The Advance of the Mobile Woman: Representations of British Women's Physical Mobility, 1660-1820

Amanda Booth Springs
Graduate Center, City University of New York
THE ADVANCE OF THE MOBILE WOMAN: REPRESENTATIONS OF BRITISH WOMEN’S PHYSICAL MOBILITY, 1660 - 1820

by

AMANDA BOOTH SPRINGS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2014
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Engineering in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Amanda Booth Springs

Date            Chair of Examining Committee

Date            Executive Officer

Professor Carrie Hintz

Professor Rachel Brownstein

Professor David Richter

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

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Advisor: Professor Carrie Hintz

Britain’s long eighteenth century (1660-1820) underwent an infrastructure and transportation revolution. Over the same period of time, scholars argue, the ideology of “the domestic woman” grew increasingly prevalent. This dissertation explores the improvements to roadways and representations of the various ways in which British women of the period increasingly utilized transportation, equestrianism, and pedestrianism to traverse the nation, which was also reflected in the development of traveling clothing for women. It argues that these literary and pictorial representations depict the tensions around women’s increasing capacity for physical movement, contending that the ideology of the domestic woman was largely reactionary rhetoric to this improved capacity for physical mobility.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people without whom this dissertation might never have been completed, and to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude.

I was fortunate to have access to the expertise of Professors Rachel Brownstein and David Richter, whose breadth and depth of knowledge of the period is remarkable. Their suggestions and corrections, both in conversation as well as through multiple written drafts, were immeasurably helpful to this process.

The tireless patience of Professor Carrie Hintz cannot be overstated or overappreciated. The long conversations in her office and essential guidance that she provided from the very beginning of this undertaking (as well as in previous iterations of the project) were fundamental to both the completion of the dissertation, as well as to my personal sanity. There are not thanks enough.

My human bookends, my sisters Rebekah Dobbs and Samantha Swindell, who keep me upright. Thank you for never letting me quit.

And Gregory Bayne, for the time and the space, the endless encouragement and support. Thank you, Mister Doctor.
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Chapter I: Spheres, Space, and Possible Mobilities

Over the course of the long eighteenth century¹ Britain experienced an infrastructure and transportation revolution. The meandering, muddy tracks and paths that had constituted roadways up until the Restoration were transformed into a cohesive, well-marked national roads system by the Regency period. The roads themselves underwent remarkable improvement. The turnpike system was introduced in this period, which increased revenue for maintenance, and through the innovations of early civil engineers more durable roads were built. These alterations were accompanied by an explosive growth in the market for private vehicles and the expansion of public transportation from extremely limited offerings between major cities to several robust systems for transportation and travel all across Great Britain by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Over the period, access to horses became more widely available and attitudes about walking morphed from associating it with poverty and criminality to viewing it as a common practice, embraced by a wide variety of people for their health, as a leisurely pastime, and as an opportunity to socialize. In short, Britain’s long eighteenth century witnessed an astounding modernization in people’s capacity for and undertaking of overland physical movement.

That this physical movement was widely enjoyed by women as well as men is made clear by their sartorial practices. The introduction and, later, widespread use of the lady’s riding habit and other travel clothing over this period demonstrates the growing popularity of travel and movement for women. All of this change is recorded in women’s letters and journals, fictional works which feature female characters, and pictorial art which depicts women in riding habits

¹ Here and throughout the term “long eighteenth century” is used to denote the years between 1660-1820
Chapter I: Spheres, Space, and Possible Mobilities

and on the road: taking private carriages and engaging public coaches, riding horses, and walking.

While it may seem an obvious observation that women took advantage of the same advancements in movement — new “possible mobilities” — as their male counterparts, the area of inquiry has largely been left unexplored. Discourses of scholarship on gender in Britain’s eighteenth century has long been shaped by an adherence to the “domestic thesis,” theory a view that co-mingles the “rise of the domestic woman” with the emergence of “separate spheres.” Though there have been various approaches, the domestic thesis's basic premise is that Britain’s long eighteenth century witnessed increased feminine confinement to the home and decreasing public autonomy for women. This perspective is a product of a quasi-ubiquitous scholarly stance which became popular in latter part of the 20th century in the works of feminist scholars, some of whose work is sketched out later in this chapter. Critical interest in the era’s conduct and advice literature, and scholarly endeavors exploring the shifts in gendered kinship and economic rights, have led to a widely-accepted understanding of the period from the Restoration to the Regency as shaped by this thesis. For the most part, eighteenth-century scholars still perpetuate the notion that the period’s social environment almost exclusively iterated an ideology of feminine domesticity based on separate spheres. Much of the critical work being done even today presumes this theoretical perspective when discussing women and female characters in literature and art.

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2 This is Lawrence E. Klein’s inclusive term for the modern argument that maintains that the era witnessed the “rise of the domestic woman” and the allocation of the sexes to “separate spheres.” The origin and development of this perspective is outlined in the following pages. Lawrence E. Klein, “Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytical Procedure.” Eighteenth Century Studies. (Fall, 1995): 97-109.
Though recent work by dissenting scholars has begun to rethink the hegemonic grip of this perceptual framing on critical work about the period, what has been missing so far from the debate about the prevalence of the domestic thesis — both then and now — is work which tests the theory’s claims about the gendering of space. There is a dearth of critical inquiry into the relationship between gendered categorizations of ideological space and historical and fictional women’s navigation of the reshaped eighteenth-century physical space of Great Britain outlined above. Scholars who work in the period have largely overlooked the profound influence of physical space on the formulation of ideological spaces, and theorists who work on space-place analysis or in mobility studies have almost exclusively focused their attentions on more recent time periods. To date, none of these schools of inquiry has produced work that explores the relationship between women’s negotiation of eighteenth-century Britain’s physical space and the development of gendered ideological spaces. More specifically, scholars have yet to discuss how the changes to the British landscape directly resulted in the expansion of women’s possible mobilities into spaces that many historically-contemporary critics and the modern-day scholars have argued were — or, perhaps more accurately, should be — off limits to them.

At its most essential, the domestic thesis is a theory of gendered ideological spaces. Born of the yoking of analyses of eighteenth-century rhetoric about “proper spheres,” and Jürgen Habermas's twentieth-century theories of political, social, and economic power structures which Habermas dates as beginning in the late seventeenth century, it emphasizes the influence of sociologically delineated and maintained “appropriate” and exclusive spaces for women and men. The constitution of these ideological spaces — the private, domestic space for women and the rest of the public world for men — like all ideological space, is predicated on physical space.
However, it is precisely an examination of physical space, and women’s navigation of it — the roads, the vehicles, equestrianism and pedestrianism — which has been passed over in critical work on gender on eighteenth-century history, art, and literature in favor of limited and limiting discussions of women’s experiences to a dominant narrative of domestic fixity and limitation to the private sphere.3

Here, I argue that representations of eighteenth-century women’s movement through Britain’s physical space defy both the domestic thesis's ascription of women to the home and its exclusion of women from a supposedly masculine-dominated public space. While it is true that depictions of the stay-at-home domestic woman were common throughout this period and that women’s movement was often met with various forms of resistance, an examination of the literature and the artwork reveals that representations in the period were not limited to domestic women. Rather, the new possible mobilities of the time period advanced a figure I call the “mobile woman.” The improved roads, innovations in vehicles, expansion of access to horses, and changing attitudes about walking allowed women greater movement outside of the home than they had ever had access to before. I maintain that these possible mobilities and the mobile woman they engendered spurred a public debate about the “appropriate place” for women in

3 In conversation, Dr. David Richter made the provocative suggestion that this scholarly attention to women’s domestic sessility became theoretically popular in the latter part of the 20th century as critical focus on eighteenth-century literature shifted from Henry Fielding to Samuel Richardson. In many ways, this dissertation implicitly concurs with this contention, as it incorporates several of Fielding’s works while only tangentially engaging Richardson. (Dec. 6, 2013)
which the popular figure of the domestic woman was offered by reactionary-complimentarians as a response to women’s greater physical mobility.

For the purposes of this dissertation, a “mobile woman” is a figure, either historical or fictional, who took advantage of the improved roads and infrastructure and advances in physical movement in the long eighteenth century and actively physically moved around in Great Britain’s public space. This species of woman is repeatedly found in letters and diaries, in fiction, and in artwork by and about women over the time period. In contrast to the domestic woman, she is not limited to the private sphere; instead, she is defined by her engagement in various forms of physical movement, which had only lately become possible. The mobile woman is, thus, a product of this particular time period, as she was largely made possible by the innovations in roads systems and conveyances which occurred over the period from the Restoration to the Regency and other social changes which made physical movement more accessible and available. These historical and fictional mobile women who moved through and across material space undermine one of the primary contentions of the domestic thesis: that women were confined to the home. This is important for two distinct but intimately interconnected reasons. By undermining one of the domestic thesis's basic tenets, it complicates the theoretical

Here and throughout, I use the term reactionary-complimentarian to denote thinkers who believed that that men and women have different but complementary roles and responsibilities in marriage, family life, religious leadership, etc and in lieu of the more common terms “traditional” or “conventional” for three reasons. First, because I am arguing that this period oversaw all new possible mobilities for women, theoretically there is no traditional or conventional stance on these innovations. Secondly, I read these new mobilities as evoking the heightened rhetoric of the domestic woman, contending that it was precisely because it became easier and easier for women to leave the home that (prescriptive) writers insisted they stay there. Finally, the emphasis on complementarianism is essential to the conversation of gendered spaces.
stronghold of this perspective on understandings of gender in the period and, by extension, it opens up new ways to consider women’s activity and agency in Britain’s long eighteenth century.

To consider what women’s physical mobility means to query the domestic thesis as a perceptual framework through which we understand British women’s lives in the long eighteenth century, as well as to the representations of those lives in the literature and art of the period, several aspects of the argument need to be more fully explicated. First, I offer an overview of the modern domestic thesis scholarship which includes works which argue various theoretical approaches to conduct literature and texts that focus on shifting economic practices that contributed to the constitution of the domestic thesis. I then sketch out some recent scholarship which problematizes the ideology’s prominence in eighteenth century studies. I explain how the Classical, Christian, and Habermasian delineations of gendered space which have been variously combined and conflated to underwrite the complementary gendered space of the domestic thesis are traced, and their influence on domestic thesis ideology is considered. Next, I outline Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey’s explications of various forms of space are outlined, and the relationship between physical spaces and ideological spaces is established. After that, I introduce John Urry’s work on mobility in order to frame why and how the mobile woman’s physical movement which is charted in the following chapters undermines the ideological space of the separate spheres theory. Finally, I provide a thumbnail of the succeeding chapters, explaining each chapter’s focus and methodology.

**The Domestic Discourse: Historical and Critical Contexts**

In order to get a sense of the prevalence of the domestic thesis on critical work about historical and fictional women’s lives in the long eighteenth century, a look at some of the key
texts from two different schools of inquiry is helpful. The first school, which focuses on the construction of the figure of the domestic woman and her confinement to the home, grounds its arguments in the print culture of the time; the second focuses on shifting economic rights for women. In these two groups, dating from the latter part of the twentieth and the onset of the twenty-first centuries, many of the most respected feminist scholars of the eighteenth century presented wide-ranging assessments of gender relations, each contending that throughout the long eighteenth century, representations of a woman’s “place” were progressively more restricted to the home, her identity ever more tightly woven to the domestic.5

**Didactic Literature and the Domestic Thesis**

Perhaps most influential is Nancy Armstrong’s seminal work, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: a Political History of the Novel* (1987), in which she tracks the shift in the intended audience for conduct literature from aristocratic gentlemen in the seventeenth century to middle-class women in the eighteenth century. Armstrong locates the “rise of the domestic woman” (a phrase she appears to have coined) in the “countless conduct books and works of instruction for women” that proliferated in the era. She contends that, “The educational handbooks for women simply mapped out a new field of knowledge as specifically female”6 and that the field mapped was one of domestic economy. Armstrong goes on to outline how this figure, the domestic

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woman, was contrasted to the figure of the economic man, arguing that not only did “gender came to mark the most important difference amongst individuals” during this time, but that the Puritan household in particular “consisted of a male and a female who were structurally identical, positive and negative versions of the same attributes.” This configuration of sex and duties was reflected in the sexes's spatial dominions, which were separated into public and private spheres.7

The domestic woman is also a concept central to Vivien Jones's edited collection of conduct materials, *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (1990), which brings together a range of texts written for and about women from the period. In the introduction, Jones makes the astute observation that, “it [is] impossible for ‘women’ to operate in a fixed and knowable category,” a truism that is then in some ways undermined by the ubiquitous presence of the notion of the domestic woman in the essays in the collection.8 Though Jones's text is divided into chapters on a range of themes — “Conduct,” “Sexuality,” “Education,” “Writing,” and “Feminisms” — each section explores its topic with the domestic woman as the central character, suggesting that a “fixed and knowable category” of woman did exist, and that she was

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7 Ibid., 4, 19.
necessarily, exclusively domestic. While, as Jones's title indicates, there were various “constructions,” the text largely argues for a singular “femininity,” one predicated on a domestic figure who was confined to the home.

Published the same year as Jones's anthology, Kathryn Shevelow’s Women and Print Culture: the Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical (1990), asserts “During the eighteenth century, as upper- and middle-class Englishwomen increasingly began to participate in the public realm of print culture, the representational practices of that culture were steadily enclosing them within the private sphere of the home.” Shevelow goes on to make the point that, “it was in the periodical that one particular formulation of femininity most persistently manifested itself on the popular level: the notion of women as different in kind rather than degree from men, possessing in the household a ‘separate but equal’ area of activity and authority.” Shevelow’s assignment of the popularization of the separate spheres ideology to the periodical echoes and extends some of the arguments found in Jones's text, maintaining that “[The

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9 This responsibility is couched differently in the various manuals and letters, but the message is consistent: a woman’s place is in the home. In the chapter on “Conduct,” the advice given women is proffered with the goal of molding their expectations to the role of the domestic woman; the section on “Sexuality” features texts which suggest that women’s sexual desire is naturally “deviant.” As Jones notes, “the ideological status of marriage and motherhood is much clearer in these texts than in the conduct manuals,” suggesting that the way of civilizing women’s sexual desire was through thorough domestication. The opinions regarding women’s “Education,” while ranging from “conservative” to “radical” in their political positioning, all position the domestic woman as, paradoxically, natural and producible. That is to say, while there is some debate in these texts over the role of education in the refinement of women’s innate tendencies towards the domestic, the desirability of the domestic woman remains unquestioned. In the following chapter, Jones asserts that women’s writing was a “transgressive act” because “publishing exposed an essentially private activity to the public gaze, blurring the conduct book delineation of separate spheres.” Even the final section of the book, “Feminisms,” features texts that are conspicuous because they resist, through their preoccupation with “the language of political libertarianism,” the ubiquitous narrative of the domestic woman.


11 Ibid., 3
periodicals's] program of bringing women into literary culture tended from the beginning toward an over-determination of one feminine figure: the domestic woman.”

In *Women’s Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Women’s Magazine* (1991) authors Ros Ballaster, Margaret Beetham, Elizabeth Frazer, and Sandra Hebron contend that, “The history of the women’s magazine is intimately connected to a larger history of modern representations and discourses of femininity.” The authors see this relationship as a byproduct of what they view as the emergence of “gender difference, rather than distinction of status or wealth” as the basis for the limitation of women’s social power. The text goes on to outline the differences between the “society periodical” concerned with politics and public scandal, and the “domestic journal” which dealt with matters of the home and hearth and concludes that, “This last perspective, that of the domestic journal, was finally to triumph in eighteenth-century periodical publication for women, and the history of that triumph is also, in many respects, the history of changed conceptions of sexual and class difference in the early modern structure.” According to the authors, in late eighteenth-century women’s magazines, the domestic trumped the political and the public, reflecting a sociological shift that suggested that gender difference was equatable with spatial differences.

The consensus which emerged from these works was that the ideal of the domestic woman, with her preoccupation with hearth and home and her allocation to the private sphere, saturated the conduct literature, periodicals, and magazines of the era, reflecting a desired limitation of British women’s power and influence to the most intimate of spaces. However, this

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12 Ibid., 5


14 Ibid., 43-44; 49-50
understanding of ideal womanhood is a product of didactic texts written at women, works which repeatedly attempt to confine women’s agency and person to the realm of the home. My work here, which does not limit itself to instructional texts, tells another story. Though my dissertation does include analyses of prescriptive works like *The Spectator* and *The Guardian*, it surveys a broader range of text and artwork, exploring iterations of women’s movement and agency outside of the home. I submit that many fictional works from the time, including plays, poems, and novels, grapple with the mobile woman as their subject, revealing a range of practice, experience, and reactions to movement. Letters and journals written by women about their own experiences show a great deal of travel and movement away from the home being undertaken by women for pleasure, for experience, and even, at times, for work. Both satirical and laudatory artwork featuring women in movement serve to demonstrate the fact that the practice had detractors and admirers. Ultimately, what my project shows is that, while there was a lot of rhetoric about the ideal of a domestic woman ensconced in the private sphere of the home, the long eighteenth century witnessed women of various classes and backgrounds taking advantage of new possible mobilities to explore and engage in public spaces. While not all women engaged this increased access to movement (just as all women did not limit themselves to the domestic sphere) the advances in infrastructure, technology, and social norms from the period, reflected in the literature, artwork, and clothing of the time allowed for types of physical mobility previously unavailable for women. These mobile women, and their navigations through space, not only contrast with the rhetoric of the domestic woman, but trouble the very spatial allocations which undergird the separate spheres framework, a point which will be returned to below.

**Economic Analyses and the Domestic Thesis**
It wasn’t just didactic forms of print culture that attempted to put women “in their place.” As a spate of scholarly texts published in the period dating from the late 1980s to the mid-2000s shows, changes in the legal and economic climate of the long eighteenth century also tried to limit women’s power and agency to the private sphere. Bridget Hill’s impressive *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth Century England* (1989), charts the development of the industrialization of England during this period, and the nation’s shift from what she terms “family economies,” which included not only housework, but also agriculture and manufacturing, to external sources of income. Hill writes, “The women’s work remained in the home while the husband’s was often outside it, so the household was no longer a productive unit as it was when all members of the household worked within it.”\(^{15}\) She maintains that this movement led to an increased sexual division of labor; one in which women were paid less than men for the same work, crowded out of industries, and ultimately, experienced a “diminishing independence” due to their growing confinement to the domestic sphere.\(^{16}\)

Exploring a different economic facet of women’s experience, Susan Staves’s *Married Women’s Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (1990) outlines the developments of married women’s property rights during the long eighteenth century. Her work maps evolving attitudes towards dower, jointure, pin money and maintenance contracts: all legal and monetary concerns specific to women at the time. Staves convincingly argues that the judgments in equity and common law courts which moved away from dower, privileging instead jointure, pin money, and maintenance contracts, were political and ideological in nature, and were designed, at least in

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\(^{16}\) Ibid.
part, to more completely confine women to the domestic sphere. She contends that, “There were three important public interests asserted in the married women’s property cases discussed here: the public interest in having a system of property law that ensured secure titles to property, the public interest in maintaining the alienability of land, and the public interest in promoting families and good behavior within families. All of these interests are ideological.”17 The ideology of “families and good behaviour in within families” cited by Staves, was more specifically one of the “domestic family,” about which she asserts:

A striking feature of the new domestic family – one insufficiently commented upon – was that responsibility for good order and happiness within the family moved away from the husband, who as sovereign of the older family had responsibility for its governance, and towards the wife, who became a more specialized expert on the home.18

The domestic “expertise” that women were thought, taught, or told to have was exclusionary in nature. As the conduct literature and the ideologically motivated changes to legal and economic power reveal, this specialization was sometimes expressed as the only appropriate kind of authority women could or should wield. In an echo of Hill’s findings, Staves cites the work of Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall in an assessment of the period’s gendered shifts in power and women’s decreasing access to public power:

the same forces which favored the rise of the private company and ultimately the business corporation, the development of public accountability and more formal financial procedures also shifted the world of women further from the power of the active market.19

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18 Ibid., 224

19 Ibid., 224-225.
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Exclusion from the growing marketplace was not the only financial challenge women were facing. In *Land, Law and Family: Aristocratic Inheritance in England, 1300 - 1800* (1993), Eileen Spring traces inheritance from the medieval period through the long eighteenth century as it became an increasingly exclusionary gendered practice in which changes in the common law actively sought to limit women’s capacity to inherit wealth. Her chapters on the heiress-in-law and the widow, in particular, chart how the eighteenth century saw, overall, a substantial decrease in women’s inheritance. After analyzing the popularization of entail, the changes in use, the replacement of thirds with strict settlements, and other developments in common law practices, social mores, and equity law, Spring concludes that women’s overall capacity to inherit decreased over the time period, forcing women to be increasingly dependent upon their male guardians and further confining their influence to domestic spaces.

Similarly, Ruth Perry explores changing kinship structures in the latter half of the period as framed by psychological and monetary “disinheritance” of women in *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (2004). Perry’s argument that kinship structures in the eighteenth century shifted privilege from the natal family to the marital union highlights the centrality of marriage and responsibilities to the home that Susan Staves has referred to as the “domestic family.” In her chapter on “The Great Disinheritance,” Perry writes, “in this movement from a consanguineal to a conjugal relationship system women’s power no longer came from their relations as sisters or daughters, but from their positions as wives and mothers” adding that, “their autonomy may have been more limited as wives and mothers than it had been as sisters and daughters.”

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Davidoff and Hall, goes on to trace the growing exclusion of women from the public workforce over the period. She then argues that the kinship shift for women, from family members to homemakers, combined with their exclusion from the marketplace, created the optimum environment for the ideology of the women’s inherent domesticity.

While my work does not dispute the findings in these studies about women’s increasingly limited financial rights, it does consider other economic factors in how women accessed and exercised public power. As the following chapters show, investment by the government in Britain’s infrastructure and the introduction of the turnpike system expanded and improved the nation’s roads, which lead to greater possible mobilities for women. Innovations in vehicles meant that more options for travel became available at a variety of price points, and thus to a greater range of women on the socioeconomic ladder. For example, while both historical and fictional texts from the time indicate the value many women in the upper and middle classes placed on possessing some form of private transportation by highlighting the privileged position of carriages as a form of dower in marital negotiations, such an expensive gift would have been inconceivable for the lower classes. However, even for those women who weren’t given a carriage upon marriage, the advent of public transportation meant that those who could not afford private conveyance also had an opportunity to travel by coaches and horses, both of which became much more widely available in the years between the Restoration and the Regency. Moreover, the rethinking of the sociological implications of walking, shifting it from a marker of poverty and criminality to an activity practiced throughout the social strata, meant that even women who had extremely limited access to money retained the option to get out of the home and into public spaces under their own steam. While some of the economic changes instituted
throughout the long eighteenth century most certainly curbed women’s agency, national and private expenditures around travel, transport, and movement increasingly provided another form of public power — the power to physically be out in public — as seen in later chapters.

**The Dominant Domestic**

Although the critical texts outlined above range widely in content and argument, they each describe the long eighteenth century as a period increasingly defined by distinctions between the responsibilities and, importantly, the spatial domains of women and men. While some of these distinctions are grounded in duties and behaviors and others in law and finance, ultimately all of them are dependent upon the idea that the domestic woman and her assignment to the “private sphere” were progressively more influential until, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, they reached a state of quasi-universality. The sum of all of this critical work, until recently, has been the construction of a modern scholarly framework which simultaneously asserts and reinforces the domestic thesis. Vivien Jones's contention that, after exploring the conduct literature of the period she has “identified... the dominant eighteenth-century ideology of femininity: the natural association between women and the private sphere [and] domesticity” has in many ways become the critical ideology of the scholarship as well, and studies of the eighteenth century have often presumed the indisputability of the conflation of women with the space of domesticity.21 This stance has recently been challenged, however, by a small but growing group of thinkers seeking to reevaluate the hold of the domestic thesis on the understanding of gender relations and women’s lives in the long eighteenth century. My

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21 Jones, 5-6.
The dissertation seeks to contribute to this reconsideration by focusing on representations of mobile women navigating public spaces.

**Complicating Domesticity**

Social, cultural, and physical circumstances in history, as well as the livable possibilities in the literature and artwork that reflect and represent them, are rarely monolithic in nature, and ideologies are just as likely to represent desires about or responses to the way things are as they are to tell the “truth.” Historians, sociologists, and literary theorists of the period are increasingly rethinking the domination of the domestic thesis, both in terms of its influence in the time period itself, as well as in the scholarship surrounding it. In the early 1990’s a push back against the quasi-universality of the argument commenced and theoretical detractors like Amanda Vickery, Lawrence E. Klein, and Robert B. Shoemaker (amongst others) began to provide critiques of the belief that the long eighteenth century was fundamentally organized by gendered divides, each arguing for a more nuanced understanding of gendered spatial relations.

Amanda Vickery’s influential “Historiographical Review: Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History” (1993) was among the earliest of the dissenting voices. Vickery’s article questions the relationship between the feminist contentions of a nineteenth century ideology of separate spheres and an early modern “social and economic marginalization of propertied women and the degradation of a working woman as a consequence of capitalism.”

While in this particular piece she locates the separate spheres ideology in the nineteenth-century, earlier scholarship had identified its advent

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further back in the eighteenth century, as Vickery herself notes. During the first half of her article, Vickery charts the developments in historical scholarship around these categories, specifically critiquing Davidoff and Hall’s *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class* (2003), in an attempt to resist what she sees as the overriding ideology of separate spheres. Vickery concludes her critique of Davidoff and Hall’s text with the observation:

If anything, the early nineteenth-century growth of female committee work and the like looks like an expansion of the female role, not a diminution. Indeed, one might go further and argue that the stress of the proper female sphere in Victorian discourse signaled a growing concern that more women were seen to be active outside the home rather than proof that they were so confined. In short, the broadcasting of the language of separate spheres looks like a conservative response in reaction to the expansion of the opportunities, ambitions and experience of late Georgian and Victorian women.

The second half of Vickery’s article is taken up with arguing against the histories of the declining value of women’s work, and thus economic power. She resists the narrative of women’s decreasing value in the workforce and the rise of the domestic woman, asserting instead that women and men had always held different jobs. Vickery sees the division of labor as conditional and, if anything, ahistorical, arguing that “research on the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century economy raises doubts about the conviction that female enterprise decayed substantially between 1700 and 1850.”

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24 Ibid., 400.

25 Ibid., 403. Quoting Judith Bennet. Ibid., 408.
Lawrence E. Klein takes up this skepticism about the dominant narrative in his article “Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytical Procedure” (1995) in which he challenges the domestic thesis. Here, Klein questions not only the eighteenth-century division of women and men into separate spatial domains, but the legitimacy of the dichotomy as an organizing principle in and of itself. As Klein explains, “the binary opposition does not adequately explain the complexities of discourse, let alone those of human experience in practice.”

