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Revolutions, Metamorphoses, Transmigrations

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10. Revolutions, Metamorphoses, Transmigrations

We have heard a good deal recently of the pervasiveness in eighteenth-century culture of an interest in transformation or metamorphosis. Attention has been usefully focussed on the imaginative energy that Pope, for instance, draws from response both to the frightening instability of physical form ('maids turned bottles,' 'Prose swelled to verse, verse loitering into prose') and also to the exhilarating fluidity and creativity of natural process ('See dying vegetables life sustain, / See life dissolving vegetate again').¹ Here the benign transmutation is worked by God; the sinister ones are the work of female demonic forces, the Spleen and Dulness respectively. Not for nothing does the *OED*'s first definition of 'Metamorphosis' ('The action or process of changing in form, shape or substance') conclude '*esp.* transformation by magic or witchcraft.'

Canonical literature of the period inherited, very largely from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a collection of personal-transformation narratives which Douglas Bush terms 'a storehouse of poetic symbols, a universal language.'² But 'universal' is a tricky term. These stories come freighted with gender implications which made them problematic for women writers, as Margaret Doody notes. The *Metamorphoses* defines its subject-matter as the changes wrought by the male gods upon female Nature, which was originally (in Dryden's version) a 'rude and undigested Mass,' justly called Chaos. Among these changes gender-bending notoriously abounds — usually, as has been pointed out, of less perfect female into more perfect male. A sensational paradigm of 'normal' sexuality is figured in the frequent changes of pursuing gods into rampant male beasts, and fleeing nymphs into rivers, trees, and other safely asexual objects. Whereas Pope gave this trope another 'straight' incarnation in the story of the river nymph Lodona, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu applied it with a wry smile to the sexual politics of her young fashionable contemporaries.³

Another popular model for narrating transformations was that of Pythagorean metempsychosis. Ovid, in fact, uses Pythagoras for the peroration of his poem, which Dryden called 'the most learned and

beautiful Part of the whole.' Pythagoras dominates the fifteenth and last book with his moving oration centred on (in Sandys's version) 'The vicissitude of things.'⁴ The Ovidian and the Pythagorean were thus closely linked.

This poetic tradition had a prose cousin deriving from the *Metamorphoses* or the 'Golden Ass' of Apuleius. This entered English with Charles Gildon's *The Golden Spy*, 1709, and more famously with Addison's *Tatler* 249 (11 November 1710). This essay uses the life and adventures of a shilling as a satirical device for historical, moral, and literary comment, about seventeenth-century politics, charitable giving, and the work of John Philips: it also comments on mutability. A comic survivor, the shilling adapts to changed times and places like a chameleon: born on a mountainside in Peru, wearing an 'Indian Habit' when imported to England by Sir Francis Drake, it is then 'refined, naturalized,' and stamped with the face of Queen Elizabeth; later it is bent, hammered flat again, clipped, and re-minted, which gives it a 'change of sex' — though it had never spoken of itself as female. None of these abuses halts its picaresque progress.⁵

In *Spectator* no. 343 (3 April 1712), Addison approached Pythagoras more closely. Here a letter allegedly from a pet monkey about its previous lives is presented with elaborate ironic undermining. It is said to be written by a rake to play a joke on a fine lady: credulity about transmigration (as opposed to credulity about literate monkeys) enters only with Will Honeycomb, who reports the incident. Still, the monkey's letter is a vivid example in its own right of the sub-genre which it initiated, in the supposed writer's incarnations as an eminent Brahmin, diametrically transformed into a Prime Minister, converted with minor modification into a jackal, and so to 'how I was a Town-Rake, and afterwards did Penance in a Bay-Gelding for Ten Years; as also how I was a Taylor, a Shrimp, and a Tom-Tit.'⁶

Thus, by its own history of transformations, the figure of metamorphosis entered English prose fiction. It became one of the forms available for inset tales and analogues, which Eric Rothstein and Douglas Lane Patey have shown as being used by novelists for guiding reader response, for 'rectification of expectations.'⁷

