the text as Charlotte Brooke did for her *Reliques of Irish Poetry*. Milliken's subscription list consists mainly of people living in her local area. The few exceptions are her printer Connor, who takes one hundred copies and two other booksellers, P. Wogan who also takes one hundred books and T. White who takes twelve books. Unlike Brooke there are no well-known writers or public figures on the list. Milliken had an earlier novel *Corfe Castle or, Historic Tracts: A Novel in Two Volumes* printed by subscription in Cork in 1793.⁵⁵⁵

One Irish woman writer, Charlotte McCarthy, conducted a public campaign against Dublin printers from exile in London. In the preface to the London edition of her novel *Justice and Reason*, she expressed her abhorrence of Irish printers and their obsession with money.

The printers of that country are so extremely avaricious, and have so very little judgment; that no man there would print it, unless I laid down the whole charge for printing, paper, and every other requisite, beforehand; which was not in my power to do.⁵⁵⁶

As there is a list of subscribers in the text it is clear that even in London McCarthy needed to publish by subscription. She had included a proposal for printing *Justice and Reason* by subscription in an

⁵⁵⁵ Anna Milliken, *Corfe Castle or Historic Tracts: A Novel in Two Volumes* (Cork, 1793).

⁵⁵⁶ Charlotte McCarthy, *Justice and Reason* (London: Published for the Author, 1767), np.

earlier text, *The Author and Bookseller: A Dramatic Piece. With proposals for Printing by Subscription Justice and Reason*.⁵⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that McCarthy had an earlier novel, *The Fair Moralist; or, Love and Duty, A Novel*, published in London in 1745 and it was reprinted in Dublin in 1747.⁵⁵⁸ What must have angered McCarthy was not just her failure to find a publisher in Dublin but having gone to the expense and difficulty of publishing by subscription in London, her novel was then reprinted in Dublin.

One small but significant group of women who were writing and publishing with confidence in Ireland were the Quakers.⁵⁵⁹ Mary Leadbeater is an example of a woman writer who through religious conviction had the confidence and agency to write and publish her stories, poems and conduct books. Between 1794 and 1826 she published a collection of poems and several volumes of instructional stories. All of these were published in Ireland. Her *Cottage Dialogues Among the Irish Peasantry*, published first in Dublin in 1811, went into five new editions before 1822.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁷ Charlotte McCarthy, *The Author and Bookseller: A Dramatic Piece. With Proposals for printing by subscription Justice and Reason* (London: Printed for the Author, 1765).

⁵⁵⁸ Charlotte McCarthy, *The Fair Moralist; or, Love and Duty. A Novel* (London: Published for the Author, 1745) Dublin reprint (Dublin, 1747).

⁵⁵⁹ For a discussion of Quaker women and agency without autonomy, see Phyllis Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Quakerism." In Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor eds., *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 434-459.

⁵⁶⁰ Mary Leadbeater, *Cottage Dialogues Among the Irish Peasantry with Notes and a Preface by Maria Edgeworth* (Dublin, 1811).

Wollstonecraft saw necessity as the only possible justification for a woman attempting a career as a professional writer. In her preface to *The Female Reader* she admonishes her reader “to obtrude her person or talents on the public when necessity does not justify and spur her on” is a “breach of modesty.”⁵⁶¹ She reflects bitterly on her own experience of trying to lead an independent life in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*: “Few are the modes of earning subsistence, and those very humiliating.”⁵⁶² Barbara Taylor describes Wollstonecraft’s entry into “the feisty commercial world of the professional literary woman as an act of bravery. As a career move it was sufficiently unusual to require a fair degree of hubris on a woman’s part.”⁵⁶³ If Wollstonecraft’s letters at this time are to be believed she did not lack courage for the undertaking. She describes herself as “the first of a new genus” and later as “a woman bold enough to advance before the age.”⁵⁶⁴ Something of Wollstonecraft’s determined spirit at this time is seen in a letter to Joseph Johnson: “I never yet resolved to do anything of consequence, that I did not adhere resolutely to it, till I had accomplished my purpose, improbable as it might have appeared to a more timid mind.”⁵⁶⁵ Once launched on this career Wollstonecraft’s working life was one of drudgery, meeting deadlines and reviewing novels that she despised. This left little time to produce her own work. Most of her now famous texts were

⁵⁶¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, “The Female Reader,” in Marilyn Butler and Janet Todd eds., *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London, 1989), vol. 4, p. 56.

⁵⁶² Mary Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* 1787, in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, p. 25.

⁵⁶³ Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 6.

⁵⁶⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft, “Letter to Everina Wollstonecraft,” 7 Nov.1787; Letter probably to Mary Hayes c. Summer 1797. In Ralph Wardle ed., *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London, 1994), pp. 165 and 413.

⁵⁶⁵ Janet Todd, *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York, 2003). Letter from Mary Wollstonecraft to Joseph Johnson, 13 Sept.1787, p. 134.

written under severe time constraints and for little money. Her many letters to Johnson chart a writing career dominated by shortage of money and advances on future projects.

If an author did secure a publisher, or as Wollstonecraft did, a publisher and an employer, how difficult was it then to make money as a professional writer? Edward Copeland in *Women Writing about Money* makes the general point that “[t]he edge of the economic abyss was a working fact of life for the woman writer.”⁵⁶⁶ As we have seen, many published women authors, even commercially successful ones, ended their careers in poor financial circumstances. The Irish novelist Regina Maria Roche, one of William Lane’s most successful Minerva Press novelists, died in poverty in Waterford. Copeland notes that very few novelists feature as characters in novels by women in the period. He makes the point that “[t]he reluctance of women authors to turn their heroines into authors constitutes a telling gauge of women’s position in the writing profession.”⁵⁶⁷ In a rare appearance the heroine of Lady Morgan’s novel *Florence McCarthy* is a novelist. Driven by financial circumstances to writing novels she has a jaundiced view of her profession: “Necessity has urged me to trace so much nonsense, that I may live and others may laugh.”⁵⁶⁸ Oliver Goldsmith is a flamboyant example of how difficult it was to make an adequate living from writing. Despite his prolific publishing career and his popularity as a writer, he struggled with debt for most of his career. One ironic example of both his success as an author and his failure to make money from this success is the history of the manuscript of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Badly in debt at the time he completed the manuscript, Goldsmith was only rescued from debtor’s prison when Dr. Johnson came to his

⁵⁶⁶ Edward Copeland, *Women Writing About Money: Women’s Fiction in England 1790-1820* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 195.

⁵⁶⁷ Copeland (1995), p. 193.

⁵⁶⁸ Lady Morgan, *Florence McCarthy* (London, 1818), pp. 264-265.

rescue by selling the original manuscript to a London bookseller. In an overlap of fact and fiction the innocent and naive hero of Goldsmith's novel Dr. Primrose, through no fault of his own, spends some months in such a prison. Johnson himself was twice confined to debtor's prison and Mrs Leeson too found herself imprisoned for debt in Dublin.

One of the most vivid accounts of the struggling writer's day-to-day attempts to make a living from writing is contained in the Irish poet and pamphleteer William Drennan's correspondence with his sister Martha McTier. Drennan worked long hours at his medical profession to support his writing. Drennan's activities as an author also highlight the dangers of publishing in Ireland, particularly in the period leading up to the 1798 rebellion. The Drennan/McTier letters in March 1806 (the year Herbert completes her *Retrospections*) are a detailed account of a struggling author's attempts to make money from writing. In a letter to Drennan on Wednesday 28 March 1806 his sister gives him the following advice.

It was foolish of you to send down but one dozen of the pamphlets ... they were all sold the very day they were advertised, but I got the loan of some to send back for sale, which I expect to repay tomorrow night. I think very well of it and, as all you write, better the second reading. Crombie says it might have been Burke's – other opinions I have not heard. I think it must please Fox while it proves your consistency in your own and his principles.”⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ Jean Agnew, ed., *The Drennan-McTier Letters* (Dublin, 1998-9), p. 453.

McTier is a pragmatic and ruthless saleswoman. However, despite her clever marketing she adds cryptically: “The carriage of your pamphlets and postage of letters about it, will take up all the profit.”⁵⁷⁰ Her knowledge of the commercial world is used on behalf of her brother but always from behind the scenes.⁵⁷¹ Drennan finds the same harsh economic reality in Dublin. On 10 April 1806 he writes to McTier.

I have had no settlement yet with my pamphlet seller here but what with printing expenses, advertising and his division of profit, I suppose little present profit will fall to my share – if any in future, is very uncertain.⁵⁷²

With rare exceptions the experience of most authors who aspired to a successful publishing career, that offered financial success and literary acclaim, was at best challenging and difficult. Some, like Goldsmith, became literary celebrities but struggled to make money from their published work. Relationships with patrons, publishers and booksellers were often fraught and many ended in bitter disputes. The atmosphere surrounding the relationship between authors and publishing was not one to attract hesitant authors into the world of publishing.

⁵⁷⁰ Agnew (1998-9), p. 454.

⁵⁷¹ Despite her keen interest in literature McTier does not seek to publish her own writing.

⁵⁷² Agnew (1998-9), p. 463.

The Professional Woman Writer

Many male writers had reservations about the respectability of publishing their writing and thereby entering the world of commerce. The question of whether to publish or not to publish was even problematic for women. Catherine Shevelow makes the point that this was a particularly difficult time for women writers.

In the eighteenth century at the same historical moment as women were, to a degree unprecedented in Western Europe, becoming visible as readers and writers, the literary representation of women – whether as members of an intended audience, as writing subjects, or as textual objects – was producing an increasingly narrow and restrictive model of femininity.⁵⁷³

It is these contradictory and simultaneous developments in the period that caused so much difficulty for aspiring women writers. A direct result was that many women wrote but never published during their lifetimes. They chose instead to share their writing with a select group of close family and friends. When eventually their work made its way into print, often long after their

⁵⁷³ Catherine Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: the Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London, 1990), p. 1.

deaths, it was without authorial sanction, or correction for a wider audience, and as we have seen, frequently seriously edited.

The birth of the professional writer, the new 'genus' that Wollstonecraft talks about so confidently when she leaves Mitchelstown to begin working for Joseph Johnson in London, was the subject of much debate. Established writers like Maria Edgeworth took a very positive view of the position of professional women writers. In her *Letters for Literary Ladies* Edgeworth, no longer saw women writers as the new 'genus' that Wollstonecraft had identified in 1787.

You allow, however, that women of literature are much more numerous of late than they were a few years ago; that they make a class in society, and have acquired a considerable degree of consequence, and an appropriate character; how can you fear that a woman of cultivated understanding should be driven from the society of her own sex in search of dangerous companions among ours?⁵⁷⁴

She also foresees a time when a literary woman would be no more remarkable than a literary man.

⁵⁷⁴ Edgeworth (1795), p. 641.

The manners of literary men are not strikingly nor wilfully different from those of the rest of the world. The peculiarities of literary women will also disappear as their numbers increase.⁵⁷⁵

From the security of her literary circle and publishing success, she confidently announces the arrival of the literary lady.

A literary lady is no longer a sight; the spectacle is now too common to attract curiosity; the species of animal is too well known even to admit much exaggeration in the description of its appearance.⁵⁷⁶

However Edgeworth and Wollstonecraft are isolated voices. Their optimism is a product of their membership of supportive coteries of established and powerful men of letters. Far more common are the remarks of men like Isaac Disraeli who in *Calamities and Quarrels of Authors* (1812) finds it difficult to reconcile women of good family with writing for a living.⁵⁷⁷ He opens his four-page account of the Irish dramatist and novelist Elizabeth Ryves's career with a summary of the evils awaiting a "female trader in literature."

⁵⁷⁵ Edgeworth (1795), p. 642.

⁵⁷⁶ Edgeworth (1795), p. 642.

⁵⁷⁷ Isaac Disraeli, *The Calamities and Quarrels of Authors: With Some Inquiries Respecting Their Moral and Literary Characters* (London, 1867), pp. 106-107.

Of all the sorrows in which the female character may participate, there are few more affecting than those of the authoress; often insulated and unprotected in society – with all the sensibility of the sex, encountering miseries which break the spirits of men; with the repugnance arising from that delicacy which trembles when it quits its retirement.

He describes how, when writing manuscripts, she was both respected and content. Only when she descended into commercial writing did she become an object of pity.

In her former hours of tranquillity she had written a tragedy and comedies – all of which remained in MS. In her distress, she looked up to her pen as the source of existence: and an elegant genius, and a woman of polished manners, commenced the life of a female trader in literature.⁵⁷⁸

The ideal intellectual woman of letters of the period was not a professional writer. She was a private individual who educated herself to be a better companion to her husband and mother to her children. If she read, she did so under the guidance of men, and if she wrote, it was never for publication, but for herself and for her family. This is the role Edward Mandeville sees Herbert occupying. As noted in Chapter Two, he does not wish her success with a career as a writer, but

⁵⁷⁸ Disraeli (1867), p. 107. For further discussion of Ryves, see Bourke et al. Vol. IV. (2002), p. 817.

happiness rearing children.⁵⁷⁹ The most perfect example of an educated but private domestic woman was the English diarist Anna Margareta Larpent. She kept a daily journal, covering the years 1773-1828 which amounted at the time of her death to sixteen volumes. They, fittingly, have never been published. Her journals are the record of her fashioning of a polite educated self.⁵⁸⁰ John Brewer, commenting on her life, suggests that she strives for “a refinement which can only be felt in the pure pleasure of intellectual pursuits.”⁵⁸¹

Women writers themselves, influenced no doubt by their education, reading, the negative public debates surrounding them and the lack of positive role models in life or in literature were not anxious to be seen as literary or learned. Caroline Hamilton writing about her sister-in-law Mary Tighe comments on this fact.