Klein goes on to explore the relationship between the mutually exclusive categories of female/male and private/public in the eighteenth century, maintaining that, “the hegemonic role often assigned to binary oppositions in the discursive worlds of past people is less solid and total than it is sometimes made out to be.”

Perhaps the most thorough assessment to date of the questionability of the domestic woman and separate spheres constructs as essential perceptual frameworks for understanding the century is offered in Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres? (1998). In the only book-length text that I’ve found to deal specifically with the topic of the genesis of separate spheres in the eighteenth century, Robert B. Shoemaker systematically works through different aspects of eighteenth century life — “Sexuality”; “Family and Household Life”; “Work”; “Religion and Politics”; and “Social and Cultural Life” — arguing against the idea that this period saw a radical change in the divisions between the genders. In the final chapter Shoemaker traces the “Continuities” in gender relations of the period in contrast to their “Change,” concluding:

26 Ibid., 98.
27 Ibid.
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the concept of separate spheres may be useful if we define it as a loose division of responsibilities between men and women within both public life and private life, and we recognise that the impact of ideological prescriptions on day-to-day practice was limited: the spheres were never truly separate, certainly not physically... And while recognising that gender differences existed throughout this period, it is true that they acquired greater moral importance and public prominence in the second half of our period due to a combination of ideological change and the vast expansion of opportunities for both sexes which developed within public life; this constitutes an accentuation, rather than the emergence, of separate spheres.  

Vickery, Klein, and Shoemaker’s critiques of the definiteness of “separate spheres” and Shoemaker’s rejection of the idea that physical separate spheres existed speak directly to my own argument that eighteenth-century British women’s navigation of physical space became increasingly common over the period. Vickery’s contention that “more women were seen to be active outside the home” is evidenced in subsequent chapters which work with a wide variety of depictions of women moving through public space. Shoemaker’s assertion that the “accentuation” of the ideology of separate gendered spheres was a response to the “vast expansion of opportunities for both sexes which developed in public life” also echoes my own contention that the changing physical world of the long eighteenth century, rather than progressively limiting women’s choices, offered them greater access to physical movement and thus certain forms of agency than had previously been available. Certainly, Klein’s reservations about the validity of strict binary oppositions as applied to gendered space is central to my own argument that the mobile woman’s growing possible mobilities disrupt not only the ideology of

women confined to the domestic sphere, but the integrity of the notion of separate spheres altogether.

Vickery, Klein and Shoemaker are not alone in rethinking the domestic thesis. Even more recently, a number of scholarly works have challenged the notion of gendered ideological spaces in several different ways. The collected essays in *Women, Writing, and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830* (2001) offer discussions on a variety of dynamic relations between gender and ideological space, each essay taking aim at the “categories of public and private [which] have been interpreted as equivalent to male and female and understood in terms of an ideology of separate spheres.” Each of these essays seeks to complicate what the authors see as the oversimplified “binary distinction” of gendered space. Similarly, in Anthony Pollock’s *Gender and the Fictions of the Public Sphere, 1690-1775* (2009), the author contends that the ideology of the domestic woman was often deployed by contemporary male authors who sought to limit women’s authority in the growing public space of published texts. Pollock sees this representation of appropriate femininity as a reaction, by threatened male colleagues, to women’s greater participation in the world of publishing. On a slightly different note, Brett Wilson’s *A Race of Female Patriots: Women and Public Spirit on the Stage, 1688-1745* (2011) focuses on the physical presence of women on the stage, after the Glorious Revolution, arguing that the drama of the time highlighted and encouraged a rise in the “public spirit” of women by casting them as central to civic plots.

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29 Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona O’Gallchior, and Penny Warburton, *Women, Writing, and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 1. While this text focuses primarily on women’s literary contributions to the “public sphere” via publication, rather than their physical presence, its questioning of the categories “public” and “private” that is akin to the work done here.

While these works and others lend some credence to Deborah Heller’s recent claim that recent critical inquiry, and Vickery and Klein’s work in particular, have constituted, “the demolition of the long-standing ‘domestic thesis’s (or ‘separate spheres theory’) which taught that women in the 18th century were incarcerated in the home or ‘private sphere’ while men were free to play an active role in the public world,” her claim is perhaps a bit premature.\(^\text{31}\) As Vickery herself pointed out in 2005, long after the publication of her article and Klein’s, “the argument that the eighteenth century saw the allocation of women and men to separate private and public domains is rapidly turning into a new orthodoxy” and the domestic thesis continues to significantly impact thinking about gender in the period.\(^\text{32}\)

Although I have no interest in “demolishing” the domestic thesis, which I view as a useful construct for exploration, or as a point of departure, this dissertation does hope to contribute to work complicating its theoretical hegemony. Though I dismiss neither the existence of a ideological domestic woman who confined herself primarily to the home and family, nor the constrictive influence of conduct literature and increasingly restrictive laws around inheritance, property, and work, I do see this figure and these restrictions as existing in dialogue with, and in response to, rapid socio-cultural changes around possible physical mobilities which allowed women other forms of agency and control. For while it is virtually indisputable that the figure of the domestic woman and the private sphere over which she reigns was prominent in the literature and art of the era, there are also countless works from the Restoration to the Regency that feature

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\(^{32}\) Amanda Vickery, *Women Advising Women*. [http://www.ampltd.co.uk/digital_guides/women_advising_women_part_1/Preface.aspx](http://www.ampltd.co.uk/digital_guides/women_advising_women_part_1/Preface.aspx)
mobile women taking advantage of the improving infrastructure and growing access to physical movement, women who are outside of the home and away from the domestic sphere. A wide range of fictional and biographical work in literary and pictorial art reveals not only that women of all different socio-economic backgrounds were enjoying the increasing potential for movement that the period offered, but that in many cases it was precisely these undertakings which evoked strictures from critics of the practice who insisted that women stay at home, in her space.

Space — physical and ideological, actual and represented — underwrites this project. In focusing on the eighteenth-century British mobile woman’s ability to move her physical body, my work grapples with how this movement was undertaken in light of and contrary to the rhetoric of domesticity. Unlike the domestic thesis, there are no simple binary oppositions proffered to explain gender relations and women’s agency in the period, and the figure of the mobile woman is not offered up here as the foil for the domestic woman, though she is envisioned as an alternative possibility and one that helped elicit a more ardent articulation of a domestic woman. As the chapters that follow demonstrate, explorations of fictional and biographical texts and artwork which engage in a conversation about aspects of women’s mobility reveal more complex and nuanced negotiations of space(s) by British women in the long eighteenth century than a monolithic domestic woman theory can accommodate.

**Spheres, Space, and the Domestic Thesis**

In order to talk about the implications of the mobile woman’s presence in public spaces, out of the home, a better understanding of the gendered separate spheres aspect of the domestic thesis in the scholarly works outlined above is necessary. The separate spheres doctrine draws
primarily from two traditions: eighteenth-century rhetoric around “proper spheres” which found its roots in both Classical and Christian traditions, and Jürgen Habermas's twentieth-century socio-political work on the emergence of the “public sphere” at the end of the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century. While the long eighteenth-century ideology of proper spheres was rooted in older notions of a divinely organized universal order, the Classical scala natura and the Christian understanding of the “Great Chain of Being,” in which every entity had its god-given duties and place, Habermas's more modern work is decidedly political in nature and divided space and activity into the three spheres of public authority, the public, and the private.\footnote{Jürgen Habermas, \textit{The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society}, trans. Thomas Burger and Fredrick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).}

Throughout the long eighteenth century, the notion of “proper spheres” was a broader understanding of delineation of space — one which encompassed the more narrow notion of the domestic thesis's gendered separate spheres. Proper spheres were grounded on two influential bodies of thought: Classical philosophy and Christian dogma. In both these traditions, men and women serve different purposes, take on different tasks, and belong to different “spaces,” a key concept to which I will return. In both, a woman’s primary purpose was to tend to her family, her responsibility is the management of the home, and her proper place the domicile.

The Neo-Classical turn of the later part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, which included an interest in Classical literature and philosophy, understood women as essentially domestic creatures and limited their appropriate existence to the domicile. In the earliest Classical literature, the physical spaces that men traverse and women inhabit are synonymous with their roles, responsibilities, and fates. Briefly, consider \textit{The Iliad} and \textit{The Odyssey}, poems which enjoyed wider readership in the early part of the eighteenth century due to
multiple translations by eminent authors. Among many other things, Homer’s epic poems can be read as modeling two types of women. In *The Iliad* Helen’s unsanctioned removal from the domestic space is the catalyst for the Trojan War. Importantly, the effect of Helen’s transgression is not limited to her or to her immediate circle; her actions represent a danger to the entirety of Greek civilization. Not only is Helen a “bad woman” because she leaves the home, the very fabric of her society is threatened by her doing so, suggesting that a woman’s refusal to adhere to her appropriate sphere can throw sociological order into chaos, a complaint made by critics of mobile women in the British eighteenth century, as well. In contrast, Penelope in *The Odyssey* — the original “good wife” — remains patiently at home, immobilized but engaged in domestic chores, waiting for Odysseus while he travels the world engaging in fantastic adventures. In return for behaving in the sedentary manner appropriate to her sex, Penelope is rewarded with the safe return of her husband and enduring fame for embodying the correct kind of womanhood.

These role models weren’t lost on the authors of prescriptive literature of the period. The name “Penelope” was used as a synonym for wife in Addison and Steele’s *The Tatler* and other didactic texts.\(^34\) The Reverend Mr. Christopher Pitt, in response to Pope’s popular translations of *The Iliad* encouraged the poet to translate *The Odyssey* by saying, “Haste to work, the ladies long to see/The pious frauds of chaste Penelope/(Helen they long have seen, whose guilty charms/For ten whole years engag’d the world in arms.)”\(^35\) Pitt’s direct contrast of the two women, in which he complements “chaste” Penelope’s ingenious employment of “pious frauds” while reminding that modern British women were more familiar with Helen’s “guilty charms” and would benefit

\(^34\) *The Tatler* No. 152.

from exposure to Penelope’s story, makes this point neatly. Perhaps even more specific to the matter at hand, Hannah More’s *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), directly referenced Penelope as a paragon of womanhood, encouraging British women to see themselves as modern renditions of the same type of perfect domestic femininity: “Nor was the industrious matron of Ithaca* more soothed at her solitary loom with the sweet reflection that by her labor she was gratifying her filial and conjugal feelings, than the industrious but pleasure-loving damsel of Britain is gratified by the anticipated admiration which her ingenuity is procuring for her beauty.”36 For a reactionary-complimentarian like More, Penelope’s gratification of her “filial and conjugal feelings” by her work at her “solitary loom” is the very epitome of appropriate behavior for a woman, her confinement to the domestic realm while her husband travels the broader world a fulfillment of her essential duties.37 As More makes clear, Penelope is a figure to be emulated by her fellow British countrywomen.38 Of course, her gentle reminder that the “pleasure-loving” British women will find their happiness in “industrious[ness]” at home suggests that there were some women who needed reminding.

36 The explanatory note marked by the asterisk reads, “Penelope; see Homer’s Odyssey.” More, 81.

37 Here and elsewhere I will use the term “reactionary-complimentarian” to denote thinkers who believed that that men and women have different but complementary roles and responsibilities in marriage, family life, religious leadership, etc. I use this in place of terms like “conservative” or “traditional” as I am arguing that much of this rhetoric is in response to new possibilities for movement and, due to this, is a new rather than a conventional stance.

38 More is, of course, not alone in this. The figure of Penelope as the perfect woman was popular through Medieval and Renaissance literature. It’s worth noting that Homer’s women were not the only Classical roots for understanding women’s appropriate place in society. In later Classical thought, similar spatial roles are reiterated in philosophical musings. Perhaps most famous is Aristotle’s explication of the roles of the sexes in procreation (the male as the active and essential force, the female as the inactive and receptive vessel) and his assertion that the sexes are different, “not only for the sake of reproduction, but also for the various purposes of life; for from the start the functions are divided, and those of man and woman are different.” Aristotle traces the domestic duties of women directly to his (mistaken) understanding of their biological roles, maintaining that it was the man’s responsibility to “acquire” and the woman’s to “keep and store.” While many argue that Aristotle’s influence as a philosopher was waning in the eighteenth century enlightenment, his understanding of human sex roles continued to be prevalent and influential. See Thomas Lacquer’s influential *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud.* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 1991).
Unsurprisingly, Christian tradition had an even greater effect on sociological understandings of women and man’s proper spheres. The influence of Biblical passages is perhaps nowhere more obvious than in the work of Reverend James Fordyce. In his popular and influential conduct book, *Sermons to Young Women*, each of Fordyce’s sermons is prefaced with a biblical reference whose exegesis serves as the jumping off point for his instruction on appropriate behavior.\(^{39}\) Fordyce divides feminine accomplishments into “Domestic,” “Elegant,” and “Intellectual,” and begins with her domestic duties, declaring that, “the care of a household all ages and nations have agreed to consider as an indispensable part of female employment, in every situation that admits it.” He goes on to quote Proverbs 31 on “The Virtuous Woman” at length, using the description as a prescription for behavior for his contemporary feminine audience. This passage of the Bible, which equates a woman’s virtue with her judicious management of the household, is offered by Fordyce as the pattern of appropriate feminine behavior though, tellingly, Fordyce interprets portions of Proverbs 31 which glorify a woman’s work outside of the home as the more domesticated skill of being adept at procuring things from far away.\(^{40}\) Though he is not convinced that Biblical role models alter the practice of British women, he remains optimistic saying “I am not without hope, that some of them may be induced to copy, though at a distance, those modest but exalted originals.”\(^{41}\)

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\(^{40}\) For example, Fordyce glosses Proverbs 31:14-15 “She is like the merchant ships/She brings her food from afar” with a note that suggests that the virtuous wife trades for foreign goods, rather than going out to procure things for her family.

\(^{41}\) Ibid, 162.
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Later in the text, in a passage that bears quoting at length, Fordyce ties women’s virtue even more tightly to the domestic by expanding upon St. Paul’s teachings. He reminds his female readers:

St. Paul, who held it not unworthy of an Apostle to enter with the greatest particularity into the concerns of common life, directs Titus to remind the aged women of their duty... His words are remarkable: “Speak thou the things that become sound doctrine;” — among the rest — “that the aged women may teach the young” women to be sober, to love their husbands, “to love their children” — What follows?— “to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home.” The precept indeed points to young women in the state of wedlock. But will any suppose the apostle meant to exclude women yet unmarried from that part of it, which, on his principles, must necessarily be applicable to them? That women who, having families of their own, go much abroad, and affect to shine any where but in their proper sphere, are peculiarly to blame, must, I think, be acknowledged. But will you thence infer, that they who have none are at liberty to stroll about perpetually, to prefer every place to home, and neglect the most respectable virtues, the most valuable accomplishments, for the parade of dress, the display of beauty, and the tricks of affectation? It is truly sad to see so many young ladies, showing themselves every day in the markets of vanity, who by a proper deportment elsewhere might render themselves agreeable and happy: to see them trifling away the opportunities of doing both, and sacrificing to a false ambition the real importance of their sex.42

Fordyce’s explication of St. Paul’s thoughts on women’s “duty” provides an example of the conflation of responsibility and space that is at the heart of the domestic thesis which is disrupted by the mobile woman. His quotation of Paul’s exhortation that women be “keepers at home” and his disapproval of women who “go much abroad” point directly to this issue. Fordyce even expands on Paul’s rules for married women, asserting that all women are obligated to confine themselves to the domicile and not be “at liberty to stroll about perpetually, to prefer every place to home,” as this type of behavior leads them to “neglect the most respectable

virtues, the most valuable accomplishments... the real importance of their sex.” The proper
sphere that Fordyce speaks of is thus very much a physical location, as well as a sociological
responsibility: a space that, tellingly, could be and clearly was being “strolled away from.”

Of course, Fordyce was not the only influential thinker to derive his understanding of a
woman’s proper sphere of influence from Christian doctrine. Returning again to Hannah More,
Strictures interweaves a woman’s earthly duties to hearth and home with her duties to her god.
More’s relegation of women to the domicile is grounded in her contention that women’s
domestic duty is essential not only the wellbeing of their families, but also to their nation and
their deity. In passages echoing the previously cited allusion to Penelope whom, tellingly, she
also referred to by national identity (i.e. “the industrious matron of Ithica [sic],”) More exhorts
her female compatriots:

Your private exertions may at this moment be contributing to the future
happiness, your domestic neglect, to the future ruin, of your country. And
may you never forget, in this your early instruction of your offspring, nor
they, in their future application of it, that religion is the only sure ground
of morals; that private principle is the only solid basis of public virtue. O,
think that they both may be fixed or forfeited forever, according to the use
you are now making of that power which God has delegated to you, and of
which he will demand a strict account. By his blessing on your pious
labors, may both sons and daughters hereafter "arise and call you blessed."
And in the great day of general account, may every Christian mother be
enabled through divine grace to say, with humble confidence, to her
Maker and Redeemer. “Behold the children whom thou hast given me!”

43Hannah More, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. 2d. ed., 2 vols. (London: T. Cadell, Jr. and
W. Davies, 1799), 48. More counsels elsewhere, “That kind of knowledge which is rather fitted for home
consumption than foreign exportation, is peculiarly adapted to women.*” (foot)noting, “May I be allowed to
strengthen my own opinion with the authority of Dr. Johnson, that a woman cannot have too much arithmetic? It is a
solid, practical acquisition, in which there is much use and little display; it is a quiet, sober kind of knowledge,
which she acquires for herself and her family, and not for the world.”, 208.
More’s assertion that “private exertions” were responsible for “future happiness” and that “domestic neglect” equaled “future ruin” not only of the private family but of the “country” itself, is extrapolated from her firm belief that the “power with which God has delegated” women is “early instruction of [their] offspring.” According to More, the proper instruction of children leads to three separate and fortuitous outcomes, 1). the “future happiness” of Britain, 2). children who will “arise and call you blessed”\(^{44}\) and, as a result of these two things, 3). salvation: Christian British mothers will have “humble confidence” when they are called to account by the Lord, because they will know they have correctly performed their specific religious duties. More’s repeated insistence on the importance of women’s “private” responsibilities echoes the domestic thesis's assignation of women to the private sphere, and her assertion that any failure on the part of women to attend to their complimentarian roles can, in fact, have national implications are concerns which arise repeatedly around the figure of the mobile woman, as later chapters shall discuss.

Other conduct literature and advice manuals which became popular for women during the long eighteenth century were informed by these two authorities, even if they failed to specifically cite them. As many of the scholars discussed in the earlier section have argued, the thrust of much of the prescriptive literature of the period was to stress the domestic responsibilities of women, encouraging them to eschew public exposure, and locating them firmly in the home. A few more instances can be found in Addison and Steele’s influential *The Spectator* in which, in 1711, Addison reminded the readers that, “Female virtues are of a domestic turn. The family is the proper province for private women to shine in.” In 1712

\(^{44}\) Here More, like Fordyce, cites Proverbs 31.
Addison again opined that, “We have indeed carry’d women’s characters too much into public life... the utmost of a woman’s character is contained in domestic life; she is blamable or praiseworthy according as her carriage affects the house of her father or her husband. All she has to do in this world, is contain’d within the duties of a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a mother.” Addison’s emphasis on the “private woman” and her proper place in the “domestic life,” that is, the home, is iterated in his multiple use of the word “contained” to describe a woman’s rightful place.45 A final example can be found in the frequently reprinted pamphlet *The Art of Governing a Wife* (1747), in which the anonymous author contends that men are supposed “to get; to go abroad and get his living; deal with all the men; to manage all things without doors's” while women are encouraged “to lay up and save; look to the house; talk to few; take of all within[sic].”46

In addition to the influence of the Classical and Christian traditions on the literature and the culture of the era, many scholars of the period invoke the work of Jürgen Habermas’s *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962, translation into English, 1989). This text is frequently referred to as a, if not the, theoretical bedrock for the modern understanding of the development of the public sphere. Habermas’s philosophy also traces sphere theory back to Classical thought, locating the advent of the public sphere in the Greek *agora*, charting the progression of spheres theory through the courts of the medieval and Renaissance monarchs, and dating the rise of what he considers to be the modern public sphere specifically from the late seventeenth century in Britain. Habermas sees the public sphere as an arena in which politics and

45 *The Spectator.*

other social issues are discussed and debated, fueled and empowered by the nation’s growing middle stations and their access to public spaces like coffee houses, clubs, salons, theaters, and, in print culture. He argues that these locales, new to the period and a product of the shifting class structures, provided a space in which people of varying stations but common concerns could come together in an inclusive environment to discuss societal issues and thus affect public policy.

Habermas envisioned the public sphere as mediating between two other spheres: the sphere of Public Authority (the governing and policing bodies) and the private sphere (the location of the citizen, the family, and the home.) While Habermas's text largely ignores the gendered natures of these spheres, later theorists's work has argued that women were denied access to the public spaces he claims were open to all and many scholars of gender relations in Britain’s long eighteenth century have conflated, or at least melded, Habermas's public and private spheres with the much older “proper spheres” ideology, arguing that both confine women to the home.

The overlap between older notions of proper spheres and Habermas's more recent exploration of private/public/public authority undergirds much of the modern scholarship about sex, gender, and space in the era. Each philosophy views its spheres as simultaneously theoretical and geographical spaces which exist — and can be understood — only in relationship to each other. As the complimentarian texts on Classical and Christian gendered spatial theory betray, the domestic thesis can be read in large part as a reaction against women refusing to adhere to the physical space that underwrote the ideological spheres. Exhortations to stay at one’s “solitary loom,” to be “keepers at home” to shine in the “proper province” of the family stand in stark contrast to lamentations about, “so many young ladies, showing themselves every day in the markets of vanity,” “stroll[ing] about,” and “preferring every place to home,” and the
prescriptive advice to stay home was clearly in response to women who were already moving. Women’s new possible mobilities in the long eighteenth century made physical movement increasingly accessible, which encouraged more forcefully articulated gendered spatial allocations. Furthermore, because the spatial ideology of the domestic thesis is mapped on physical space, women’s growing capacity to physically move outside of and away from the home, as seen in the texts that populate this project, problematizes the theory that women were increasingly homebound and offers another perspective on what a woman’s place was.

**Spheres, spaces, and movement.**

The domestic thesis's separate spheres are predicated on physical space, and therefore modern space-place theory offers useful tools to examine the overlapping and intertwining of these types of spaces. Although most of the (relatively young) field of space-place theory concerns itself almost exclusively with the post-modern world, the field’s focus on how space and people moving with/in space work is helpful when considering the advances in women’s possible mobilities in eighteenth century Britain. I maintain that these advances evoked the historically contemporary ideal of the domestic woman and, as a result, the modern scholarly preoccupation with this ideology’s supposed socio-cultural dominance. While a full examination of the field is impossible here, a discussion of the most salient theories, with a particular focus on the groundbreaking work of Henri Lefebvre, yields a useful theoretical framework through which to think about women’s navigation of eighteenth-century spaces.

In Henri Lefebvre’s seminal *The Production of Space* (1991), the noted sociologist and philosopher delineates space as existing in three separate, but interrelated ways: 1). “material space”; 2). “representations of space”; and 3). “spaces of representation,” the totality of which he
Chapter I: Spheres, Space, and Possible Mobilities

argues are a concrete abstraction. Lefebvre’s variants of space are also expressed as “perceived,” “conceived,” and “lived,” distinctions that Stuart Elden neatly sums up thusly:

The first of these takes space as physical form, real space, space that is generated and used. The second is the space of savoir (knowledge) and logic, of maps, mathematics, of space as the instrumental space of social engineers and urban planners, of navigators and explorers. Space as a mental construct, imagined space. The third sees space as produced and modified over time and through its use, spaces invested with symbolism and meaning, the space of connaissance (less formal or more local forms of knowledge), space as real-and-imagined.

David Harvey, thinking through Lefebvre in his own conceptualization of space(time) in Spacetime and the World: from the Wellek Lectures (2009), goes further, describing Lefebvre’s “material space” as the “space of actual human practices... the world of our tactile and sensual interaction with the material circumstances of our lives.” As Harvey notes, Lefebvre also sometimes refers to this as “experienced space” because it is the space of physical interaction with the world around us. For the purposes of this work, “material space,” “perceived space,” and “experienced space” all refer to the physical world of Britain’s long eighteenth century, with specific attention paid to the ways in which it was altered and changed that allowed women better navigation and negotiation of geographical spaces.

In contrast, Lefebvre’s second type of space, “representations of space,” are “an entirely different matter” according to Harvey, who explains that we use “abstract representations... to represent the structure of space as we experience it.” In this “conceived space,” the physical world is being articulated through some form of depiction. This type of space is also referred to

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47 Lefebvre’s use of this term stems from Karl Marx’s definition: “abstraction which became true in practice.” For more on this, see Lukasz Stanek, Space As Concrete Abstraction: Hegel, Marx, and modern urbanism in Henri Lefebvre. (2007) http://www.henrilefebvre.org/text/Routledge_STANEK.pdf

48 Stuart Elden. Understanding Henri Lefebvre, 190.
as “conceptual space,” as it is an attempt to recreate our ideas about and understanding of space. Harvey lists words, maps, and diagrams among other representations of space and reminds us that the correspondence between perceived space and conceived space is always open to inquiry and interpretation. While technically all of the works in this dissertation offer some type of “conceived space” because they are all either literary or artistic representations, here its use is limited to eighteenth-century texts that specifically sought to depict geographical space.

Lefebvre’s final species of space — “spaces of representation” — refers to “the way we humans live — physically, affectively, and emotionally — in and through the space we encounter.” This “lived space” overlays geographical space and makes symbolic use of its objects. This is the realm of ideological space which is predicated on geographical space. “Lived space” is simultaneously theory and practice (a concrete abstraction) of how space is used and, thus, produced. The relationship between the use of geographical space and the production of ideological space is central to this dissertation, and the representations of women’s use of space explored in the following pages are offered as examples of practices which resist the supposedly dominant gendered spheres theory and, in doing so, call into question ideological assumptions about eighteenth-century Britain’s “lived space.”