The metamorphic analogue exemplifies the whirligigs of time and chance. In *The Discovery*, 1764, London schoolmistress and novelist Mrs. A. Woodfin makes a bird recount a series of past lives. He begins as Trojan Paris, 'the handsomest Man upon Earth, and the greatest Coxcomb' (forerunner of many seducers in novels), and continues as a hideous beggar who, however, is no less smitten with Helen than he was as Paris. As his tale proceeds, its instability escalates: 'I have been a Jew, a Mahometan, a Chinese, and an Indian Brahmin. I once was a Bear in

Lapland, and from thence rose a Lion in *Africa*. ... I have been a Slave to strong Passions, and an unfeeling Ideot. I have been modest when learned, and impudent in Ignorance.⁸

Thus Mrs. Woodfin twirls her fictional kaleidoscope. What, then, are we to make of Doody's judgement that women writers have difficulty with the theme of change? The main reason, surely, is not that male writers often depict female metamorphosis in terms of the unstable, leaky, excessive, grotesquely divisible body. It is rather that they tend to equate femininity itself with liability to change. Max Byrd, revisiting the metamorphosis theme, tells us that Pope devotes two Moral Essays to the inconsistency 'of even the most rational man or woman.'⁹ This is hardly an accurate summary of Pope's agenda. He produces with some fanfare his key to 'Quick whirls, and shifting eddies, of our minds' — that is, to apparent vagaries of the *male* mind, which in turn prove to be, not the whole truth about the man's personality, but something explicable by vagaries in circumstance.

Early at Bus'ness, and at Hazard late;
Mad at a Fox-chace, wise at a Debate;
Drunk at a Borough, civil at a Ball,
Friendly at Hackney, faithless at Whitehall.¹⁰

This adaptation to circumstances is a major point of the reincarnation stories; Pope inscribes a more insular version of the human lives lived by Woodfin's bird. But from Pope's explanation of the characters of *men* one might logically suppose that, since women did not get up early for business or go canvassing to get drunk, since they were exempt from the pressures that make men unstable, they would behave the more steadily. But no. By nature woman is the ever-shifting 'Cynthia of this minute.' By custom, meanwhile, since she is to be 'seen in Private life alone,'¹¹ no fox-chases or debates can provide her with any excuse for fluctuations of mood. Women, to Pope, are both more changeable than men, and less excusably changeable.

Here Pope is being entirely traditional. The ancient view of changefulness, as a characteristic and a deficiency of the female, was classically embodied both in the form of science (women have more of the unstable element of water in their composition) and in the form of aphorism: '*varium et mutabile semper / femina*.' This Virgilian tag is spoken by the lying god Mercury, in order to persuade Aeneas that it is right to abandon the constant Dido; but the context has had no effect whatever on the later history of the phrase.¹²

Byrd writes (doubling the problematic adjective) that the 'subject of universal change is universal.'¹³ His pronouncement implies inclusiveness, though he is writing of poetry only. Clearly the theme is shared by novelists: narratives, indeed, necessarily deal in change. Does the woman novelist include herself in this universal, despite the need to negotiate the damaging associations of the female with change? Early in the history of the novel, female protagonists immerse themselves thoroughly in the whirls and eddies of life. Aphra Behn's Isabella is successively nun, wife, bigamist, and murderer. Eliza Haywood's early heroines, in Virginia Woolf's words, 'swarm over all the countries of the South and of the East, climbing ropes, dropping letters, overhearing secrets....'¹⁴ The elements of flamboyance, melodrama, and excess belong to a particular developmental phase of the novel and of Haywood; the eventfulness and variety continue to hold sway in mainstream or canonical texts even when this phase is over. Just so is Robinson Crusoe slave and planter, castaway and administrator; Tom Jones is (at roughly the same time) gigolo to Lady Bellaston and wise mentor to his friend Nightingale; Roderick Random moves from Scotland to London to Cartagena to Scotland.