It was her idea that learning and talents in women, never excited love &, while young, she was willing to pass for having neither. I remember hearing it remarked that Mrs Tighe was very pretty but had not much sense.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁹ Edward Mandeville, *Miscellaneous Poems*. (Waterford: published for the Author, 1798).

⁵⁸⁰ Anna Margareta Larpent, *The Diaries of Anna Margareta Larpent. 1758-1832*. HM 31201. V. 1-16, also MSS 00814. San Marino CA., Henry E. Huntington Library.

⁵⁸¹ Brewer (1997), p. 57.

⁵⁸² Linkin (2005), p. 259.

Hester Chapone, whose *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind Addressed to a Lady* was a best-selling conduct book for girls in Ireland in the second half of the eighteenth century, expresses severe reservations about learned women.

The danger of pedantry and presumption in a woman of her exciting envy in one sex and jealousy in the other - of her exchanging the graces of imagination for the severity and preciseness of a scholar, would be, I own, sufficient to frighten me from the ambition of seeing my girl remarkable for learning.⁵⁸³

Margaret King, Mary Wollstonecraft's pupil in Mitchelstown Castle, herself a successful writer of political pamphlets for the United Irishmen and of children's books, ridicules the literary pretensions of another governess Fanny Holcroft, the daughter of the dramatist Thomas Holcroft.

Did a great man enter the house she wrote Poetry – and such poetry! She was called down by one of the servants on the arrival of a party of strangers – she rushed into the room, breathless and with a pen in her hand. “Ah My god!” said she - “have the

⁵⁸³ Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind Addressed to a Lady* (Dublin, 1773). This is the first of six Dublin reprints that were published between 1773 and 1786. It is a good example of printers collaborating to bring out a popular and potentially lucrative text, so as not to enter into competition with each other.

kindness to excuse me I have left my heroine in my hero's arms and I must fly to relieve them." So saying she disappeared to the great astonishment of all the company.⁵⁸⁴

Frances Sheridan (Chamberlain), mother of the dramatist Richard Brindsley Sheridan, liked to keep her writing habits secret. Her granddaughter tells how she wrote her novel *Sidney Bidulph*.

...with a trunk or chest placed beside her, into which she put her manuscript if Mr Sheridan chanced to enter the room while she was thus employed.⁵⁸⁵

Women writers were themselves anxious about entering the public sphere. Mary Tighe included a preface asking for kindness from her readers in her 1805 limited edition of *Psyche*. She also attempted to keep control of the copies that were printed. A surviving copy of the text has the author's inscription to William Parnell dated 1805. There is a further inscription at the foot of the front page: "This copy was presented to W. Parnell by Charles James Fox, and returned after his death to M. Tighe at her earnest request."⁵⁸⁶ What has survived of Tighe's journals were not published until 2005 and her novel *Selena* has never been published, although the manuscript has

⁵⁸⁴ Janet Todd, *Rebel Daughters: Ireland in Conflict 1798* (London, 2003), p. 322.

⁵⁸⁵ Alicia LeFanu, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mrs Frances Sheridan* (London, 1824), p. 109.

⁵⁸⁶ Mary Tighe, *Psyche: or The Legend of Love* (London, 1805) Rare Books, 32844, Huntington Library California.

survived.⁵⁸⁷ Charlotte Brooke in the preface to *Reliques of Irish Poetry* expresses grave concern about the criticism she will receive when her work is published: “To guard against criticism I am no way prepared, nor do I suppose that I shall escape it.” She describes herself as “one unskilled in composition, and now, with extreme diffidence, presenting, for the first time, her literary face to the world.”⁵⁸⁸ Chapone in her dedication to *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Lady* begins by making clear her own unwillingness to publish and the encouragement she needed in order to bring her work out into the public sphere. The dedication is to Mrs Montagu.

I believe that you are persuaded that I never entertained a thought of appearing in public, when the desire of being useful to one dear child, in whom I take the tenderest interest, induced me to write the following Letters: - perhaps it was the partiality of friendship, which so far biased your judgment as to make you think them capable of being more extensively useful, and warmly to recommend the publication of them.⁵⁸⁹

Having both flattered Montagu and made her responsible for suggesting the publication, she concludes by making a direct appeal for sales using her patron’s name.

⁵⁸⁷ Mary Tighe, *Selena*, unpublished novella 1809, MSS 4742-4746, Dublin: National Library of Ireland.

⁵⁸⁸ Charlotte Brooke, *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (Dublin, 1789), p. viii.

⁵⁸⁹ Chapone (1773), pp. v-vi.

As you have drawn it forth, I may claim a sort of right to the ornament and protection of your name, and to the privilege of publicly professing myself, with the highest esteem⁵⁹⁰

Chapone seeks the protection of the established writer, not just her patronage and support. She also attributes the success of the publication to Montagu's patronage.

The bookseller is preparing the second edition with all haste, the whole of the first being gone out of his hands; which considering that he printed off fifteen hundred at first, is an extraordinary quick sale. I attribute this success principally to Mrs Montagu's name and patronage.⁵⁹¹

Despite the success of Chapone's text, she died in reduced circumstances. She is another example of how difficult it was to make a living as a professional woman writer. In fact there are very few Irish women authors in the period who made financially successful careers from their writing. Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan are perhaps the two most famous exceptions.

Susan Staves argues that the professional women writers who did succeed in the eighteenth century did so because they constructed heroines who were domestic and who conformed to the ideal of the virtuous woman. She also notes a change in the attitude to women writers in mid-century again because they compromise.

⁵⁹⁰ Chapone (1773), p. vi.

⁵⁹¹ Chapone (1773), letter to Mrs Montagu 20 July 1773, pp. xxviii-xxix.

What is striking about this mid-century shift is the way women writers win acceptance by playing the roles of daughters, sisters or wives of literary men.⁵⁹²

There are many examples of successful relationships between literary giants and their female protégées. These relationships are characterised, for the most part, as friendly and helpful. Richardson's championing of Frances Sheridan is a good example. By dedicating her novel *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* to Richardson she reveals much about their relationship. She thanks him for his "exemplary Goodness and Distinguished Genius."⁵⁹³ But it would be a mistake to think that it was only aspiring women writers who lavished such praise on their patrons. Many men also employed fulsome dedications to their patrons. Mr Dibdin published his novel *The Younger Brother* in Dublin in 1793. He dedicated it to the Marquis of Sailsbury: "It was reserved for your Lordship to dignify patronage by blending solicitous condescension with spontaneous Liberality."⁵⁹⁴ If the sycophantic language is familiar, it is most likely due to Austen's parody of Dr Fordyce's diction in Mr Collins's well-rehearsed speeches in *Pride and Prejudice*.⁵⁹⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft finds the self-effacing and pretended humility of some of these dedications degrading. In a letter to Mary Hays in

⁵⁹² Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 230.

⁵⁹³ Frances Sheridan, *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*, eds., Patricia Koster and Jean Coats (Oxford, 1995).

⁵⁹⁴ Mr Dibdin, *The Younger Brother, a Novel in Two Volumes* (Dublin, 1793).

⁵⁹⁵ James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* (Dublin, 1766). This was one of the most popular conduct books in Ireland in the second half of the eighteenth century. There were four editions re-printed in Dublin between 1766 and 1800.

1792 she tells her frankly: "I do not like your preface."⁵⁹⁶ She also explains in detail why writers who need to apologise should not attempt to publish their work.

This kind of vain humility has ever disgusted me – and I should say to an author, who humbly sued for forbearance, "If you have not a tolerable good opinion of your production, why intrude it on the public."⁵⁹⁷

Despite the difficulties outlined above and the complicated and often difficult task it was to get published many women writers were publishing their work. Often they had to overcome enormous difficulties and prejudices to do so. And despite the fact that many died in poverty, they nonetheless had forged careers as authors out of the most unpropitious circumstances, thus proving that with enough persistence and hard work it could be done.

A Sanctioned Sphere of Operation

⁵⁹⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd (New York, 2003), letter from Wollstonecraft to Mary Hays, 25 Nov. 1792, p. 209. For further discussion, see Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen, Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1992).

⁵⁹⁷ Wollstonecraft (2003), p. 210.

“Manuscripts disarm the censor’s frown, and boast an added charm.”⁵⁹⁸

We return to the question asked at the beginning of this chapter. Why despite the very elaborate construction of *Poetical Eccentricities* and *Retrospections*, as manuscript replicas of published books, there is no indication, either in her own writing, or in outside sources, that Herbert ever attempted to get her work published? In a period when more women were being published than ever before, Herbert’s behaviour at first seems puzzling. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the reasons that lie behind this decision. What seems contradictory in Herbert’s presentation of her manuscripts as printed books is explainable in the final analysis by the particular time, class and place that she occupies as a writer. Her writing life is poised at a moment of profound change for her class and gender in Ireland. She is caught on the threshold of two cultures: the traditional and private world of pre-commercial and genteel manuscript culture and the modern world with its new-found enthusiasm for and reliance on print and commerce which is coming to a painful if exuberant birth in Ireland in the eighteenth century. Herbert belongs to an older more traditional world and her attitudes to commerce and publishing belong to that world. This is a world where manuscripts have not been totally replaced by print and where relationships and identity are formed, not around purchasing power, in the crude buying and selling that forms the cash nexus, but around gift-giving and receiving. Despite the importance of the printed book, there still exists in Herbert’s time a flourishing manuscript culture, and it is to this apparently safe culture that Herbert adheres. Herbert

⁵⁹⁸ Alexander Chambers, ed., *The Poems of William Whitehead in The Works of the English Poets* (London, 1810), vol., xviii, p. 252.

here is following the advice of a poet with whose work she is very familiar. The English poet William Whitehead's poems appear regularly in "Poet's Corner" in *Finn's Leinster Journal*.⁵⁹⁹ His poem "A Charge to the Poets" articulates clearly arguments in favour of the primacy of manuscripts over print, and recommends them as the preferred medium for young and aspiring writers.

If nature prompts you, or friends persuade,

Why, write, but ne'er pursue it as a trade.

And seldom publish: manuscripts disarm

The censor's frown, and boast an added charm,

Enhance their worth by seeming to retire,

For what but few can prate of, all admire.

Who trade in verse, alas! As rarely find

The public grateful, as the Muses kind.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁹ Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century *Finn's Leinster Journal* had a regular column titled *Poet's Corner*. This column featured not only works by well-known poets but also contributions from readers. Many of the surviving copies of the paper from the period have this column removed suggesting that they were collected by its readers.

⁶⁰⁰ Chambers (1810), p. 252.

In his essay “The ‘Trade of Authorship’ in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” W. B. Carnochan argues that Whitehead’s rejection of literature as a trade “mirrors a desire to recreate a literary elite, graceful and mutually supportive, and not, like the modern rabble, vulgar and inept.”⁶⁰¹ Thomas Adams and Nicholas Barker remind us in their essay “A New Model for the Study of the Book” that “the printed book was preceded by, and long overlapped with, the manuscript book.”⁶⁰² My study of Herbert’s manuscripts shows that despite the growing dominance of print culture in eighteenth-century Ireland there still existed a resilient and rich manuscript culture. As I have argued in Chapter Four, Herbert belongs to a circle where reading parties and the sharing of books is a feature of daily life. She describes how a family friend, Heck Young, “Wrote a book for us wherein he made Master Otway, Master Thomas, Miss Dolly and Miss Fanny the principle Personages” (Ret., p. 34). One of the titles she uses for Chapter 17 is “Coteries.” Clearly it is a familiar term as it is used to introduce a passage that describes how she and her Dublin cousins, gathered together in the evenings “read, wrote novels and romantickized” (Ret., p. 50). The sharing and circulation of hand-written texts among a select group is familiar and inspiring. Manuscript culture gives Herbert a way of becoming a literary lady without encountering any of the disadvantages associated with the commercial and public world of the printed text. Andrew Carpenter argues convincingly for the existence of thriving coteries of unpublished poets who circulated their work in manuscript form in Ireland in the latter half of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

There are indications that literary coteries – groups of like-minded individuals who passed to each other verses they had written, sometimes amending or adding to the

⁶⁰¹ W.B. Carnochan. “The ‘Trade of Authorship’ in Eighteenth-Century Britain” in Nicholas Barker, ed. *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society: The Clarke Lectures, 1986-1987* (London, 1993), p. 140.