These categories provide a useful theoretical framework for thinking about what and how the different delineations of space offered by distinct traditions can mean. Though the following matrix makes no claims of being exhaustive, it enumerates examples which suggest some of the commonalities and discrepancies between the eighteenth century notion of proper

49 David Harvey, *Spacetime and the World: from the Wellek Lectures.*
Chapter I: Spheres, Space, and Possible Mobilities

spheres and the Habermasian theory as applied to the long eighteenth century, with an eye to how Lefebvrian divisions of space interpenetrate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eighteenth Century Proper Spheres</th>
<th>Material Space/Perceived Space</th>
<th>Representations of Space/Conceived Space</th>
<th>Spaces of Representation/Lived Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Sphere: the bedroom, the nursery, the kitchen, the dining room. Or, more expansively: the private house or apartment. Public Sphere: the rest of the world, including subsumption of the domestic sphere</td>
<td>Domestic Sphere: texts describing the home or domestic scenes, paintings of homes or domestic scenes, floorplans, estate maps, domestic economy literature</td>
<td>Domestic Sphere: the house as the location of marriage, the family, children, chastity, modesty, economy, feminine responsibilities and duties</td>
<td>Public Sphere: the world as business, trade, politics, news, international interaction, wars and treaties, masculine responsibilities and duties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In considering the matrix, the distinctions and continuities between the proper gendered spheres ideology and Habermas's categories can be read, at least in part, as the ways in which participatory and theoretical understandings of space correlate to actual physical locations. Both the “domestic sphere” of the eighteenth century and Habermas's “private sphere” are predicated on notions of “the home” which in turn is based on the physical structure of the house. As this rubric makes clear, the house is a specific real world structure (with rooms and stairs and doors, etc.) The home is a representation in literature and prints as the feminine domain; the literary and metaphorical space of the family and of women. Through its (the house’s and the home’s)
association with the people who inhabit it and the social understandings that surround it, it becomes, in turn, a “space of representation”; representing the domestic/private sphere. The three understandings of the home are distinct, but interrelated, inextricable, and largely mutually perpetuating: 1) the physical structure of the house, 2) represented by the family and by women in particular, and 3) representative of the family and the responsibilities of women. These interpenetrative understandings of the home underlie both the sentiment of the historically contemporary proverb, “Husbands in the Market, Wives in the Home,” as well as modern-day scholar Brian Dolan’s recent assertion that women of the long eighteenth century “were not expected to stray from their homes” and domestic ideologies of and about the time period place women in the geographical, physical house as well as the theoretical, philosophical home. However, if, as Lefebvre claims, “Ideology per se might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space,” the meme of the home-bound domestic woman, with its archaic origins, development in eighteenth-century sources, and near ubiquity in modern scholarship is open to reexamination through the reshaping of geographical space. The innovations in vehicles, broadened access to horses for riding, and growing popularity of walking which allowed women increasingly greater possible mobilities in eighteenth-century Britain reframes the ways in which we think about historical and fictional women’s lives in the period.

### Possible Mobilities, Corporeal Travel, and the Mobile Woman

“Mobilities, as both metaphor and process,” John Urry explains, “are at the heart of social life,” thus when the potential for women’s movement changes radically, so does the society in

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50 Dolan, 7.
which these changes take place.\textsuperscript{51} In discussing corporeal travel (that is, physical human bodies in motion) in the twentieth century, Urry argues that, “If households are always on the move, then the distinction of home and away loses its organisational and ideological power and the home loses its ability to sediment women’s work.”\textsuperscript{52} This, I contend, is also true of the effects of the transportation revolutions in Britain’s long eighteenth century, where the changes charted in the following chapters so altered geographical space as to exponentially expand women’s potential for and engagement in physical movement, complicating an ostensibly dominant doctrine of gendered public and private spheres.\textsuperscript{53} I maintain that eighteenth-century British women’s enhanced capacity for and undertaking of corporeal travel offered mobile women the power to traverse physical and ideological spaces – the “lived space” of the Britain’s long eighteenth century – and, in doing so, prompted reactionary-complimentarian thinkers to more adamantly insist on “proper” gendered spaces. Put simply, the emergence of the mobile woman helped instigate a rhetorical furore that insisted on the naturalness and the necessity of the domestic woman.

\textit{Anxieties around and Challenges to Women’s Mobility}


\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 50.

\textsuperscript{53} There are problems with conflating all women’s physical mobility with a kind of unencumbered, uncomplicated form of agency or freedom. Not all travel is undertaken voluntarily, nor did all eighteenth-century British women have equal access to the various forms of corporeal travel which were available. This study, however, focuses on women’s willful physical movement and demonstrates that although women’s corporeal travel was initially primarily the province of the wealthy, it became increasingly accessible to British women of different classes through the introduction, growth, and reconsideration of forms of conveyance.
The close association between the physical and the philosophical understanding of “a woman’s place” helps to explain the anxieties around women’s increased mobility in the eighteenth century. For reactionary-complimentarian thinkers female mobility, in ways that were distinct from male mobility, threatened desirable social norms by allowing women to move outside of their designated representational space. Because the private sphere that women were to be confined in was subsumed under the larger public sphere where men had free rein, women’s bodily movement outside of the home differed essentially from men’s in that it undermined the definitive and defining spaces of the sexes. The challenges to women’s movement that are evidenced in the following chapters, where mobile women deal with unwanted attention, harassment, and even assault for daring to navigate public spaces, combined with the anxieties in the responses of reactionary-complimentarians to women’s movement who, like John Fordyce and Hannah More earlier, criticized women outside of the home all attest to the tensions that the new possible mobilities for women engendered. As will be more fully discussed in later chapters, critics of mobile women tended to conflate their mobility with deceit, sexual freedom, enmasculcation, and with a diminishing of British identity. However, despite the dangers for and the criticisms of women’s mobility, the benefits of the new capacity for movement must ultimately have outweighed its drawbacks, given the impressive expansion of mobility for women over the period that the remainder of this project maps.

Mobility, Women, and the Advance of The Mobile Woman

To date, what little work has been done on eighteenth-century women’s mobility has largely focused on women’s travel narratives. Works on women’s travel writing, as well as scholarship on individual women who travelled, like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Hester Thrale
Piozzi, Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Montagu, and Frances Burney D’Arblay, all center on women's international adventures.\(^{54}\) whereas my dissertation focuses on women’s movement within Great Britain. It limits itself to the material advancements in Britain, specifically roads, vehicles, and clothing and their relationships with British women’s capacity for movement within the nation.

The progress of women’s possible mobilities is charted through the analysis of representations of mobile women in the texts over the period, exploring the various ways that they are depicted as well as how those illustrations altered as time went by. As is common with broad social shifts, women’s increased mobility neither developed in a strictly linear fashion, nor did it progress without challenges. In the following chapters, the study of women’s movement is accompanied by an analysis of depictions of the various criticisms of and resistances to the expansion of women’s opportunity for movement and the agency corporeal travel afforded. Much of the opposition was predicated on the ways in which eighteenth-century British women’s navigation of perceived spaces and its revision of social space disrupted and denied complimentarian notions of gender-appropriate places; criticisms of mobile women by proponents of the domestic thesis. This opposition and the ways it was handled by female corporeal travelers is most vividly seen in the reactionary responses to women’s presence in public transportation and to travel clothing for women.

Chapter I: Spheres, Space, and Possible Mobilities

Works like Celia Fiennes's journals cataloguing the extensive travels of an upper-middle class woman on horseback at the end of the seventeenth century lend insight to the early potential for women to travel. Other journals and letters from the likes of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), Catherine Talbot (1721-1770), Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806), Lady Mary Campbell Coke (1726-1811), Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi (1741-1821), Frances Burney D’Arblay (1752-1841), and Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1855) all chronicle various aspects of travel: the roads, the vehicles, the horseflesh, women’s travel clothing. Restoration plays such as William Wycherley’s *Love in a Wood* (1672), George Farquhar’s *The Beaux-Strategem* (1707) and John Dryden’s *Marriage à la Mode* (1673) all feature female characters whose identities are conflated with their coaches. Dramatic prologues written by George Colman the Younger (1762-1836) and satirical prints published by Hannah Humphrey (1745-1818) depict women driving carriages. Furthermore, the novels of the long eighteenth century, including canonical works like Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* (1722), Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749), and Burney’s *The Wanderer* (1814) all feature women from various socioeconomic backgrounds who spend the majority of their texts traveling around the physical space of Britain.55

My work builds its argument for the mobile woman from the ground up. Literally. The following chapter deals in physical space, outlining the expansion and improvement of the British roads network and the advent of modern road building techniques. This foundational chapter surveys historical documents, detailing laws passed, surveys undertaken, and maps made to chart the changes to Britain’s landscape over the long eighteenth century which ushered in a brave new era of overground movement. This chapter outlines the growth of the roads network

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55 These references are meant to be exemplary, not exhaustive, of the texts that are dealt with in the following chapters.
and the improvement of the quality of the roads, how they encouraged greater travel and transportation and how those practices, in turn, required further infrastructure expansion and better quality road building. It records how the changes in the perceived space of the nation were formalized in the forms of way-markers and guideposts, surveying, and cartography. Through an examination of historical women’s letters and journals, and the plots of novels featuring women travelers, the chapter traces the innovations in infrastructure and their presence in works by and about mobile women.

In the third and fourth chapters I discuss the introduction or reconsideration of different forms of women’s conveyance: first, the private carriages and public coaches and later equestrianism and pedestrianism. Through an exploration of a wide variety of plays, poems, prose, and pictorial art, I explore the representations of mobile women’s adoption of these new possible mobilities. I consider each form of movement in light of its benefits and drawbacks, and negative and affirmative reactions to mobile women are registered and examined as are the female corporeal travelers coping strategies. I argue that as physical mobility for women became progressively more popular and accessible much of the opposition to it disappeared. I maintain that developments in the material culture of vehicles and ideological shifts around equestrianism and pedestrianism increasingly afforded eighteenth-century British women resistance to confinement to the private sphere, offering them a growing form of agency and control outside of the home instead.

The fifth chapter demonstrates how the enhanced capacity for corporeal travel for women found articulation in developments in fashions of the time, most notably in the widespread adoption of the ladies's riding habit. Looking first at didactic literature and satirical prints of the
time, this chapter catalogues a variety of arguments against the outfit. It then traces the
increasingly complimentary assessments of it in poetry, prose, and portraiture. It notes the actual
popularity of the ladies's riding habit in life writing and news reports from the period. I see the
ladies's riding habit, and the other occasional travel wear that followed in its wake, as material
evidence of women’s increasing physical movement. Ultimately, I argue that positive attitudes
towards women’s riding habits began to outpace the negative responses as the century wore on, a
phenomenon I attribute to the growing acceptance of Britain’s mobile women.

Improved infrastructure, innovations in vehicular design, and changing attitudes towards
equestrianism and pedestrianism all conspired to radically change opportunities for British
women’s physical mobility throughout the long eighteenth century. These changes made bodily
movement more readily accessible, convenient, and common than it had ever been before;
fundamentally changing the way movement was perceived. Women as well as men took
advantage of these developments, but because of complimentarian mappings of gendered
geographies which located women’s appropriate sphere of influence exclusively to the domestic
space, women’s movement in the public arena was attended by social and moral tensions that
were largely absent from men’s. Women’s enhanced capacity to traverse physical space
conflicted with the ideologies about appropriate behaviors and spaces for women that have been
traced above. This direct challenge to those understandings made the relationship between
women, movement, and social mores complicated and contentious.
Chapter II: Laying the Groundwork: The Development and Navigation of Britain’s Roadways.

Freedom itself cannot exist without free communication — every limitation of movement on the part of the members of society amounting to a positive abridgment of their personal liberty. Hence roads..., by providing the greatest possible facilities for locomotion and information, are essential for the freedom of all classes, of the poorest as well as the richest.

Samuel Smiles

Due to the overlap and interconnectivity between perceived, conceived, and lived spaces, a look at the material changes to Britain’s infrastructure (its perceived space) is key to understanding the ways in which the transport revolution of the long eighteenth century affected women’s possible mobilities (navigation of perceived and lived spaces). The development in roadways in the period from the Restoration to the Regency created the possible mobilities that called forth both the reactionary ideology of the domestic thesis and the alternate figure of the mobile woman offered here. The growth and improvement of Britain’s roads system, and the period’s introduction of new forms of maps, atlases, and navigational tools (conceived space), is both figuratively and literally foundational to women’s possible mobilities.

The later part of Great Britain’s seventeenth century and entirety of the eighteenth century witnessed a marked change in the nation’s travel and transportation networks, with greater investment in roads and walkways, improvements in road building, and broader access to travel aids of various sorts all reflecting and encouraging an increasing potential for and undertaking of physical movement. This chapter charts the progression of Britain’s network of roads and walkways, advances in the art and science of road building, and the proliferation of published travel aids. It was over the course of this period that the country’s traditionally limited

system of parish roads was added to and transformed by the introduction of turnpikes; that walkways and promenades were introduced; that the road building techniques of Metcalfe, Telford, and McAdams were developed; and that road atlases and other travel guides became widely available in order to help increasing numbers of travelers navigate rapidly changing perceived space. As Jo Guldi has shown in *Roads to Power: Britain Invents the Infrastructure State* (2012), this time period oversaw a massive transformation in Britain’s infrastructure, converting its roadways from “mire and muck” to a “road system [that consisted] of forty-foot wide highways of level gravel that extended to every village and island in the nation.”

Here, I outline the changes to Britain’s roadways, and the influence of these changes on navigational guides to set the foundation for this dissertation’s larger exploration of how the British eighteenth century’s evolving perceived, conceived, and lived spaces offered increasing possible mobilities for women. First looking at the history of the British roads network, including surveying, turnpike roads, new road building techniques, and the introduction of navigational signage, and the proliferation of atlases, maps, and road books, I argue that these changes expanded women’s possible mobilities. I see this expansion reflected in texts featuring historical and fictional women, which repeatedly demonstrate that the growth in representations of the mobile woman over the era was a direct result of real world changes to actual possible mobilities. In contrast to the narrative of the home-bound domestic woman, the material alterations to Britain’s geography, technology, and cartography fundamentally improved women’s mobility, making physical movement more accessible than ever before, and ushering in opportunities to resist confinement to the domestic sphere and leave home.

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The Augmentation and Improvement of the British Road Network

Although major roads, many dating back to the Roman period, had long connected the larger cities in Britain, for the duration of the seventeenth century the primary form of transportation in and around the nation was water based. What travelers there were largely made their way on boats, either via the seas surrounding Great Britain or on the rivers and canals running through it. While horse-drawn carriages and coaches had gained popularity in London and some of the other larger cities from around 1630, they did not begin to extend their influence outside of the metropolitan hubs until almost one hundred years later, and it was not until the early part of the eighteenth century that the nation began to invest in earnest in a broader road network. As the need for reliable travel and transport grew, so did Great Britain’s investment in its roads. Though there is some debate amongst road historians about the impetus for the massive expansion and improvement of the British roads network over the course of the long eighteenth century, with alternate theories posited regarding the importance of the military needs, the demands of growing trade, government intervention, and, specifically, the impact of the introduction of turnpike roads, most historians agree that a seismic shift took place.

A Brief History of British Roads

The oldest roads in Britain had traditionally been built and used primarily by the British military, and maintained by the parishes through which they passed. One of the earliest acts regarding the roadways, The Highway Act of 1555, specified that roads were to be cared for by

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58 For more on the development of coaches and carriages, see Chapter III.

59 Jo Guldi nicely sums up how these disparate aspects all contributed to the infrastructure boom: “The technology behind the transport revolution, including the siting, foundation making, and labor management of turnpikes originated in military road building in the early eighteenth century. Britain’s military roads, [were] constructed between 1726 and 1750… More than nine hundred miles of road were paved, connected by one thousand bridges, which were maintained at public expense through the 1790s at the cost of £5,000 yearly.”, 16.
the local governments, with each parish responsible for the section of the road that was contained within it. The act stipulated that two members of the parish be selected to function as “Surveyor of the Highway,” a job which entailed announcing once a year on the Sunday after Easter what repair work was needed to maintain the roads. For the following four to six days, the parishioners were expected to work eight hours a day on the roadways. This system meant that each local area was responsible for the “shape, direction, and quality” of its own portion of British infrastructure, resulting in the roads being tended in a rather ad-hoc manner which created an “immense variance in the quality” of roads in different places. This method of road maintenance was inconsistent and inefficient with “fewer than 2% of parishes spending money on their roads in any given year” and by the late seventeenth century, this form of upkeep proved untenable. Under the reign of Charles II (1660-1685) attempts were made to rectify the damage to the most important roads and, in 1663, the first Turnpike Act was passed. A decade later in the early 1670s, in an effort on the part of the crown to better understand the state of the nation’s infrastructure, the surveyor John Ogilby undertook an ambitious project on behalf of the king: surveying the roads of Britain.

**John Ogilby’s Survey**

Charles II was interested in the quality and maintenance of his roadways and in the late 1660’s, the king supported a proposal for a survey of the roads made by John Ogilby. The need for an accurate understanding of the roadways was driven by the needs of the military, the

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61 Guldi, 9.

62 Ibid., 12.
institution of the General Letter Office, as well as by increasing trade and travel as the nation was shifting from a primarily feudal economic model to an increasingly mercantile system. The military, the post’s letter carriers, tradespeople, and travelers needed a better understanding of Britain’s geography, the distance between cities and towns, and the various routes available to them.

Ogilby conducted his survey over the course of several years and the end product proved to be singular in its extensiveness and accuracy. Prior to Ogilby and his surveyors, Britain had used a variety of measurements of distance and, depending on the region, a “mile” could range from the statute mile of a length of 1760 yards to over 2600 yards. Ogilby’s team standardized measurements of distance by walking the British roadways with a wheel-dimensurator which had been designed to precisely measure ten statute miles per revolution. (Illustration ?) Ultimately, these measurements were paired with angular directions and road inclines to produce a thorough survey of the British road network, parts of which would later be popularized in Ogilby’s Britannia [sic], which is further discussed below.

The King’s support for this early measurement of Britain’s perceived space, and the resultant published production of conceived space in the form of Ogilby’s survey gestures to the increasing import of the roads system, in a shifting away from water based travel to overland travel which offered a much broader mobility to the British. In turn, these new possible mobilities transformed the nation’s lived spaces. These and other improvements to the British roads network directly affected real and fictional eighteenth-century British women’s potential mobility.

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Chapter I: Spheres, Space, and Possible Mobilities

Illustration 1: The frontispiece from John Ogilby’s Britannia, 1695. On the right, approximately 2/3rds of the way down the page, a surveyor can be seen using the wheel-dimensurator.

for movement, as the examples of women’s observations, considerations, and inquiries about roads at this chapter’s end will show.

Although Ogilby’s survey measured and mapped Britain’s roads, it did nothing to improve their quality, which continued to be a problem. The general state of disrepair that was such an issue under Charles II was addressed under the reign of William and Mary (reigned 1689-1702), when a Royal Act was passed to more vigorously compel road maintenance by
threatening penalties for noncompliance from the parishes. This Act also stipulated that, “All cartways leading to market-towns were to be made eight feet wide at the least, and as near as may be even and level, and no causeway for horses was to be less than three feet in breadth” and allowed local justices of the peace to set carriage fees in an attempt to control spiraling prices for land carriage. A second Act during the same reign provided for further expansion of the roadways, as well as for the posting of way-markers indicating the next market town in any given direction at each crossroad, an innovation to which I will return.\footnote{Robert Kemp Philp, \textit{The progress of carriages, roads and water conveyances. A sect. of Philp’s ‘History of progress in Great Britain’}. (London: Houlston & Wright, 1858), 143-144.}

The quality of the roads continued to be a concern under the rain of Queen Anne (1702-1714). Wagoners were limited to the use of a maximum of six horses or oxen (except when ascending a hill), in an attempt to discourage heavy loads. The queen’s act does not seem to have met with much success, however, given that during George I’s reign (1714-1727) the king’s government reduced the number of permitted draft animals to five, citing the soft roads of the time, which were so gouged and rutted by overly-heavy carts and wagons that they were frequently rendered quasi-impassable. In another attempt to combat damage to the roads, George I’s government also placed limits on the amount and weight of goods that could be carried at one time on the roads within ten miles of London and Westminster.\footnote{Ibid, 144-145.} When none of these measures served to solve the consistent problems with the quality of the roads, the government turned to turnpiking.

\textbf{Turnpike Roads}
Chapter I: Spheres, Space, and Possible Mobilities

The first turnpike road was established under Charles II in 1663 on the New Great North Road. It was here that the concept that the users of the road should pay to maintain it, rather than the people of the parish, was introduced. This shift in responsibility did not catch on right away, and it was not until more than thirty years later in 1696 that a second turnpike act was passed. In an early reference to the turnpike roads, seventeenth-century author and traveler Celia Fiennes complained in 1698 that, “the road on the causey [causeway] was in many places full of holes, tho’ it is served by a barr at which passengers pay a penny a horse in order to the mending of the way.” Although her unhappiness with that specific road may have been well deserved, especially given that turnpike roads were only just then being introduced, the expansion of the turnpike roads system is largely credited with overhauling the quality of the British infrastructure. Many historians point to the early gradual, and later rapid, expansion of turnpike roads as ushering in a whole new era of road maintenance, construction, and quality.

Initially overseen by Justices of the Peace, another act of Parliament moved the governance of many of Britain’s turnpike roads’s moved from the Justices to local trustees in 1706, creating “turnpike trusts.” Unlike the earlier parish roads, where local governments had cared only for the expanse of road that fell within their boundaries, “turnpike trust roads” were cared for by trustees from the various parishes through which the road ran. In an attempt to create a more effective and cohesive system of keeping up the roadways, road maintenance was paid for by the turnpike’s tolls, which were charged for use. These tolls were set by the trustees

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and rates varied depending upon the mode of transportation and/or the numbers of livestock and people using the road.

Turnpike trusts neither immediately nor entirely replaced parish roads, and were met with a fair amount of opposition, particularly from colliers, farmers, carriers, and other workers who felt that the tolls unfairly penalized their labor. There were occasional protests and/or riots, and in a number of cases turnpike gates were torn or burned down. Nevertheless, as the century wore on Parliament passed more and more acts granting powers to local trustees over their roads, and turnpikes became increasingly common. To give some sense of this development, although over thirty years passed between the first and second turnpike acts in 1663 and 1696, by 1750 the entire length of the thirteen main thoroughfares in and out of London had been turnpiked. In the period from 1751 to 1772, an era referred to as Britain’s “Turnpike Mania,” the government oversaw the establishment of 389 new turnpike trusts; more than either the forty years preceding the era, or the sixty-six years succeeding it. Additionally, by the mid-1830s, Great Britain’s turnpike trust system entailed more than a thousand trusts, which controlled over 20,000 miles of road, with approximately a million and a half pounds of toll receipts per year.

Though the implementation of the turnpike trust system in Great Britain was not without challenges — in addition to the issues noted above, people rode around the turnpikes, refused to pay, and took alternate, toll free routes — most historians agree that the revenue generated by the new system contributed substantially to advances and improvements in the British infrastructure.

In “Turnpike Trusts and the Transportation Revolution in 18th century England,” Dan Bogart

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69 Ibid, 49.

70 Ibid., 189.
explains that, “Turnpikes had a significant effect on road maintenance and investment. Road expenditure generally increased by a factor of more than ten after turnpikes assumed control from parishes.”¹¹ This sentiment is echoed in *Society and Economy in Modern Britain: 1700 - 1850* (1991), when Richard Brown credits turnpike roads with being more effective than the parish system in generating the monies necessary to maintain and improve the nation’s roads system.¹² The value of this maintenance is made clear in Eric Pawson’s work, where he convincingly argues that the proliferation of the turnpike roads and the upkeep made possible by their tolls radically enhanced Britain’s trade economy,¹³ a position echoed by William Albert in *The Turnpike Roads System in England, 1660-1820* (1977), where the author acknowledges that, though “The direct and indirect benefits to which the turnpike trusts gave rise are virtually impossible to measure, and even if it were possible it would be difficult to derive a meaningful figure for the amount of capital embodied in the trusts... it does seem clear that the trusts were instrumental in lowering carriage costs.”¹⁴ Albert goes on to claim that, “While the effects of competition probably contributed to these lower costs, evidence of faster rates of travel and heavier loads being drawn by fewer animals suggests that the improved roads were also an important, if not the central factor in explaining lower charges.”¹⁵ Though some historians demur, as does Jo Guldi, claiming that the institution of turnpike roads increased costs for long

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¹⁴ Albert, 194.

¹⁵ Ibid.
distance traders and disenfranchised certain segments of the population or, like Dorian Gerhold, that increasing trade was a more direct result of improved horse breeding and vehicular construction,\textsuperscript{76} most transport historians concur that the introduction and proliferation of turnpike trusts was foundational to improved trade, transport, and travel.\textsuperscript{77}

The turnpikes's impressive contribution to the improvement of the British infrastructure directly affected women’s capacity for movement. With the expansion and betterment of the roads, Britain’s perceived space was radically altered. While Fiennes's complaint about the quality of the turnpike road she found herself on in 1698 reminds that turnpikes did not immediately solve all of Britain’s infrastructure woes, ensuing texts for and about women demonstrate how vital the turnpikes were to the expansion of women’s possible mobilities, as we shall see later in this chapter.

**Way-Markers, Guideposts, and Milestones**

The proliferation of the new and improved roads that the turnpike era ushered in were attended by other material changes to the landscape which speak to the increase in movement over the era. When the roads had been primarily tended to by parishes, signage had been scarce and irregular. William III attempted to address the problem as early as 1697, decreeing that “in the more remote parts of the kingdom, where two or more paths intersected, local Surveyors [are] to erect guide stones showing the way to the nearest market town.”\textsuperscript{78} Unfortunately, the

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\textsuperscript{76} For more about vehicular innovations and the growing popularity of equestrianism, please see Chapter III.


\textsuperscript{78} [http://www.bsswebsite.me.uk/A%20Short%20History%20of/waymarks.html#top](http://www.bsswebsite.me.uk/A%20Short%20History%20of/waymarks.html#top)
project was not properly funded and thus there was considerable variation in both the implementation and the enforcement of this act across the country.

With the expansion of the turnpike system, however, things changed. Signage was mandatory on most turnpike roads by an act in 1744, and the General Turnpike Act of 1766 made milestones and guideposts compulsory on all turnpikes:

That the said trustees or commissioners shall cause stones or posts to be set up or placed in or near the sides of every turnpike to be erected, at the distance of one mile from each other, denoting the distance of any and every such stone or post from any town or place, and also such direction post at the several roads leading out of any such road, or at any crossings, turnings, or terminations thereof, with such inscriptions thereon denoting to what place or places the said roads respectively lead.

The guideposts and way-markers that were erected in response to this act tended to be tall stone pillars, four-sided, and set at crossroads with all four sides inscribed with the distances to the next large town in each direction. (Illustration 2) As the Dodderhill Parish Survey Project (DPSP) notes, this signage not only equipped travelers with directions and distances, but also helped stagecoaches and, later, mail coaches keep on schedule. Milestones, too, were used by the stagecoach and post-chaise drivers. By counting the markers along the road, a driver could figure out when to change horses at a coaching inn and how much to charge his various passengers. Likewise, in the era before uniform postal rates were adopted in 1840, mail carriers used them to calculate postal charges. According to the DPSP, “At the height of the turnpike era, there were 20,000 miles of roads with milestones.”