Meanwhile Jane Barker and Mary Davys, publishing in the same years as the early Haywood, are somewhat more cautious in the creation of preposterous adventures for their heroines. Much of the flux and variety of their novels occurs in the margins, through inset stories to parallel, or contrast with, or emblemize the heroine's experience. Their female protagonists are both active and acted upon; but a split is evident between these two aspects. First-person narrators become less busy, and tend to situate their adventures in a past tense remote from the narrating present. Davys's Amoranda in *The Reform'd Coquet* (1724) is a resourceful and decisive manager of other people's problems, kaleidoscopically shifting lives until it is time for her reform. Then she collapses completely, repents her previous bounciness, and becomes a sad and sorry, and especially a grateful, Amoranda, unable to act for herself but wholly reliant on her rescuer-hero. In fact, she acquires a sudden and striking likeness to the lay-figure heroine of Barker's last novel, *The Accomplish'd Rake; or, Modern Fine Gentleman* (1727), who seems created for the purpose of being wronged and belatedly receiving reparation, and who remains emotionally fixed and faithful, altering not when she alteration finds. She is far from exempt from the vicissitudes of life; but they wash over without essentially affecting her.

This response to vicissitude, like the vicissitude itself, becomes a favourite and explicit theme of women novelists. The plots of Penelope Aubin, for instance, in summary superficially resemble those of Haywood: her fifth, *The Life of Charlotta du Pont, an English Lady*, 1723, boasts

on its title-page that it 'contains the greatest Variety of Events that ever was published.' In fact, her exemplary characters of both sexes look on tempests in unparalleled quantity but are never shaken; they are as far removed, not only from Pope's Characters of Women, but even from his Characters of Men, as it is possible to conceive. The women novelists, it seems, had learned to keep change and their heroines carefully separated.

Resistance to 'female' mutability was an important element in the increasingly prescribed exemplary character of the novelistic heroine. In the novel's development, therefore, while claims to social realism became *de rigueur*, and environments and the distresses suffered there became domestic, the emotional disposition of female protagonists tended ever further towards the improbable in their tenacity and imperviousness. As Mary Wollstonecraft so acutely remarked, even the *bildungsroman* change-through-experience was suspect for a woman: where heroes are permitted becoming, heroines 'are to be born immaculate; and to act like goddesses of wisdom, just come forth highly finished Minervas from the head of Jove.'¹⁵

In women's actual, historical lives, domesticity did not preclude frequent and radical Pythagorean vicissitudes. As Lady Mary Wortley Montagu phrased it, 'women and priests never know where they shall eat their bread.' Frances Burney observed through a male character that a girl cannot be educated fittingly for her station in life, since that is not yet settled. It will all depend who she marries: on the 'temporal destiny' of a man she has not yet met and will not choose for herself, and on that of children not yet in existence; her character must be capable of adapting to whatever destiny throws at her.¹⁶

Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson lived through marriage, bereavement, remarriage, and multiple fatherhood, with no perceptible effect on their writings, their self-image, or even their external circumstances. For twice-married female writers like Elizabeth (Knipe) Cobbold, Anna Maria Mackenzie (formerly Johnson), or Hester (Thrale) Piozzi, a new husband meant a complete revolution in place of abode, income bracket, and social role. The precociously writing (and publishing) girl Hester Salusbury became the harassed, home-centred wife Hester Thrale, nurturing literary careers but not having one; the agonizing metamorphosis into Hester Piozzi produced an author — a role unthinkable for Hester Thrale. Elizabeth Montagu's identity as a patron and bluestocking leader followed from her becoming a rich, childless widow as surely though not as explicitly as her sister's novelistic career followed from her marriage breakdown.

Pictured by masculinist ideology as themselves unstable, experiencing acute instability in their material circumstances, women might well

wish to explore in fiction either material or subjective transformation. They found little help from the established plots of the traditionally female romance genre. Passage from courtship to ideal marriage involves the traditional novel heroine in no jolt or swerve. Even where it is accompanied by social or financial apotheosis (often drawing on the stories of King Cophetua or Pygmalion), it produces structural resolution and stasis: not so much a change as a renunciation of change. The same is true of the conversion of transgressive characters. Pamela, Clarissa, Sophia, Amelia, is each a rock of stability amid the machinations or misadventures of her man; Charlotte Grandison remains essentially the same person even when she learns to curb her subversive impulses. None of these patterns could serve a writer wishing to represent in fiction the successive incarnations of, say, a Hester Thrale Piozzi or a Frances Burney D'Arblay. The didactic novel, it seems, stands at the opposite pole from the long Augustan poems described by Doody as delighting in endless variety and stubbornly resisting closure. Or, to put it differently, the genre prescribed for women bears a heavy internalized demand for patriarchal closure and order, from which the more experimental genres written chiefly by men float free.

