

# **The Unsex'd Female**

Richard Polwhele



# Table of Contents

<u>The Unsexed Females</u> .....	1
<u>Richard Polwhele</u> .....	2

# The Unsexed Females

## Richard Polwhele

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.  
<http://www.blackmask.com>

### INTRODUCTION

A prolific writer whose work is now largely forgotten, Richard Polwhele was the author of numerous religious tracts, political satires and essays, topographical and historical studies, poems, translations, and biographical and autobiographical sketches. He was born in Truro, Cornwall, on 6 January 1760 to common but well-to-do parents: his father, Thomas, maintained a small but ancient estate two miles outside of town, and his mother, Mary, kept the house a center of social activity. The poet and satirist John Wolcot (better known by his nom de plume, "Peter Pindar") was an instructor of Polwhele's at school, and a frequent guest at the Polwhele home. Wolcot took an active interest in young Richard's literary aspirations, reading his poems and praising them for their wit, but at the same time adjuring him to refrain from writing in "damned epithets." The two must have had a falling-out at some point; years later, Polwhele would spitefully attack his former mentor in *A Sketch of Peter Pindar* (1800) (See Appendix I). In addition to Wolcot, Mary Polwhele had other literary friends, two of whom Richard met on a visit to Bath and Bristol in 1777: the historian and radical political pamphleteer Catherine Macaulay, and the poet and playwright Hannah More. Macaulay, "the English Thucydides," was on this occasion being honored with a birthday celebration, featuring elaborate parties, poetry readings, and culminating with the presentation of a sculpture featuring Macaulay as the muse Clio. Richard Polwhele participated in the festivities by composing an ode for Macaulay, which was published along with five other poems in April, and which marked Polwhele's debut as a writer. Following the suggestions of several of his friends, Polwhele soon after published a volume of poetry entitled *The Fate of Lewellyn*, a work which did nothing to further his career, and which indeed gave him an early reputation as a callow and unpromising poet.

In the spring of 1778 Polwhele entered Christ Church, Oxford, where he remained long enough to be admitted to the study of law, but not long enough to take his degree; instead he entered the church, and proceeded to take minor offices in various small parishes in Cornwall and Devonshire. His first long-term position was as curate of Kenton in Devonshire, a post he held from 1782 to 1793. Here Polwhele cultivated many friends, including several self-styled literary men who had formed a society for belle lettres in Exeter. Polwhele became an active member of this group, and served as both editor and major contributor to its first anthology, *Poems, Chiefly by Gentlemen of Devonshire and Cornwall* (1792). During his years at Kenton Polwhele also completed what was to become his most acclaimed and enduring work, his translation of the Greek pastoral poets Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus (1786) (these were reprinted countless times, and the translation of Theocritus remained the standard throughout most of the nineteenth century). In 1793 Polwhele published the first of his topographical "histories," *Historical Views of Devonshire*, and began publishing his second, more extensive study, *The History of Devonshire* (1793– 1806). In the same year, Polwhele suffered the loss of his first wife, Loveday, and consequently took a brief sabbatical from his curacy; after a few months at home with his mother, Polwhele returned to Kenton with his three children, and was soon married again.

Together with his new wife, Mary, Polwhele left Kenton in early 1794 and took an appointment at the parish of Manaccan, near Helston, Cornwall, where he resided until 1806. In contrast to Kenton, Manaccan was a poor parish, and Polwhele found that he had little income with which to support his ever-growing family, and few intellectual friends with whom to converse; most of the money Polwhele earned from his office he had to pour into repairs for the dilapidated cottage in which he lived, and most of his conversation took the form of epistles (among his chief correspondents were Samuel Badcock, Macaulay, William Cowper, Erasmus Darwin, and Anna Seward). Polwhele's relationship with the literary society at Exeter also took a bad turn; the anthology of *Essays by a Society of Gentlemen at Exeter* (1796), edited by Polwhele, became a source of heated controversy between members of the group, and resulted in Polwhele dissociating himself from the others. Despite these hardships, Polwhele continued to find both time and energy to write, and indeed composed and published a prodigious

## The Unsex'd Female

number of poems, essays, and histories during his tenure at Manaccan. His chief labor during this period was the massive three-volume *History of Cornwall* (1803), which included civil and military history, a description of the population, sketches of literary figures and literary productions, and a glossary of Cornish language. In addition to this work, Polwhele produced a number of essays and satires on religious matters, such as *Anecdotes of Methodism and Sir Aaron, or The Flights of Fanaticism* (both published in 1800), in which he sought to expose the "follies" of low-church sects; published several poems, including *The Old English Gentleman* (1797) and *The Unsex'd Females* (1798); and frequently contributed essays and poems to the *Anti-Jacobin Review*.