These guideposts and milestones, material markers of alterations to perceived space are further evidence of the ways in which lived space in Britain was evolving. The addition of navigational signage is a clear indication of increasing corporeal travel, and texts by and about women from the period note these material advancements. In an early reference, Celia Fiennes encountered some of the early guideposts which had been stipulated by William III’s Act in 1697. She writes approvingly of the roads around Lancaster:

They have one good thing in most parts of this principality, or county palatine its rather called, that at all cross ways there are posts with hands pointing to each road with the names of the great town or market towns that it leads to, which does make up for the length of the miles that strangers may not loose their road and have it to go back again.  

Although then, as now, noting street signage was not a typical pastime, references to markers became more common towards the end of the period. Sarah Murray’s *A Companion and Useful Guide to Scotland* (1799) frequently counted milestones to give her readers an accurate sense of distance as well as directions and in an 1810 letter Mary Anne Radcliffe writes that her coach “passed one milestone, and another, and another, which was all my amusement to count.” In 1803, Dorothy Wordsworth remarked on the guidepost at the crossroads for Glasgow and Edinburgh on her way to Glasgow

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81 Fiennes, 164.


Illustration 2: Eighteenth-century way marker.
All of this additional investment in and standardization of the roads indicates how commonplace overland travel was becoming. The better maintenance of pre-existing roads, the building of new roads, the revenue generated by turnpikes, and the standardization of distance and signage, all underscore the ways in which Britain’s overland infrastructure developed at an impressive rate over the long eighteenth century, and radically altered its perceived, conceived, and lived space. To get a sense of how drastic the augmentation of the British infrastructure was, contrast John Ogilby’s map of the “principal roads” in England and Wales from 1695 with John Cary’s map of the same one hundred years later in 1795. A side by side comparison illustrates the marked increase in roadways throughout the England, Wales, and Scotland. (Illustrations 3 and 4, respectively)

**Advances in Road Construction and Repair**

*Roads have in all times been among the most influential agencies of society; and the makers of roads, by enabling men readily to communicate with each other, have properly been regarded as among the most effective pioneers of civilization. Roads are literally the pathways not only of industry, but of social and national intercourse.* Samuel Smiles

In addition to changes in the responsibility for the maintenance of the roads, the augmentation of the overland network, and the implementation of navigational markers, the engineering and construction of British roads went through numerous improvements over the long eighteenth century. Sir Walter Gilbey describes early roads in Britain as mere “cattle tracks and water-courses”: byways which made use of livestock’s movements or the gravel bottomed bed of a low water stream. As Jo Guldi has observed, many roads in the early part of the period

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were initially built or improved upon by the British military, in an attempt to bind the nation together and suppress internal dissent and were, in reality, used relatively infrequently. Roads that had been designed for occasional use — even the occasional use of a large military force — could not hold up under the increasing traffic in the eighteenth century and that, coupled with the need for more roads to meet demand, led to the rise of the field that we now refer to as “civil engineering.” As early travel was largely water-based many of the first civil engineers (John Perry, Hugh Myddleton, John Smeaton, amongst others) focused primarily on drainage, canals, harbors, and other water works, considering roadwork to be beneath their talents. However, later

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Illustration 3: John Ogilby’s map of the principal roads, 1695.

87 Guldi, Chapter 1.
Illustration 4: John Cary’s map of the turnpike roads and canals, 1795.
investment in roadways, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century, substantially altered how roads were viewed and valued and, thus, how they were built. The earliest and most influential civil engineers of roads were John Metcalf (1717-1810), Thomas Telford (1757-1834), and John Loudon McAdams (sometimes MacAdams, 1756-1836), the most eminent of Britain’s professional road builders. Each of these men contributed substantially to the nation’s advances in infrastructure, materially altering Britain’s perceived space.

According to engineering historian Samuel Smiles's *Lives of the Engineers: History of the Roads* (1863) the blind, working class John Metcalf is to be credited with pioneering road building techniques which countered particularly soggy stretches in the English terrain. As early as 1752 Metcalf, previously a stage wagoneer, lobbied for and received a contract to build an approved turnpike road from Harrogate and Boroughbridge, a project which he finished in 1754. He was successful in this endeavor, a feat which was then rewarded by other government contracts for road and bridge building. It was during one of these later contract jobs, building of the turnpike road from Knaresborough to Harrogate, that Metcalf began to make significant changes to the science of road building. This particular route was complicated by a bog that lay between the two towns which the surveyor on the project believed was impassable. In order to win the contract, Metcalf offered to build the road across the bog to spare the expense of a detour around it.

In order to build through the marshy land, Metcalf first cut gutters alongside the proposed route and used the excavated dirt to built up the road bed. He then utilized common local flora as filler, specifically furze (a spiny and dense evergreen shrub) and ling (a species of heath or

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The Advance of the Mobile Woman: Representations of British Women’s Physical Mobility, 1660-1820

heather) which he bundled together to create a base for the otherwise marshy terrain. These organic mixtures were covered with layers of stone and gravel. Over time, the decomposition of the flora melded the bundles together, creating a strong — and dry — roadway. Smiles contends that, “when the materials had become consolidated, it proved one of the best parts of the road.”

With this success, and the contracts that followed, John Metcalf became the first British civil engineer to specialize in roads; he is credited with constructing over 180 miles of road over the span of his 40 year career.

Metcalf was not alone in his improvement of roadways. Following in his footsteps were two Scotsmen, Thomas Telford and John Loudon MacAdams. Telford, who had apprenticed as a stonemason and found fame as a bridge builder and a poet, was named the first president of the Institution of Civil Engineers, which was founded in 1818. Nicknamed the “Colossus of the Roads,” Telford pioneered two different styles of road building. Where the roads experienced normal wear and tear, Telford leveled and drained the land, then laid out large slabs of rock placed as close together as possible. The edges of these slabs were broken off and the remnants used as filler. When possible, Telford spread a layer of gravel over the road to aid with its incorporation, resulting in a decidedly durable final product.

For roads that were expected to experience greater amounts of traffic, Telford took even greater care. With horses and other working livestock in mind, these roads were leveled to a

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89 Samuel Smiles, *Lives of the Engineers III: History of Roads. Metcalf: Telford* (London: John Murray, 1879), 92, 88. Smiles notes that Metcalf’s system was so successful that similar measures were later taken by George Stephenson for his railway across Chat Moss. This is but one example of Metcalf’s ingenuity. For more, consult Smiles's work, 74-101.

90 Skempton, 441.

91 Ibid., 247.
maximum gradient of one in thirty to reduce the draught on hauling heavy loads. The roads themselves featured not one, but two, seven inch layers of rock and stone. The bottom layer, consisting of approximately three inch pieces of whinstone, limestone, or hard freestone, was crossbonded or jointed and set by hand. The spaces between these stones were filled with smaller bits of the same material packed by hand. On top of this, a second seven inch stratum of small pieces of whinstone (no larger than two and a half inches in diameter) was placed. Finally, a one inch layer of gravel completed the process.92 (Illustration 5) 93

Illustration 5: Telford's Roads.

Telford’s contemporary, and arguably the most famous road maker of the period, was another Scotsman by the name of John Loudon MacAdams. The two engineers had similar styles of road building, each depending upon layers of rock, stone, and gravel on raised beds, though the materials they used and specifics of the processes differed. MacAdams was among the earliest of road builders to build specifically to accommodate the vehicles travelling the roads, rather than to expect the vehicles to accommodate the roadways; an change in priority that underscores the growing import of wheeled conveyences. MacAdams's technique involved

92 Ibid., 247-248.
93 Image with permission from http://www.saburchill.com/history/chapters/IR/024.html.
building up the roads with large stones and then covering those with angular fragments of granite, greenstone, and basalt to create a bedrock several inches deep. Over the fragments, gravel (at first by itself and, in later years, mixed with tar to form a substance called “tarmacadams”) was placed to absorb wear and drain water more effectively. MacAdams was particularly careful about road maintenance during the initial consolidation period, refilling bald patches and replacing stone that had been displaced due to traffic, in order to insure that a consistent surface would be achieved. One of the smartest aspects of MacAdam’s model was that it effectively used the weight of the growing number of vehicles passing on the road to aid in the incorporation process. The end result was a pavement-like surface that was durable and relatively smooth, and which revolutionized overland transport and traveling.\(^{94}\) (Illustration 6)\(^{95}\)

**Illustration 6: MacAdams's Roads.**

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**The Westminster Paving Act of 1762 and Popularization of the Promenade**

Alongside the development of the roads network, advancements in walkways and promenades began to take shape. Historically, walking in and between cities and towns in Britain

\(^{94}\) Smiles, *Lives of the Engineers III*, 249.

\(^{95}\) Image with permission from http://www.saburchill.com/history/chapters/IR/024.html.

\(^{96}\) Image with permission from http://www.saburchill.com/history/chapters/IR/024.html.
was associated with poverty and, frequently, criminality. In 1762, however, the Westminster Paving Act was passed. Prior to this act, road maintenance in Westminster, as elsewhere, had been the responsibility of the homeowners, who were expected to tend their section of the street. Walking in London had been a dirty and dangerous business, with streets thick with mud, crowded with traffic, and filled with refuse. After the act passed, according to Roy Porter, “paving commissioners were appointed, with paid staffs; gutters were built on either side of the road, and in main streets Purbeck paving-stones replaced pebbles. Combined with a convex carriageway, gutters, and underground drains, pavements transformed street use, for now pedestrians could stroll along the sidewalks undisturbed by vehicles and horses.”

Further changes, like extending the hours of the street lamps from midnight to dawn, “encouraged nightlife - made for safety.” Later in the century, the appointment of John Nash as the architect of the Surveyor General of Woods, Forests, Parks, and Chases reshaped much of the city, creating thoroughfares and parks to be enjoyed by the “ton.”

Like many other fashions, the popularity of paving stones and other urban improvements to the streets was quick to spread from London to other parts of Britain and, as Peter McNeil and Georgio Riello have noted, “during the following decades similar acts were enacted in many country towns. By the end of the century, town centres were provided with walking facilities.”

This alteration in the physical layout of British towns, in addition to the improvement of the road

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98 Ibid., 126.

99 Ibid., 127.

and byways that linked towns together, created a whole new atmosphere for pedestrianism and socio-cultural attitudes towards walking underwent a significant shift. What was once considered an undertaking of only the poor or the suspect became a pastime for the middling stations and the wealthy, a point which will be returned to below.

**Regency British Roads and Walkways**

As a result of the shift in responsibility from parishes to turnpike trusts and home owners to paving commissioners, advances in street signage dictated by laws, and the work of civil engineers like Metcalf, Telford, and MacAdams, by the late Regency period, “local variations in road surfaces had vanished,” leaving a homogeneous network of roads characterized by its unity and internally knitting Great Britain together. Jo Guldi describes the end result:

> Across the entire nation, a ten-inch-thick bed of gravel, flint, limestone, whinstone, or pebbles, twenty feet wide, spread into a great and even monolith. The stone broken into even shapes and washed clean of loam and sediment were piled into a sloping mound, raised in the middle, so that water could drain into ditches on either side of the road. Hedges and trees were manicured to neither obstruct nor even shade any part of the road for a full thirty feet on either side of the highway. Wide footpaths, raised above the kerb, accommodated pedestrians on both sides of the road’s entire course, and the whole of its length was punctuated with milestones and guideposts.101

The fundamental alterations to eighteenth-century Britain’s perceived space, in the forms of the expanded and improved road network, both reflected and encouraged increasing movement on the part of British subjects — including British women. As men and women engaged in increasing amounts of professional and personal corporeal travel, a growing demand for published navigational tools and travel aids was created. The following section outlines the advancements in conceived space as embodied in the explosion of travel aids. It shows how

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these atlases and pocketbooks were marketed to women as well as men, as well as how publications for women began to include navigational material after the mid-point of the century. I argue that the inclusion of women as intended audience for this type of material offers yet more evidence of their increasing physical mobility, standing in stark contrast to the ideology of the home-bound domestic woman.

Navigational Publications: Maps, Atlases, and Road-Books

The ongoing improvement of the British roads system is well-documented in the developments in the cartographic and navigational texts of the period. While maps of Great Britain date back to at least the medieval period, it was beginning with John Ogilby’s survey and the resultant creation of Britain’s first road atlas, Britannia Atlas (1675), that the blueprint for road atlases for public use was created. From the late seventeenth century on, publicly accessible road maps and travel aids, many of them based directly on Ogilby’s work, proliferated. Atlases, maps, and travel books of Great Britain were published frequently and increasingly inexpensively, directly responding to the growing needs of an growing mobile populous. To give some sense of the sheer amount of this type of material, Sir Herbert George Fordham’s The Road-books and Itineraries of Great Britain, 1570-1850, though dated, lists over one hundred different road-books available to the public between the publishing of Ogilby’s survey and 1820, the majority of which went through numerous editions over the period.102

John Ogilby’s Britannia (1675) and John Cary’s New Itinerary (1798)

As “His Majesty’s Cosmographer and Geographic Printer,” John Ogilby is credited with creating the first cohesive road atlas of Great Britain, based on the survey he undertook in the

1670’s. In theory the work was to be divided into two volumes. However, only the first was ever published. The first edition in 1674 featured one hundred copper plate imprints, dedicated to depicting the main roads fanning out from London and connecting the capital to other major metropolitan areas. Mapping around 7,500 miles of principal roads, the volume replicated only a fraction of the approximately 26,600 miles Ogilby claimed to have surveyed.

The Britannia was an original concept. A collection of strip maps, it took the visual form of scrolled parchment. The traveller began at the bottom left corner and proceeded forward on his or her journey to the top of the strip which ended where the bottom of the following strip began. The map reader thus read the map from bottom to top and left to right, ending at the top right corner of the page. The map was drawn to scale, one inch to each 1760 yard mile, and each scroll featured a compass rose to aid in orientation. The maps noted towns and other landmarks along the way, to aid the traveler in his or her journey, and included interesting, if sometimes odd, peripheral information.103 (Illustration 7)104

The ostensible purpose of Ogilby’s original edition of Britannia was navigation, but the expense and size of the text severely limited its usefulness as a tome for those on the road. Early editions of the text were large and unwieldy, too cumbersome for travel, and too expensive for all but the wealthiest travelers. As Chris Mullens has observed, “Each map [in the atlas] measures 32 x 47 cms... The whole volume was clearly not for the convenience [sic] of the traveller.”105

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103 For further information and to see electronic versions of all 100 plates, visit Dr. Chris Mullen’s The Visual Telling of Stories at http://www.fulltable.com/vts/m/map/ogilby/mna.htm.
104 http://www.fulltable.com/vts/m/map/ogilby/b/SH950.jpg
105 http://www.fulltable.com/vts/m/map/ogilby/mna.htm
Rather, as Robert Philps explains, copies of the atlas were kept at inns and other reststops, to be consulted by travelers who would copy down the directions in pocket-books before setting out. The inconvenience posed by this method was soon rectified, when the author and his fellow cartographer and step grandson William Morgan published an “epitome” of the *Britannia* in 1676. After Ogilby’s death later the same year, Morgan continued to offer various versions of the text. These new editions took a note from the earlier travelers's practices, and were entitled alternately: *Ogilby and Morgan’s Pocket Book of the Roads with their Computed and Measured Distances; The Traveller’s Pocket-Book; or, Ogilby and Morgan’s Book of the Roads Improved*

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106 Philps, 150.
and Amended, in a Method never before Attempted; or, even more commonly, *The Traveller’s Pocket-Book*. This version was a smaller variation of the atlas which cut costs by doing away with the expensive prints and simply listing the distances in miles between cities in table form. A separate map could be purchased and affixed to the back of the book to supplement the tables. Though it was originally Morgan’s work, it later came to be printed by a large (and, over the years, changing) group of publishers. The pocket-book proved popular, going through numerous editions between 1676 and 1794 with each new version promising to be “corrected, and considerably improved.” ¹⁰⁷ The pocket-book was, as its name suggests, small and readily portable and while it continued to be loosely based off of Ogilby’s survey, regular publication of new editions meant that changes to Britain’s road network were kept up to date. At around a shilling for the book itself, and an additional shilling for the supplemental map (approximately one day’s wages for a laborer), *The Traveller’s Pocket-book* was widely affordable.

*The Traveller’s Pocket-Book* was not the only road-book available based on Ogilby’s work. In fact, the original atlas proved so fertile that it spawned seemingly endless “corrected,” “improved,” and otherwise altered versions of his survey, many of which were reduced in size and bulk and whose portability was aggressively marketed. In 1699, *The Traveller’s Guide, or, A most Exact Description of the Roads of England* also did away with the maps themselves, repurposing the information from Ogilby’s survey into a travel sized tome that explained how to get from point A to point B by way of descriptive directions. The author of the preface explained the text’s purpose by arguing that while the *Britannia* had been generally well received the “charge of engraving the maps had so much enhanced the price of the book, that it came into but

¹⁰⁷ To give some idea, the pocket-book was published a minimum of twenty-four times between 1760 and 1794.
Chapter I: Spheres, Space, and Possible Mobilities

few hands, and especially the bulk rendered it unfit for the use it seem to have been purposefully
compiled, I mean the direction of travellers.”

The enterprising John Senex published a version of Ogilby’s work for the first time in
1712 entitled *An Actual Survey of All the Principal Roads of England and Wales*, described as,
“First Perform’d and Publish’d by John Ogilby, Esq; and Now Improved, Very Much Corrected,
and Made Portable by John Senex.” Senex’s version, too, miniaturized the data, rendering the
information transportable, and therefore useful, for travelers. In 1720, *Britannia Depicta, Or,
Ogilby Improved: Road Atlas of England and Wales*, offered yet another version of Ogilby’s
survey. This work, like Senex’s, proved popular and had a long publishing run with successive
reprints offered by multiple editors until at least 1764. The assistant to the Quarter Master
General of His Majesty’s Forces, Daniel Paterson, published *A New and Accurate Description of
all of the Direct and Principal Cross Roads in Great Britain*, which enjoyed at least eighteen
editions between 1771 and 1826. William Owen’s *New Book of Roads: or, a Description of the
Roads of Great Britain* was published regularly from the mid 1770s until 1840.

More than 100 years after Ogilby, in 1794, John Cary was engaged by the British
Postmaster General to survey the post and mail coach roads of England and Wales. After having
been promised exclusive publishing rights to his findings, Cary, like Ogilby, undertook the
survey himself and spent over a year with a team measuring the British roadways, which had
grown considerably over the century. Initially, he and his team completed an “accurate

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109 All of these works proved popular and went through multiple editions. Senex’s work was first published in 1712 and re-published in 1742.

perambulation” of 9000 miles of roads, to which another 1000 miles was later added.111 These surveys served as the basis for his New Itinerary (1798). While Cary’s work lacked the artistic flair of Ogilby’s strip maps, his text consisted of accurate tables of the distance of principal and cross roads between the cities and towns. Unlike Ogilby’s work, the New Itinerary included the mail’s arrival and departure time in each, its size and population, the locations of post-inns and stagecoach schedules, along with other useful information of interest for the traveler moving between urban places. Cary’s survey essentially supplanted Ogilby’s work as the definitive measurement and description of British roads, with the added bonus of information pertaining to corporeal travel.112

Alternate Road-Books

Works directly based on Ogilby’s Britannia and, later, Cary’s Itinerary were not the only navigational tools available in the long eighteenth century, and early almanacks and pocket books of all types typically included basic directions to and from the market towns. The Exact Dealer Refined (1698), The English Chapman and Traveller’s Almanack (1702), The Tradesman’s Guide (1727), and The Traveller’s Pocket-Companion (1741), were all broader in scope than texts that were primarily variants of the surveys.113 Unlike the various atlases and maps that they were based upon, titles of these works are decidedly gendered in nature.

111 Fordham, 24.

112 The value of this information is evident in the ongoing lawsuit that sprung up between Cary and his contemporary Daniel Paterson. The year Cary’s New Itinerary debuted, Paterson published a new edition of his A New and Accurate Description of all of the Direct and Principal Cross Roads in Great Britain expanded and modified to include information from Cary’s text. As Cary had been granted exclusive rights to his survey’s data, he sued Paterson and won. Nevertheless, Paterson (and after his death Edward Mogg) continued to publish using Cary’s data, suggesting that the monetary benefits of publishing outweighed the risks of repeated lawsuits.

113 John Hill, The Exact Dealer Refined (London:H. Rhodes, 1698); The English Chapman and Traveller’s Almanack (London: Theodore James, 1702); Charles Pickman, The Tradesman’s Guide (London: R. Ware, 1727); and Person who has belonged to the publick offices upwards of twenty years, The Traveller’s Pocket-Companion (London: J Hodges, 1741) Each of these texts went through multiple reprints over the course of the long eighteenth century.
referencing chapmen, tradesmen, etc. However, while the language and professional titles specified in these early versions of these navigational tools were largely directed at men, the inclusion of women in the full title of *The Tradesman’s and Traveller’s Pocket Companion: or, the Bath and Bristol guide: Calculated for the use of Gentlemen and Ladies who visit Bath; The Inhabitants of Bath and Bristol; and All Persons who have Occasion to Travel* published in 1753 suggests that these texts were meant for and used by members of both sexes. By listing “ladies” alongside “gentlemen,” “tradesman,” and “travellers,” in the enumeration of the intended audiences, the guide explicitly acknowledges women’s use of navigational tools. Moreover, by the second half of the long eighteenth century, texts marketed specifically to women, such as *The Ladies Complete Pocket Book* (1753) and *The Ladies Own Memorandum Book* (1769) began, in editions dating from the 1770s, to contain tables of roads. The inclusion of tables of roads in these publications directed specifically at middle-class women suggests that the improving overland travel conditions directly affected women’s physical mobility, providing them with greater opportunity for movement. This expansion of women’s possible mobilities is illustrated in a variety of biographical and fictional texts of the time.114

**Women on the Road: Journals and Letters**

**Celia Fiennes (1662-1741)**

The autobiographical writing of the period reflects these developments in the roads system over the long eighteenth century. One of the most thorough chroniclers of the quality of the roads early in the period was Celia Fiennes, an English horsewoman who made multiple

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114 For more on the proliferation of atlas, travel books, and road maps, see: Dorothy Ballen et. al *Bibliography of Road Making and Roads in the United Kingdom*, (London: PS King and Son, 1914); Herbert George Fordham. *The Road-books & Itineraries of Great Britain 1570 to 1850 a Catalogue with an Introduction and a Bibliography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1924).
“home tours” around Britain in the years between 1685 and 1712. Fiennes's journal, published by her descendent Emily Griffith in 1888, frequently discusses the road conditions she encountered on her tours in the late seventeenth century. Fiennes has already been quoted noting that a turnpiked causeway was full of holes and her text goes on to offer numerous observations about the state of the roads she traveled. Fiennes's descriptions of the perceived space of the Restoration’s infrastructure give a good indication of the wide variety of road conditions at the end of the seventeenth century, when the roads were still primarily tended by locals. For example, of a trip between Newton Toney and Durly she writes, “The roads all about this country are very stony, narrow, and steep hills or else very dirty as in most of Sussex.” On another journey, at Hale, she describes the countryside as, “pretty much enclosed and woods; a rich deep country and so the road’s bad.” After visiting Hale, however, Fiennes writes about returning to a place where one of the early guideposts divided the four counties of Worcester, Oxford, Glocester, and Warwickshire. There she “ascended... a high hill and traveled all on the top of the hills, a pleasant and a good road,” on her way to Rowle Stone. The variance Fiennes found in the quality of the roads in such close proximity points to the significant disparities in the quality of roads at the time. Fortunately for Fiennes, her wealth eased the difficulties of travel. Because she was on horseback she wasn’t restricted to the roads of the time and when the roads were truly terrible she could take alternate routes. And because she had financial resources, her time was her own and she could alter her schedule and her itinerary if needed.

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116 Ibid., 54.

117 Ibid, 55.
Furthermore, the decided regional differences in the composition of the early roads are recorded in Fiennes's journal. Fiennes describes the ten-mile stretch of road from Dorking to Kingston in Surrey as “a chalky, hard road,” whereas the road between Worsup and Blith, is described as “a heavy, sandy way.” At Aberford she claims that “all the country is full of coal and the pits are so thick in the road that it is hazardous to travel for strangers.” Of the road to Dunstable, Fiennes observed that it was, “full of deep sloughs, in the winter it must be impassable,” though she goes on to note that alongside the same road, “there is a very good pitched causey for foot people and horses, that is raised up high from the road.” Upon entering into Norfolk she noted that the ground was low and flat along the Waveny river, so that even a little rain made the river overflow onto the road rendering it, “very unsafe for strangers to pass by reason of the holes and quicksands and loose bottoms.” Fiennes describes more precarious conditions in Ely, Cambridgeshire where two rivers meet, where even the causeway overflowed in the winter and reduced the locals to navigation by boat. Just past Ely, Fiennes passed into Huntingdonshire where, she noted, “the road was so full of holes and quicksands I durst not venture, the water covering them over and a stranger there cannot easily escape the danger.” She fared better along the Tyne in Northumberland, where the road, “was good hard gravelly way for the most part,” and again at Durham, where she encountered a “pleasant road.”

118 Ibid., 63; 89.
119 Ibid., 102.
120 Ibid., 118.
121 Ibid., 136.
122 Ibid., 141.
123 Ibid., 175; 178.
124 Ibid., 175; 178.
Other Women Travelers

Fiennes was not the only woman to travel around Great Britain, and though not all travelers were as forthcoming regarding the state of Britain’s infrastructure, many took note of the quality of the roads they utilized during their travels in their letters and journals. Though far from exhaustive, it is nevertheless telling that a search for “road*” on the British and Irish Women’s Letters and Diaries returned 102 hits between the years 1660-1749, whereas the same search between 1750 -1820 returned 1890 occurrences. While some of the instances of use in both date ranges referred to a metaphorical or figurative sense of “the road,” the numbers still point to a sharp uptick in historical women’s discussion of Britain’s perceived space in the form of its physical, material roads. Even accounting for the larger number of texts available as the period progresses the numbers demonstrate a decided, if imperfectly linear, growth in historical women’s interest in roads and, by logical extension, mobility.