In novels by women, an emotional stability equal to Pamela's or Sophia's often goes with either the appearance or the accusation of change. When Frances Sheridan's heroine Sidney Bidulph writes, 'I think I have nothing the same about me.... You cannot imagine, my Cecilia, how I am altered,' she goes on to focus on changed looks, and specifically excepts as unchanged her 'feelings and affections.' This stability is reflected in the fact that her maiden name titles the narrative of her marriage, and even the sequel which covers her daughters' courtships.¹⁷ Burney's novels, though sometimes seen as tracing growth and development, regularly refer to change as an eventuality to be feared, or a fault to be avoided. When, early in *Cecilia*, minor characters repeatedly debate whether the protagonist will be changed by moving to London, it is good Mr. Arnott who hopes she will not, and corrupt Mr. Harrel who is sure she will. The hypocrite Mr. Monckton voices a consensus: all must wish her to 'continue in every respect exactly and unalterably what she is at present.'¹⁸ Camilla's lover laments her alleged mutability in terms appropriate to the angels-turned-devils of *Paradise Lost*: 'Is this the artless Camilla? ... O how spoiled! how altered! how gone!' He is of course mistaken, misled by a mentor who believes women naturally defective in stability and 'internal hold.' In the end, although Mrs. Arlbery momentarily conceives that Camilla might transfer her affections, and although Camilla's friend Mrs. Berlinton does undergo 'difference' and 'hardening,' the heroine is vindicated: she is as gay, frank and innocent as ever, in just the terms that Monckton wished for

Cecilia.¹⁹ Juliet of *The Wanderer* also faces damaging charges of mutability, this time couched in Ovidian, not Miltonic, terms. She is 'an adept in metamorphoses'; 'Ovid was a mere fool to [her].... Neither juggler nor conjuror is a match for her.' Yet while Ovid's tales are 'a staring chaos of lies,' Juliet's integrity and essential consistency are vindicated at last. In Burney's work 'radical metamorphosis and fragmentation' may be, as Julia Epstein notes, 'metaphors for the female condition'; they are also, by a striking double bind, allegations to be resisted at all costs.²⁰

Two obscure eighteenth-century women novelists make intriguing use of metamorphosis, one as she expands the narrow range of personal development permitted to a heroine, the other as she briefly raises the issue of inconstancy not merely in a man but in a hero. Each novelist situates, on the margins of a fairly conventional plot, subordinate narratives of fantastically shifting identity.

Mrs. A. Woodfin, writing in the 1750s and 60s, has something of Eliza Haywood's pell-mell variety of incident, much of it in inset tales or analogues. Her heroines have spirit, but their activity does not extend much beyond running away from cruel parents or scaling the wall of a prison. They remain steadfast and unfaltering in their love amid the vicissitudes of life. On the margins of their tales, however, appear one or two more mature women whose vicissitudes occur after, instead of before, marriage. One such is the heroine's good aunt in Woodfin's third work, *The Auction: A Modern Novel*, [1759]; to the puzzlement and annoyance of reviewers, the novel is titled after an apparently peripheral episode in the aunt's story, in which she buys back a valuable possession which was stolen from her — one of the actions by which she herself works out her own salvation. In Woodfin's final novel, *The Discovery*, 1764, the older-woman character moves centre-stage; the vicissitudes of her story equal those of the young heroine's, and they refashion her behaviour and subjectivity as Marianne's do not. Presented not with sentiment but with the wry humour typical of the reincarnation tale, they fit nicely in a novel of social realism.

In a gripping opening scene in a coaching-inn yard, a 'little Gentlewoman in Mourning,' Mrs. Dubois, rescues a distressed orphan, Marianne Middleton, from a persecuting uncle and hostile watchman. Called a foolish woman by the coachman, suspected of being a bawd by the coach passengers, Mrs. Dubois would compel the reader's interest even without the tip-off of an author's Advertisement that she is the one 'whom I esteem the Heroine of my Novel.' Marianne's and Mrs. Dubois' stories so far, told in successive flashbacks, have several parallels. Each has unloving parents; each runs away to the house of a former female servant, now married; each is besieged by suitors. But Marianne's is in outline a highly conventional story: she flees from the threat of a forced