Polwhele's literary production slowed significantly during the next thirty years, largely because he found himself greatly overworked in his clerical offices. To better support his family, Polwhele found it necessary to take and hold several positions simultaneously: although he left Manaccan in 1806, he continued to hold the curacy there as a nonresident until 1821; he undertook the vicarage of the parish of St. Anthony in Meneage in 1809, and held that position until 1828; from Manaccan he had gone back to Truro to become curate of Kenwyn, which he supplemented in 1821 with the vicarage of Newlyn East. During this time he published a few sermons, a few satiric essays and poems, compiled his *Biographical Sketches in Cornwall* (1831), and labored on an autobiography. His last years were spent on the family estate of Polwhele, where he died on 12 March 1838.

Although the majority of reviewers found *The Unsex'd Females* a tedious, lifeless piece of writing (little was said of its politics), Polwhele's associates at the *Anti-Jacobin Review* were quick to call it to the attention of reactionary readers. "The...poem has much of a political cast, and, therefore, comes peculiarly within our region of reviewing," remarks the anonymous critic (27),

"And we are happy to see one of the first poets of the day, one who ranks amongst the foremost for richness of language, vividness of fancy, and brilliance of imagery, employing his poetical talents, at this awful crisis of church and state, in vindication of all that is dear to us as Britons and as Christians (33)."

The reviewer here acknowledges what he considers the "larger" purpose of *The Unsex'd Females*, beyond its concern with a particular group of women: the poem seeks to reaffirm nationalist loyalty and Christian religion in the face of revolutionary politics and rationalist secularism. Unquestionably this is one of Polwhele's chief concerns, and one which he had found that Thomas Mathias, author of his acknowledged lodestar, *The Pursuits of Literature*, shared with him. Polwhele and Mathias, like many of the religious reactionaries in England in the 1790s, believed that the Reign of Terror in France was proof patent that Reason is not a deity, but rather is a false idol worshipped by those human beings who have forgotten that they are sinful, wicked creatures direly in need of providential (both deific and monarchical) direction. Mathias articulates the position eloquently in the introductory epistle to *The Pursuits of Literature*:

"When I have read and thought deeply on the accumulated horrors, and all the gradations of wickedness and misery, through which the modern systematic philosophy of Europe has conducted her illuminated votaries, to the confines of political death and mental darkness, my mind for a space feels a convulsion, and suffers the nature of an insurrection. I look around me. I look to human actions, and to human principles. I consider again and again, what is the nature and effect of learning and of instruction: what is the doctrine of evidence, and the foundation of truth...I am told, that human reason is nearly advanced to full perfection; I am assured, that she is arrived at the haven, where she would be. I again look around me. I ask, where is that haven? Where is that steady gale which has conducted her? I listen, but it is to the tempest: I cast my view abroad, but the ocean is every where perturbed (xiv-xv)."

According to Polwhele, Mathias's poem had served as a clarion call to those "whose politics and even religion have been long wavering" to examine their values and become "fixed in their principles" (3); *The Pursuits* was a sermon against the Revolution and those with revolutionary sympathies, and may indeed have been the text which most persuaded Polwhele to adopt the reactionary position. Polwhele's devotion to the project of *The Pursuits of Literature* continued even after Mathias disparaged him in a subsequent edition; although Polwhele could no longer muster up the same praise for the poem itself as he did before the attack (See Appendix I). In any case, *The Unsex'd Females* stands among the first in a line of reactionary works composed by Polwhele, most of the later ones appearing in the pages of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*.

Of course *The Unsex'd Females* is much more than a poem against the French Revolution and against Reason: it is, first and foremost, a satiric critique of the feminist principles expounded by Mary Wollstonecraft and her followers. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), the first polemic (of many, from various sources) aimed

## The Unsex'd Female

at Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Wollstonecraft had set forth a radical critique of British society, which she regarded as particularly oppressive with regard to women. The views were more fully set forth in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792): English women, she argued, had been assigned straitened roles within society, had been trivialized as sentimental creatures, and had been denied access to higher education. Sentimentalist literature Wollstonecraft found particularly noxious, for it tended to portray women as essentially emotional beings, and consequently as inferior to men in their capacity for rational understanding. This rejection of the sentimental ideal of femininity is Polwhele's immediate concern in *The Unsex'd Females*, but throughout the poem he links Wollstonecraftian feminism with revolutionary politics and anti-Christian values.