⁶⁰² Nicholas Barker, *A Potencie of Life*, p. 12. Adams and Barker also register the changes that are now taking place after hundreds of years when the printed book dominated: “Now the printed book in turn is being superseded by the electronic book, as print superseded the manuscript.”

texts – flourished in various parts of the country and especially in Dublin Castle from time to time during the latter half of the sixteenth century and for most of the seventeenth century.⁶⁰³

Carpenter in his introduction to *Verse in English from Eighteenth-Century Ireland* speculates that “[o]nly a handful of those who lived in eighteenth-century Ireland wanted to make money out of the writing of verse, but hundreds – probably thousands – of them ... considered it a very agreeable pastime.”⁶⁰⁴

The poet Katherine Philips is one example of a successful poet who circulated her poems in manuscript form. Peter Beal in his study of Philips describes her as “the foremost woman writer of the seventeenth century to flourish in the context of a manuscript culture.”⁶⁰⁵ His essay includes an analysis of her reasons for not wishing her work to be published.

As a woman writer circumscribed by her social status perhaps even more than by the fact that she was a woman, and one acutely conscious of her “virtue” and “honour”, she

⁶⁰³ Andrew Carpenter, “Circulating Ideas: Coteries, Groups and the Circulation of Verse in English in Early Modern Ireland” in Martin Fanning and Raymond Gillespie eds., *Print Culture and Intellectual Life in Ireland 1660-1941, Essays in Honour of Michael Adams* (Dublin, 2006), p. 1.

⁶⁰⁴ Andrew Carpenter, *Verse in English from Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Cork, 1998), p. 1.

⁶⁰⁵ Peter Beal, *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England: The Lyell Lectures, Oxford 1995-1996* (Oxford, 1998), p. 147.

would find in manuscript culture, with its seductive social bonding, her principle medium of literary transmission.⁶⁰⁶

Beal describes the relative safety of manuscript culture as “a mixed blessing:”

“Manuscript culture itself not only entailed certain social advantages of privileged exclusivity, but also imposed upon the poet inhibiting restrictions”⁶⁰⁷ For Herbert as well as for Philips’ manuscript culture offered what Beal describes as “a sanctioned sphere of operation.”⁶⁰⁸ Sanctioned and safe as this culture appeared to be, it was not an untroubled arena in which to write and circulate texts. Barker argues that manuscript culture created complex and intricate relationships between authors and their readers. Manuscripts linked “writers and readers through a system of diffusion, that all its participants cultivated to serve complex and sometimes conflicting needs.”⁶⁰⁹ Herbert gained status and a sense of self-worth from the circulation of her manuscripts but she was also conscious of the dangers she exposed herself to, even among a small and sanctioned group of readers. Mary Tighe too was acutely aware of this. Writing for a small coterie seemed very daunting to her as we see from this extract from her Preface to *Psyche; or, The Legend of Love*.

⁶⁰⁶ Beal (1998), p. viii.

⁶⁰⁷ Beal (1998), p. 149

⁶⁰⁸ Beal (1998), p. 149.

⁶⁰⁹ Nicholas Barker, “In Praise of Manuscripts” in *Form and Meaning in the History of the Book: Selected Essays* (London, 2003), p. 29.

The author, who dismisses to the public the darling object of his solitary cares, must be prepared to consider, with the same degree of indifference, the various reception it may then meet. But for those, who write only for the more interested eye of friendship, no such indifference can be expected. I may therefore be forgiven the egoism which makes me anxious to recommend to my readers the tale which I present them, while I endeavour to excuse in all other defects but that, which I fear cannot be excused, the deficiency of genius.⁶¹⁰

Despite these fears, we see Tighe's ambitions for her work in the select group of people she chose as her coterie of readers. Among them were Thomas Moore, Anna Seward, Eleanor Butler, Sarah Ponsonby and John Wesley. This "limited" edition had a remarkable circulation as Linkin's research on Tighe reveals.⁶¹¹ A limited edition of fifty copies of a text might have only fifty recipients but readership, as in Tighe's case, could be in the hundreds as copies were shared with friends and family. Beal notes the same ambitious strategy in Katherine Philips' circulation of her manuscripts. Herbert too circulates her *Poetical Eccentricities* among the most influential of her circle, the Archbishop's literary circle in Cashel, her wealthy Dublin relations and, most tellingly John Roe's mother and friends.

⁶¹⁰ Tighe (1805), p. 1.

⁶¹¹ Linkin (2005), p. xvi.

Herbert can maintain a certain amount of control over her writing as long as it remains in manuscript form, and so long as she can retain possession of it. In her *Journal* she describes her annoyance when her brother Nicholas takes the manuscript of *Retrospections* from her in 1806. One reason for this is the very private, even confessional, nature of its content. Herbert writes about herself and her intimate circle; this is not subject matter which she would want exposed to a general reading public, certainly not when the author is one of a minority, and at this time embattled, class in Ireland. Her world is essentially a very private one, and this is the world she writes about and makes the subject of her poetry, her *Recollections* and her *Journal*.

In some instances it was considered more effective to circulate material privately rather than to have it published. Martha McTier had a clever solution to the problem of whether her brother William Drennan should publish a particular text. In March 1806 she wrote to Drennan about a satiric play that had been written about a family friend.⁶¹² One hundred and fifty copies of it were printed and distributed. Drennan wished to publish a condemnation. On reading the text of this condemnation McTier responded.

I like the epigram. The thought is excellent but not clearly enough expressed and I shall not put it into the paper – chiefly, because I think it would be degrading in you to

⁶¹² Agnew (1998-9), pp. 443-444.

appear there on such a subject. It will do better in some female hands, and for this purpose, I send it in a book I had borrowed from Miss Sinclair.⁶¹³

For McTier, publishing is not always the most effective way of getting material into the public domain, or into the places where it will have most effect. By placing Drennan's condemnation anonymously in a book, it will get to the intended readers in the most efficient and damaging way.

Margot Finn, in *The Character of Credit* makes the point that the giving and receiving of gifts serves complex and conflicting needs. Gift-giving imposes its own rules and sets up power relations between the giver and the receiver. Women novelists, Finn comments, use their writing as a way of examining women's indebtedness: "Gifts afforded authors opportunities to explore exchange relations outside the cash nexus and within the domestic sphere, providing an especially useful mechanism for the fictional representation of women's debt obligations."⁶¹⁴ Herbert's world is dominated by gift-giving, not commercial transactions; it is centred on old value systems, not on the new ones of commerce and trade. She purchases no books and few clothes; all are gifts from friends, relations and friends. She does not borrow books from the lending library in Kilkenny, with which she must be familiar, as the *Finn's Leinster Journal* advertises the library and the books it has on offer regularly throughout her lifetime. She is always in receipt of gifts, very rarely the gift-giver. This reinforces her position as a dependent and as a member of the younger branch of a great family.

⁶¹³ Agnew (1998-9), p. 452.

⁶¹⁴ Finn (2003), p. 35.

Herbert's fine relations bestow gifts of clothes and small jewels, some of them second-hand, and educated men give her books. These gifts show the esteem in which she is held but they also highlight her dependent position. Gifted goods, as Finn argues, create power relationships and foster indebtedness, and these are debts that Herbert can never repay, so they bring with them responsibility and create dependent relationships. Belonging to this traditional economy, it is not surprising that Herbert does not readily, if at all, think of entry into the new commercial world as a possibility. It is interesting that she does not balance her social indebtedness by giving to those less well-off than herself, thus creating her own set of obligations. But there is no instance of her giving to the poor or the less well off of her father's parishes in her writing. And as we have seen, Carrick-on-Suir in Herbert's day had many needy citizens. In accepting her books as gifts Herbert automatically assumes an obligation to the men who give them to her and to their traditional ideas about women. Paid employment as a professional writer is not part of this world-view, nor would it free Herbert from indebtedness in the value system of the traditional world she inhabits. Gift-giving and the obligations she feels embed her in her world. Herbert thus avoids the perils of the public commercial world but she remains locked in a private world of gift-giving that creates obligations and indebtedness of its own and imposes its own set of restrictions.

As a young woman of good family, brought up to be modest and ladylike, Herbert would have regarded her writing as the work of a literary lady. Her understanding of women's role in society does not include that of the professional woman writer. Herbert is an amateur, a lady who works for self-improvement, not for fame. She is the model of ladylike self-improvement that Hannah More recommends, and that Anna Margaretta Larpent shows herself to be in her diaries. More condemns

women who cultivated their talents for public gain. For her, a woman's "talents are only a means to a still higher attainment."⁶¹⁵ That Herbert views her self-improvement in this light is evident from passages in *Retrospections*. She opens Book the Third with a summary of her achievements: "I spent the former part of My Life improving Myself for Society as well as Solitude" (Ret., p 143).

Improvement for Herbert meant lessons in dancing, drawing, music and minute attention paid to dress and appearance. The particular social milieu in which Herbert lives is one that promotes advantageous marriage as the only legitimate goal for young girls. A publishing career of any kind would not have been even a remote possibility. To have sought publication would have been to step completely outside her class's expectations of what the role of a young woman should be. Herbert, despite her intelligence, is not a mould-breaker; perhaps in her construction of herself as a writer she is, but not in her construction of herself as a woman. Her life is about conforming to the normal behaviour of women of her class and time. The glimpses of independent thought we see in her writing are not carried into her public life or behaviour. She is the dutiful daughter, the sensitive, misunderstood lady we see in her account of her love affair. The ultimate act of conforming to the conventions of ladylike behaviour is when she records her decline into melancholy, spinsterhood and silence when her one hope of marriage vanishes. Herbert does not count her literary talents as one of her attractions as a woman; in fact if anything, she sees it as a distinct disadvantage to her marriage prospects. During her brief flirtation with John Roe she never mentions her writing. She does not record it ever having been a subject of conversation between them.

⁶¹⁵ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997), p. 79.

Herbert's reluctance to have her work published may not have been a high-minded refusal to join the commercial world of print or a stubborn adherence to a more traditional way of life. She may simply not have had the confidence in her work to seek publication. By keeping her writing out of the public domain, she protects herself from damaging criticism. Although she certainly shows timidity about her work there is also a confidence in it that suggests that this may not have been the most compelling reason for not publishing. From her reading and experience, she knows that the successful professional writer is always a man, rarely a woman. All of the authors she reads are men. Her childhood, as she reconstructs it in *Retrospections*, features no women of genius and no learned women writers. There are, as we know, other successful women writers in Ireland at the time, but Herbert does not mention or refer to any of them in her work. In her poetry Herbert distinguishes between the relative strengths of men's and women's intelligence. Women can learn but they are weaker intellectually. She makes this distinction clear in her poem "An Address to Old Maids by one of the Sisterhood." This understanding of the innate difference between the abilities of men and women is basic to Herbert's understanding of the relationship between the sexes. Despite her own obvious intelligence, she conforms to the conventional eighteenth-century belief in the intellectual inferiority of women. This in turn informs her attitudes to life, to men and to her writing.

Almost all writers envisage an ideal reader, one who will fully appreciate the aesthetic nature of their work. In this argument we can find another reason why Herbert did not seek to have her work published. She did not want to enter a market that was already populated by cheap and inferior books. We get an inkling of this attitude in her dismissive responses to the praise she gets from her Dublin acquaintances who read her *Poetical Eccentricities*. Herbert had an ideal reader in mind; the

literary nature of *Poetical Eccentricities* and *Retrospections* makes this obvious. Her use of literary allusion makes it clear that the reader she envisions is one who is as well-read as herself. She is not writing for a common or vulgar public but for a select group who can enter at their ease into her world of literary allusion. Her texts can only truly be appreciated by readers who identify the many allusions to the poets and dramatists who populate her texts. Her ideal readership is an elite group who can recognise the elaborate games she is playing with the texts with which they are all familiar. Her texts call for intelligent participation on the part of the reader, not passive consumption. By not publishing, Herbert can control her readership; she can limit it to the number of people she allows to read her writings. Even given this control, she also includes prefaces and explanations to guide the reading of her poems for fear her chosen readers may judge them too harshly or interpret them incorrectly.

As I argued earlier, Herbert's world is dominated by gift-giving not by commercial considerations. She purchases no books and few clothes, all are gifts from friends and relations. Herbert has little or no knowledge of commercial transactions or the consumer market; her access to things, books and clothes, is through the network of gift-giving in which she and her family participate. Her manuscripts follow the same pattern; they are shared among family and friends and do not become part of any commercial transactions. Belonging to this traditional economy, it is not surprising that Herbert does not readily, if at all, think of entry into the new commercial world. In accepting all of her books as gifts, Herbert also assumes obligations to the men who gave them to her and to their traditional ideas about women and reading and writing.

Had Herbert ignored the persuasive arguments against a lady of her class entering the commercial world of publishing and chosen to have her work published, the obstacles would have been formidable. The print trade in Ireland, as we have seen, was a very inhospitable place for Irish writers. To get a publisher Herbert would have had several options but all of them would have been almost certainly out of her reach. Having a powerful patron would have been one way to get published. Although there seem to have been many well-educated men visiting the Herbert household during her childhood, men who acted as educational mentors, none of them seems to have fostered in her any ideas of publication. Unlike Richard Edgeworth, Herbert's father is a genial and loving father, an emotional Dr. Primrose if we are to believe Herbert, but not an intellectual. We get no indication that he writes anything apart from his weekly sermons. In all the details of the household that Herbert gives, there is no mention of her father having a library. She keeps her own clearly cherished books in her bedroom. Another option would have been to set up a subscription list. This is what Mrs Leeson and Charlotte Brooke do when they are trying to get their work published. There are very specific reasons why the men to whom Leeson applies were reluctant to refuse her sponsorship. Even with a long subscription list Leeson still needed to use her connections to get her work published, as did Brooke. Herbert would not have had quite the same moral leverage to encourage subscriptions as Mrs Leeson had, or Brooke's connections among the literary men of her day. Indeed the existence of scandalous memoirs like *The Memoirs of Mrs Leeson* in print would have discouraged Herbert rather than been an example she could follow. Her last resort would have been to move to London, as Goldsmith, Sheridan, Pilkington and Roche had done. It was one thing for a young man, or a very ambitious and independent woman, to go to London and quite another for a woman of Herbert's class and temperament to embark on such a venture.