marriage, with a true lover already waiting in the wings for an eventual resolution. Mrs. Dubois, on the other hand, makes most of her troubles for herself. She actively deceives her rejecting family by a secret marriage to her brother's French valet. When her husband turns against her because he can't get at her money, she 'sought for a Cause adequate to his Anger, and deceived myself to excuse him.' But self-suppression in her is a phase, not a way of life. Once assured of his infidelity, she falls satisfactorily out of love: 'I examined my Heart, and found my ungrateful Husband become obnoxious to me.' Next, not from any innate tendency but as a practical result of living among the poor, she discovers the pleasures of active benevolence: 'a lasting Feast of Reason, a Mental Pleasure out of the Power of Fortune to snatch from me.' Friendship with the local rector results in a course of reading (periodical essays, history, even novels), and a discovery of intellectual pleasures equal to those of benevolence. At the end of the novel, aged thirty, she finds a second husband and a love based on friendship.²¹

Mrs. Dubois bows to none of the key requirements of the fictional heroine. For one thing she lives too long. Also she feels and expresses desire (implicitly for the odious but charming Dubois as well as explicitly — 'How often has my Mouth watered' — for sweet and sticky food). She disobeys and deceives her parents, uses and discards a mentor (although by then he wants to marry her), learns new roles as benefactor and as reader, and enjoys autonomy of action which seems set to survive a second marriage.

Where the vicissitudes of human fortune test Juliet's steadfastness, the 'variegated Scenes in Life' cause Mrs. Dubois to change and grow.²² The child envious of her sister; the girl with 'no Attachment to any Person living'; the gleefully deceitful teenage bride; the cruelly used wife making excuses for her husband, then 'trembling like a Criminal' when he catches her buying cakes; the self-analyser who wrestles with her past and (amazingly in a mid-eighteenth-century novel) coolly absolves herself from blame and lays it on her parents;²³ the generous rescuer and judicious mentor, are credible but quite distinct successive phases of a single individual. Their variety is unmatched in the stories of such near contemporaries as Sarah Fielding's *Cynthia* and *Camilla*, Charlotte Lennox's *Arabella*, or Frances Brooke's *Julia* and *Emily*.

Woodfin called attention to these transformations at the outset of her social-realist fiction. The *Advertisement*, which claims Mrs. Dubois, not Marianne, as her heroine, also introduces a dedication of the novel to Pythagoras. The dedication itself relates a dream in which she, the author, was transformed into Mrs. Dubois. In this capacity, in a dream within a dream, she hears two male birds discussing, one his previous

incarnations, and the other those of his wife. The sex of each individual remains constant throughout their many lives.

This dedication serves multiple purposes. Besides the simple foregrounding of universal change, and a rebuke to self-serving dedicators to living great persons, it provides the grounds of a highly relevant gender comparison. After the first speaker's lives, from Trojan Paris to a contemporary with 'great expectations' ruined by a twenty-year Chancery suit, the second begins the tale, not of his own lives but those of his 'Mate this Year.' She seems to have lived through most of the pages of a typical biographical dictionary of illustrious women: she was 'Pharaoh's Daughter who saved Moses,' Semiramis, Aspasia, Sarah, Ruth, and Bathsheba, 'Jane Shore, Jane Seymour, and Queen Elizabeth,' and more recently a trio of royal mistresses. At the same time, claims the uxorious husband, his wife has been 'always beauteous, always virtuous, and always charming.'

The blatant self-contradictions make this female metempsychosis a parody of the male genre. Jane Shore was famous for *not* being virtuous; the Hanoverian mistresses were famous both for that and for not being beautiful. This is a *reductio ad absurdum* both of change and of resistance to change. The male bird has lived variety: great and obscure, named and unnamed, human and animal, innocent and cruel. The female bird has lived almost exclusively the lives of those women actually recorded in history (as if variety were attainable no other way, not by occupation, financial status, or personality), and she even denies the variety those lives suggest, claiming instead to have been always 'exactly and unalterably' beautiful, virtuous, and charming. The listening bird expresses scepticism about all this, which highlights the ironic intent. Woodfin uses the metempsychosis figure to contrast the variety and vagaries of men's lives with the boringly invariable feminine ideal (with the delicious extra ironies that the husband speaks the wife's story for her, and that he takes a different mate each season). This narrative makes endless change a process to which the female, or the ideologically prescribed pattern female, is ill adapted; it ironically prefaces a novel with a more than usually changeable alternative heroine.