While it would be not only impossible, but tiresome, to attempt to systematically list all of the instances of women discussing the quality of roads throughout the long eighteenth century, a few more examples from the database and elsewhere serve to underscore how essential the improved infrastructure discussed at the beginning of this chapter was to British women’s increasing capacity for movement. At the midpoint of the century, in 1750 the well-known essayist Catherine Talbot (1721-1770) made plans to go to Deal to see the sea for the first time. She wrote to her friend, poet Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806), to inquire as to whether the two might meet in Canterbury and go on to Dover and then Deal. Talbot’s letter asks not only if Carter could join her, but specifically inquires multiple times about the quality of the roads that the trip will entail. Carter responds directly, writing, “The road from thence to Dover I never
travelled, but my brother assures me ‘tis a very good one. The inn to which all strangers go there is the Ship. From Dover to Deal is eight miles, a good road, excepting the hill, which may be walked up, and there is a beautiful romantic prospect from the top of it. From Deal to Canterbury is sixteen miles, a most excellent road.”¹²⁵ It is clear from Talbot’s repeated questions about the quality of the roads, and Carter’s encouraging report, that road quality was key to the two women deciding in favor of undertaking the trip. Given the dangers that Fiennes enumerates in her descriptions of poor roads, Talbot’s concern about road quality is hardly surprising. However, in the sixty years since Fiennes's journal, the same years which saw the introduction of turnpike roads and the advancements in maintenance of Britain’s infrastructure, the roads had so improved that Carter asserts that all of the roads they will use are “good” or “excellent.”

Though Lady Mary Campbell Coke (1726-1811) is perhaps better known for her international travels than her domestic trips, the diary she kept of her movements, like Fiennes's, provides glimpses of the state of British roads later in the period. In an early entry in August of 1766, it was recent roadwork itself with which Lady Mary Campbell Coke took issue. Leaving her kinsman’s estate Wentworth Castle to return home, she writes, “The road as far as Rotherham was perfectly good, but for some miles on the other side the very new repairs made it very jumbling and disagreeable, and the dust never more troublesome.”¹²⁶ Later, Lady Coke addresses the conditions of the roads again when she recounts making an early morning trip to see her

¹²⁵ Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot, *A series of letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from the year 1741 to 1770*: to which are added, Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Vesey, between the years 1763 and 1787. Accessed through *British and Irish Women’s Letters and Diaries*. http://solomon.bwld.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bwld/getdoc.pl?S4455-D101

friend Mrs. Howe. In an observation that illustrates the abundance of overland traffic, Coke notes that though she was on the road between seven and eight in the morning, the amount of traffic on the road had already dirtied the way, complaining, “from the number of carriages upon the road it was very dusty.”

By 1774, during her travels in Wales with her family and Dr. Johnson, the writer Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi described the new and improved road along Penmaen Mawr in her diary. She writes that the road was, “lately made, very easy, and very safe,” and details the care taken to build the walls on either side of the road; the interior wall to protect travelers from falling rocks and the exterior wall to keep them from falling of the side over the cliff into the water below.

In May of 1779, in a comment that alludes to both the quality of the roads as well as the growing traffic, Thrale’s friend, the novelist Frances Burney, noted the beauty of the road from Streatham to Brighthelmstone. She writes in her diary about the trip, which she took with the Thrale family, “The road from Streatham hither is beautiful: Mr., Mrs., Miss Thrale, and Miss Susan Thrale, and I, travelled in a coach, with four horses, and two of the servants in a chaise, besides two men on horseback; so we were obliged to stop for some time at three places on the road.” It’s worth noting that their party alone was composed of a coach, a chaise, and two horseback riders, some of the popularizing modes of transportation which I discuss in Chapter III.


Chapter I: Spheres, Space, and Possible Mobilities

On a slightly different note, in *A Journey to the Highlands of Scotland* (1776, tentatively attributed to Mary Anne Hanway), the author begins her the first letter in her text by wryly claiming that:

> Nothing need be said of the road between England and this place [Scotland,] it being so universally known, since the legislature thought it fit to form an act which hath rendered it so usefully fashionable to the happy Hibernian heroes and English *misses* longing to throw off the leading-strings of parental duties.130

Hanway’s arch acknowledgement of the cultural significance of the principal road between London and Scotland due to its close association with elopement to Gretna Green, is a salient example of how transformative improved infrastructure was: how changes in perceived space directly affected corporeal travel and women’s possible mobilities. Although Lord Harwicke’s Marriage Act passed in 1754, it really wasn’t until the 1770s, when the toll road was built to Gretna rendering the passage to Scotland easier and — importantly — faster, that Gretna Green became the destination for runaway marriages.131 In this instance it was precisely because of the improved quality of the road that Gretna Green became virtually synonymous with elopement, and it was due to this widespread cultural significance that Hanway felt she could refrain from description. Once in Scotland, however, she does, take the time to describe the much lesser known Glencroe road which led into the highlands: “I cannot better describe it than by saying, it strikes a pleasing gloominess that I do not dislike, being new to me, who have only been used to bowl away upon a turnpike road in England.”132 Though she contrasts this road

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132 Hanway, 52-53. [http://openlibrary.org/books/OL19372022M/A_journey_to_the_Highlands_of_Scotland](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL19372022M/A_journey_to_the_Highlands_of_Scotland)
advantageously with English turnpike roads, granting the Scottish road a sort of melancholy romance, her description of “bowling away” on an English turnpike road serves as a tacit reminder that turnpiked roads were some of the finest quality roadways in the nation. In a final note about the quality of the roads she traveled on, Hanway goes on to say that the Glencroe road “has been rendered good by soldiers,” a subtle acknowledgement that though much of the responsibility for road building and maintenance was shifting, the English military still built and maintained untumpiked roads as a means of knitting the nation together and subduing the Highland Scots who sometimes resisted their rule.\textsuperscript{133}

While it may seem an obvious point, all of these women are writing about road conditions because they are using the roads. Each of these women, from Fiennes's extensive travels “for her health” to Hanway’s excursions around Scotland are women who are actively out on the road, traversing perceived space and, in doing so, shaping lived space. None of these women are engaged in domestic activities, and none are confined (nor seem much concerned with) matters of the home. This is of course not to say that none of these women ever performed domestic tasks, but rather to remind that, no matter what the conduct books were instructing, women, because of improving infrastructure, had the capacity to move out and about in public spaces.

**Novel Roads: Literary Representations of the New Infrastructure**

The influence of the expansion of the roads network and the improvement of the quality of the roads on women’s travel is witnessed in the fiction of the time as well. While observations about the conditions of roads in literature are mundane enough that they rarely are discussed at

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid, 53.
length, the effects of Britain’s altered physical space are clearly evident in the period’s literary works. As the century wore on, many plots which focused on or featured female characters were only possible because of the Britain’s new infrastructure.

Though some works specifically address the effect of the quality of the British roads on women’s travel, the subject usually merits only a passing mention. In *Tom Jones* (1749), the contrary Mrs. Western arrives in London and immediately complains about the quality of the roads saying, “Well, surely, no one ever had such an intolerable journey. I think the roads, since so many turnpike acts, are grown worse than ever.”¹³⁴ In Frances Burney’s *Evelina* (1778), Lord Orville’s sister, Lady Louisa, in a passage that echoes Lady Mary Coke, complains “the roads are monstrous dirty, you can’t imagine how troublesome the dust is to one’s eyes!”¹³⁵ And it is along another “dusty road,” rather than in the pleasant but confined walnut groves, that Miss Mandville likes to walk in *Orwell Manor* (1795), because, the text wryly observes, “There is no accounting for the caprices of pretty women.”¹³⁶

However, the effects of the expansion of British roads are most clearly seen not in specific quotations, but instead in the larger plots of eighteenth century texts. Certainly, the peregrinations of the eponymous heroine in Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* (1722) would not have been possible without a road system that allowed for extensive domestic travels. While the novel is set in the mid-seventeenth century, Moll’s easy movement back and forth between London and Lancashire, and around the English countryside, all seem to be predicated on an experience more

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¹³⁶ Mary Elizabeth Parker, *Orwell Manor* (Dublin: P. Wogan, P. Byrne, W. Jones, and J. Rice, 1795), 141.
in keeping with the roads and an ease of transportation that were not prevalent until the eighteenth century.

Likewise, Sophia Western’s adventures in *Tom Jones* would not have been possible without these eighteenth-century changes to Britain’s perceived space. She and Honour initially travel towards London on the London road, but Sophia, afraid of being overtaken by her father, asks the guide to reroute to the Bristol road.\textsuperscript{137} She chooses to travel via byways rather than great roads in order to avoid detection, a choice that gestures to the diversifying options for travel because of the growing number of roads.\textsuperscript{138} It is on a “wide and well beaten road” that Sophia and Harriet find an inn to stop at, as one would in mid-century Britain.\textsuperscript{139}

The entire plot of Frances Burney’s last novel, *The Wanderer* (1814), is dependent upon the protagonist’s ability to move around Great Britain via the roads. Though the story begins with a boat ride from France to England, all of the succeeding movement undertaken by the eponymous “Wanderer,” Juliet Granville, is over land, via the roads that by this late date wound throughout Great Britain. Granville’s arrival to England has her traveling first by chaise, which breaks down, and later by coach, from Dover to London to Lewes. Due to the “dirt of the roads,” she travels the short distance between Lewes to Brighthelmstone via dog cart rather than walking.\textsuperscript{140} She travels around the Brighton countryside in Mrs. Howel’s carriage and Mrs. Arbe’s chariot. Later in the novel she is accosted by Lord Sycamore in a post-chaise, takes the

\textsuperscript{137} Fielding, *Tom Jones*, 488.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 496.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 498.

stagecoach from London to Bagshot, and hires a post-chaise to go on to Romsey. All of her travel is possible only because of the expanded road system and the various forms of transportation it ushered in.

In fact, for a long stretch in the third volume of *The Wanderer*, the novel indicates the importance and the prevalence of the British roadways by way of negative example when Juliet Granville leaves the roads to avoid detection. In order to evade her husband, she abandons the “high-road” she has been walking on, and takes to the New Forest, “far removed from the ‘busy hum of man,’ from all public roads.” Granville’s early use, and later avoidance, of the roadways both point to the importance of the improving British infrastructure in the plots of novels, and underscore how central and commonplace roads, and the women’s movement they encouraged, had become.

**Conclusion**

The improved condition of Britain’s transportation and travel infrastructure, the published resources to navigate this infrastructure, and the historical and fictional texts which discuss women’s use of the British roads each serve as indicators of British women’s increasing physical mobility over the long eighteenth century. The roads, guideposts, maps, and pocket-books are material markers of this mobility, tangible reminders that movement was increasingly available and undertaken. The surveying and mapping of the British roads by Ogilby and Cary, and the portable tools for navigation that were regularly updated over the course of the long eighteenth century gesture to the growing need for dependable information regarding Britain’s rapidly

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141 Ibid., 655; 664.

142 Ibid., 675.
The Advance of the Mobile Woman: Representations of British Women’s Physical Mobility, 1660-1820

growing and changing road network and the proliferation of affordable and portable atlases, roadmaps, and pocketbooks, suggest that British subjects were taking greater advantage of the expanding road network. The inclusion of this type of navigational material in publications marketed specifically to women, the references in women’s journals and letters of the quality of roads, and the centrality of women’s mobility to the plots of eighteenth century novels all serve to remind that to the the evolving perceived space of Great Britain directly affected women’s possible mobilities, enhancing their opportunities to interact with a world exterior to the domestic sphere, which in turn helped to shape the lived space of the era. Contrary to the dominant narrative that women’s lives became more circumscribed over the period, the improving roads of Great Britain, coupled with the various conveyances for and modes of traversing them offered British women the opportunity to be mobile women and to exercise more agency and control over their navigation of space than previously possible.
Innovations in conveyance developed alongside the changes to Britain’s perceived and conceived space discussed in the previous chapter. The popularization of private carriages, the introduction of the stagecoach system and, later, post-chaises and mail coaches, all served to provide people with opportunities to move which previously would have been unimaginable. These innovations in vehicles also served to expand access to horses for riding and the growing availability of horses encouraged more equestrianism. In turn, all of these developments in movement significantly altered the socio-cultural attitude towards the act of walking. Whereas at the end of the seventeenth century pedestrianism had still been considered a marker of poverty and, frequently, criminality, by the Regency period ways of walking had developed which were lauded for their sociable and salubrious properties. Predicated on the advancements to Britain’s perceived space, as embodied in the more expansive, better built and maintained roads, changes in the material world of Great Britain reshaped the nation not only physically, but culturally. The long eighteenth century was witness to a fundamental shift in access to and attitudes about travel and physical movement, with corporeal travel becoming an increasingly common activity, available to an expanding group of people.

The literature and art of the period is rife with examples of this corporeal travel; full of characters undertaking these new or re-imagined forms of movement. Plays, novels, periodicals, poems, and visual artwork all discuss real world material advancements in movement and the men and women who enjoyed them. Here, I look specifically at how these diverse developments in physical mobility are represented as being widely adopted by the women of the period. Using
fictional and biographical sources, textual and visual works, I explore depictions of women engaged in different forms of physical movement, and the ways these works illustrate varying relationships between these mobile women and broader notions of space, movement, and agency. I consider each form of movement’s potential to afford women control and power; outline the benefits and drawbacks of women’s mobility; and chart the ways that women negotiated these new possible mobilities and reactions to them. The chapter begins with the advancements in the nation’s carriages, coaches, and chaises, exploring the proliferation of private and public vehicles and women’s access to and use of them. It then examines the popularization of women’s equestrianism, looking at the growing accessibility to horses and increasingly encouraging attitudes towards horseback riding. Finally, I trace the dramatic shift around public perceptions of women’s walking and the resultant changes in its practice. Each of these types of mobility are discussed in terms of the opportunity for control that they afforded women, as well as the sociological resistance they inspired in response to the agency that they offered.

**Private Carriages, Coaches, and Chaises**

“Ah, Mrs. Joyner, nothing grieves me like the putting down my coach! For the fine clothes, the fine lodging – let’em go; for a lodging is as unnecessary a thing to a widow that has a coach, as a hat to a man that has a good peruke. She eats and drinks and sleeps in her coach.”

Lady Flippant, *Love in a Wood* Wycherley, 1672

**A Brief History of British Carriages and Coaches**

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143 Please see chapter I for a further discussion of these connections.

Chapter III: On the Move: British Women’s Private Carriages and Public Coaches from the Restoration to the Regency

Concomitant with the augmentation of the roads system was the advent and development of the carriage and coach industries. The same period that saw the impressive expansion of the network of roads connecting Britain’s cities and towns witnessed a rapid evolution in vehicular design and the rise of transportation available for public use. The development of road networks discussed in Chapter II spurred on and responded to advancements in various forms of coaches and carriages, with both sides of the transportation relationship contributing to the growth of possible mobilities. The resulting rapid normalization of first personal, and later public, carriages and coaches made movement accessible to increasingly wider circles of people, and slowly changed both the purpose and the implications of riding in these vehicles. Perhaps the most important advancements in the mobility of women in the period between the Restoration and the Regency were these developments in the nation’s wheeled forms of transportation and the changes in public perception of women’s use of them.

While the earliest Medieval and Renaissance responses to the introduction of carriages and coaches in Britain painted the new technologies as catering to the indolent and – tellingly – effeminate, by the seventeenth century private carriages were becoming popular with a larger, though still largely affluent, body of consumers. Initially limited to royalty, vehicles became commonplace with the upper classes. In 1677, the “Worshipful Company of Coachmakers and Coach Harness Makers” was chartered by Charles II, an event that prompted Sir Walter Gilbey to conclude, in *Early Carriages and Roads* (1903), that, “The foundation of the company shows that the trade of coach-building was by this time large and important, while the interest taken by the King must have given an impetus to the business.”

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The King’s tacit approval certainly appears to have increased the desirability of private vehicles and, according to historian Richard Straus in *Carriages and Coaches: Their History and Their Evolution* (1912), by the later part of the seventeenth century, “To be anyone... you had to have your private coach.” Of course, the “anyone” here was initially limited to the very upper echelons of the socio-economic scale and Straus goes on to stress what Lady Flippant so passionately insists in the quote above, observing that, for the wealthy, “The private coach was the last luxury to be given up after financial embarrassment.” As both Straus and Lady Flippant make clear, the social cachet of the private coach was significant, and ownership of a personal carriage during this period was viewed as one of the primary symbols of wealth and power.

The agency that a private coach afforded implied in both Lady Flippant’s lament and Straus's assessment is echoed throughout life writing and fiction from the period, and featured in its artwork. The wealth, in both senses of the word, of women and female characters who owned, or aspired to possess, private carriages illustrates their desirability. Early on, when the famed memoirist Samuel Pepys went to check on the progress of his own coach at the coachmaker’s, he recorded that he found, "a great many ladies sitting in the body of a coach that must be ended [finished] by tomorrow; they were my Lady Marquess of Winchester, Lady Bellassis and other great ladies, eating of bread and butter and drinking ale." In text after text from the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth century, connections are made between money, private


147 Ibid.

148 Gilbey, 53.
carriages, women and power. Restoration plays in particular are filled with references to wealthy women and their carriages. As noted, Wycherley’s Lady Flippant has her own coach. So do Aphra Behn’s rich and powerful courtesans Angelica Bianca and La Nuche.\footnote{Aphra Behn, The Rover and The Rover Part II, respectively in The Plays, Histories, and Novels of the Ingenious Mrs. Aphra Behn. with Life and Memoirs, in Six Volumes, Vol. I ed. Montague Summers. (London: John Pearson, 1871) Google Books Edition.} In George Farquhar’s The Beaux-Strategem, Dorinda’s fantasies about becoming Lady Aimwell are conflated with the potential ownership of her own coach when she muses, “if I marry my Lord Aimwell there will be title, place, and precedence, the Park, the play, and the drawing-room, splendour, equipage, noise, and flambeaux – Hey my Lady Aimwell’s servants there!— Lights, lights to the stairs! – My Lady Aimwell’s coach put forward! – Stand by, make room for her ladyship.”\footnote{George Farquhar, The Beaux-Strategem. (London: Jim Dent and Co., 1898), 90. Google Books Edition.} In The Roundheads, Behn’s character Lady Lambert distinguishes herself from the masses by her ownership of a carriage, complaining, “the Rabble! — those faithless things that us'sd to croud my Coach’s Wheels, and stop my Passage, with their officious Noise and Adoration.”\footnote{Aphra Behn, The Roundheads; or The Good Old Cause in The Plays, Histories, and Novels of the Ingenious Mrs. Aphra Behn. with Life and Memoirs, in Six Volumes, Vol. I ed. Montague Summers. (London: John Pearson, 1871) Google Books Edition.}

A few years later John Dryden’s Marriage a la Mode reiterates the conflation of a wealthy woman’s identity with her coach when Doralice explains, “Your town lady, who is laughed at in the circle, takes her coach into the city, and there she’s called your honour, and has a banquet from the merchant’s wife, whom she laughs at for her kindness.”\footnote{John Dryden, Marriage a la Mode in The Dramatick Works of John Dryden, ed. Sir Walter Scott. (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1882), Google Books Edition.} The distinction Doralice makes here between the town, which was the seat of the court and home to the nobility...
and the gentry, and the city, center of commerce and mercantilism, points to the specific socio-economic significance of the private coach early in the century. The physical mobility the coach provides from “town” to “city” is concurrently sociological movement, an entrance into a lower social order. The lady who is not good enough for “the circle,” or the elite, can use her private coach to impress “the merchant’s wife”—a woman below her on the social ladder, one who, at this early date, would not be wealthy enough to have access to private transportation.

In each of these cases, the wealthy woman’s agency and identity is tethered to her coach ownership. Behn’s courtesans can practice their trade in part because of the mobility that their carriages afford them; Dorinda’s consideration of Lord Aimwell as husband is predicated exclusively on the material wealth it will provide her and the power that a coach will grant her to force others to “stand by” and “make room”; Lady Lambert’s dismissal of “the Rabble” hinges on their annoying habit of impeding her mobility. In perhaps the most salient example, Doralice’s conflation of a lady’s private coach with socio-economic hierarchies makes explicit the physical and social power a lady’s coach could award its owner.

The Coach and Six

In the early part of the era, most coaches were so heavy that they had to be drawn by six horses, a configuration known by the self-explanatory moniker “the coach and six.” A large and weighty carriage, the coach and six necessitated ownership, or at least access to, six horses at any given time as well as a postboy or coachman to drive them and usually several other servants such as footmen. As a form of transportation, it was the most luxurious available, and was synonymous with power, agency, and, frequently, courtship. For much of the period the coach and six symbolized the ultimate in marital dower from a suitor to his intended and, paradoxically,
one of the most important enticements to settle into married domesticity was the promise of the freedom of a coach and six.

In a later Wycherley play, *The Gentleman Dancing Master* (1672), the young heroine Hippolita has been promised a coach and six by her lover if she runs away with him. She succinctly sums up its allure, saying: “What young woman of the town could ever say no to a coach and six, unless it were going into the country? a coach and six!” 153 In a letter to the Duchess of Portland in 1740, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu writes, “For my part, when I marry, I do not intend to enlist entirely under the banners of Cupid or Plutus, but take prudent consideration, and decent inclination for my advisers. I like a coach and six extremely, but a strong apprehension of repentance would not suffer me to accept it from many that possess it.” 154 A negative example of the coach and six’s romantic value is offered in Colonel Bastion’s lament in Susannah Centlivre’s *Perplexed Lovers* (1712): “I have nothing but a faithful heart to balance his Estate, and Title, no gold to give in Dowery with my Love, no Coach and Six to praunce it in the Ring, no Diamond Bait to glitter in the Box, no Thousand Pounds to hazard on a Card; this Sword is all my Fortune, and Love the only Jointure I can make.” 155 On a somewhat similar note, the satirical poet Alexander Pope connects the coach and six specifically to women when, in *The Rape of the Lock*, he writes, “While fish in streams, or birds delight in air/Or in a coach and six the British fair.” 156 These examples highlight how a coach and six was amongst the most prized

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offerings to a woman on the marriage market. While this connection between a vehicle that offered women control and power and an institution that denied them the same seems paradoxical, the fact that the physical mobility and agency a coach and six provided was proffered in return for a woman’s acceptance of marital proposals underscores the vulnerabilities of a domestic thesis that depends upon believing that women were confined to the private sphere. It is likely that many women – or as many as were able – heeded the cheeky advice offered them in the epilogue to Addison’s *Cato* (1712): “The woes of wedlock with the joys we mix/’Tis best repenting in a coach and six.”

Obviously, not everyone could afford the luxurious and expensive coach and six. With the expansion of the middling orders that began in the mid-seventeenth century and gained traction in the eighteenth century there was a dramatic increase in the types of private vehicles available. Carriages, coaches, calashes, chariots, chaises, cabriolets, curricles, gigs, landaus, phaetons, and whiskeys (to name but a few) were ushered in, as those in the middle ranks aspired to the possessions of their social superiors. These various versions of wheeled vehicles all either date from this period, or experience significant alterations during it, broadening women’s possible mobilities by offering modes of conveyance at a variety of price points. This influx of vehicles somewhat altered their significance which, while remaining primarily the providence of the well-to-do, allowed for those in the upper-middling and middling orders an opportunity to own a

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159 For more on the various prices of the different kinds of carriages and coaches, see William Felton, *A Treatise on Carriages*. 
vehicle even if they couldn’t afford the coveted coach and six.\textsuperscript{159} Though all of these vehicles were used to some extent by women, the phaeton in particular was a popular choice.

**Phaetons and Phaetonas**

*Phaetons, for some years, have deservedly been regarded as the most pleasant sort of carriage in use, as they contribute, more than any other, to health, amusement, and fashion, with the superior advantage of lightness, over every other sort of four-wheeled carriages, and are much safer, and more easy to ride in, than those of two wheels.* – William Felton, 1796

As the century wore on, the phaeton seems to have been more closely associated with women than other types of carriages. Apart from the highly desirable coach and six, the phaeton, which was described as “deliciously dangerous,” appears to have also held broad appeal for women who were frequently depicted in them. These smaller, lighter weight carriages were owner driven, with no coach box, and were known to be driven by women as well as men. In *A Treatise on Carriages* (1794), transport historian William Felton describes the steps to the high perch phaeton as specifically accommodating women’s needs observing, “To high phaetons, there are many steps devised besides the fixed treads to the carriage… for the more easy accommodation of the Ladies.”\textsuperscript{160} Not only were phaetons constructed with accessibility for women taken into consideration, but as William Bridges Adams notes in *English Pleasure Carriages*, women drove the carriages themselves. He writes of the eighteenth century, “Pony Phaetons of a Cabriolet form were at one time very fashionable... These carriages are principally used for parks, where ladies drive themselves.”\textsuperscript{161} Contemporary news from the period


substantiates this assertion, though it seems that women did not limit themselves to driving around the parks. For example, *The Gentleman's and London Magazine: Or Monthly Chronologer* of 1788 reports an accident suffered by one Mrs. Benwell who, while driving to London in her phaeton, was almost struck by an out of control cart with a sleeping driver. The article notes that she, “had just time to turn out of the way, which she fortunately effected.”

Women drivers of phaetons are mentioned in multiple works of fiction of the time as well. In the novel *The Adventures of Mr. Loveill: Interspers'd with many Real Amours of the Modern Polite World* (1750), immediately after Lady Juliet is widowed, she spends so much time visiting in London that she wears out her chairmen; she then drives herself to Bath in her phaeton to socialize further. Hannah Cowley’s 1785 comedic play, *Which is the Man?* mocks the practice, by including an off-stage run-in between Mrs. Bell’s coach and Mrs. Whipcord’s phaeton, when the satirically named Mrs. Whipcord’s wild driving ends with the two vehicles's traces (straps) entangled. The tongue-in-cheek nature of this and other texts suggests that the practice of women driving themselves was somewhat controversial, and in the moralizing text, *Dialogues Concerning the Ladies* (also 1785) the author Mrs. Sheldon marks it as an unladylike behavior. In “Dialogue V: Miscellaneous Observations Relative to the Ladies” she writes, “Nor does it seem natural to me to see a woman even driving a phaeton.” Nevertheless, the wording of her criticism, specifically the inclusion of word “even,” suggests how reactionary her stance was while simultaneously hinting that the women’s driving had already become commonplace.

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Along the same lines, George Coleman mocks the trend in the prologue to his 1778 play, *The Suicide, a Comedy*:

‘TIS now the reigning taste with Belle and Beau
Their art and skill in Coachmanship to show.
Nobles contend who throws a Whip the best;
From head to foot like Hackney-coachmen dress’sd:
Duchess and Peeress too discard their fear,
Ponies in front, my lady in the rear.
A Female Phaeton all danger mocks,
Half-coat, half-petticoat, she mounts the box;
Wrapt in a dusty whirlwind scours the plains,
And cutting—Jehu!—whistling—holds the reins.
Happy, thrice happy, Britain, is thy state,
In the year seventeen hundred sev’nty eight,
When each sex drives at such a furious rate.