Carrick-on-Suir, as we have seen, was for many of its inhabitants, a small, overpopulated and poverty-stricken town. However it had a lively, if small and confined, literary life. Among its active members was the printer John Stacy who printed the works of his friend Patrick Lynch and who also brought out a journal in 1792, *The Carrick Recorder or Weekly Collation*. In the first edition he printed a poem welcoming the printing press and lauding its potential for universal good.

Inhabitants of Carrick show

The press your welcome, let it sow

The seeds of knowledge, social grace,

Of ardour, industry and peace.⁶¹⁶

Although Herbert did form part of a coterie of readers and writers, she did not participate in the literary life of the town. Her world was that of the rectory and her Anglo-Irish family and acquaintances. The only possible mentor from her own circle, who could have encouraged Herbert to publish her *Poetical Eccentricities*, was her neighbour and self-confessed admirer of her work Edward Mandeville. He published his *Miscellaneous Poems* in 1798 by subscription.⁶¹⁷ There are exactly four hundred subscribers; this neat number might suggest a target set by the printer, or just neat symmetry as the number of subscribers hides the actual number of copies. The number of copies listed per subscriber varies from one to ten; however the majority only take one copy. The list

⁶¹⁶ Quoted in Patrick. C. Power, *Carrick-on-Suir and its People* (Dun Laoghaire, 1976) pp. 76-77.

⁶¹⁷ Edward Mandeville, *Miscellaneous Poems* (Waterford: Printed for the Author by John Veacock, 1798).

of names is fascinating. The one that first catches attention is Herbert. The most remarkable thing is how many copies they take and how many of the family subscribe. Rev. Nic. Herbert and Hon. Mrs. Herbert take eight copies each, Rev. Otway and Miss Herbert (Dorothea as the eldest daughter) take four each. Thomas takes one but his name is entered twice, perhaps a mistake or a means of making up the numbers. Other notable names are Jonah Barrington, who only takes one. Both Catholic and Protestant clergy are well represented. The Jephsons, the Herbert's next-door neighbours in Carrick take ten copies and Capt. Russell, Otway's father-in-law takes two copies. The Marquise of Waterford takes seven copies and William Wall of Coolnamuck takes four copies. The Herbert family doctor Dr. Careshore subscribes for one copy, as does the famous Carrick school teacher and scholar Patrick Lynch. Margaret Roe, John Roe's mother, subscribes for one copy. Had Herbert wished to publish her *Poetical Eccentricities* then she would have had access to the same subscription list as they, according to her own reports, are read and praised by this very group of people. However, as we have seen, Mandeville does not encourage Herbert's ambition; rather he praises the domestic role she inhabits in 1798, that of dutiful daughter, and wishes her success as a wife and mother in the future. It is interesting that Herbert only mentions Mandeville once in *Retrospections*. She notes his attendance at one of their family parties in 1798, but makes a satirical comment about his wife, whom she refers to as "a smart piece." This is Herbert's code for anyone she does not like.

We should make a distinction between Herbert's two main texts. While the publication of her verse would not have exposed her to accusations of immodesty, her memoir was a much more suspect genre. One very compelling reason for not publishing her *Retrospections* would have been the existence and highly controversial success of so many scandalous memoirs, several of them Irish. The poet John Duncombe in *The Femeinead* ridicules the memoirs of Letitia Pilkington, Lady Vane and Constantia Phillips. He considers the publication of their own accounts of their unchaste lives an

added infamy: “These three ladies have endeavour’d to immortalize their shame by writing and publishing their memoirs.”⁶¹⁸ Susan Staves in *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain* makes the point that “to publish an account of one’s own life was not the act of a modest woman.”⁶¹⁹

However, although Herbert does not publish her work, she does declare herself a member of an elite writing group and a member of a circle of professional writers that includes Milton, Pope and Goldsmith. The one material difference is that Herbert does not publish. This would suggest that publication should not be the yardstick by which we measure success. Her education, class and gender prescribe the possible roles she can play; that of professional writer is not one of them. This does not mean that she does not think of herself as a writer whose work is of professional quality, and as one who belongs to that elite group; it simply means that she does not publish her work. Her life is domestic but her writing is not. It is only in her writing that she steps outside the narrow world of domesticity that has been mapped out for her. By presenting her texts as published books she continues that process. It is a statement of her ability and of her desire to do more than what is prescribed for her. Had her family circumstances, education and location been different, the story might also have been very different. In the final analysis, she may, in her own understanding of her role in the life assigned to her, be a failure. But in her role as a writer, given the few opportunities open to a woman of her class and time, she is a remarkable, if unusual, success.

⁶¹⁸ John Duncombe, *The Feminead: or Female Genius, A Poem* (London, 1754), p. 15.

⁶¹⁹ Staves (2006), p. 270.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued, that Herbert's unpublished texts shed interesting light on literary culture in provincial Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While the question of Herbert's sanity remains unsolved, the texts themselves are documents that speak beyond that question, to acknowledge an active culture of diary-keeping, of friendly exchange of unpublished texts and of a culture of reading and writing where such texts featured alongside books.

Reading Herbert's unpublished texts in terms of life-writing, the practice of emulation and book history has opened up new ways of thinking about her work, her career as a writer and the literary world she inhabited. While this approach does not dispel the many contradictions in her work it does identify and explore them. It also suggests the probable sources of those conflicts that other readers of her work have seen as a manifestation of her addiction to romance and proof of her insanity. This study challenges both Bowen's and Woolf's assessment of her writing, and that of many subsequent readers, who saw her as the crazed writer of one strange but essentially truthful autobiography. The location of her three original texts has facilitated the first bibliographical study

of her manuscripts and the first assessment of her complete extant oeuvre. Reading Herbert's texts alongside the works of the many other unpublished and published contemporary writers who form part of this study places her writing in its literary context. This allows us to see how much part of that world she is but it also highlights the differences between her writing practices and those of her contemporaries. It is these differences that make her work such an interesting way to approach the study of book history in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The major contradiction in Herbert's writing is that between the rational woman of letters that she constructs in her early writing and the romantic heroine that she becomes in the final stages of *Retrospections* and her *Journal*. This highlights a recurring motif in Herbert's life and writing. Each of the enabling factors in her life also proves disabling. Circumstances that creates the possibility of her forming a strong subject position as a woman of letters are challenged by opposing forces. The clearest example of this is the relationship she forges with her father's literary friends in her childhood. These men foster her ambition, direct her taste and provide the model on which she bases her subject position as a lady of letters. However, because of the nature of the close relationships between the young susceptible girl and the older intellectual man, they are also sites of erotic awakening and provide the basis for the development of the romantic heroine. Similarly, she is educated to be an accomplished young woman, a wife and mother, while her interaction with these men of letters creates the ambition to model herself on them. Her manuscripts too display this conflict; they are the work of a woman of letters, but her decorative binding, amateur watercolours and elaborate calligraphy can also be seen as a display of conventional female accomplishments.

Herbert's emulative practices enable but also limit the possibilities of her writing. Her preferred literary role models are the heroines of tragic love stories. Herbert embraces Eloisa's tragedy and Pope's poetic monologue as her own. This simultaneously creates and limits the possibilities of her writing ambitions, as the outcome is predetermined by the text on which she models her story. The

same is true of *Paradise Lost*, to remain faithful to her parallel texts and complete her own text Herbert's life story becomes a tragedy. The study of her emulative practices also forces us to reconsider Herbert's self-constructed madness. Her manuscripts may tell the story of a crazed woman but they are the work of a woman of letters; they are controlled, articulate and with the exception of the *Journal*, finished. The most vivid examples of how the study of Herbert's emulative practices alters the meaning of her texts are the two surreal graveyard scenes at the end of *Retrospections*. These appear to be visual proof of Herbert's crazed mind. But, she is not simply indulging in some strange hallucination she is also copying in minute detail Eloisa's vision at the end of Pope's poem. Thus, Herbert's emulative practices reveal her strange psychosis, at least in part, as a response to the literary culture of her time and not simply the product of her psychological decline.

Herbert's world revolves around books, she receives them as gifts, reads and thinks about them, mimics them in minute detail and in some instance comes to live her life through them. Her manuscripts are written and handmade in the image of the printed book. We get a vivid picture in Herbert's manuscripts of the meaning of the book in the period. However, in the world of books that she inhabits we also see two opposing forces at work. The books she receives as gifts foster her ambitions but they also create obligations and foster dependency. Just as the men of letters become her role models, they also form her way of thinking about herself. Thus, despite the power of the printed book, Herbert remains within the culture of gift-giving and the circulation of private, unpublished texts.

Herbert's writing practices and those of her contemporaries reveal a hidden world of literary performance that is not motivated by the desire to publish, but by a wide variety of personal and

cultural imperatives. I do not want to suggest that any generalisations about women writers can be drawn from this study of a single author's career. However, rather than thinking of Herbert's career as a writer being impoverished by her failure to publish her work we need to regard her as a writer caught between worlds. Her background, education and class belong to the private world of gift-giving and the circulation of unpublished texts. However, her reading brings her into contact with the new commercial world of print that is driven forward by ambitious printers, booksellers and the entrepreneurs of commerce and money making that come to dominate the eighteenth-century world. This study brings into focus the tensions for women writers of Herbert's class in provincial Ireland between their assigned role as upholders and practitioners of old world values and the possibility of becoming participating and public members of the almost exclusive male preserve of the professional writer. Herbert finds a place for herself in this world of limited possibilities by mimicking published books in minute detail and circulating them among a group of friends and acquaintances who understand her references to such texts and her many literary allusions. Thus, she simultaneously figures herself as a woman of letters, conversant with the most important literary works of her time, and she also represents her Anglo-Irish circle as a literary coterie. Herbert's texts are among most interesting to have survived from the period because of her accurate mirroring of published books and her embedding of her life story in the plots of canonical texts.

One of the most interesting outcomes of my research has been the discovery of the number of ordinary people who kept private journals and diaries. The diarists show commitment to self-improvement, reading, amateur theatricals, experimental farming, the betterment of the poorer classes and considerable entrepreneurial ambitions. The evidence from these journals shows a vibrant literary culture where people formed coteries of readers, collected and shared books, built

private libraries and joined lending and public libraries. The conventional view of Herbert's Anglo-Irish class as unlettered and idle is challenged by these findings.

My research also shows how disabling the conditions within Irish publishing in the eighteenth century were for Irish writers. The foundations of the debilitating movement that was to see successive generations of authors leaving Ireland to make their careers abroad were laid in the shortsightedness of Irish reprint trade of the eighteenth century. But the reprint trade also fostered a community of taste between Ireland, England and Scotland; it made a limited number of books available at reasonable prices and introduced books to Ireland that might never have crossed the Irish Sea.

However, despite the power and influence of the printed book it represents only part of the literary culture of the time. A culture of private writing, where handwritten texts were passed around and gifted to close family and friends, still played an important role in Herbert's world. This textual culture is very often hidden from view because of the dominance of research into the history of the printed book. It is also a relatively unknown field and we may never be able to completely recover the full extent of its existence. An example of what can be done is Philippe Lejeune's pioneering research on the diaries of young girls in eighteenth-century France. In Ireland much work remains to be done in this area, particularly around the location of the unpublished diaries and journals of ordinary people.

In this thesis I have attempted to explore and understand the traffic in unpublished texts and the role they played in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Irish sociability. I have also

attempted to uncover the role that printed books played in everyday life. I have ascertained the books the Herbert read, the ways in which she read them and the ways they structured her daily life and subjectivity. Through analysing Herbert's texts as life-writing, rather than as autobiography in the more conventional sense, I have sought to understand the ways in which her private writings construct and express her subjectivity. Dorothea Herbert was undoubtedly an eccentric woman of her time, but nevertheless there are ways in which her works present an example of female life, which was socially constructed, but nevertheless imaginatively active.