[Susanna] Pearson dedicates her novel, *The Medallion*, 1794, more conventionally, to the Prince of Wales. Her next prefatory item raises the Popeian question of circumstances altering behaviour. She refuses to appeal for pity by mentioning the circumstances under which she has written, but asks the gentlemen reviewers not to read her work 'in a morning' when they may feel ungenerous, but in the 'perfect good-humour' which follows dinner-time: they are apparently more changeable than she is.

Pearson's novel, written in the person of the eponymous Medallion, alludes implicitly to the *Tatler* shilling: her protagonist comes to England among Addison's coin collection. The genre had been imitated meanwhile by others including Francis Coventry, Charles Johnstone, and Tobias Smollett. The medallion lives through some ancient history and modern high and low life, becomes the property of an exemplary heroine, remains with her long enough to observe the progress and happy resolution of her courtship, is dropped immediately after her marriage, and after a few further commercial transactions passes into the hands of a mistress who 'held some correspondence with the Muses' — Pearson herself, to whom her new possession offers acceptable copy.

Pearson deliberately feminizes the coin narrative, making its early stages, unlike the modern ones, not satiric. The medallion is not given a gender, and at first it seems to combine the properties of both sexes. It begins as a bracelet (a female item to Pearson's readers, but in this case worn in battle by a Volscian officer). Its ancient male owners allow for some name-dropping and recondite mainstream history; its ancient female owners (a Roman courtesan, an Etrurian shepherdess, and Cleopatra) represent not merely name-dropping but also genuine alternatives of female experience. It becomes more a body, less purely an economic unit, than Addison's shilling or Johnstone's guinea. Metamorphosis for Addison's coin is having its titles cut off, being disfigured, 'spoiled and pillaged'; for Pearson's, more physically sensitive, it is 'my body being expanded till scarcely the thickness of an egg shell' or being 'liquefied' and undergoing 'some very painful operations.' Its fears of stagnation, isolation, and entrapment are human female fears: at the shepherdess's death it is 'buried with her.' During the 'brilliant aera' of Augustus it 'had the misfortune to live in obscurity'; when the fall of Rome makes the 'beautiful retirement' of Capri 'a solitude indeed' it 'gave up for ever the hope of being once more introduced to Society'; rescued after centuries, it 'had scarcely reconciled [itself] to total seclusion.' Against all this, Addison's shilling merely 'lay undiscovered and useless.' The female writer sketches a subjectivity for her unit of commercial exchange in a way the male writers do not.²⁴

Following this analogue about violently enforced change or suppression, the novel's contemporary courtship plot and its historical setting (including attendance at Mirabeau's funeral and reference to the September 1792 massacres) are highly specific. Important minor characters are as metamorphic as the medallion itself: the heroine's supposed mother begins as a weeding woman ('This charming enemy of chickweed': i. 24) inspired by Pamela; she has a marriage, divorce, and keeper behind her by the time she attains a title, and a further marriage to come. The medallion-narrator expresses disapproval (without observing the

parallel to its own involuntary behaviour) of human beings switching class, as they do repeatedly in the story; its own affections are constant to the heroine (its 'favourite Mistress': iii. 208). The heroine too, like her real mother and unlike her supposed mother and sister, is a fixed point in a turbulent and unstable society; she painfully and gradually forgives the hero's temporary and aberrant infatuation with somebody else (iii. 198ff.).

Pearson's narrative, like Woodfin's, centres on a decorously steadfast and consistent heroine. Where the bird device provides Woodfin with a link to a different, less static, idea of admirable women, that of the medallion serves Pearson to frame her story with flux and instability, and later to fracture it with irruptions of more of the same (as the medallion, stolen or dropped, passes through the hands of swindlers, villains, and a French *citoyenne* whom the doctrines of egalitarianism have led to deplorable marital rebellion). Finally, Pearson confronts her fixed model with a male instability which is uncommon for a fictional hero of this date. A puzzling *appearance* of infidelity in the hero is a standby plot-complication; terminal, tragic male infidelity is also common, from Elizabeth Griffith to Mary Wollstonecraft; and so is pre-entanglement as in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. But the gratuitousness of suffering inflicted on, and accepted by, Pearson's Lady Viola is less common, intended, says the narrator, to protect 'many an amiable heart' by teaching them 'to look on the inconstancy of a beloved object as an accident within the sphere of probability' (iii. 142).