Polwhele's attacks on Wollstonecraft's immorality and irreligion take the form of sallies against her personal affairs. After Wollstonecraft's death in 1797, her husband, William Godwin, had put into publication his biographical account of her private life; *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published twice in 1798, and was apparently not only read by Polwhele, but also reviewed by him for the April 1798 issue of the *European Magazine* (the substantial and unmistakable similarities between the unsigned review and Polwhele's footnotes on the *Memoirs* in his poem are discussed in the notes to the present edition). From Godwin's biography Polwhele garnered the fodder he needed to take shots at Wollstonecraft's history of "licentious" love affairs, and particularly her relationships with the painter Henry Fuseli and the American revolutionary Gilbert Imlay. According to Polwhele, these liaisons were indicative of the poor moral character one could only expect to find in a "woman who has broken through all religious restraints" (28–29), who has rejected the laws of Nature and of Nature's God: "Nature is the grand basis of all laws human and divine: and the woman, who has no regard to nature, either in the decoration of her person, or the culture of her mind, will soon 'walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government'" (6). The despising of government both by man and by monarch, the rejection of God and Nature (i.e., the "natural" intellectual and qualitative differences between the genders) in favor of Reason and social refiguration, and the abandonment of domestic duty for the pleasures of sexual self-fulfillment are for Polwhele all symptoms of the same disease, the "Gallic frenzy" that has infected and unsexed the English woman.

Curiously, however, of the eight women Polwhele names as "unsexed" (15–20), only two actually fit the Wollstonecraftian model: Mary Hays and Helen Maria Williams. Hays had been a close friend of Wollstonecraft (indeed, she had orchestrated her marriage to Godwin), and had established herself as an equally radical, equally controversial feminist theorist through the publication of such works as *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous* (1793) (though this treatise, unlike Wollstonecraft's, emphasized Christian principles as the basis of its critique of gender/power relations). More infamous even than Wollstonecraft, Williams had gained notoriety in England for her *Letters from France, 1792–96* (1796), a sympathetic account of the Jacobins' rise to power, and for her widely publicized liaison with fellow radical John Hurford Stone. But these two stand quite apart from the other women Polwhele calls into question. Charlotte Smith, who had indeed once been a French sympathizer, had by 1798 already become a leading voice among the reactionaries; in *The Emigrants* (1793), Smith had expressed her outrage at the massacre of the French aristocrats and her disillusionment with revolution. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, although the author of several liberal political works (such as the abolitionist satire *Epistle to William Wilberforce* [1791]), was hardly a revolutionary; furthermore, she had no sympathy whatsoever for Wollstonecraft's feminism, being herself a staunch believer in the propriety and priority of the male-dominated household, and an outspoken opponent of the "overeducation" of women. One wonders why Polwhele mentions her as first among Wollstonecraft's disciples. Mary Robinson's notoriety stemmed not from her political views (she was, compared to Wollstonecraft, only fashionably liberal) but from her affairs, particularly her early liaison with the Prince of Wales. As for the artists Emma Crewe and Angelica Kauffman, Polwhele can only accuse them of breaching decorum in their sensual designs; and Ann Yearsley, the famous "unlettered" milkmaid-poet, he upbraids solely for her (probably justified) dispute with her tutor and literary patron Hannah More over the artistic and financial control of her work (Yearsley's politics, expressed in poems such as "Reflections on the Death of Louis XVI" [1793] and "An Elegy on Marie Antoinette" [1795], Polwhele must have found impeccable).