Appendix

One

Appendix One

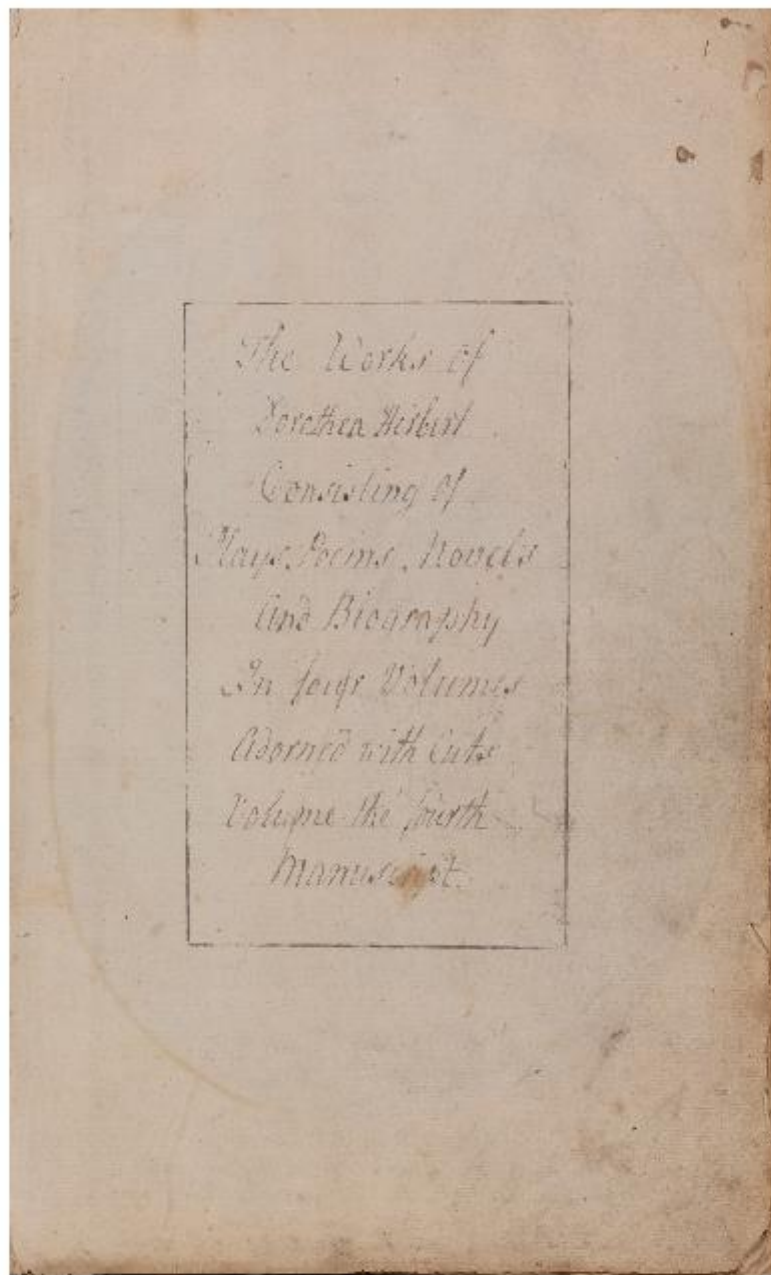


Figure 1: First Title Page of *Retrospections*

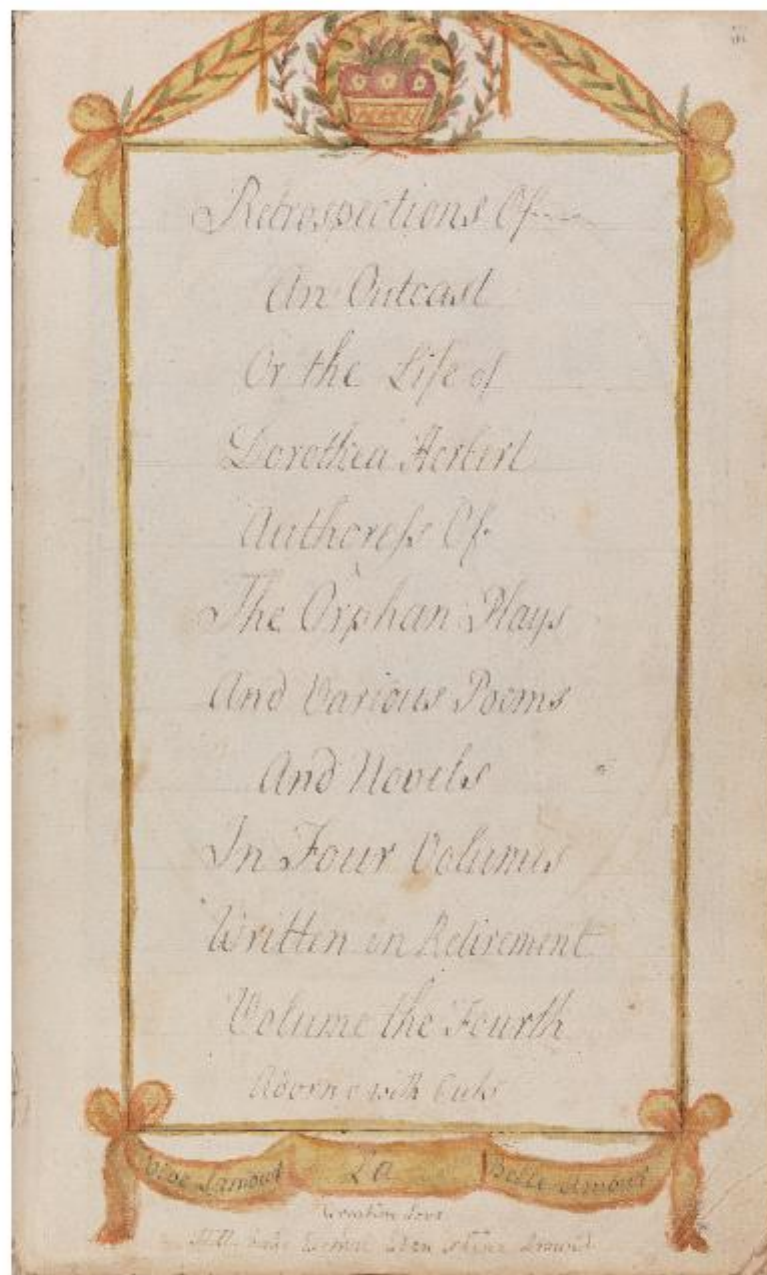


Figure 2: Second Title Page of *Retrospections*



Figure 3: Plate 1 "Frontispiece: The Outcast"



Figure 4: Plate 2 "The Authoresses Pictura: Dorothea Herbert Rose"

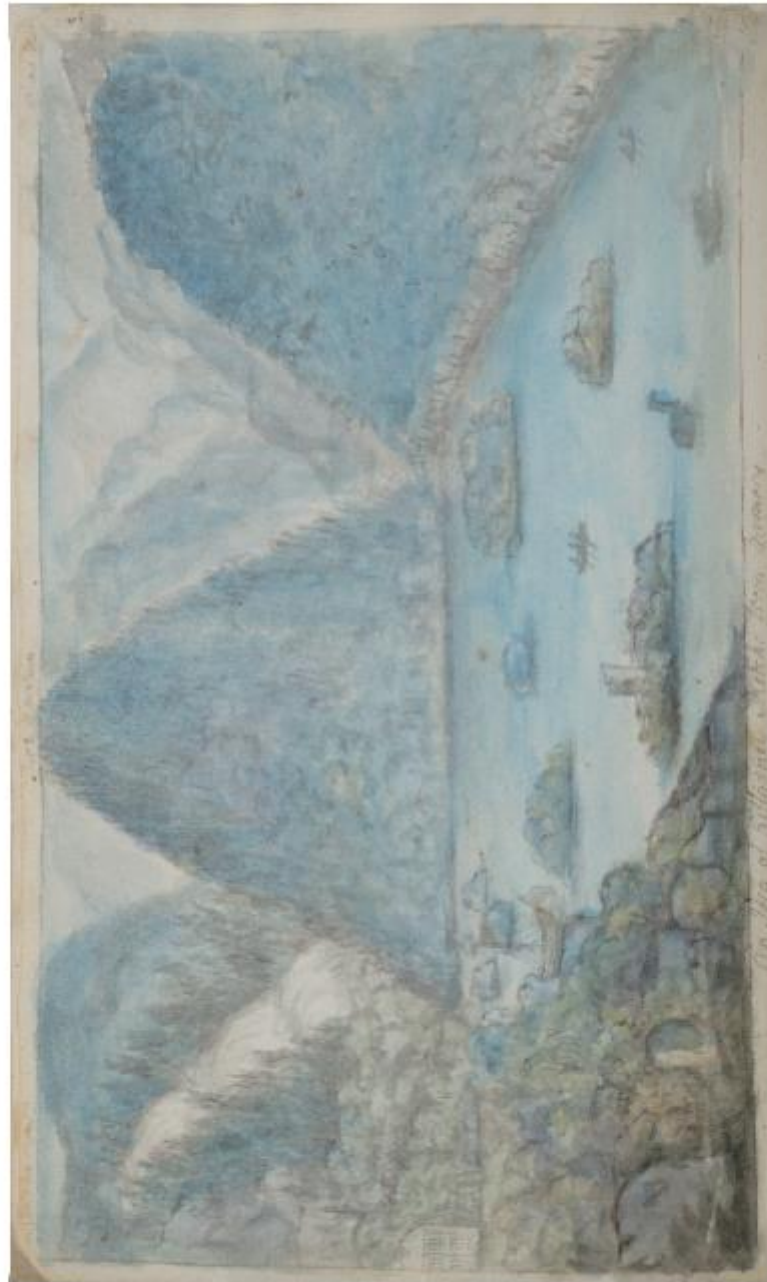


Figure 8: Plate 3 "An Idea of Killarney sketched from Memory"



Figure 6: Plate 4 "North West View of Carrick-on-Suir"



Figure 7: Plate 5 "The Beautiful Eyes"



Figure 8: Plate 6 "A Landlord Proclaimed"



Figure 9: Plate 7



Figure 10: Plate 8 "The Lone Wanderer"

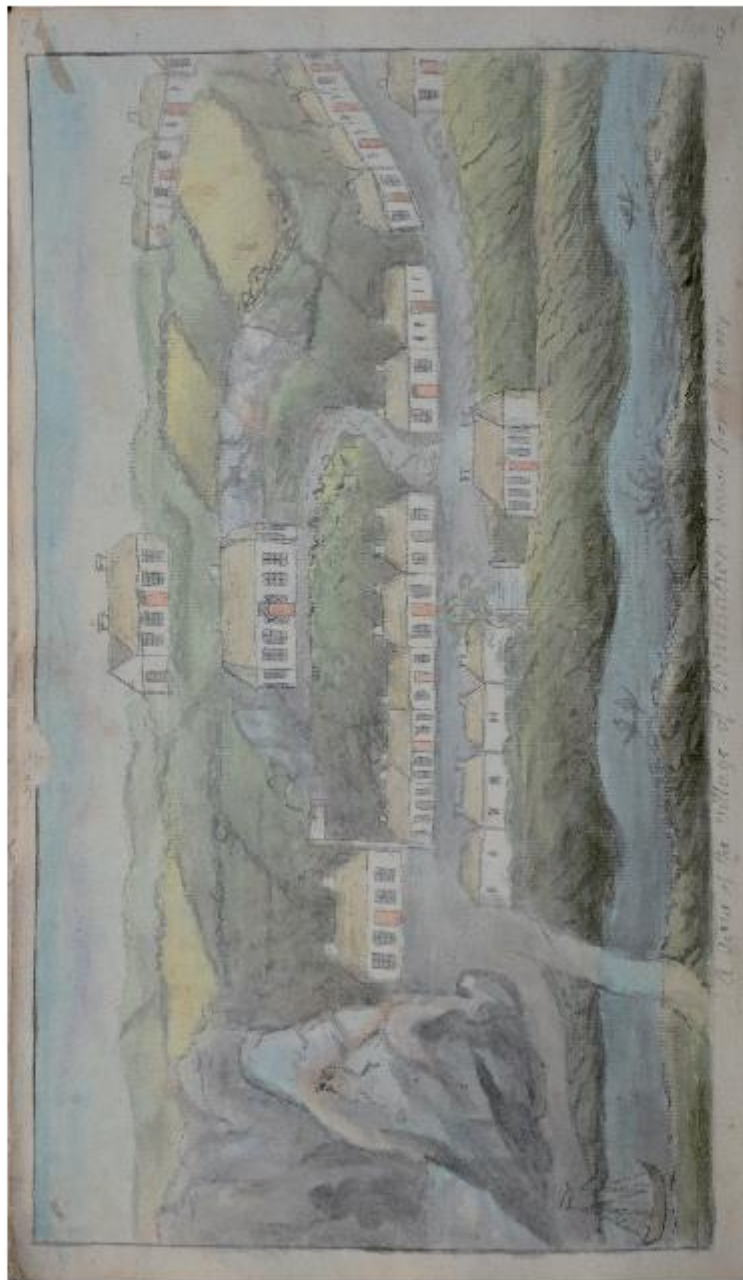


Figure 11: Plate 9 "A View of the Village of Bunmahon from Memory"



Figure 13: Plate 11



Figure 14: Plate 12



Figure 15: Plate 13 "The Mourning Muse"



Figure 16: Hugh Douglas Hamilton's painting of Richard Mansergh St George, c. 1795. Oil on canvas, 228cm x 146.2 cm. National Gallery of Ireland 4585, purchased 1992 (currently in storage.)



Figure 17: Front cover of 2004 edition of *Retrospections* shows the face only of the figure on the left of this painting by John Michael Wright of "The Ladies Catherine and Charlotte Talbot" 1679. Oil on canvas, 130 cm x 110cm. National Gallery of Ireland 4184, purchased 1976.