Woodfin obliquely presents a version of the female who is '*varium et mutabile*' without being in any way culpable. Pearson seems to regress to a singularly harsh enforcement of unwavering steadfastness for a heroine. Yet her female-seeming medallion, linked in conclusion to the female narrator, has gone fearlessly as spectator through every level of society, every imaginable kind of change. Though an increasingly unstable environment renders Lady Viola only more stable, it seems apt to read the metamorphosis device as providing a subtext to her story: some female beings can range as widely as the weeding-woman turned Lady, without incurring her moral blame.

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Notes

- 1 E.g. Margaret Anne Doody, *The Daring Muse, Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), chapters V and VI; Max Byrd, 'Pope and Metamorphoses: Three Notes,' *MP*, 85 (1988), 447-59; Terry Castle, *Masquerade and civilization: the carnivalesque in eighteenth-century English culture and fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), passim; Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, IV, 54, *The Dunciad*, I, 274, *An Essay on Man*, III, 15-16.
- 2 Douglas Bush, foreword to George Sandys's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, ed. Karl K. Hulley and Stanley T. Vandersall (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), xi.
- 3 Dryden, *Poems*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), II, 800; Pope, *Windsor Forest*, lines 171ff.; Lady Mary, 'The Lover, a Ballad' (*Essays and Poems and Simplicity*, A Comedy, ed. Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 234-36). Addison's *Spectator* 600 (29 Sept. 1714) deals with the probable joys of heaven as including variety; he refers to 'Man' in terms which would become disturbingly sexual if used of woman: 'not capable of being always delighted with the same Objects', 'every Gratification', 'every Desire will be followed with Fruition', 'susceptible of Pleasure by so many different Ways' (ed. Donald F. Bond [Oxford: Clarendon, 1965], V, 48-53): I owe this reference to Gordon Fulton. Tassie Gwilliam writes of Richardson's Lovelace as a metamorphosis artist whose power to remain unfixed is threatened by the rape ('"Like Tiresias": Metamorphosis and Gender in *Clarissa*,' *Novel*, 19, 1986, 101-17).
- 4 Dryden, *Poems*, IV, 1718; *Metamorphoses*, XV, 177ff. (ed. Hulley and Vandersall, 672).
- 5 *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), III, 269-73.
- 6 Ed. Bond, III, 272-6.
- 7 Eric Rothstein, *Systems of Order and Inquiry in later Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1975), 13ff.; Douglas Lane Patey, *Probability and Literary Form: Philosophical Theory and Literary Practice in the Augustan Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 214.
- 8 Mrs. A. Woodfin, *The Discovery: or, Memoirs of Miss Marianne Middleton* (London: Lowndes, 1764), I, viii-xi, xix, xxii.
- 9 Byrd, 499.
- 10 *Epistle to Cobham*, lines 30, 132-5.
- 11 *Epistle to a Lady*, lines 20, 200.
- 12 Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV, 569-70. Henry Fielding's Dr. Harrison uses this line to triumph over Mrs. Atkinson without mentioning its context, though she had recently lost points for quoting Dido on second marriages without reference to context (*Amelia*, 1751: ed. David Blewett (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 414, 257-8).
- 13 Byrd, 448.
- 14 Behn, *The History of the Nun; or, The Fair Vow-Breaker*, 1689; Woolf, 'A Scribbling Dame,' 1916: *Essays*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth), II, 1987, 24.
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- 20 *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*, 1814: ed. Margaret Anne Doody, Robert L. Mack and Peter Sabor (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), esp. p. 771; cf. Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen, Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 195.
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- 22 *The Discovery*, I, 163-5, II, 264.
- 23 *The Discovery*, I, 165, II, 24.
- 24 *The Medallion*, 6, 7, 5, 8-9; *Tatler*, III, 272, 271.