Considering this catalog of the unsexed, one can only conclude that Polwhele attacks these women not for what they are, but for what they are not: they are unsexed, unfeminine, either because they are immodest, or unsentimental, or insubordinate. Women must do more than simply avoid setting a bad example: they must provide a positive model of chaste, sentimental, subordinate femininity. Polwhele therefore provides his reader

## The Unsex'd Female

with a list of women he deems exemplary among literary ladies. Prominent among them are the women of the Blue Stocking Circle, the literary society that met for much of the 1780s in the salons of Elizabeth Montagu. In addition to Montagu herself, the group consisted of Elizabeth Carter, Hester Chapone, Hester Thrale Piozzi, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Horace Walpole, Joshua Reynolds, and many other conservative notables, and held its meetings without the debaucheries of dancing, gambling, and alcohol. Polwhele also mentions favorably the sentimental novelist Fanny Burney, who in works such as *Evelina* (1778) and *Camilla* (1796) mixed "with sparkling humour chaste/ Delicious feelings and the purest taste" (34); the gothic author Ann Radcliffe, presumably for her stirring accounts of virtue in distress; the illustrator Diana Beauclerk; and the poet Anna Seward. This litany of saintly women is sung by "a voice seraphic" (28), calling the sex away from the perils of Wollstonecraft, and at its conclusion the reader learns that this has been the voice of Polwhele's "friend," Hannah More. Vehemently opposed to Wollstonecraftian feminism, More believed in a natural intellectual and psychological difference between genders, and Polwhele cites approvingly her opinion that "the mind, in each sex, has some natural kind of bias, which constitutes a distinction of character; and...the happiness of both depends, in a great measure, on the preservation and observance of this distinction" (36–37).

Maintaining the distinction of gender roles is Polwhele's primary agenda in *The Unsex'd Females*, but this agenda is caught up with many others. In order to ensure that men and women behave differently, they must inhabit and operate in different spheres. If women were allowed to follow their own sexual desires and sleep with any man they wished, whither the domestic duties of hearth and home? If women were educated in the same way as men, and busied themselves with the hard affairs of government, what would become of the softer sex? And if women lost their femininity and abandoned their domestic obligations, what would the future hold for English society? The questions alone must have frightened Polwhele, but they were not questions he would have to answer; by the turn of the century Wollstonecraft and her followers had fallen so far into public disfavor that any fears of revolutionary feminism had been effectively quelled. But in the nineteenth century, women worked within the roles provided them — as beings sentimental and religious, compassionate and "seraphic" — to create another, more subversive, and ultimately more effective feminist program for the refiguration of society. Religious groups devoted to causes such as temperance and the abolition of slavery sprung up on both sides of the Atlantic, and provided women with opportunities to exert, through the exercise of their putative moral and spiritual superiority, a substantial amount of control over the destinies of men, and eventually over their own destinies as well. To follow the progress of these groups — from the temperance unions, to the suffrage societies, to the organizations for equal opportunity in education and employment — is to trace the development of modern feminism. Locating Polwhele's poem in the history of feminist thought thus becomes a two-handed affair: on the one hand, *The Unsex'd Females* stands as a critique of late eighteenth-century feminism and as a testament to the seemingly unfailing ability of patriarchal cultures to use fear and loathing as tactics in the reiteration and retrenching of their ideological justification; on the other hand, the very terms in which Polwhele defines femininity, and the barriers which he sets up to women's abilities, are those which would ultimately be taken by many women in the nineteenth century and used as springboards into a new feminist ideology more subversively radical than Polwhele, or even Wollstonecraft, could ever have imagined.

### THE UNSEX'D FEMALE

THOU, who with all the poet's genuine rage  
Thy "fine eye rolling" o'er "this awful age,"  
Where polish'd life unfolds its various views,  
Hast mark'd the magic influence of the muse;  
Sever'd, with nice precision, from her beam  
Of genial power, her false and feeble gleam;  
Expos'd the Sciolist's vain-glorious claim,  
And boldly thwarted Innovation's aim,  
Where witlings wildly think, or madly dare,  
With Honor, Virtue, Truth, announcing war;  
Survey with me, what ne'er our fathers saw, `  
A female band despising NATURE's law,



## The Unsex'd Female

As "proud defiance" flashes from their arms,  
And vengeance smothers all their softer charms.  
I shudder at the new unpictur'd scene,  
Where unsex'd woman vaunts the imperious mien;  
Where girls, affecting to dismiss the heart,  
Invoke the Proteus of petrific art;  
With equal ease, in body or in mind,  
To Gallic freaks or Gallic faith resign'd,  
The crane-like neck, as Fashion bids, lay bare,  
Or frizzle, bold in front, their borrow'd hair;  
Scarce by a gossamery film carest,  
Sport, in full view, the meretricious breast;  
Loose the chaste cincture, where the graces shone,  
And languish'd all the Loves, the ambrosial zone;  
As lordly domes inspire dramatic rage,  
Court prurient Fancy to the private stage;  
With bliss botanic as their bosoms heave,  
Still pluck forbidden fruit, with mother Eve,  
For puberty in signing florets pant,  
Or point the prostitution of a plant;  
Dissect its organ of unhallow'd lust,  
And fondly gaze the titillating dust;  
With liberty's sublimer views expand,  
And o'er the wreck of kingdoms sternly stand;  
And, frantic, midst the democratic storm,  
Pursue, Philosophy! they phantom-form.