Figure 18: The Library at Plas Newydd showing Eleanor Butler on the right and Sarah Ponsonby on the left. Contemporary sketch by Lady Leighton, 1813.



Figure 19: *Poetical Eccentricities* manuscript.

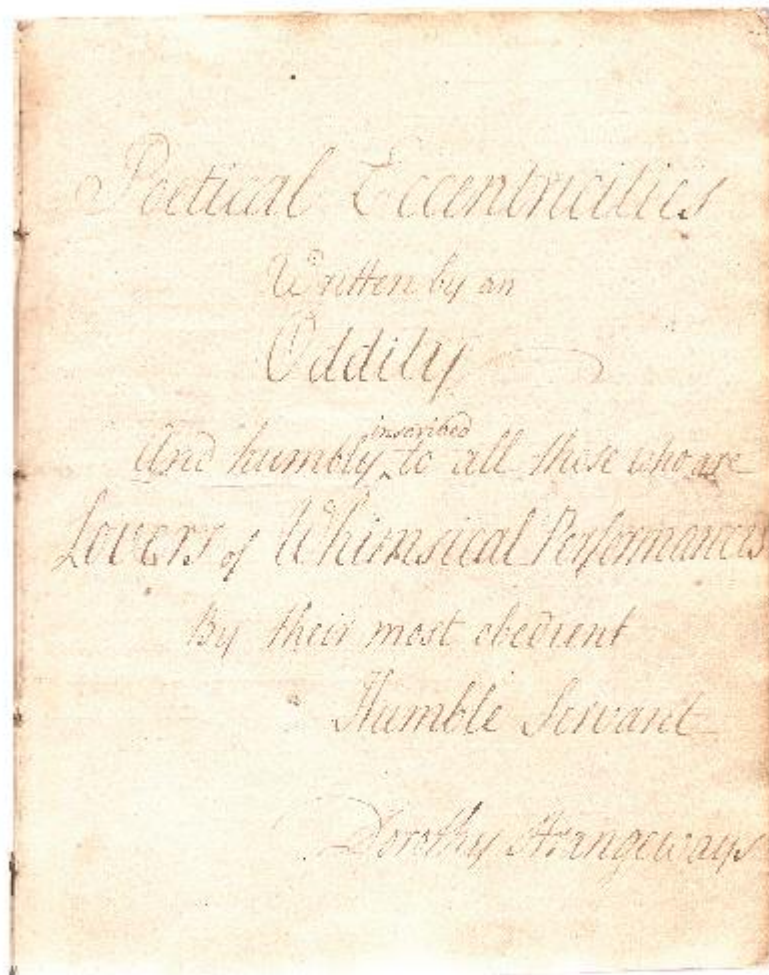


Figure 20: Title page of *Poetical Eccentricities*

<i>Index</i>		<i>Page</i>
<i>Preface</i>	-----	<i>I</i>
<i>Virgins</i>	-----	<i>1</i>
<i>Religion</i>	-----	<i>2</i>
<i>Modesty</i>	-----	<i>4</i>
<i>Melancholy</i>	-----	<i>5</i>
<i>Sensibility</i>	-----	<i>7</i>
<i>Solitude</i>	-----	<i>8</i>
<i>Midnight</i>	-----	<i>10</i>
<i>The Storm</i>	-----	<i>12</i>
<i>The Riddle an Enigmatical Satyrical Etc</i>	-----	<i>16</i>
<i>The Breakfast-table written at B</i>	-----	<i>18</i>
<i>The Rights of Woman</i>	-----	<i>19</i>
<i>The Bundle</i>	-----	<i>20</i>
<i>Don-Don or the new Whole Duty of Man</i>	-----	<i>20</i>
<i>Life in three Parts</i>	-----	<i>24</i>
<i>The parson's Fireside</i>	-----	<i>26</i>
<i>An Address to Old-Maids</i>	-----	<i>40</i>
<i>Strickman sitting for his Picture</i>	-----	<i>23</i>
<i>Epitaph on an Old Maid</i>	-----	<i>48</i>
<i>Miss Herbert's Last Will</i>	-----	<i>50</i>
<i>Sally's Complaint</i>	-----	<i>56</i>
<i>The Villa</i>	-----	<i>58</i>
<i>Lines to a friend</i>	-----	<i>70</i>
<i>Swiss Ball or Humours of Corruption</i>	-----	<i>71</i>
<i>The Buckle's mock Heroic Poem</i>	-----	<i>81</i>

Figure 21: Index of Poetical Extraneousities

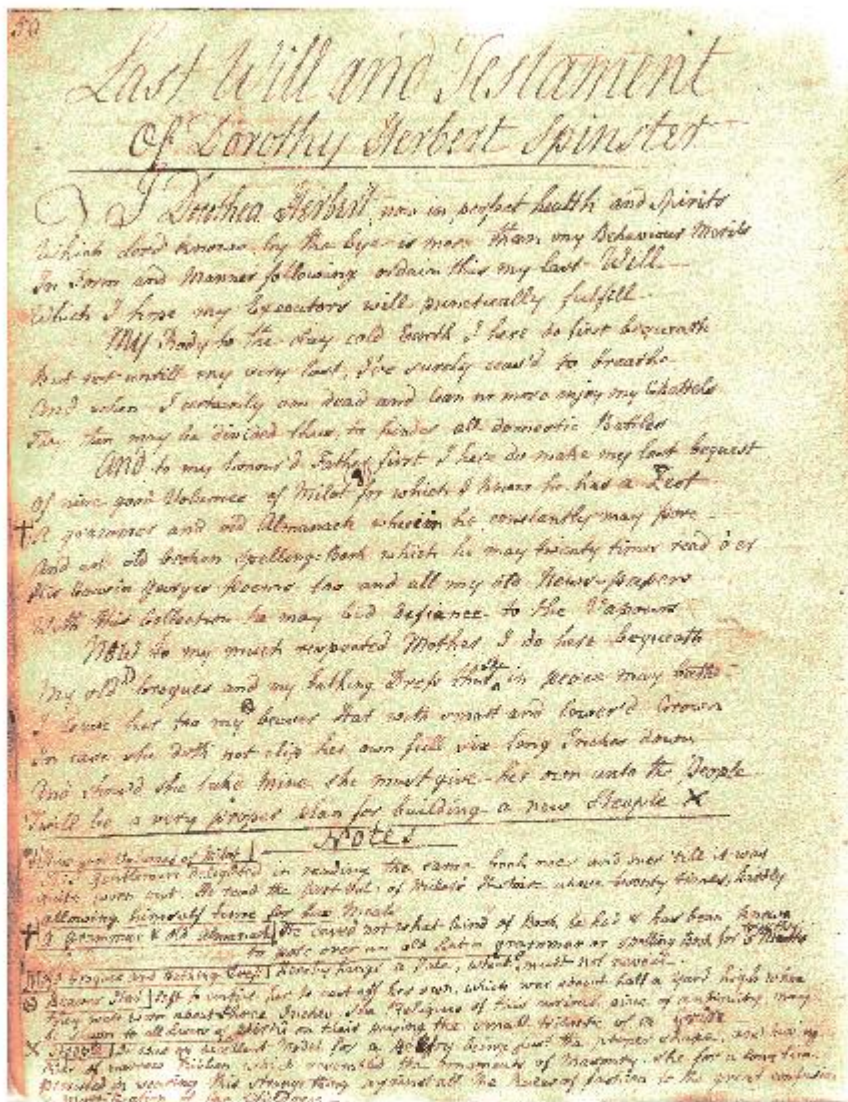


Figure 22: "Last Will and Testament of Dorothea Herbert"

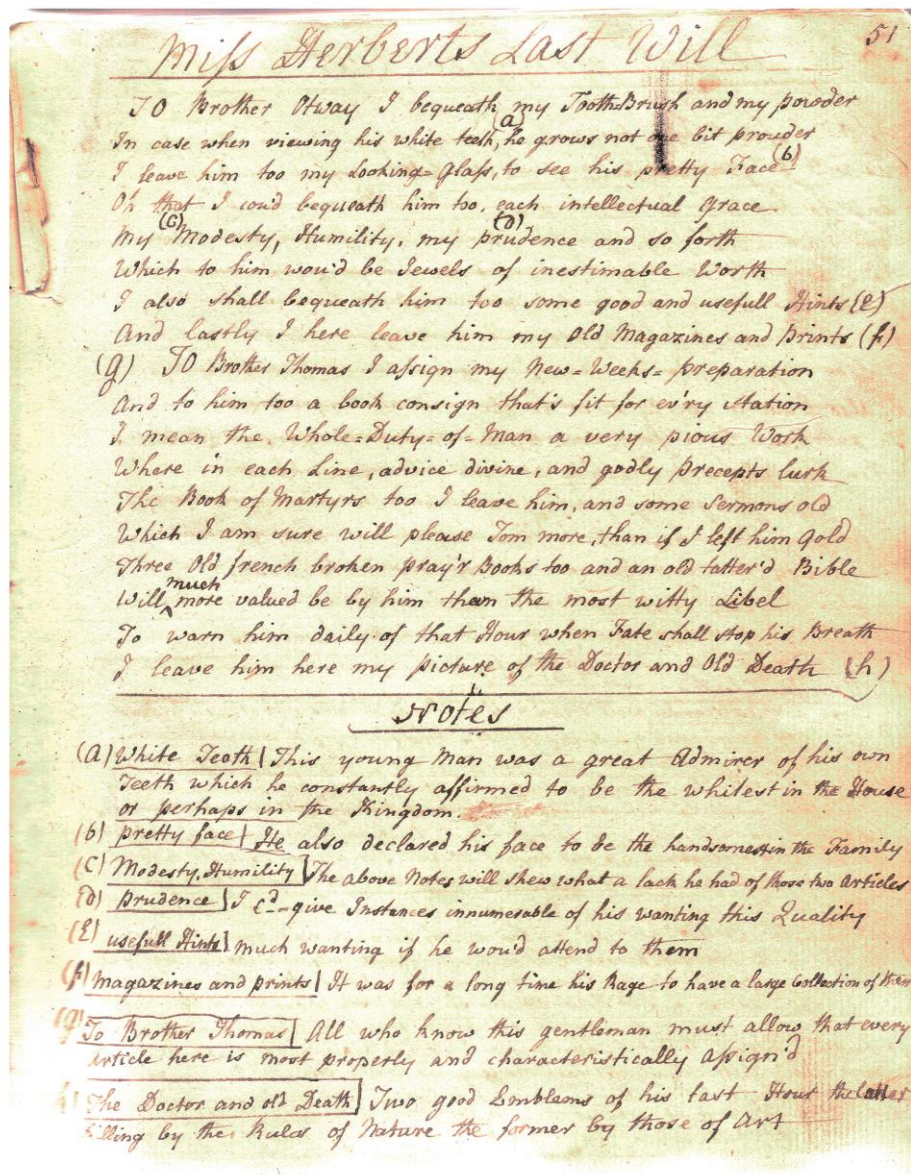


Figure 23: "Last Will and Testament of Dorothea Herbert"

Miss Herbert's Last Will

To Sister Jan 'twas ⁽¹⁾ my plan to leave all my fine Cloaths
 As well I know she loveth shew to kill surrounding beaux
 And to her also I here leave each Jewel ⁽²⁾ in my Casket
 And when Work grows her Hobby-Horse I leave her my Work Basket
 By shew'd she once again remount the Old Grand-Overture
 I leave her here a proper sum good Masters to procure ⁽³⁾
 Or should she fancifully chuse to ride upon a heap of Apples ⁽⁴⁾
 I here appropriate ten groats to purchase her those Hobby Dapples
 I also leave a yearly sum for her and all my Sisters
 To purchase them from time to time straight Waistcoats and hot Bladders
 When symptoms of Insanity at each full Moon appear
 In a rage for giving grand fandangoes Balls and Suppers quest
 I likewise here bequeath to Jan my violent horse for Home
 To qualify her sad disease a mad desire to roam
 I also hereby leave at her Command
 My Bag of Oaten Meal for her white hands ⁽⁵⁾

NOTES.