Although Coleman’s assertion that men and women display their “art and skill in coachmanship” takes aim at both sexes, the prologue quickly limits itself to mocking female drivers. His description of the noble’s clothing, “like Hackney-coachmen dress’sd” and women’s attire as “half-coat, half-petticoat,” (an issue taken up in greater detail in Chapter V), underscores his derisive attitude toward female drivers, as does his complaint about their, “cutting,” “whistling,” and “hold[ing] the reins.” Here, to “cut” is to wield a whip or lash, and “whistling” is a reference to the sound of a “broken-winded horse.” Both of these descriptions suggest an aggressive style of driving, which is reiterated in the exclamation, “Jehu!” a Biblical allusion to and contemporary term for a “furious coach driver.” The description of British women “hold[ing] the reins,” had the connotation then, as it does now, of possessing control, another aspect of the practice the narrative voice satirizes. Additionally, the figure of the “Female Phaeton,” is an obvious pun on the carriage and the Greek character for whom it’s named. In the myth, Helios's son lost control when driving his father’s sun carriage, which resulted in his plummeting toward
the Earth and threatening the wellbeing of all humankind. The sexualized allusion here suggests that the female drivers are exhibiting a similar sort of dangerous hubris and, perhaps, that their behavior is dangerous for society as a whole.

Of course, more nuanced literary representations of women driving phaetons exists as well. Probably most famously, in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) Miss Anne de Bourgh drives her own phaeton and ponies. While this association might at first seem unflattering (Miss de Bourgh is described as “thin and small” and “sickly and cross” and is, at least tangentially, positioned as the antagonist to the novel’s heroine) it’s worth noting that she is not the only female character in the novel to be associated with a phaeton. Late in the text, when Elizabeth Bennet’s likable aunt Mrs. Gardiner writes to her about Pemberley, she announces: “I shall never be quite happy till I have been all round the park. A low phaeton, with a nice little pair of ponies, would be the very thing.”\(^{165}\)

In *Pride and Prejudice* phaetons are the preferred mode of conveyance with the ladies mentioned, most likely because they could be easily managed by a woman alone — even a woman of limited physical strength like Miss de Bourgh. Their broad popularity is hinted at, given the two contrasting figures with whom they are linked, and the text seems to suggest that a woman would enjoy the luxury of a phaeton in which she could drive herself. Certainly this widespread appeal is reflected in Sir Walter Gilbey’s assertion that, “Driving as a pastime came into vogue about the beginning of the [nineteenth] century, when it became fashionable for ladies to display their skill on the coach box.”\(^{166}\) Miss de Bourgh’s practices, Mrs. Gardiner’s wishes,


\(^{166}\) Gilbey, 122.
and Gilbey’s observation remind that physical mobility for women and the agency that vehicles provided them was highly valued.

**Modern Females: Contemporary Prints of Women Driving**

Contradictory depictions of women driving phaetons are perhaps even more noticeable in pictorial art from the long eighteenth century, where there are numerous representations of the practice. Here, too, the earlier works tend to be satirical in tone, and several prints use the trope as a form of negative political commentary. In the following pieces it is precisely the control over physical movement that female phaeton drivers wielded that is used as metaphor for what the artist clearly views as inordinate and inappropriate power in politics. This trope hints at anxieties provoked by women’s adoption of mobility through carriages, and the ways in which it could be read as analogous to greater agency.

In a print from 1776 entitled, “Phaetona or Modern Female Taste,” the female subject drives a pair of ponies, seated in a high-perch phaeton. The woman sports an enormous coiffure, decorated with massive ostrich feathers, as Frenchified fashions which were subject to much ridicule at the time. She wears a military-style riding habit with a high collar and is positioned leaning forward in her seat, with her arm outstretched and reaching forward, dangling a whip over her ponies. Her phaeton features a ducal coronet, and some have suggested that the print is intended to satirize the notorious Mrs. John Foster, the well-known writer. Regardless of the specific target, the print is clearly meant to criticize women more generally, as its subtitle, “Modern Female Taste” makes clear. The absurdity of the woman’s coiffure, clothing, and, most

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167 Foster, née Hervey, was well known not only as a writer, but for her unusual personal life, which she shared with her best friend Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire and Georgina’s husband, the Duke of Devonshire, herself becoming Duchess of Devonshire only after Georgina’s death. For more information, see the contextual information provided by M.Dorothy George, ‘Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires in the British Museum’, V, 1935).
important, activity is evident in the details of the print. Her hair and feathers are depicted as being larger than the her horses; her posture, with her arm extended upward, mock heroic: her phaeton excessively elevated off the ground. (Illustration 8)

Illustration 8: Phaetona or Modern Female Taste Published by M. Darly, 1776.

Several years later in 1781 another print, this one entitled The Modern Woman, revisited many of the same themes. This print is similar in various ways to Phaetona, or Modern Female Taste: the phaeton is also driven by a woman wearing ostrich feathers in her hair and brandishing a long whip. In an outfit reminiscent of Coleman’s satirical description, she wears “Half-coat, half-petticoat,” – the short coat and waistcoat of a riding habit paired with a more feminine ruffled skirt. Her outstretched arm is positioned almost identically to Phaetona’s, though this
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driver stands rather than sits. In place of the ducal coronet, her phaeton features a crest with the head of a stag in an oval with the caption, “Fashion.” (Illustration 9)

![Illustration 9: The Modern Woman published by Hannah Humphrey, 1781.](image)

In a departure from the earlier print, this female driver is accompanied by a male companion. Standing, she towers over him as she drives the tiny horses. Her companion appears to be terrified, posed in an ambiguous position where either his hands are up to his face in shock or, perhaps, he is praying. The inscription beneath the print reads:

Talk not to me Sir of yr old Fashion’d rules,
E’en laugh’d at by Children, the Joke of the Schools:
They might do for yr meek minded Matrons of old,
Who knew no use of Spirit but their Servants to scold.
But for me Z———ds & Blood am not I fit to command,
I can swear Sir, & What’s more drive four Horses in Hand.

Art historian M. Dorothy George suggests that this piece depicts Agnes Townshend, a
noted courtesan in the eighteenth century, though other scholars posit that this is a depiction of
the original Duchess of Devonshire, Georgiana. In either case, the satiric inscription mocks a
thoroughly confident female voice which distances itself from “meek minded matrons” and
conflates being “fit to command” with the ability to “drive four horses in hand.”

A year later in 1782, a Thomas Colley print featuring Mary Robinson driving Charles
James Fox was published. Robinson, an actress, writer, and professional mistress nicknamed
“Perdita” (“the lost woman”) by her lover George, Prince of Wales (later George IV), for her role
on stage of the same name. She was later a companion to Fox, who was a powerful Whig
politician. In this print, as in the previous two, Perdita wears ostrich feathers and a riding habit.
She, too, wields a whip. Her horses and carriage are less disproportionately drawn, though her
initials are prominently displayed, emblazoned on the side of the phaeton and denoting
ownership. While Fox is not pictured in the same position of panic or prayer that the figure in
*The Modern Woman* is, he is nevertheless dejected, one hand holding his hat (literally, “hat in
hand”) which shows his initials stamped on the inside, the other hand appearing to clutch his
heart. The sharp contrast between the placement of the characters's initials, coupled with the fact

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168 M. Dorothy George, author of *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires in the British Museum V* (1935), suggests that the piece depicts Townshend: “The signature suggests that the lady may be Agnes Townshend, a noted courtesan, known as vis-à-vis Townshend, a noted whip, who drove her phaeton and four all over the country. See: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1456783&partId=1&searchText=the+modern+woman,+1781&page=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1456783&partId=1&searchText=the+modern+woman,+1781&page=1). However, this print does not depict a vis-à-vis, that is, a carriage in which the passengers faced each other. Mike Rendell, independent scholar and author of *The Georgian Gentleman*, has suggested Georgiana instead. [http://blog.mikerendell.com/?p=2951](http://blog.mikerendell.com/?p=2951)
she is driving while he is being driven, indicates the power relations between them. Perdita physically and figuratively holds the reins.169 (Illustration 10)

Each of these depictions of women driving their phaetons is satirical, mocking the power and control that naturally attend women “holding the reins.” In addition to this, each of the specific women featured in these prints (regardless of which women they actually were) engaged in untraditional gender relations: the Duchesses of Devonshire lived in a tryad with their Duke, Agnes Townshend was a professional courtesan, and Mary Robinson a mistress to several of the most powerful men in the nation. The trope of physical mobility as metaphor for female sexual

169 Ibid. George has argued that the title appears to have been a George Selwyn witticism. She also cites a paragraph in the *Morning Herald*, 17 Sept. 1782, which noted, "In the late Phaetonic expedition of Perdita and the eloquent Patriot it is to be distinguished that the lady gives the gentleman the airing, and not, as usual, the gentleman the lady." For more, see the British Museum: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1457144&partId=1&searchText=perdito+and+perdita&page=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1457144&partId=1&searchText=perdito+and+perdita&page=1)
transgressions is here coupled with an anxiety around women exerting unsuitable levels of control, agency, and power.

Not all representations of women driving phaetons were negative, however. Later in the century, in a print from *The Gallery of Fashion* August, 1794, two young women are enjoying a drive in their high perch pony phaeton. In this print in a magazine for women, unlike the satires above, women driving phaetons is depicted as a fashionable, even healthy, pastime. Though these women also wear ostrich feathers they are stylish, not absurd, and the ladies are attractively and comfortably dressed “en neglige.” They are described as “taking an airing,” an allusion to a salubrious and appropriate practice for women. (Illustration 11)

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Gadding About: The “Dangers” of Women in Coaches

Regardless of the type of carriage utilized by women, their driving was a source of masculine anxiety. Throughout the century, a woman’s private coach was viewed as the height of luxury, not simply because it was an expensive possession to acquire and maintain, but because it granted her agency and control over her physical movement and was a relatively safe form of conveyance for women. Although there were highway robberies, like the one Henry Fielding’s Mrs. Western experiences in her personal chaise, and the potential for overturning, as happens to Madame Duval’s coach in Burney’s *Evelina* (both dangers inherent in any transportation of the time), personal carriages generally granted women a great deal of secure movement. The real dangers, such as they were, of women in private carriages lie precisely in the autonomy that the vehicles afforded them, dangers for the male guardians of women’s bodies much more so than for the women themselves, and the fears that women’s access to private coaches engendered in men are prevalent in both the writing and the visual art of the period.

Perhaps most neatly summed up in a scene from William Congreve’s *Love for Love* (1695), concerns around women in carriages centered on a conflation of physical mobility and sexual freedom. The play includes a conversation between Angelica and her uncle Foresight, which turns on Angelica’s access to transportation and highlights this anxiety:

**Angelica:** Is it not a good hour for pleasure too, uncle? Pray lend me your coach; mine’s out of order.

**Foresight:** What, would you be gadding too? Sure, all females are mad today. It is of evil portent, and bodes mischief to the master of a family. I remember an old prophecy written by Messahalah the Arabian, and thus translated by a reverend Buckinghamshire bard: -

‘When housewives all the house forsake,
And leave Goodman to brew and bake,
Without guile, then be it said,
That house doth stand upon its head;
And when the head is set in grond,
Ne marl, if it be fruitful fond.’
Fruitful, the head fruitful, that bodes horns; the fruit of the head is horns. Dear niece, stay at home—for by the head of the house is meant the husband; the prophecy needs no explanation.

Angelica: Well, but I can neither make you a cuckold, uncle, by going abroad, nor secure you from being one by staying at home.

Foresight: Yes, yes; while there’s one woman left, the prophecy is not in full force.

Angelica: But my inclinations are in force; I have a mind to go abroad, and if you won’t lend me your coach, I’ll take a hackney or a chair, and leave you to erect a scheme, and find who’s in conjunction with your wife. Why don’t you keep her at home, if you’re jealous of her when she’s abroad?170

As the excerpt illustrates, one of the concerns around women and their coaches interpreted women’s increasing possible mobilities as affording them sexual license. In a variant of the satires of the sexually unconventional women driving phaetons above, Foresight’s conviction is simultaneously broader and more focused; he is convinced that women “gadding” about will lead to “the fruitful head that bodes horns.” Foresight’s fear of cuckoldry is rooted in a woman’s capacity for physical movement and, in ways that are echoed in the criticisms of women driving phaetons, he conflates women’s physical movement with sexual permissiveness.

Moreover, Foresight’s fear of cuckoldry is not localized, as would be expected, but rather generalized. As Angelica points out, his anxiety around connections between women as corporeal travelers and sex aren’t limited to the potential unfaithfulness of his wife. In this case, Angelica is Foresight’s niece, not his wife, and thus cannot cuckold him. Yet her movement threatens his sense of sexual security nonetheless. Foresight’s stance is that the movement of women, and the agency that attends women’s mobility, threatens the sexual security of all men.

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Foresight references a specific prophecy that forewarns of the fall of man through woman’s adultery, adultery made possible by her access to wheeled vehicles and the physical movement they afforded. Similar meeting points between women’s physical mobility and the potential for sexual licentiousness are revisited in a variety of satirical prints over the period. James Gillray’s *The Fall of Phaeton* and the anonymous *The Princes Disaster, or a fall in the Fitz* both suggest this anxiety by referencing an actual carriage accident that occurred in July of 1788 involving the Prince Regent and Maria Fitzherbert, his longtime mistress and (later, possibly) secret wife. Gillray’s work depicts Mrs. Fitzherbert, who has fallen from a phaeton, on her hands and knees with her skirts over her head and her derriere uncovered. The Prince of Wales is falling after her, albeit gracefully, set to land with his face in her exposed posterior. In the background a soldier smirks and a worker starts, his hands thrown up in the air in surprise.


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171 The two had were tossed from George IV’s phaeton while out taking air one day.
The piece clearly conflates the literal and euphemistic understanding of a “fallen woman.” The caption reads, “Th’ imaginary Bride with Beauty glows, For Envy magnifies what e’er She shows” – a paraphrasing from Ovid’s, “The Story of Phaeton,” a sly gesture to Fitzherbert’s “fall” and a probable attack on her presumed hubris. (Illustration 12)

Illustration 13: The Princes Disaster, or, a Fall in Fitz. Anonymous. Published by James Aitken. July 1788.

The Princes Disaster, or a Fall in Fitz retains the same theme of the “fallen woman.” In this piece however, Maria Fitzherbert is depicted in a supine position with her breasts exposed and her legs apart. The prince is again in the act of falling, this time positioned to land neatly between her spread thighs. In both prints the opportunity for illicit sexual congress is predicated on a ride in a phaeton – a carriage that, as discussed above, enjoyed the close association with women’s sexuality, as well as one with a portentous etymological warning. (Illustration 13)

While it may seem that the connections between carriages and sex may have been limited to lampoons on Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince of Wales, Thomas Rowlandson’s pornographic
print, *Rural Felicity; or, Love in a Chaise* makes it clear that the associations were broader than that. Printed in 1793, this satirical etching features young lovers who not only take advantage of the privacy afforded by their private chaise, but of the actual motion of the curricle itself to enhance their sexual experience.

*Illustration 14: Rural Felicity; or, Love in a Chaise. Thomas Rowlandson, 1793.*
In this print, the subjects are depicted mid-coitus. The woman is perched on the seat of the curricle with her skirts around her hips, her pantless partner kneeling between her legs. She holds a riding crop, raised in her right hand as if to strike her partner. Both participants appear to be enjoying “taking the air.” An inscription at the bottom of the print describes the scene:

The Winds were hush’d, the evening clear,  
The Prospect fair, no creature near,  
When the fond couple in the chaise  
Resolved each mutual wish to please.  
The kneeling youth his vigour tries,  
While o’er his back she lifts her thighs.  
The trotting horse the bliss increases,  
And all is shoving love and kisses.  
What couple would not take the air  
To taste such joys beyond compare

There was an privacy that these conveyances offered, here encapsulated in the line “no creature near” that admitted, or was at least suspected to admit, inappropriate intimacies, and here and in the satirical prints of Mrs. Fitzherbert above, it is not simply a chaise’s capacity for movement which promotes women’s licentiousness, but the movement of the vehicle itself. Lest this concern around the privacy of coaches seem conjecture or satire, it is worth visiting the trial of Lady Ann Foley and Lord Petersburgh, in which the two were accused of adultery and multiple witnesses swore they had seen Lady Foley and Lord Peterburgh engaged in the act of “carnal copulation” in his Lordship’s coach on numerous occasions.172 Of course, not all private carriage outings included sexual relations, but the potential for them, and the anxiety that this potential evoked, contributed to complicated socio-cultural significations of mobile women in private carriages. Both the fear of sexual licentiousness and, thus, cuckolding and the concern is

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172 The Cuckold’s Chronicles, (London: H. Lemion, 1793),
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around the agency and power corporeal travel permitted women rendered the mobile woman in a private coach a polemic figure.

Public Transportation

Stagecoaches

It is difficult to determine the exact period at which a stagecoach first appeared upon the road, but it seems to be pretty well ascertained that in 1662 there were but six, and one of the wise men of those days, — John Crossell of the Charter House, — tried his best to write them down. It was supposed he had the countenance of the country gentlemen, who were afraid if their wives could get easily and cheaply to London, they might not settle so well afterwards at the Hall or Farm.¹⁷³

Due to their expense, private carriages were not available to everyone, and by the mid-point of the seventeenth century forms of public transportation began to be introduced into Britain, though it would take until the improvement of the roads in the eighteenth century via the aforementioned implementation of the turnpike roads for widespread public travel networks to take root. Only the very wealthy could afford to purchase and keep a coach (and the horses and servants one necessitated), and as the period progressed the majority of people, were they to travel, would do so via public transportation. First on stagecoaches and, later, on post-chaises and mail coaches more and more people had access to movement. These innovations revolutionized women’s possible mobilities.

The earliest systems of public transportation, stagecoaches, first appeared in England around 1640, and were lauded in 1669 by Edward Chamberlayne, author of *The Present State of Great Britain*, as possessing:

¹⁷³ The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, *The Book Of Carriages; Or, A Short Account Of Modes Of Conveyance, From The Earliest Periods To The Present Time*. 1853.
such an admirable commodiousness both for men and women, to travel from London to the principal towns in the country, that the like hath not been known in the world... wherein one may be transported to any place sheltered from foul weather and foul ways, free from endangering one’s health and one’s body by hard jogging or over-violent motion on horseback; and this not only for the low price of about a shilling for every five miles, but with such velocity and speed in an hour as the foreign post can make in a day.\textsuperscript{174}

Chamberlayne maintains that the advent of the stagecoach service served as a (relatively) comfortable and affordable way to travel for those without the means for a private carriage and acknowledges that, from the beginning, members of both sexes engaged the services of the stagecoaches. His inclusion of women in his remarks on the passengers who used stagecoaches, and his claim that the attendant price was “low,” remind that this public form of transportation broadened the possibilities for women from a wider variety of socioeconomic backgrounds to move about.

Though the act of riding in a stagecoach was so quotidian that little direct attention in writing is paid to procuring and riding in it, the stagecoach is represented as being an increasingly common form of transportation for women across the social stations in the literature at the time. Without focusing much attention to the practice, authors as diverse as Daniel Defoe, Eliza Haywood, Charlotte Lennox, Henry Fielding, and Frances Burney (to name but a few of the most well-known), all wrote texts in which a female protagonist engages the services of a stagecoach. Once Moll Flanders has lost her own private carriage, she resorts to riding the stagecoach back to London from Chester, and later from London to Stone and back again, and still later to Dunstable. In Eliza Haywood’s \textit{Fantomina} (1725) the unnamed protagonist

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purposefully engages the same stagecoach as her errant lover in order to (re)seduce him.

Henrietta Courtney’s adventures begin when she hails the Windsor stagecoach to go to London in Charlotte Lennox’s *Henrietta* (1758) and Henry Fielding’s eponymous heroine, Amelia moves to London with her husband via stagecoach.\(^{175}\) The stagecoach expanded and democratized travel in ways which had private carriage ownership had not.

Although stagecoach travel became increasingly commonplace over the first half of the eighteenth century, it was not without its challenges. As with private coaches, travelers of both sexes were victim to stagecoach accidents. These accidents, in fact, seem to have been even more common in stagecoaches than in private carriages; so commonplace that historian William Conner Sydney claims, “The over-turning of stagecoaches was a matter of almost daily occurrence.”\(^{176}\) Stagecoach passengers also found themselves prey to the legendary highwaymen that populated the period like Dick Turbin, Jerry Abershaw, and Jack Sheppard, as well as other less famous hoodlums and footpads. For women, however, there remained an additional and sex-specific danger; namely, the harassment they were subject to at the hands of the male passengers with whom they were forced to share space.

In order to get a sense of the experience of riding in a stagecoach, it is important to know that they held a number of passengers, usually between eight and ten inside the coach itself, with second class seats available in a large basket fastened to the back, and the least expensive seats located on the roof of the coach. The areas were not segregated by sex and the passengers had no

\(^{175}\) Defoe’s Moll Flanders, Eliza Haywood’s Louisa (*The Fortunate Foundlings*), Charlotte Lennox’s, Henry Fielding’s eponymous heroines, Henrietta and Amelia, respectively, and Burney’s titular Cecilia all travel via stagecoaches.

control over who their travel companions were. The shared space of the stagecoach was a place for strangers of both sexes and various socio-economic backgrounds to meet and mix; a relatively unusual experience in a time period that was still suspicious of inter-sexual, inter-stational socializing, particularly with persons unknown. This arrangement meant that passengers had little control over to whom they were exposed. As the author from “The Correspondence of Caroline: Stagecoach Incidents” in *La Belle Assemblee* writes, “What contamination you may receive from passengers in a stagecoach, I am yet to learn. I have heard that these conveyances, like death, level all distinction….”177 (Illustrations 15 and 16)

Illustration 15: The Stage Coach.

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177 *La Belle Assemblee*. “The Correspondence of Caroline: Stagecoach Incidents.” (London: J. Bell, January, 1820), 28
The troubles that ensued from this arrangement were not lost on the authors of the period. Richard Steele, in particular, seems to have been sensitive to the ways in which the composition of a stagecoach ride created a space amenable to the harassment of women. He highlights some of the difficulties experienced by women traveling in the unsegregated space of the stagecoach in *The Spectator* 132. In this edition of *The Spectator*, the narrator finds himself returning to town in a stagecoach. He shares the stagecoach with “Mrs. Betty Arable, the great fortune, and the widow her mother; a recruiting officer (who took a place because they were to go); young Squire Quickset her cousin (that her Mother wished her to be married to); Ephraim the Quaker

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her guardian; and a gentleman that had “studied himself dumb from Sir Roger De Coverley’s.”

The Spectator uses this scenario to moralize about the more limited agency that public vehicles like the stagecoach offered to women, framing the discussion in terms of the inconveniences and dangers women in a stagecoaches are subjected to by men.

The journey begins with the opportunistic officer teasing the widow about marrying either her or her daughter, Mrs. Betty Arable. This ribaldry is not appreciated by the ladies or the other passengers in the coach, and the Quaker reprimands him, “If thou speakest improper things in the hearing of this virtuous young virgin, consider it as an outrage against a distressed person that cannot get from thee: ‘To speak indiscreetly what we are obliged to hear, by being hasped up with thee in this publick vehicle, is in some degree assaulting on the high road.'” The Quaker characterizes the realm of the stagecoach as a kind of public-private hybrid space, one in which people are “hasped up” with others in a “publick vehicle,” and the inopportune officer is accused of being a kind of highwayman, “assaulting [the other passengers] on the high road.” The Quaker is specifically concerned with the well-being of his ward, a “virtuous young virgin” whose exposure to this buffoon is both outrageous and distressing. The perceived and lived space of the stagecoach is here posited as simultaneously public and private: accessible to anyone with the means to pay, while simultaneously enclosed and intimate. Mrs. Betty Arable’s exposure to the officer happens only because she is in a stagecoach with him, she is “contaminated” by him in this space that “levels all distinctions.”

It’s worth noting the women’s social station here, for while Mrs. Betty Arable is described as “a Great Fortune,” the Quaker at one point claims they “cannot go any other way” to town. The women possess money, but not enough to maintain a private coach. The challenges to their mobility, though not physically dangerous, are nicely summed up in the person of the offending officer, who “takes advantage” of the situation to thrust himself on the women against their wills. The women’s male companion intercedes on their behalf, and the rest of the journey is spent peaceably.
between the passengers so improving after the Quaker takes the Captain to task for his behavior.

By the journey’s end Mrs. Betty Arable expresses “her satisfaction in the journey... declaring how delightful it had been to her.” Though the story ends cheerfully, the point is not lost that a woman could expect some unwanted attention from with men while traveling via stagecoach and that this form of public transportation, while offering some agency in terms of election of destination, lacked the control afforded women in private coaches.

This issue is one that *The Spectator* returns to on multiple occasions. It is briefly referenced in a letter in *The Spectator* 145, but treated more fully in the letter from “Rebecca Ridinghood” in *The Spectator* 242 December 7th, 1711 who writes of her recent experience in a stagecoach:

> I had the fate of your Quaker, in meeting with a rude fellow in a stagecoach, who entertained two or three women of us (for there was no man besides himself) with language as indecent as was ever heard upon the water. The impertinent observations which the coxcomb made upon our shame and confusion were such, that it is an unspeakable grief to reflect upon them.\(^{180}\)

Unlike the previous scenario, in which the women’s thoughts on the subject are unknown to the reader, the exposure of Rebecca Ridinghood and her fellow travelers to the “coxcomb” in the coach is recounted along with the author’s fury about the situation. The experience is so distasteful that the women are reduced to abandoning their stagecoach to liberate themselves from the male passenger’s onerous company. At the time, their physical removal from the coach is their sole means of recourse, but it is not Rebecca Ridinghood’s final salvo. Unlike the silent Mrs. Betty Arable, Rebecca Ridinghood vocalizes and publicizes her displeasure. While unable

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to control the situation within the stagecoach itself, she takes control of the situation after the fact. Incensed with her fellow passenger’s behavior, the author suggests that perhaps one of the beaus of the women in the stagecoach should “demand satisfaction” from the offending male passenger, with whom he may meet at the location where the women “all alight[ed] to get rid of him.” She also exhorts Mr. Spectator to devote another edition of his pamphlet to the bad behavior of men in stagecoaches and the ways in which women are unavoidably subjected to them in this hybrid space. She suggests that, in order to insure all male stagecoach riders see the paper, the issue be affixed to every stagecoach in the land. She writes, “If you will oblige us with a Spectator on this subject, and procure it to be pasted against every stagecoach in Great-Britain, as the law of the journey, you will highly oblige the whole sex, for which you have professed so great an Esteem.” Her plea that Mr. Spectator paste his admonishment “against every stagecoach in Great Britain” and her assertion that, were he to do so, he would, “highly oblige the whole Sex” indicates that women’s presence in stagecoaches and the sexual harassment that could accompany it, was commonplace.