Far other is the female shape and mind,  
By modest luxury heighten'd and refin'd;  
Those limbs, that figure, tho' by Fashion grac'd,  
By Beauty polish'd, and adorn'd by Taste;  
That soul, whose harmony perennial flows,  
In Music trembles, and in Color glows;  
Which bids sweet Poesy reclaim the praise  
With faery light to gild fastidious days,  
From sullen clouds relieve domestic care,  
And melt in smiles the withering frown of war.  
Ah! once the female Muse, to NATURE true,  
The unvalued store from FANCY, FEELING drew;  
Won, from the grasp of woe, the roseate hours,  
Cheer'd life's dim vale, and strew'd the grave with flowers.

But lo! where, pale amidst the wild, she draws  
Each precept cold from sceptic Reason's vase;  
Pours with rash arm the turbid stream along,  
And in the foaming torrent whelms the throng.

## The Unsex'd Female

Alas! her pride sophistic flings a gloom,  
To chase, sweet Innocence! thy vernal bloom,  
Of each light joy to damp the genial glow,  
And with new terrors clothe the groupe of woe,  
Quench the pure daystar in oblivion deep,  
And, Death! restore thy "long, unbroken sleep."

See Wollstonecraft, whom no decorum checks,  
Arise, the intrepid champion of her sex;  
O'er humbled man assert the sovereign claim,  
And slight the timid blush of virgin fame.

"Go, go (she cries) ye tribes of melting maids,  
"Go, screen your softness in sequester'd shades;  
"With plaintive whispers woo the unconscious grove,  
"And feebly perish, as depis'd ye love.  
"What tho' the fine Romances of Rousseau  
"Bid the flame flutter, and the bosom glow;  
"Tho' the rapt Bard, your empire fond to own,  
"Fall prostrate and adore your living throne,  
"The living throne his hands presum'd to rear,  
"Its seat a simper, and its base a tear;  
"Soon shall the sex disdain the illusive sway,  
"And wield the sceptre in yon blaze of day;  
"Ere long, each little artifice discard,  
"No more by weakness winning fond regard;  
"Nor eyes, that sparkle from their blushes, roll,  
"Nor catch the languors of the sick'ning soul,  
"Nor the quick flutter, nor the coy reserve,  
"But nobly boast the firm gymnastic nerve;  
"Nor more affect with Delicacy's fan  
"To hid the emotion from congenial man;  
"To the bold heights where glory beams, aspire,  
"Blend mental energy with Passion's fire,  
"Surpass their rivals in the powers of mind  
"And vindicate the Rights of Womankind."

She spoke: and veteran BARBAULD caught the strain,  
And deem'd her songs of Love, her Lyrics vain;  
And ROBINSON to Gaul her Fancy gave,  
And trac'd the picture of a Deist's grave!  
And charming SMITH resign'd her power to please,

## The Unsex'd Female

Poetic feeling and poetic ease;  
And HELEN, fir'd by Freedom, bade adieu  
To all the broken visions of Peru;  
And YEARSELEY, who had warbled, Nature's child,  
Midst twilight dews, her minstrel ditties wild,  
(Tho' soon a wanderer from her meads and milk,  
She long'd to rustle, like her sex, in silk)  
Now stole the modish grin, the sapient sneer,  
And flippant HAYS assum'd a cynic leer;  
While classic KAUFFMAN her Priapus drew,  
And linger'd a sweet blush with EMMA CREWE.

Yet say, ye Fair, with man's tyrannic host,  
Say, where the battles ye so proudly boast,  
While, urg'd to triumph by the Spartan fife,  
Corporeal struggles mix'd with mental strife?  
Where, the plum'd chieftain of your chosen train,  
To fabricate your laws, and fix your reign?  
Say, hath her eye its lightnings flash'd to scath  
The bloom young Pleasure sheds on Glory's path;  
Her ear, indignant as she march'd along,  
Scorn'd every charm of soft lascivious song?  
Say, hath she view'd, if pass'd the mourner by,  
The drooping form, nor heav'd one female sigh;  
Arm'd with proud intellect, at fortune laugh'd,  
Mock'd the vain threat, and brav'd the envenom'd shaft?  
Say, hath your chief the ideal depths explor'd,  
Amid the flaming tracts of spirit soar'd,  
And from base earth, by Reason's vigor borne,  
Hail'd the fair beams of Mind's expanding morn?