- (1) All my fine Cloaths
 Those are extremely well dispos'd of, as the lady loves a bit of shew in her least
- (2) Each Jewel in my Casket
 Consisting of Glass Beads cut Steel &c &c
- (3) Her Hobby Horse
 There certainly never existed a more Hobby-horrical Lady feebler
 will appear in the following instance. Walking was at one time her Hobby
 when she used to rise at one O'clock past Midnight & padlock the Walks
 and gardens till she was almost lame. But one Morning about two O'clock
 as she was scampering up and down full speed she arrived opposite a large
 Oak when she perceived a monstrous pair of Eyes glaring through a
 Hole in it. This incident made her quickly dismount from this Hobby
 and run for shelter however on the alarm being spread, the supposed
 Monster with Astonish proved to be a poor innocent calf, who was probably
 led by congeniality to stare so unmannerly at her. But this incident
 made her dispose of her Hobby Horse. The next she mounted was
 Mayday's Grand Overture to practise which she arose at the appointed O'clock
 but being afraid to sit by herself after what had happened she made the
 unfortunate Kitchen maid rise each Morning and lie on a sofa near the Harpsichord
 This gave way to heads work Needle work to Goodery Coohery to something else
 but all equally violent whilst they lasted
- (4) A Heap of Apples
 She and her Sister Bradshaw used to get at top of a Heap of Apples
 & sit whole morning, branching them and whole Even'g Roasting them which
 Hobby had nearly cost them their lives (5) she had beautiful hands w^h were by starts her Hobby
 devoted in sewing this strange my
 modification to her Children

Figure 24: "Last Will and Testament of Dorothea Herbert"

Miss Herbert's last Will

35

To Sister Bradshaw I bequeath my Drawers with lock and key
 Where she who eat too'd tidings her House linen may lay
 To her I leave my Waiting-Maid who I'm sure will be wanting
 To help poor Kegan with her work when thro' fatigue she's paining
 My Dickies and old linen gown tho' they're both old and shabby (2)
 When trimmed with proper Management will make fine things for Baby
 My ancient flannel petticoat will make it swaddling clothes
 Oh that I could bequeath it too my pretty little Niece (3)
 With all the nameless beauties of my charming little face
 My lofty Height majestic Air and every other Grace
 I leave my Sister Martha Dear my old field Bed to sleep in
 And also my two Cupboards snug for hiding holes (4) to creep in
 To shelter her from Visitors who would her precious time engross
 Not whilst she has those Holes to hide she need be at any loss
 My old Straw Hat I her bequeath which now is trimmed with faded red
 And six old ragged Handkerchiefs to tie in strings about her Head
 I leave her too my (5) Books and old (6) Book-Worm
 And an old Pen which truly is much worn

NOTES

- (1) poor Kegan Miss Bradshaw maid. There had been a strong argumentation in the family some asserting that she was to be saddled with more work in Dublin than she could possibly do her Mistress and others maintain'd the contrary Our Author being of the former Opinion charitably bequeathed her Waiting-Maid to help her
- (2) Baby Miss Bradshaw who was not then born
- (3) Niece All who have ever seen our Author will conceive what an acquisition her Niece would be to the Infant who would be a real prodigy & out do Jonathan Shandy himself if he were
- (4) my lofty Height &c Her Acquaintances will also perceive what an advantage her Height, Air and face would be to the Child when grown up
- (5) for hiding Holes Miss Martha being Chum to the Author was by her infected with a mortal Aversion for Morning Doppers this shews the danger of sleeping with addicks as their peculiarities are certainly catching - As she gave her that Disorder she thinks it but Justice to leave her two Cupboards for hiding Holes they having been often very useful to her in that Capacity
- (6) my old Straw Hat Miss M. Herbert detested taking much trouble about dressing her Head
- (7) old ragged Handkerchiefs Not the above Miss Generally had her Hat on with the first old string at Handkerchiefs she could meet
- (8) Books &c She was much like our Author in disposition especially in being a great Book Worm
- (9) Book-Worm She also like our Author was for ever writing tho' no one had ever been permitted to see her productions the only thing yet come to light is her having an exact and well written Catalogue of the incident in the Villa family

Figure 25: "Last Will and Testament of Dorothea Herbert"

34 Miss Herbert's Last Will

TO Sister Sophy I bequeath my little Spider Table⁽¹⁾
 And my four painted paper piers to ornament her Table⁽²⁾
 My side saddle my old bridle and all my ready money⁽³⁾
 To buy a handsome Farthingale to decorate her Poney⁽⁴⁾
 Al brother Nick the Organ posit'd and forcibly possess'd the Turret⁽⁵⁾
 He now his legacy has lost for nought from me shall he inherit
 I therefore in this my last Will do cut him off with a Shilling.
 And yet scape grace for this small sum to collect the chance no doubt is willing⁽⁶⁾
⁽⁷⁾

NOTES

- (1) little Spider Table This table the very property bequeathed to her sister Sophy who made it. This young lady was a prodigy of science and ingenuity she could do all kinds of Carpenter work and had a regular set of tools for that purpose. She could also do all kinds of masonry could plaster ceilings, mould cornices, paint walls, glaze windows mend chises, glaze China as well as the different Artizans themselves. She was a famous Accomptant and could set figures much better than the parson of the parish.
- (2) painted paper piers with which our Author ornamented her parietal Table. This table Miss Sophia Herbert fitted up with her own hands apart from the large stables she made the partitions, bay left, windows. Lin for bay and painted it herself.
- (3) Ready Money She could turn a penny with the best Jew of them all.
- (4) Her Poney In field sports and horsemanship she was a perfect Diana. She often galloped about without bridle or saddle and clear'd every Hedge Fifth of Wall that came in her way. Her Poney was a remarkable one broke and trained by herself. An officer in the K-y Militia wanted to purchase this Poney the Bargain was in great forwardness when unluckily the Horse lay down in a tivet with her one leg before the officer's servant. The man reported the circumstance to his Master who loudly upbraided her with wanting to saddle him. Now replied she he was as stout a head as ever lived till you and your Regiment came to Town from whom he has learn'd an ugly trick of being over fond of Drunkenness. However the Bargain was broke off. In short the Poney and his mistress long continued the wonders of an antient's Neighbourhood. Added to the above perfections she was an excellent shot and could make a dog or curry a Horse with the best whippet in the Kingdom not excepting equine Debbatons themselves.
- (5) The Organ posit'd The young Gentlemen contrary to the ardent prayers of our Author constantly open'd the Trap door of a pigeon house which was over a very pretty Turret in which was a very fine shamless Organ. This last Miss Herbert took should she pains to beautify but he destroy'd both by sitting down the pigeons dirt continually on them. It is therefore no wonder our Deborah shew some resentment in finding the effects of much hard labour destroy'd by the mischievous tricks of a wanton school boy.
- (6) scape grace He was quite a scape grace being excessively wild, and when a child he look'd like some laughing a Ditch which gave him a dreadful wicked look which made him as much one in appearance as he was in Reality.
- (7) No doubt is willing Had he ten thousand a year at the time this Will was made he would have willingly resigned it for one Shilling of Ready Money.

Figure 26: "Last Will and Testament of Dorothea Herbert"

Miss Herbert's Last Will

55

And now To those who best may fame preserve
And make my last sad Eulogy in Verse
I leave my written Poems and my Quiret
And a huge piece of Iron strong to bar it

And here I do appoint, ordain, and name my dear good brother Bill⁽²⁾
To oversee and execute with faithfullest this my Last Will
And I am sure with Rectitude and Honesty⁽³⁾ he will Administer
As witness my hand this twenty first of October

Dorothea Herbert Spinster

Codicil

I leave to my Executor my pencils paints and painting Box⁽⁴⁾
And all great Nature's ample store of Hills and Dales and Woods and Rocks

Notes

- (1) Iron strong to bar it Against all Intruders
- (2) Brother Bill | William Bradshaw Esq^r
- (3) Rectitude and Honesty | A bold Assertion considering this Executor was an Attorney!
- (4) Woods & Dales &c | Either to draw from or to make the most of them by using them as Instruments for litigation

Figure 27: "Last Will and Testament of Dorothea Herbert"

Appendix

Two

Appendix Two

Texts Alluded to in Herbert's *Retrospections of an Outcast*, *Poetical Eccentricities*

Written by an Oddity and Journal.

Retrospections of an Outcast

Parallel Texts in *Retrospections of an Outcast* (I use the term parallel text to denote those texts that Herbert uses as the models for the overall structure, central themes and character development in her manuscripts)

Acknowledged

Milton, John: *Paradise Lost*

Pope, Alexander: *Eloisa to Abelard*

Goldsmith, Oliver: *The Deserted Village*

Not acknowledged

Goldsmith, Oliver: *The Vicar of Wakefield*

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797)

Mary: A Fiction. (1788) and *Maria or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798)

Mary Tighe (1772-1810)

Selena (c 1809)

Writers and Texts directly alluded to in *Retrospections of an Outcast*

Writers and Texts	Number of Direct Allusions
Alexander Pope (1688-1744) <i>Eloisa to Abelard</i> <i>Essay on Man</i>	13

<i>An Essay on Criticism</i>	13
<i>Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady</i>	4
<i>Epistle 11: On the Nature of Man with Respect to Himself</i>	1
<i>Messiah</i>	1
	1
	1
Oliver Goldsmith(1730-1774)	
<i>The Deserted Village</i>	6
<i>The Traveller</i>	8
<i>Retaliation</i>	1
James Thomson (1700-1748)	
<i>The Tragedy of Sophonisba</i>	8
<i>Agamemnon and Clytemnstra</i>	2
<i>Tancred and Sigismunda</i>	4

<i>Edward and Leonora</i>	3
<i>A Nuptial Song</i>	1
<i>To Peace</i>	1
Robert Blair (1593-1666)	
<i>The Grave</i>	10
William Shenstone (1714-1763)	
<i>The Landscape</i>	5
<i>A Pastoral Ballad</i>	2
John Milton (1608-1674)	
<i>Paradise Lost</i>	4
Mark Akenside (1721-1770)	
<i>To A Friend Unsuccessful in Love</i>	2
<i>Hymn to Cheerfulness</i>	2

Thomas Gray (1716-1771) <i>Elegy Written in a Country Graveyard</i>	3
Daniel Defoe (1659?-1731) <i>Robinson Crusoe.</i>	2
Fanny Greville (1730-1789) <i>Prayer for Indifference</i>	2
William Congreve (1670-1727) <i>On the Death of the Marquis of Blandford</i>	2
Isaac Bickerstaff (1735-1812) <i>The Padlock</i>	2
Zenephone (c4 30-354 BC) <i>Life of Socrates</i>	2

The Spectator (1711-12 & 1714) (Eight-volume edition, 1788)	2
John Gay (1685-1732) <i>The Beggar's Opera</i>	1
John Philips (1676-1708) <i>The Splendid Shilling</i>	1
Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718) <i>The Fair Penitent</i>	1
Thomas Otway (1652-1785) <i>The Orphan or the Unhappy Marriage</i>	1
Henry Fielding (1707-1754) <i>The Tragedy of Troyedius</i>	1

John Langhorne (1735-1779) <i>Hymn to Plutus</i>	1
George Farquar (1677-1707) <i>The Inconstant – A Comedy</i>	1
Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) <i>Don Quixote</i>	1
Sir George Lyttleton (1709-1773) <i>History of England during the Reign of Henry the Second</i>	1
Samuel Johnson (1769-1784) <i>Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia: A Tale in Two Volumes</i>	1
Solomon Gessner (1730-1788) <i>The Death of Abel</i>	1

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) <i>Sir Charles Grandison</i>	1
William Shield (1748-1829) <i>Rosina</i>	1
John Philips (1676-1708) <i>The Splendid Shilling</i>	1
William Shakespeare (1564-1616) <i>Hamlet</i>	1
W. H. Dilworth <i>Lord Anson's Voyage</i>	1
Homer <i>The Iliad</i>	1

Virgil (70-21 BC) <i>The Aeneid</i>	1

Plays rehearsed and performed by the Herbert family and their friends

***The Padlock* – Isaac Bickerstaff (1735-1812)**

“To amuse our leisure Winter Hours, We propose acting a Play in Mrs Jepson’s large Parlour – It was the Padlock we performed and we made a real farce of it – We had only Some old Bed Curtains for scenery and everything else suitable to them – God knows we had more fuss rehearsing and preparing than a Head Theatre.” (Ret., p. 77)

***The Opera of Rosina* - William Shield (1748-1829)**

“The young people at Castletown now acted a play in the most Capital stile, for as they spent every winter in Dublin they could not fail to catch The Theatric fire at a Time when the Metropolitan stage abounded with Capital Performers – No expense was spared in dress or Scenery – The play was the Opera of Rosina. (Ret., p. 85)

***The Fair Penitent* – Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718)**

“The old Garret the scene of most of our childish Pranks was our theatre – The Fair Penitent the play we chose. I had at once the laborious Tasks of painting the Scenes and fitting Myself for formidable part of Calista ... Our Prompter not yet out of his spelling book miscalled his Words or lost his place – The gallant gay Lothario grew sulky and refused to act his Part when the brave Horatio tilted him too roughly – The venerable Sciolto burst out laughing just in the Act of introducing the lost Calista to the dead Body of her Lover – Calista and Lavinia fought desperately behind the scenes about change of Dresses – and finally the Candle snuffers set the Stage on fire.” (Ret., p. 171)

Plays and Operas attended by Herbert

***The Beggar’s Opera* - John Gay (1685-1732)**

Herbert was taken to see the play in Dublin in 1779. “The Play was the Beggars Opera – and it being the first thing of the kind I had ever seen, I did nothing but laugh and cry during the whole representation for which I was rated by Mrs Fleming who declared it was quite against the Rules of Polite Decorum and betrayed a Vulgar Rusticity to laugh or Cry at a play House.” (Ret., p. 48)

1785, The Herberts make a family excursion to Waterford to hear Mrs. Billington sing.⁶²⁰ Herbert compares her unfavourably with her friend Mrs. O'Hara. "We went to a Waterford play to hear Mrs. Billington sing – but Mrs. O Hara's voice pleased me Much better." (Ret., p. 117)

Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity

Parallel Texts in *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity*

Oliver Goldsmith

The Deserted Village.