This depiction of the limited power of female passengers to manage the drawbacks of riding in a stagecoach is similar to that described in detail in Delarivier Manley’s work from 1725, *A Stagecoach Journey to Exeter*. Purportedly actual letters sent by Manley during a stagecoach ride, this text straddles the theoretical fence between autobiography and fiction, recounting the narrator’s journey from London to Exeter. In it, the text’s narrator, like Steele’s fictional Mrs. Betty Arable and Rebecca Ridinghood, is plagued by a male passenger. In letters to

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181 Ibid.
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her friend, Manley refers to the other passenger as a “fop,” who insists upon regaling her (against her will) with long, boring stories starring himself and flirting with her.

These texts point out what seems to have been the primary difficulty of stagecoach traveling for women – exposure to men – while simultaneously intimating how common this form of transportation was for women in the long eighteenth century. By placing themselves in the stagecoach women exposed themselves to being bothered by men; by being in public they were sometimes treated as if they are public property. The behaviors of the boorish men in these altercations underscore the paradoxical position mobile women in stagecoaches found themselves in; in possession of the agency afforded by greater mobility, but also subject to limited control over the possible improprieties of male companions. While the women’s responses vary from modest silence on the part of Mrs. Betty Arable to Rebecca Ridinghood’s public indignation and Delarivier Manley’s searing quasi-private (framed as personal letters, but published by the author nonetheless) ridicule, each response acknowledges the inconveniences of the situation and illustrates a coping mechanism for its unpleasantness. These texts suggest that dealing with the drawbacks of traveling in a stagecoach is preferable to forgoing movement, that the benefit of increased mobility for women outweighed its costs.

The popularity of stagecoaches with historical women wasn’t limited to Manley, as evidenced in Catherine Talbot’s sympathetic declaration to Elizabeth Carter about Carter’s trip to Liege in 1763. The letter explicitly references not just the British stagecoaches, but the quality of the turnpike roads as well: “Your journey to Liege was dreadful, and I confess I had rather travel with five fat English gentlewomen in a stage coach along our smooth turnpike roads, than with
Mrs. Montagu herself vis a vis in these rugged and calamitous ways.” While the tone is tongue-in-cheek, with Talbot’s allusion to the inconvenience of a stagecoach ride with “five fat English gentlewomen” on the excellent British turnpike roads set up as a counterpoint to the pleasures of a vis a vis carriage ride with Mrs. Montagu on the horrendous French road, the fact that she references “gentlewomen” as her hypothetical companions once again stresses how common women in stagecoaches were. This seems to have been a favorite image of Talbots, as she wrote again to Carter in 1765, “This day is so warm that I am particularly glad you are not stuffed up in a snail-paced stage coach, with two tars, one smoaker, two fat gentlewomen (one of them sick with riding backwards), a little child, a lap dog, and half a dozen bundles.” is reiterated in Dorothy Wordsworth’s ride to London by stagecoach with her two maids in 1792 and, in 1796, Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra that she was disappointed, for she had wished to go to town by stagecoach, but her brother Frank wouldn’t let her.

Stagecoaches, whatever the dangers or inconveniences of possible exposure may have been, increased in popularity over the eighteenth century. Their popularity is evident even in the early examples of their use, where mobile women endured unwanted attention, and their appeal continued to grow. While they dominated public transportation for the first half of the century,

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182 Catherine Talbot, A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot from the Year 1741 to 1770: To Which are Added Letters from Mrs. Carter to Mrs. [Elizabeth] Vesey between the Years 1767 and 1787, vol. 3 (London: F.C. & J. Rivington, 1809), 43.

183 Talbot, 368.


they were later joined by a second form of public transportation, the post-chaise, which likewise expanded women’s possible mobilities.

**Post-chaises**

In 1743, “the system of traveling post… was introduced into England by one John Trull.” Post-chaises, differing from these coaches in size, cost, comfort, and speed, ushered in the next stage of travel in Britain. They were smaller, seated fewer passengers, and were more exclusive and expensive than stagecoaches. Unlike the stagecoach, the post-chaise was compact and light-weight, holding only one or two passengers at a time. They were pulled by two or four horses, with postilions riding on their backs and, as they could be individually hired, were considered a more “genteel” mode of travel. While the stagecoaches had set routes and ran on a schedule, a post-chaise was, by design, more flexible and could be hired to go anywhere the patron — or patroness — wished, stopping only to refresh the horses. In modern vernacular, stagecoaches are to public buses what post-chaises are to taxis.

It is perhaps unsurprising then that, as Ralph Straus points out, “The post-chaise became extremely popular.” He continues, “The literature of the mid-eighteenth century is full of references to it. All kinds of adventures happened to people in post-chaises. They were seen in every part of the country, they could be hired here, there, and everywhere.” Straus's observation stresses what I have striven to show here, that is, that post-chaises, like stagecoaches, were introduced in the historical world and soon thereafter into literary worlds, enhancing the mobility of both historical and literary women. The popularity of post-chaises with women, both

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186 Straus, *Carriages and Coaches.*

187 Ibid.
historical and fictional, is evidenced in a wide variety of writings from the time, a range of texts which look at the kinds of agency and power that they offered.

In a 1749 letter reminiscent of the print in La Belle Assemblee of the two women taking an airing in a phaeton, the famed bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu wrote to her friend Rev. Mr. Freind about passing time with Lady Sandwich in Tunbridge Wells, “We were here three weeks in great happiness and tranquillity; the place was thin of company, but I wanted none as I had hers; we drank the waters, and walked, in the morning; in the evening we went out together in a post-chaise.” Here, the post-chaise is a pleasant pastime for well-heeled ladies, and one that offers complete control over their physical movement. These advantages are reiterated in another letter from Montagu to Freind where she describes taking a post-chaise with her friends “like bold demoiselles errantes” — i.e., wandering ladies. This use of the post-chaise underscores the agency it offered affluent women who had the power to move about solely for pleasure and enjoyment. Elizabeth Carter provided a negative example of this association when she wrote to Catherine Talbot in 1760 saying, “Upon this occasion, I have mightily felt the want of two human conveniences, a post-chaise and a house. If I had been possessed of the one, I would certainly have come to Tunbridge; and if I had been mistress of the other, I would have endeavoured to prevail on you to come to Deal. But neither post-chaise nor house have I.”

However, the post-chaise was not the exclusive province of the wealthy, and its rapid spread and

188 Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, The Letters of Mrs. E. Montagu, With Some of the Letters of Her Correspondence, vol. 2 (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1809), 125. Montagu’s letters, published by her nephew and executor Nicholas Montagu, explain her repeated allusions to riding in post-chaises with the footnote, “Post-chaises were then newly invented by Jethro Trull.” This slightly odd, seemingly obvious, footnote seems to suggest that Montagu’s frequent references to post-chaises were grounded in the relative novelty of this form of transportation

189 Ibid., 288.

relatively reasonable price made it increasingly accessible to a wider range of women, with whom it became a popular form of transportation. By 1810, according to Elizabeth Spence, a three wheeled post-chaise in Helensburgh Baths could be rented for “fourteen shillings a day, exclusive of keeping the man and horse.”

Alongside the British women in the long eighteenth century who employed post-chaises, female characters from the period were often depicted as engaging this new method of transportation. Many of these depictions suggest that the post-chaise proved superior to the stagecoach as a form of transportation for women, most likely because it permitted greater agency and control and allowed women to avoid the inconveniences and “exasperations” [sic] of exposure as outlined in The Spectator and in Manley’s work. Due to this added convenience and safety, women in post-chaises were “here, there, and everywhere,” by the midpoint of the century and well-known writers such as Sarah Scott, Charlotte Lennox, Charlotte Turner Smith, and Frances Burney all wrote novels featuring female characters in post-chaises, exploiting and exploring this new form of travel’s varying degrees of agency and control.

While the letters cited above suggest the post-chaise offered a quasi-complete control by women over their own movement, Charlotte Turner Smith’s novels Emmeline (1788) and Etheline (1789) play with the range of autonomy and agency the chaise offered. In Emmeline, it is not the heroine, but instead her uncle who arranges the post-chaise to spirit her away from the family home. In Smith’s next work, Etheline, it is the heroine herself who hires a post-chaise.

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192 Scott’s The History of Cornelia (1750); Lennox’s Henrietta (1758); Smith’s triad of female centered novels: Emmeline (1788), Ethelinda (1789), and Celestina (1791); and Burney’s The Wanderer (1814) all contain passages with women making use of post-chaises.
This change in authority has been noted by Mary Anne Schofield, who suggests that this detail reflects Smith’s evolving gender politics. Schofield contends that the employment of post-chaises is representative of power, arguing that the male characters in *Emmeline* “create and control” the heroine, but that a year later in *Ethelinde*, “the women... make their own fate.”193 The shift in agency is symbolized by who directs the movement of the post-chaise and the corporeal traveler therein.

Although the ability to direct the movement of the post-chaise was key to its success as a mode of transportational agency, the anonymity that post-chaises could provide offered a variant of power. In Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer* (1814), the mentally unstable Elinor, a wealthy woman who owns her own carriage, hires a post-chaise in order to conceal her identity while she stalks her love interest and the heroine. In an interesting twist in this text, the public post-chaise offers more privacy and control than her easily identifiable coach. Because the individualized nature of the construction and branding of private coaches, like the crests painted on their doors and the livery worn by the servants who attended them, publicly identified their owners, there were times when public transportation could offer a powerful anonymity — one which was lost by private coach usage.194

This useful anonymity is nowhere more explicit than in the reoccurring trope of the post-chaise as the vehicle of choice for clandestine marriages. As the earlier examples of literary representations of women in post-chaises indicate, the benefit of this form of transportation was its unique position as a quasi-private means of conveyance. The various uses of the post-chaise


194 This recalls the conflation of a woman with her coach mentioned earlier.
in the texts mentioned highlight both their ready availability and their discretion; traits that
distinguish the chaises from their stagecoach competition and depict them as a largely
empowering form of transportation. Eighteenth century women’s adoption of travel via post-
chaises didn’t create the same type of public-private space that was inherent in the stagecoach;
instead, the chaise offered women a distinct form of space that emphasized intimacy and
discretion. These qualities were key to why the period witnessed a strong association between
post-chaises and elopement, one which permeated the literature and the art of the time.

In David Garrick’s popular farce, *A Peep Behind the Curtains, or, The New Rehearsal* (1767), a pivotal scene in which the hero Wilson is convincing Miss Fuz to run away with him highlights the role of the post-chaise in the undertaking of a clandestine marriage:

**Wilson:** To prevent [our separation] let me lead you a private way through the house to a post-chaise we shall be out of reach before Sir Toby my lady have gone half through Romeo Juliet.

**Miss Fuz:** Do not insist upon it now! I could not for the world – my fear has taken away my inclinations –

**Wilson:** I must run away with you now Miss. Fuz, Indeed I must

**Miss Fuz:** Have you really a post-chaise ready?

**Wilson:** I have indeed! A post-chaise and four.

**Miss Fuz:** A post-chaise and four! Bless me!

**Wilson:** Four of the best bays in London – my postilions are in blue jackets with silver shoulder knots –

**Miss Fuz:** With silver shoulder knots! Nay— there is no resisting – and yet—

**Wilson:** Nay quickly, quickly determine my dear Miss Fuz –

**Miss Fuz:** I will determine then — I will sit by my papa at the rehearsal, and when he is asleep, which he will be in ten minutes, and my mama will he deaf, dumb, and blind to everything, but Mr. Glib’s wit — I’ll steal out of the box from them, and you shall run away with me fast as you can wherever, your four bays shoulder-knots please to take me….

This comical scene positions the post-chaise as central to both Miss Fuz’s acquiescence
to marriage, as well as the pragmatic solution to issues around an elopement and, in doing so,
gestures to several important aspects of the post-chaise experience. First of all, it suggests material comfort. While the post-chaise was not a coach and six, it was still a pleasant form of travel, it offered availability and flexibility and, above all else, discretion (in terms of both “discreetness” and “choice”). Given that successful elopement was dependent upon many, if not all of those attributes, it is unsurprising that the post-chaise became so closely linked with the act. Perhaps the most famous case of a post-chaise’s potential for anonymity and its benefit can be found in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), when Lydia Bennet and Wickham use a post-chaise for the final segment of their elopement to London. It is their use of this form of transportation which ultimately stumps her family’s search for her, the post-chaise effectively ending her family’s ability to trace their whereabouts. In the end, it is only Mr. Darcy, with his superior connections and deeper pockets, who is able to find them.

The trope of the post-chaise as vehicle for elopement is prevalent in the visual art of the time as well as the literary. Just a few examples include a print from 1777, *The Elopement or, A Tripp to Scotland*; Thomas Rowlandson’s two prints *The Elopement* (1792) and *Smuggling Out* (1815); and Richard Dagley’s cheekily entitled *Taking Amiss*, published in 1821. (Illustrations 17, 18, 19, and 20, respectively). All of these prints include a depiction of a post-chaise waiting in the periphery for the eloping couple.

These examples are not meant to suggest that post-chaises were used by women solely, or even primarily, for romantic endeavors, of course. Rather, it is in thinking through the travel requirements of an elopement that the significant differences between the stagecoach experience of exposure, and the post-chaise experience of discretion are thrown into relief. Post-chaises further extended women’s capacity for agency over their own movement, expanding the control
Chapter III: On the Move: British Women’s Private Carriages and Public Coaches from the Restoration to the Regency

Illustration 17: The Elopement or, A Tripp to Scotland, 1777.

Illustration 18: The Elopement.
Thomas Rowlandson, 1792.

Illustration 19: Smuggling Out.
Thomas Rowlandson, 1815.

Illustration 20: Taking Amiss.
Richard Dagley, 1821.
that women could assert. Both innovations in public transportation altered women’s power to move in ways that starkly contrast with the narrative of the circumscribed, domestic woman. When the varying opportunities for women’s movement are considered in relationship to each other, the growing range of possibilities and potential authority and control that was becoming available to women in the period can be appreciated. While the introduction of the stagecoach had indubitably opened up opportunities for women’s movement, its narrowly limited routes and schedules, as well as the possibility of unpleasant exposure to men, were all aspects of its more limited potential to grant women agency and control than the discreet post-chaise.

**Palmer Mail Coaches**

A third form of wheeled public transportation available to women became widely available after 1782 when John Palmer revolutionized the British postal service with the introduction of mail coaches. While primarily intended for mail delivery, the coaches allowed for a limited number of passengers (initially four inside the coach, and one next to the driver; later the outside number expanded to three as a second seat behind the coachman’s was added). The mail coaches, which refreshed its horses every ten miles, proved much faster than the larger, more cumbersome stagecoaches. Although they were less passenger-centric, stopping as they did only at mail centers and not for the convenience of the travelers, they became a very popular form of transportation because of their speed and accessibility, and in three short years, by the end of 1785, mail coach routes covered England.¹⁹⁵

The mail coach effectively replaced the stagecoach, and, given their similarities, should have subjected women to many of the same inconveniences and the uncomfortable exposure

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¹⁹⁵ As Richard Strauss explains, “The stagecoaches, useful though they were, disappeared before Palmer’s mail-coaches, which held their supremacy until the era of steam revolutionized locomotion.” *Carriages and Coaches.*
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inherent to its antecedent. As with the stagecoach, passengers were of both sexes, rode inside and out, and had little to no control over the company they met with in the coach. Notably, however, women rarely mention riding in mail coaches in the literature of the time, and women riding in mail coaches enjoy considerably less focused textual attention than the stagecoach in its period. Though the author Mary Anne Radcliffe mentions engaging one to visit friends in 1810, and the Scottish poet Anne MacVicar Grant complains in a letter to Helen Dunbar in 1803 about not being able to procure one in Bristol Hotwells, the mail coach is rarely discussed in any length in texts from the latter half of the century.¹⁹⁶

Arguably, women’s presence in public coaches may have had become so common by this late date that it didn’t elicit the same sort of obnoxious behavior by men as before, as texts in which women ride in mail coaches are suspiciously absent of representations similar to those we have seen of the stagecoach. For example, in another letter from Anne MacVicar Grant to Helen Dunbar that same year, it seems as though the old trope of women’s exposure to men in public transportation will be revived, only to find the writer and the reader pleasantly surprised:

First, now, behold me in the streets of Glasgow, preparing to enter the mail coach, which was occupied by two gentlemen, one well dressed, well bred, and rather youthful looking, whose countenance bespoke good humour and intelligence; and much veracity of countenance he had, as shall appear in the sequel. The other, — how shall I describe him? for he was all chagrin at the time, and looking his very worst; yet, through his neglected, heavy figure, and harsh sun-burnt countenance, some gleams of the gentleman broke dimly forth; yet I really shrunk from him, and thought of Sterne’s Smelfungus. He was sick and he was splenetic; and he did nothing but growl and murmur, and tell his grievances, all the way to Hamilton. But, though he was surly, he was not vulgar; his language was that of a manly and

¹⁹⁶ Radcliffe, Mary Ann Radcliffe, *The Memoirs of Mrs. Mary Ann Radcliffe: in Familiar Letters to Her Female Friend* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Privately published, 1810), 190; Anne MacVicar Grant, *Letters from the Mountains: Being the First Real Correspondence of a Lady, Between the Years 1773 and 1807*, vol. 3. (London: Longmans & Co., 1807) 156. “That day we could neither get a mail-coach, nor a partner in a post-chaise, so we took places in a right miscellaneous voiture, emphatically called the long coach, and very long indeed we thought the time we were in it.”
enlightened mind, through which gleams of feeling and gentleness broke forth unconsciously. In short, by the time we reached Moffat, I thought him like the ghost of Matthew Bramble.\footnote{Ibid., 154. The allusion to first Lawrence Sterne’s Smelfungus, Tobias Smollett’s character, from \textit{The Expedition of Humphry Clinker} (1771), Matthew Bramble}

In works that do specifically reference women in mail coaches, the experience is dissimilar to those previously outlined for the stagecoach. For example, although George Colman’s play \textit{Ways and Means, or, A Trip to Dover} (1788) mocks the mail coach’s uncomfortableness and his female passengers complain about the jostling of the coach and the discomfort of having to ride backward, it says nothing about being harassed (or the potential for being harassed) by male passengers — not in small part, I suppose, because by this late date, in this text at least, all of the passengers are women. A bit later, in the anonymous \textit{Filial Indiscretions: The Female Chevalier} (1799), the heroine Miss Harriet Sommerfield’s greatest trial in her unchaperoned mail coach ride is illness, not undesirable company. By 1809, in Sarah Green’s \textit{Tales of the Manor}, even the complaints of Coleman’s protagonists are made to seem dated or inaccurate. When Mrs. Fortescue inquires, “Do you travel in a mail coach?... Good heavens, it must be shockingly disagreeable” Mrs. Macauley responds, “No, for a public vehicle... it is certainly the most pleasant of any.”\footnote{George Coleman, \textit{The Dramatic Works of George Coleman the Younger} (Paris: Bobee and Hingray, 1827) Google Books Edition. Anonymous, \textit{Filial Indiscretions: or, The Female Chevalier} (Edinburgh, 1799). Sarah Green, \textit{Tales of the Manor} (London: B. Crosby & Co., 1809), Google Book Edition, 219.} In large part, the anxiety around the presence of women in a public-private form of conveyance seems to have dissipated and the act of traveling as a woman appears to have grown so common as to normalize the behavior and even the prints of the time, few though they seem to be, reflect an acceptance of women in mail coaches. (Illustration 21)
Although mail coaches lacked the privacy and autonomy post-chaises afforded and were, as noted above, even less flexible in accommodating their passengers than stagecoaches, they remained a popular form of travel until the advent of the railroad. The comparative normalcy of women in mail coaches, in stark contrast to the responses their presence elicited in the early years of stagecoaching, suggests that the persistent use of public transportation by women over the preceding century had significantly altered perceptions and behaviors, at least partially de-stigmatizing women’s public movement and rendering it more socially acceptable. This growing
acceptance of women in public coaches, and thus in public spaces, tacit though it may be, offers an alternate to the dominate narrative of this period as one marked by an ever more popular ascription of women to the private sphere. The numerous representations of women, historical and fictional, in movement via private carriages, stagecoaches, post-chaises, and mail coaches resists the ideology of the domestic woman, instead highlighting the increasing opportunities for women’s mobility, and the power that attended those opportunities. While there were dangers and discomforts inherent to this movement, the steady progression and popularity of all of these vehicular advances speaks to a growing demand for movement. Moreover, coaches, whatever their species, were but one genus of women’s increasing possible mobilities, each form of which can be understood to have been utilized by mobile women, thereby complicating and questioning the dominance of the stronghold of the domestic thesis over the long eighteenth century.
Chapter IV: On the Move: British Women’s Equestrianism and Pedestrianism from the Restoration to the Regency

Women’s Equestrianism

As an active recreation, and a mode of conveyance, riding on horseback appears to have been of very remote usage among our fair countrywomen. During a long period, indeed, it was the only one known to, or, adopted by them, for the performance of journeys.

The Young Lady’s Equestrian Manual199

Though the use of carriages, coaches, and chaises first became widely possible in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, horseback riding had long been a popular form of movement for women, having predated wheeled conveyance in Britain as one of the earliest kinds of transportation. Long before the vehicles discussed above became available for widespread use, horses had offered women opportunities for movement and agency and they remained a popular and viable form of transportation even after the introduction of carriages in Britain. As the anonymous author of The Young Lady’s Equestrian Manual (1838) notes, “Nor did the superior and more recent invention of coaches, for a long period, tend materially to supersede, among ladies, the use of the saddle.”200

The eighteenth century saw a resurgence of women’s horseback riding. Though horses had long been ridden in Britain, women increasingly rode horseback as roads improved and greater access to horses became available. Women’s equestrianism may have even outpaced the rise in use of wheeled vehicles becoming, as it did, more and more accessible and thus common, over the century. As The Young Lady’s Equestrian Manual observes, “In the time of Charles the


200 Ibid.
Second the fashion among ladies of riding on horseback, declined; during subsequent reigns, it gradually revived.” Not coincidentally, this revival occurred alongside the improved physical conditions of the roads and the expansion of various public coaching systems, each of which required greater accessibility to horses.

As stagecoaches, post-chaises, and mail coaches became increasingly accessible to women, so too did horseback riding. The various possible mobilities shared symbiotic relationships in which each contributed to growth in each other. The late seventeenth century primarily featured private equestrianism which, much like private coach ownership, limited access to horses to those with substantial economic means. In contrast, due to a growing middle class, the eighteenth century saw the expansion of the ability to buy horses and the development of the less expensive option of renting post horses along the roadside, where they began to be kept ready for equestrianism and coaching. Though post horses at inns and taverns had been available since at least the sixteenth century, the improvements in British infrastructure discussed in Chapter II increased the number of roads and their accompanying hostelry, as well as demand for horses for hire. Greater access to post horses grew substantially over the long eighteenth century, an expansion that is reflected in the levying of a tax on them in 1779, for the first time. It is likely that the resurgence of women’s horseback riding noted in *The Young Lady’s Equestrian Manual* is at least partially attributable to this increasing capacity to hire post horses, as the ability to rent rather than buy broadened the market for riding.

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201 Ibid.

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The expansion of both exclusive, private horse ownership and wider public access to post horses is illustrated in both non-fiction and fiction, and in the art of the period: in Celia Fiennes's *Through England on a Side-Saddle in the Time of William and Mary*, written at the end of the seventeenth century, the protagonist travels England on her own horses. In Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* (1722) Moll hires a horse to go to Newmarket and, later, to go to London. Henry Fielding’s Sophia Western both owns and hires horses; when she is unable to sneak her own horse out to escape from her father’s house, she “takes horses” at a nearby inn. In a letter to Elizabeth Carter in 1748, Catherine Talbot boasts, “As for me, I am grown a very tolerable horse-woman, and make no more noise of riding sixteen miles of a morning, than you do of walking ten,” a reminder that both activities were increasingly popular for women. In 1804 Lady Louisa Stuart, while planning an excursion with Lady Lonsdale, inquires of the Duchess of Buccleuch, “at what rate does one hire horses to go into the Highlands?” She goes on to confess, “I ought to know, for I did actually engage them when I was last at Bothwell, but I have forgot all about it.”

As with public coach riding, expanded access to horses and growing participation in riding appears to have slowly changed public perceptions of female equestrians. Early depictions of women riders from the era reveal a belief that female equestrianism could be de-feminizing. In

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The Advance of the Mobile Woman: Representations of Women’s Physical Mobility, 1660-1820

The Spectator 435 “Female Dress — Mixture of the Sexes in One Person — Female Equestrians” (1712), the narrator satirically refers to women riders as “female cavaliers,” “equestrian lad[ies],” and “hermaphrodites.”205 In The Idler 6 (1758), Samuel Johnson satirizes the impressive feat of an unnamed woman who is said to have ridden “on one horse a thousand miles in a thousand hours,” mockingly calling her “the amazon,” “the patroness of the race,” and the “goddess of the stable.”206 These texts highlight anxieties around women’s horseback riding and the masculinization it was thought to induce. Even as late as 1794 the satirist Charles Pigott’s The Female Jockey Club used the trope of the horsewoman as a figure for mocking what he read as overly assertive behavior on the part of various women of his time.207

Nevertheless, as the century progressed more and more women, both fictional and historical, took pride in their horsemanship. In addition to Catherine Talbot’s letter quoted above, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in a letter to her daughter the Countess of Bute dated 1748, writes from Venice, “I endeavour to preserve [my health] by constant riding, and am a better horsewoman than ever I was in my life, having complied with the fashion of this country, which is every way so much better than ours.”208 Perhaps a bit more modestly, in 1814 Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Catherine Clarkson, “By little and little I have become a tolerable horse-

205 Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, “No. 435. Saturday, July 19, 1712” in The Spectator, Volumes 1, 2, and 3 ed. Henry Morley (London, 1891). As much of the complaint in this particular number of the paper revolves around the sartorial choices of the riders, it is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

206 While this story seems apocryphal, given that an average horse can run between 30-40 miles per hour, and perhaps 100 miles/day humanely, the event seems to be based on some sort of historical incident, as it was also recorded in Henry Boyle’s The Chronology of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, (London: Sherwood, Goode, and Piper, 1826), 226; as well as William Hone’s The Yearbook of Daily Recreation and Information, (London: W. Tegg, 1832), 538.


woman. I have no fears and that is a great point — but I cannot attain the power of managing my horse; I can however ride for four or five hours without fatigue, at a pace which was torture to me when I first began.”

This change in attitude around equestrianism was seen in fictional works as well as biographical and the same year as Wordsworth’s letter to Clarkson, Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* was published, a novel which Donna Landry has convincingly claimed is, “about learning to ride,” a point to which I return later in the chapter.