Alas! in every aspiration bold,  
I saw the creature of a mortal mould:  
Yes! not untrembling (tho' I half ador'd  
A mind by Genius fraught, by Science stor'd)  
I saw the Heroine mount the dazzling dome  
Where Shakspeare's spirit kindled, to illumine  
His favourite FUSELI, and with magic might  
To earthly sense unlock'd a world of light!

Full soon, amid the high pictorial blaze,  
I saw a Sibyl—transport in her gaze:  
To the great Artist, from his wondrous Art,  
I saw transferr'd the whole enraptur'd Heart;  
Till, mingling soul with soul, in airy trance,

## The Unsex'd Female

Enlighten'd and inspir'd at every glance,  
And from the dross of appetite refin'd,  
And, grasping at angelic food, all mind,  
Down from the empyreal heights she sunk, betray'd  
To poor Philosophy — a love-sick maid!  
— But hark! lascivious murmurs melt around;  
And pleasure trembles in each dying sound.  
A myrtle bower, in fairest bloom array'd,  
To laughing Venus streams the silver shade:  
Thrill'd with fine ardors Collinsonias glow,  
And, bending, breathe their loose desires below.  
Each gentle air a swelling anther heaves,  
Wafts its full sweets, and shivers thro' the leaves.

Bath'd in new bliss, the Fair—one greets the bower,  
And ravishes a flame from every flower;  
Low at her feet inhales the master's sighs,  
And darts voluptuous from her eyes.  
Yet, while each heart-pulse, in the Paphian grove,  
Beats quick to IMLAY and licentious love,  
A sudden gloom the gathering tempest spreads;  
The floral arch-work withers o'er their heads;  
Whirlwinds the paramours asunder tear;  
And wisdom falls, the victim of despair.

And dost thou rove, with no internal light,  
Poor maniac! thro' the stormy waste of night?  
Hast thou no sense of guilt to be forgiv'n,  
No comforter on earth, no hope in Heaven?  
Stay, stay — thine impious arrogance restrain —  
What tho' the flood may quench thy burning brain,  
Rash woman! can its whelming wave bestow  
Oblivion, to blot out eternal woe?

"O come (a voice seraphic seems to say)  
"Fly that pale form — come sisters! come away.  
"Come, from those livid limbs withdraw your gaze,  
"Those limbs which Virtue views in mute amaze;  
"Nor deem, that Genius lends a veil, to hide  
"The dire apostate, the fell suicide. —  
"Come, join, with wonted smiles, a kindred train,  
"Who court, like you, the Muse; nor court in vain.  
"Mark, where the sex have oft, in ancient days,  
"To modest Virtue, claim'd a nation's praise;  
"Chas'd from the public scene the fiend of strife,

## The Unsex'd Female

"And shed a radiance o'er luxurious life;  
"In silken fetters bound the obedient throng,  
"And soften'd despots by the power of song.

"Yet woman owns a more extensive sway  
"Where Heaven's own graces pour the living ray:  
"And vast its influence o'er the social ties,  
"By Heaven inform'd, if female genius rise  
"Its power how vast, in critic wisdom sage,  
"If MONTAGUE refine a letter'd age;  
"And CARTER, with a milder air, diffuse  
"The moral precepts of the Grecian Muse;  
"And listening girls perceive a charm unknown  
"In grave advice, as utter'd by CHAPONE;  
"If SEWARD sting with rapture every vein,  
"Or gay PIOZZI sport in lighter strain;  
"If BURNEY mix with sparkling humour chaste  
"Delicious feelings and the purest taste,  
"Or RADCLIFFE wrap in necromantic gloom  
"The impervious forest and the mystic dome;  
"If BEAUCLERK paint Lenora's spectre-horse,  
"The uplifted lance of death, the grisly corse;  
"And e'en a Princess lend poetic grace  
"The pencil's charm, and breathe in every trace.  
She ceas'd and round their MORE the sisters sigh'd!  
Soft on each tongue repentant murmurs died;  
And sweetly scatter'd (as they glanc'd away)  
Their conscious "blushes spoke a brighter day."