Alexander Pope

The Dunciad

⁶²⁰ Elizabeth Billington (1768-1818) was a famous opera singer who made many successful tours in Ireland. The series of letters which form her memoirs were believed to have been written by Elizabeth Billington to her mother, Mrs. Weichell. They were the source of scandal at the time and most of the publication is taken up with the publisher's explanations of why he is publishing them against the wishes of Mrs. Billington. *Memoirs of Mrs. Billington* (London: James Ridgeway, 1792). Billington wrote to her mother from Waterford during her concert tour there in 1785: "My stay in this place will be about a month longer, as I meet with great encouragement, and shall make two great benefits; but I may flatter myself that I succeed everywhere...write to me by return of post, to Mr. Sutherland's Shoemaker, Peter Street, Waterford" (*Memoirs of Mrs. Billington*, p. 51).

Writers and Texts directly alluded to in *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity*

Writers and Texts	Number of direct Allusions
John Milton (1608-1674)	
<i>Il Penseroso</i>	2
<i>L'Allegro</i>	3
<i>Solitude</i>	3
Oliver Goldsmith (1730-1774)	
<i>The Deserted Village</i>	15
<i>Retaliation: a Poem</i>	4
Alexander Pope	
<i>The Dunciad</i>	20

Edmund Burke (1729-1797) “Burke’s Decree”	1
Laurence Sterne (1713-1768) <i>Tristram Shandy</i>	3
John Fox (1516-1587) <i>The Book of Martyrs</i>	1
Socrates (c 469-470 BC) Recommended as general reading, no specific text mentioned.	1
Claude Francoise Millot (1726-1782) <i>Elements of General History</i>	2

Herbert's Journal 1806-1807

Parallel Texts in Herbert's *Journal*

John Milton

Paradise Lost

Alexander Pope

Eloisa to Abelard

Direct Allusions in Herbert's *Journal*.

There are no direct allusions in Herbert's *Journal*. However, *Paradise Lost* and *Eloisa to Abelard* form the basis of the structure of the *Journal*. *Paradise Lost* remains the overall theme of the work and *Eloisa to Abelard* is the model for the heroine's story.

Appendix

Three

Appendix Three

A Brief Account of my Research

Retrospections of an Outcast and Herbert's Journal.

I first read Herbert's *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806* in the 1988 Dublin edition. In his "Historical Backdrop" to the text Louis Cullen asserted that the original

manuscript “now appears to be unaccounted for” (Ret., 1988, p. 454). Later that year I attended a conference in University College Cork, where a paper on Herbert debated whether or not the text was based on a real manuscript or was an elaborate hoax. This controversy has continued to surround the text despite the fact that the manuscript is now accounted for.⁶²¹ It was not difficult to locate the original manuscript. It was placed on permanent deposit in the Manuscripts Room in Trinity College Dublin Library in 1986. The deposit includes Herbert’s *Journal* covering the years 1806-1807. In his introduction Cullen also claims that Herbert’s “other three volumes containing plays, poems and novels had disappeared” (Ret., 1988, p. 454). However, a note attached to the Herbert deposit in Trinity College Dublin provides the following information about the missing manuscripts.

The whereabouts of vols 1-3 are unknown: a MS book of poetry by an anonymous young lady in Waterford Cathedral Library may have been written by Dorothea Herbert but this volume has not been identified. Another volume, perhaps two volumes were, according to Mandeville tradition, destroyed by Dorothea Mandeville’s niece (i.e Desmond Mandeville’s grandmother).

Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity

In pursuit of the ‘ms book of poems’ mentioned in this note, I visited Christ Church Cathedral in Waterford. The building that once housed the library is now closed. The whole structure was severely water-damaged and the entire collection was transferred to the college library in Waterford

⁶²¹ A colleague in University Cork Cliona Ó Gallchoir gave a paper at a conference held in University College Dublin on 18 March 2011. The conference, “The New Scientists in Ireland: A Tribute to the Loebers,” focused on Rolf and Magda Loeber’s *A Guide to Irish Fiction, 1650-1900*. Aware of my research on Herbert, O Gallchoir was surprised to learn that questions about the authenticity of *Retrospections* are still current among eighteenth-century Irish scholars. This shows how difficult it is to dispel doubts of this kind, and how attractive and enduring the myths and mysteries associated with an author and text can be.

Institute of Technology in 1995. Before this transfer, Julian Walton was asked to examine the library by the then Dean, Dr. Mayne. Walton has published two articles describing what he found and the work carried out on the library before the transfer of the books.

Large plastic sheets covered the bookshelves but afforded inadequate protection from dust, cobwebs, bits of plaster that fell from the crumbling ceiling, and above all from the pigeons who flew through a hole in the window and cheerfully built their nests and deposited their excreta among the ancient tomes.⁶²²

Walton had made a catalogue of the books in the library in 1981. Herbert's text is not listed in this catalogue. I contacted Walton and he confirmed that the manuscript was not in the library at that time.

Waterford Cathedral library would not seem an obvious place to find Herbert's collection of poems. Founded in 1745, it contains between 2,500 and 3,000 books, made up mostly of works of theology, church history and law.⁶²³ There were three catalogues made of the collection between its foundation and the 1950s. All three are listed in Walton's catalogue. "Register of Books Belonging to Waterford Cathedral Library" is dated 1857. The "Catalogue of Christchurch Cathedral Library," dated 1870, also contains a list of books borrowed between 1877 and 1880. In 1957 a card index of the library was compiled. Only this 1957 catalogue is now available, the whereabouts of the two nineteenth-century catalogues is now unknown.⁶²⁴ The 1957 card index of the library was compiled by the then curate of the Cathedral Rev. S.W. Reede. On leaving Waterford he arranged to

⁶²² Walton Julian C. "The Library of Christ Church Cathedral, Waterford," *Decies* 1XL (1980), 5.

⁶²³ See also Walton, Julian, "Conserving a Cathedral Library," *Aquila* (1995), pp. 42-44. *Aquila* is the magazine of St John's College, Waterford.

⁶²⁴ These were among a small collection of the most valuable books in the library that were misplaced during the transfer of the books from Waterford Cathedral to the library in Waterford Institute of Technology. Despite intensive research I have not been able to locate them.

have the cards sent for safe-keeping to the Representative Church Body Library in Dublin. There they were transcribed to a typed catalogue. The cards are now missing, presumed destroyed. The catalogue is ninety-three pages long and contains over two thousand entries, each giving details of author, title, publication (where, when and by whom) and shelf location. There is a copy of this catalogue in the library in Waterford Institute of Technology. An examination of the catalogue reveals no entry under Strangeways, or Herbert or *Poetical Eccentricities*. But, on page thirty-eight, among the weighty books on law and religion, I found the following entry: "Hangways, Dorothy, Poems mms 1720 Section J, Shelf 6." If this is indeed Herbert's *Poetical Eccentricities*, then Dr Walton's account of the making of the card index may help to explain the mutation of Strangeways to Hangways. The Rev. Reede who compiled the card index, was meticulous and diligent, but his hand-writing was almost illegible. Added to this, the secretary who typed the catalogue, had little knowledge of the library or its texts. This led to many errors in transcription. Walton found several in his examination of the library. Some were peculiar, as he indicates in the following account.

Some of the more specialised items are incorrectly listed, for instance, a volume published in 1560 entitled *Les Plees del Coron* (Cases Brought by the Crown) is entered under "Koran."⁶²⁵

A brief examination of the catalogue shows many items of comparatively light reading in this Cathedral library. Among the miscellaneous titles in the catalogue is a collection of songs belonging to Mrs Bolton, wife of Dean Hugh Bolton (1723-57). There are also several novels and collections of poems, among them are *The Modern Husband* (1744) by W. Ellis and E. Fenton's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1717). There is only one other manuscript listed, J. W. Hackett's *Common Place Book*,

⁶²⁵ Walton (1995), p. 6.

(1827).⁶²⁶ It is likely, therefore, that Herbert's manuscript of poems was in Waterford Cathedral Library in 1957. When and how it arrived there is still uncertain.

I discovered the whereabouts of the missing manuscript of *Poetical Eccentricities Written by an Oddity* in 2010. That summer I was working on the manuscript of *Retrospections* in the Manuscript Room of Trinity College Dublin. When speaking to the archivist, Jane Maxwell about Herbert's missing work, she remarked that Patrick Wyse Jackson, the son of Robert who had written the article on Herbert in 1956, was working in the Geology Department in Trinity. At lunchtime I walked over to the department and found Dr Jackson in his office. I explained who I was and asked him about the manuscript. He said that his father had died in 1976 but that his books and papers were still in his family home. He had some recollection of the manuscript and said he would re-visit his father's library on my behalf. A day later I got an email to say he had found it among his father's papers and would lend it to me for my research. This true story of a lost and found manuscript preserves and indeed continues much of the mystique that has always surrounded Herbert's work. Certainly the day I walked up the steps of GMB in Trinity to collect the manuscript felt more like an episode from A.S. Byatt's novel *Possession* than an ordinary research day in Trinity Library.⁶²⁷

Finn's Leinster Journal

As I have noted in this thesis, Herbert's most consistent reading during the productive years of her writing career was the local newspaper, *Finn's Leinster Journal*. Herbert notes that the family began taking in the paper in 1777 (Ret., 2004, p. 33). Published twice weekly, and containing both

⁶²⁶ This is now missing.

⁶²⁷ The episode may have lacked the glamour of the Hollywood version of *Possession* but it was chilling to have in my possession a manuscript that I had begun to feel was a myth of my own creation.

international and local news, this paper has been a valuable resource for my research. However, when I began work on this thesis I travelled to many local libraries and heritage centres, trying to piece together from scattered archives, the *Leinster Journal* for the years 1777 to 1806. In November 2010 the long-promised digitisation of the *Journal* was added to the *Irish Newspaper Archive*.⁶²⁸ This would have saved endless time and energy had it come out, as promised, eighteenth months earlier. But the delay was fortituous as I was able to see at firsthand how rich many of our archives are, but also how widely dispersed, and at times disorganised, they are. The *Irish Newspaper Archive*, by providing an almost complete collection of the papers published between 1777 and 1806, has allowed me to make a thorough search for those years and has filled in many gaps in my previous research. Not alone is the digital archive almost complete, it is also so much easier to read and to search. It has been an important addition to what is an invaluable archive of Irish newspapers.

***The Carrickman's Diary 1787-1809* .⁶²⁹**

I first learned of the existence of James Ryan's diary when searching through files in the Heritage Centre in Carrick-on-Suir in 2002. There were photocopies of several extracts there, but no indication of where they came from. I subsequently discovered a microfilm copy in Waterford City Public Library. At that time the location of the original was not known. However, after repeated visits to the library, it was eventually located in a storage facility where it had been placed for "safe-keeping." I have since been able to study the manuscript in detail. At the moment the manuscript is undergoing considerable conservation. The original binding has been removed, and is in the process

⁶²⁸ Irish Newspaper Archive, website.

⁶²⁹ James Ryan *The Carrickman's Diary*, MS. Waterford City Library.

of being repaired. Like *Finn's Leinster Journal*, this text has been an invaluable contemporary source for the study of Herbert's writing.

The Diary of Elizabeth Richards, 1789-1825

Elizabeth Richard's diary was discovered in Holland in 1917 by her granddaughter who made a typed copy of the original manuscript. The original is now in held in Municipal Archives in Rotterdam. A copy of the typed transcript was obtained by Enniscorthy town library sometime in the early 1990s. There are no details of how or where this was obtained or when it arrived in the library. The original of this is now missing. However in 1998 six partial copies of the original were made and two were given to each of the libraries in New Ross, Enniscorthy and Wexford town. The two Enniscorthy copies are now missing but there is one copy in Wexford and one in New Ross. The copies contain only the first half of the diary from May 1798 to October 1821. They conclude when Richards and her family leave Ireland to live in Holland. The second part of the diary covering the period 1821 to 1825 was not included. A published edition of the complete diary appeared in print in 1995.⁶³⁰

Sir Vere Hunt's Diaries, 1790-1809

Four of the Sir Vere Hunt *Diaries* were also believed to be missing for many years. In 2010 I discovered them in a brown envelope in the vault of Special Collections in the Boole Library of University College Cork. They were not catalogued and there was no note attached or any record of how they came to be there. They were subsequently catalogued and then returned to Limerick City

⁶³⁰ Elizabeth Richards, *The Diary of Elizabeth Richards 1798-1825*, ed. Marie Jong-Ijsselstein (Hilversum, 1999).

Library, where they now form part of the Vere Hunt Papers. The National Library of Ireland has a microfilm copy of the diaries.

William Blunden's Diary, 1789-1798

There is a microfilm copy of William Blunden's *Diary* in the National Library. However, the original manuscript is now missing. Lengthy correspondence with Lady Pamela Blunden revealed that Castle Blunden has been under renovation for many years. When Lady Blunden moved to a cottage on the estate she remembers packing papers away in boxes for storage. She hopes that the *Diary* may be there. In her own words "They are (I hope) safely in a box which is heaven knows where!"⁶³¹

⁶³¹ Letter from Lady Pamela Blunden to Mary Breen, 1 Feb. 2010.

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