Alongside the jump in journals, letters, and literary works depicting horsewomen, didactic horseback riding texts began to be published in the latter part of the century, indicating the rise in popularity of women’s equestrianism. In 1783, the ladies's horse trainer Mr. Carter, in *Instructions for Ladies in Riding*, offered precise and exacting guidance on selecting horses specifically for women, ladies's mounting and dismounting, and the positioning of the female body and its attendant petticoats, amongst other sex-specific equestrian advice.

Similarly, John Lawrence’s 1796 *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses, and on the Moral Duties of Man towards the Brute Creation* contains a section, “On the Paces and the Equestrian Art, or Modern Method of Riding on Horseback, as it is Practiced by both Sexes” and the treatise contains strict and detailed instructions for women who ride.

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All of these texts point to the revival of “the fashion among ladies of riding on horseback” which *The Young Lady’s Equestrian Manual* contends took place over the period. Though women rode for various reasons, and experienced different difficulties, the works from the long eighteenth century make it clear that women of a variety of social stations were exploiting and enjoying the agency that horseback riding afforded them. Whether via privately owned or hired horses, many British women and their fictional female contemporaries defy the trope of the sessile domestic woman by actively taking part in equestrianism.

**Celia Fiennes's Journeys**

One of the period’s earliest and most detailed accounts of a woman’s equestrianism is the journal of Celia Fiennes, *Through England on a Side-Saddle in the Time of William and Mary* (1702).\(^{213}\) The diary focuses exclusively on Fiennes's equestrian travels, chronicling the challenges and rewards of her trips. In her mid-thirties, Fiennes journeyed around England and Scotland on horseback alone but for the company of two servants. She was ostensibly travelling to improve her wellbeing, her journal claiming, “My journeys... were begun to regain my health by variety and change of air and exercise.”\(^{214}\) However, the various trips that Fiennes undertook were met with a variety of difficulties and, as editor Christopher Morris astutely observes, “The accidents... which befell Celia [during her travels] left her singularly unmoved and suggest that there was little the matter with her nerves.”\(^{215}\)

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\(^{213}\) For information about Fiennes's observations on British infrastructure, please see Chapter II.


\(^{215}\) Ibid, 20.
Fiennes experiences a string of difficulties with the physical aspects of riding over the course of her journeys, many of which recall the poor state of the roads in this early period. For example, when she rides into Norfolk, and finds that the river had overflowed, “so that the road lay under water which is very unsafe for strangers to pass, by reason of the holes and quick sands and loose bottom,”\(^\text{216}\) she calmly continues her trip. Later, in Lancaster, she has difficulty keeping her horse’s head when, “the stones were so slippery crossing some channels that my horse was quite down on his nose but did at length recover himself and so I was not thrown off or injured.”\(^\text{217}\) She has trouble again near Fowey, explaining:

> my horse was quite down in one of these holes full of water but by the good hand of God’s Providence which has always been with me ever a present help in a time of need, for giving him a good strap he flounc’d up again, though he had gotten quite down his head and all, yet did retrieve his feet and got clear off the place with me on his back.\(^\text{218}\)

She is actually thrown on her journey from Newton Toney to London: “a little before I came to Alsford forcing my horse out of a hollow way his feet failed and he could no ways recover himself and so I was shot off his neck upon the bank, but no harm I bless God.”\(^\text{219}\)

Fiennes's journal reports each of these dangerous situations matter-of-factly, seeming undaunted by any of her close calls. While she usually attributes her safety to God’s favor, one cannot help but wonder if her ability to retain her seat under adverse conditions might not have something to do with superior riding skills and seeming unflappability. Along those same lines, it’s worth

\(^{216}\) Ibid, 136.

\(^{217}\) Ibid, 164.

\(^{218}\) Ibid, 203.

\(^{219}\) Ibid, 215.
considering whether it was divine intervention that helped her horse regain its balance at Fowey, or if her “giving him a good strap” may not equally have been to thank.

Even when Fiennes confronts her most unpleasant experience on the road, she seems unperturbed:

the only time I had reason to suspect I was engaged with some highwaymen; two fellows all of a sudden from the wood fell into the road, they looked truss'd up with great coats and as it were bundles about them which I believe was pistols, but they dogg’d me one before the other behind and would often look back to each other and frequently jostle my horse out of the way to get between one of my servant’s horses and mine.220

Although nothing violent comes of the encounter (the suspicious men finally leaving Fiennes alone after riding with her for several miles), Fiennes is nevertheless keenly aware of the threat posed to her purse and person, though her retelling of her response to the situation is relayed in the same matter-of-fact tone that distinguishes her memoir. The ill health from which she claims to have suffered appears to have done little to dampen her adventuresome spirit and, given the varied and questionable state of the roads, Fiennes's solitude, and the various dangers that attended a woman alone on horseback, “Celia’s travels acquire a certain heroism.”221

None of the dangers she encounters keep Fiennes from travelling or from recommending travel by horse to others. In fact, in the preface of her work she exhorts her countrymen and women to undertake their own trips around England:

Now this much without vanity may be asserted of the subject, that if all persons, both ladies, much more gentlemen, would spend some of their time in journeys to visit their native land, and be curious to inform themselves and make observations of

220 Ibid, 185.
221 Ibid, 22.
the pleasant prospects, good buildings, different produces and manufactures of each place, with the variety of sports and recreations they are adapt to, would be a sovereign remedy to cure or preserve from these epidemick diseases of vapours, should I add laziness?²²²

Fiennes advice is telling in that it includes women, both explicitly as well as implicitly. She encourages “all persons” to travel around their country for both their edification and their health. She specifically characterizes her fellow Britons as in need of cure or preservation of the “epidemick” of vapours and, though she addresses both men and women here, her specification of “vapours,” (a disease associated almost exclusively with women, and suggestive of a lack of physical, mental, and emotional strength), indicates that her criticism is gender specific.

Fiennes's association of riding with improved mental and physical health provides an early argument for the benefits of being a mobile woman, while her exhortation for others to take up the practice gestures to its relative rarity. As the century wore on, that rarity subsided and more and more British women took to riding.

**Women Riders in Defoe and Fielding**

While initially unusual, the woman rider - and the mobility riding permits her — increasingly features in the literature of the time. For example, in Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* (1722) the titular character employs a variety of forms of transportation (including being transported) throughout her colorful life. Though she claims early on that she is “no horsewoman,” she nevertheless hires a horse and “man to ride before [her]” to go to Newmarket after having conned a shop owner out of lace in Cambridge. A bit later, in a scene that highlights both the availability and the generally unregulated nature of hiring horses in the earlier part of

²²² Ibid, 32.
the period, she rents a horse a second time to get from Ipswich to Colchester from a farmer who, rather than directing her to a post inn, offers to take her himself after ascertaining that she is willing pay five shillings (approximately the equivalent of five days labor).

In *Tom Jones* (1749), Sophia Western’s skill as a horseback rider, though unobtrusive, is in many ways central to the plot. Early in the novel she is thrown from her horse and saved by Tom in a scene that introduces her equestrianism and foreshadows their romance. Her riding becomes a skill which reveals important aspects of her character. Though depicted in this early scene in the novel as lacking control over her own horse, Sophia later depends upon her equestrian abilities to evade her father and aunt’s threat of forced marriage. When she decides to sneak out of her father’s house, her maid Honour reminds her that she will be unable to take her own horse, asking her, “Well, but, ma’am… how doth your la’ship think of making your escape? Where will you get any horses or conveyance? … Robin [the groom] will be hanged before he will suffer it to go out of the stable without my master’s express orders.” To which Sophia spiritedly responds that she will walk out of the house, and “take horses at the very first town [they] come to.”223 In this scene, it is her ability to ride, coupled with the ability to rent post horses, which allows her to escape her father’s house and her family’s marital plans for her. This excursion is ostensibly embarked upon with the goal of riding to a sympathetic family member’s house in London to seek haven, but as soon becomes apparent (at least to Honour and the reader), Sophia Western’s equestrianism and access to public horses is materially responsible for

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her ability not only to escape her family’s marital dictates, but also to actively pursue Tom Jones.224

The ease with which Sophia and Honour are able to hire horses is revisited several times in the novel, and throughout the text they encounter little trouble procuring transportation. In fact, renting horses on the road is depicted as so commonplace that in a later scene when Sophia and Honour are being followed at night by unknown people and the perils of highwaymen are clearly being alluded to, the other party turns out not to consist of criminals but of Sophia’s own cousin Mrs. Harriet Fitzpatrick. In a situation that suggests Sophia’s own, as it is predicated on matrimonial distress, Mrs. Fitzpatrick and her maid have run away from an abusive husband, and, like Sophia and Honour, have rented horses to escape from an untenable living situation.225

It is worth noting that both of these characters are not simply traveling, they are actively thwarting their roles as domestic women. Both are defying their male guardians by physically removing themselves from their power, and both literally and figuratively oppose confinement to the home. In Fielding’s work, these female equestrians use horseback riding and the ready letting of horseflesh along the relatively newly expanded British road system as a form agency and self-determination that offers them the power to reject the domestic thesis.

While the examples of women on horseback in Defoe and Fielding may seem incongruous, the common theme in the two novels is that of women using horses and physical movement as an assumption of agency and a form of resistance to domesticity. Though the plots, circumstances, and characters are dissimilar, in both texts the women engage horses and move

224 Ibid., 497.
225 Ibid. “This unexpected encounter surprized the ladies much more than I believe it will the sagacious reader, who must have imagined that the strange lady could be no other than Mrs Fitzpatrick, the cousin of Miss Western, whom we before mentioned to have sallied from the inn a few minutes after her.”
physically in order to take control over their destinies. Moll’s criminal endeavors, Sophia’s familial disobedience, and Harriet’s matrimonial abandonment are all predicated on the capacity for physical movement to grant women control and freedom from the domestic.

**Women’s Horseback Riding in *Mansfield Park***

Running from the law and escaping overbearing fathers and husbands or were not the only reasons women rode. In Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* (1814) women’s horseback riding functions as a metaphor for the text’s complicated romantic relationships. Unlike Defoe and Fielding’s works in which women’s horseback riding provides (at least temporary) escape from sociological and familial obligations, the equestrianism that permeates Austen’s novel is central to the love triangle between Fanny Price, Mary Crawford, and Edmund Bertram, the women’s different riding styles metaphoric for their distinct characters. In *Mansfield Park*, two competing narratives around women’s equestrianism meet; in the character of Fanny Price, horseback riding is seen as a healthy exercise, one which improves her delicate constitution, and frees her from the company of her stifling aunts. Alternatively, Mary Crawford’s natural talents as a horseback rider, while initially charming, are ultimately linked to her dangerously libertine attitudes towards virtue and appropriate behavior. In these two models, the long eighteenth-century’s encouragement of and anxieties around women’s horseback riding meet.

Fanny Price is the very model of a domestic woman. In Austen’s novel, she is characterized by her quietness, accommodation, submissiveness, and obedience. She is a homebody whose fundamental problem, arguably, is that she lacks her own home. Her gentleness is so pronounced that it is a quasi-invalidism, and she is encouraged to learn to ride for her
health, a prescription that was increasingly popular over the long eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{226} Even though Fanny’s first “horse” is an old, grey pony, an animal of smaller stature and considered (albeit frequently incorrectly) to be more manageable than the larger horse, her initial reaction to horseback riding is one of “dread” and “terror.” Fanny credits Edmund Bertram with being the person who convinced her to ride, recollecting that he, “took to reason to persuade me out of my fears, and convince me that I should like it after a while.”\textsuperscript{227} In a page that could have been taken out of the Celia Fiennes's advice manual, Edmund encourages Fanny to ride in order to improve her health, and she slowly learns to enjoy the activity.

The salubrious properties of Fanny Price’s timid, tentative horseback riding are repeatedly noted throughout the text. Early on, Edmund claims that Fanny’s proposed removal to Mrs. Norris's care will be good for her by comparing it to the benefits of Fanny’s horseback riding, saying, “And I’m quite convinced being with Mrs. Norris will be as good for your mind as riding has been for your health, and as much for your ultimate happiness, too.”\textsuperscript{228} When her old, grey pony dies, Fanny was, “in danger of feeling the loss in her health as well as in her affections; for in spite of the acknowledged importance of her riding on horse-back, no measures were taken for mounting her again.”\textsuperscript{229} As Fanny’s constitution is too delicate for idleness with her Aunt Bertram, as well as for rigorous walking with her Aunt Norris, Edmund decides that “Fanny must have a horse.”\textsuperscript{230} Edmund’s final solution for the loss, selling one of his own

\textsuperscript{226} For more on Fanny’s frailty, see Akiko Takei, “‘Your Complexion Is So Improved!’: A Diagnosis of Fanny Price's 'Dis-ease',” \textit{Eighteenth-Century Fiction}, (2005). Vol. 17. Iss. 4, Article 6. Available at: \url{http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/ecf/vol17/iss4/6}


\textsuperscript{228} Ibid., 25-26.

\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., 34-35.

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., 35.
horses to buy a mare suitable for Fanny to ride, comes about because he wanted to “procure for Fanny the immediate means of exercise, which he could not bear she should be without.”

In contrast to Fanny Price’s initial timidity, her rival Mary Crawford immediately enjoys horseback riding. Invited by Edmund Bertram to learn to ride on the horse he had procured for Fanny, Mary Crawford readily accepts the offer. Unlike Fanny’s initial “dread,” “terrors,” and “trembl[ing],” Mary is a natural equestrian:

Miss Crawford’s enjoyment of riding was such that she did not know how to leave off. Active and fearless, and though rather small, strongly made, she seemed formed for a horsewoman; and to the pure genuine pleasure of the exercise, something was probably added in Edmund’s attendance and instructions, and something more in the conviction of very much surpassing her sex in general by her early progress, to make her unwilling to dismount.

Mary Crawford, “active and fearless,” enjoys riding immediately, and is a better horsewoman after her first few lessons than Fanny after six years of riding. The attention Edmund pays her while teaching her to ride, coupled with her own enjoyment of being naturally better than most other women riders, simply add to the “pure genuine pleasure of the exercise” for her. Mary’s rapid mastery of the art of horseback riding, so quickly attained that she is cantering comfortably by her second lesson, is lauded by the characters in the text. The “old coachman” who attends Fanny explicitly compares the two women, describing Mary Crawford’s “great cleverness as a horse-woman” and finding Fanny’s performance wanting when he says, “It is a pleasure to see a lady with such a good heart for riding!... I never see one sit a horse better. She did not seem to have a thought of fear. Very different from you, miss, when you first

Ibid., 35.

Ibid., 68.
began, six years ago come next Easter. Lord bless you! How you did tremble when Sir Thomas
first had you put on!’”233 A bit later this same quality, Crawford’s “merit in being gifted by
Nature with strength and courage,” is celebrated by the Bertram sisters. Moreover, Mary
Crawford’s health and activity is again directly contrasted with Fanny Price’s invalidism and
sessility when it is decided that Mary, Edmund and the other young people in the party will ride
to Mansfield Commons the next day while Fanny stays home.

The Mansfield Commons ride proves so successful that the group decides upon more
outings over the following four days and Fanny is thus deprived of her mare. Left with her two
aunts, she is obligated to pick roses for one, and walk back and forth to Mrs. Norris’s cottage
twice in the heat for the other. All of this activity in the heat renders her incapacitated with a
headache, which Edmund finally notices and ascribes, correctly, to her lack of access to her
horse:

Nothing of this would have happened had she been properly considered; but
she had been left four days together without any choice of companions or
exercise, and without any excuse for avoiding whatever her unreasonable
aunts might require. He was ashamed to think that for four days together she
had not had the power of riding, and very seriously resolved, however
unwilling he must be to check a pleasure of Miss Crawford’s, that it should
never happen again.234

When Fanny’s rides resume the next day, her health returns along with them.

Mary Crawford’s relationship with riding is not nearly so straightforward. The qualities
which are credited with making her a superior horsewoman are later recast in the plot. Towards
the novel’s end, Mary fails to respond to the news that her brother has eloped with Edmund’s

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233 Ibid., 70-71.
234 Ibid., 75-76.
married sister Maria in a way that Edmund deems appropriate. Though the scene between Edmund and Mary is absent from the book, he later recounts to Fanny his shock at Mary’s dismissive attitude towards the situation: “the manner in which she spoke of the crime itself, giving it every reproach but the right; considering its ill consequences only as they were to be braved or overborne by a defiance of decency and impudence in wrong”\textsuperscript{235} reshapes Mary’s equestrian “strength and courage,” into a bravery that is a “defiance of decency and impudence in wrong.” Edmund’s negative appraisal of her contention that all that can be done is to “brave” and “overbear” the consequences of the foolish elopement echoes familiar complaints about women’s equestrianism and mobility, when he deems Mary Crawford’s behavior to be “unfeminine” and “immodest.”\textsuperscript{236} Ultimately, it is Mary’s fearlessness, the absence of the appropriate “loathings” which cause Edmund Bertram to reject her.

The text’s ambivalence around Mary Crawford’s horse-back riding, and the characteristics it represents, rearticulates the period’s lingering concerns around women’s physical mobility. This is not so with Fanny’s riding. When Edmund says to Fanny, “\textit{She} rides only for pleasure; \textit{you} for health” he privileges Fanny’s reason for riding over Mary’s; where Fanny Price’s equestrianism falls into the narrative of appropriate, healthful exercise, Mary Crawford’s riding is code for a too-liberated woman — at least, too liberated for a clergyman like Edmund Bertram.\textsuperscript{237} While Fanny’s triumph over Mary may seem to suggest the triumph of the domestic woman over the mobile woman, this reading fails to appreciate that, at this late date, even a female character as “domesticated” as Fanny Price rides horses. Although the text expresses

\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., 479.
\textsuperscript{236} Ibid., 476.
\textsuperscript{237} Ibid., 71.
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some concerns around women’s physical mobility through its depiction of Mary Crawford, it simultaneously advocates for women’s movement by associating the good health of its “courtesy book heroine” Fanny Price with her ability to ride.238

Collet and Stubbs: Artistic Representations of Women’s Horseback Riding

Literary representations of women’s horseback riding were not alone in their critique of women’s equestrianism, and the period witnessed a variety of prints and paintings of women engaged in the act of horseback riding. While some of these works were mocking in tone, others were clearly laudatory. Of the artists of the time, two stand out for their work with female equestrians: the satirical John Collet (sometimes mistakenly spelled “Collett,” 1725-1780) and the complementary George Stubbs.

Perhaps the most prolific in his mocking of women riding was the well-known printmaker John Collet, whose mezzotints typically feature women wearing riding habits while engaging in various “manly” sporting activities. Often referred to as the “second Hogarth,” and thought to be one of his students, Collet published a wide a variety of caricatures of women riding, engaged in active pastimes. As historian Patricia Crown has explained, “Collet’s pictures suggest that in a politically and socially turbulent late 1760s and 1770s some English women and men experimented with conventions of dress and behavior... and explored the boundaries of social and moral arbitration concerned with keeping the sexes distinct.”239


particularly true of his depictions of female equestrians, several of which are salient to the discussion at hand.

Contrary to the piece’s title, there are actually two female fox hunters in Collet’s “The Female Fox Hunter,” (1778, Illustration 22). Both women are out in front of their male companions, leading them in the hunt. The rider in the foreground is wearing a deep blue riding habit with red trim, another traditionally masculine pairing. In this print, the dominant figure is the blue-clad female fox hunter, who is drawn in the process of leaping over a fence. She raises her whip above her head, urging her horse on, her hunting dogs bounding around her. She is active, confident, and controlled in her seat. In the backdrop of the piece, a second woman in a dark green riding habit is in the company of two men. She and her horse have just cleared a fence, and she is looking back over her shoulder at one of her companions who has lost his seat upon landing. In particular, the positioning of second female figure is one of a literal “looking down at” — she casts a glance back at the tumbled male rider — a pictorial representation of the phrase’s metaphorical meaning. The positioning of the women in contrast to the unseated male rider provides a visual representation of the gendered anxiety expressed in texts like The Spectator, The Idler, and others discussed above. These women have assumed masculine pastimes, and they are depicted as superior in ability to the men in the picture:

Perhaps Collet’s most obvious expression of gender anxiety is to be found in his rather obviously entitled print “The Rising Woman and the Fallen Man” (1781, Illustration 23). In this mezzotint, a woman in a riding habit is in the process of leaping over a fallen parson and his horse, in pursuit of a stag being chased by her dogs. A sort of mixture of the two women in “The Female Fox Hunter,” she holds her whip high over her head, looking down her nose (literally as
well as figuratively) at the terrified parson as she urges her horse over his body. In the background of the picture, another male rider is in the midst of losing his seat as his horse clears a fence. Again, the woman’s superior skill is contrasted with the man’s — or more precisely, the men’s — inferior abilities, and the title of the piece clearly articulates the often obliquely expressed, but seemingly common, fear of the ladies's riding: that the activity encouraged woman’s “unnatural” ascension over man.
Around the same time, the well-known painter and printmaker George Stubbs (1724 - 1806), did a series of portraits of women on horseback. “Mr. Stubbs, the horse-painter,” as he was frequently called, was famed for his depictions of horses and painted portraits of The Countess of Coningsby (1760), Sophia Musters, Countess of Oxford (1767), and Laetitia, Lady Lade (1790) (amongst others) in which the subject is captured in the act of riding.

In Stubbs's *The Countess of Coningsby in the Livery of the Charlton Hunt*, the Countess is attired in a navy blue riding habit trimmed in gold, a feminine version of the riding outfit for the

“wide buttoned cuffs and matching pocket flaps” which were, according to Aileen Ribiero, “prominent masculine features.”241 With her dog trailing behind, she holds her crop in one hand, reins in both, and sits easily on her mount. As Egerton notes, “There is no lack of assurance in the Countess'ss pose... she rides as to the manor born”242 (Illustration 24)

*Illustration 24: The Countess of Coninsby in the Livery of the Charlton Hunt. George Stubbs,*

In Sophia Musters's portrait, *John and Sofia Musters riding Past Colwick Hall,* the woman rider is accompanied by her husband on her ride. She precedes him on her horse, dressed in a red riding habit, inspired by the British Army’s uniforms. (Illustration 25)

While each of these paintings feature their subject in the act of riding, Lady Lade’s portrait goes a step further, capturing the rider in the midst of conscientiously and competently

241 Ribiero, *Costume,* 25. For more on women’s riding habits, see Chapter IV.

242 Egerton, 138.
The work, whose full title is *Lady Lade Exercising an Arabian Horse*, shows Lady Lade putting her mount “through an exercise in which he rises on his haunches while she remains perfectly poised on her side-saddle.” Lady Lade, described by Judy Egerton as, “a fearless horsewoman,” is wearing a large buttoned navy blue riding habit and plumed hat. She holds the whip and reins in hand, horse rearing beneath her. Alone in the portrait, she wears a serene expression, unfazed by her horse’s skittishness. (Illustration 26)

Like Collet’s satires, these paintings acknowledge the women’s equestrianism. Unlike Collet, these depictions are appreciative; the women in the portraits are not being mocked, but applauded. Even though these women’s horseback riding is traditionally masculine, the admiring tone of the works suggests a significantly distinct response to it than . The paintings attest to the

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spreading use and growing appreciation of women’s equestrianism over the long eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{244} 

That women’s equestrianism was increasingly common over the period is evident. In the late seventeenth century Celia Fiennes exhorts her fellow subjects to ride for their health and well-being, and by the early nineteenth century even Fanny Price, the domestic ideal, is a horsewoman. But though – or perhaps because – women’s riding had become an everyday occurrence, the works of the period grapple with the anxieties around the enhanced mobility it offered. These texts position women’s horseback riding as symbolic of individual agency; resistant to the qualities of the submissive, demure, and static domestic woman. The physical

\textsuperscript{244} While most of the women featured in the paintings listed above are, at minimum, members of the gentry, that commonality is indicative of who could afford portraiture more than who was riding horses.
mobility that equestrianism provided women mirrors and expands the independence of their character, and the benefits and drawbacks of that independence are wrestled with: Celia Fiennes actively addresses her health issues through riding, while exposing herself to the dangers of the road; Defoe’s Moll eludes the victims of her crimes; Sophia Western and Harriet Fitzpatrick escape unhappy marital prospects; and Mary Crawford’s strength and courage initially attract, only to later repel, her love interest. The ambivalence around women’s equestrianism, like their expanding access to wheeled transportation, underscores frictions between the figure of the mobile woman and the supposed hegemony of the domestic thesis.

**Women Walking**

The advancements in equestrianism and vehicles affected another form of women’s movement. The changes to women’s mobility predicates on the introduction and proliferation of private and public vehicles, the resurgent popularity of horseback riding, and the material changes to the landscape of Britain discussed in Chapter II radically altered perceptions around women walking. For the first half of the eighteenth century, walking was almost exclusively coded as an activity of the destitute and the dangerous. Samuel Smiles writes, “Such being the early state of the roads, the only practicable modes of travelling [sic] were on foot and on horseback. The poor walked and the rich rode.”

Referencing a period a bit further along in the century, Peter McNeil and Giorgio Riello note, “Walking was considered as an activity for the lower sorts or those who could not afford a coach.”

Royal acts and proclamations dating back to the fifteenth century which dealt with vagrancy gesture to how walking had been almost

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245 Smiles, 164.

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exclusively associated with the impoverished masses up until the later part of the eighteenth century, and as historian Richard B. Schwartz reiterates, “Those with means almost never walked... Anyone else found walking would be considered a priori a footpad or a pauper.”

However with the developments in transportation that are charted above — the introduction and development of stagecoaches, post-chaises, and mail coaches, as well as the popularization of women’s horseback riding and the newly pedestrian-friendly roadways discussed in Chapter II — transformed how both men and women moved around the nation. As Alice Wallace has argued:

the transport revolution beginning in the mid-eighteenth century... affected walking in several ways. First, it altered the socio-economic content of walking by making fast, cheap travel available to the labouring classes, thus increasing the attractiveness of travel in general and removing walking’s long-standing implication of necessity and so of poverty and vagrancy.

This shift is evident in women’s letters and journals of the time. In a letter to Catherine Talbot from Elizabeth Carter (1753), the author opens her missive with the proclamation, “The activity and spirit of a seventeen miles's walk was quite necessary, my dear Miss Talbot, to enliven me after the stupidity of a tiresome journey, with no very sprightly conversation in the coach” and goes on to describe her walk from Canterbury to Brook, and then on to Deal. In 1758 Mary Granville Pendarves Delany boasted to her friend Anne Granville Dewes, “According

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249 Elizabeth Carter, Letter from Elizabeth Carter to Catherine Talbot, June 02, 1753, in *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot from the Year 1741 to 1770: To Which areAdded Letters from Mrs. Carter to Mrs. [Elizabeth] Vesey between the Years 1767 and 1787*, vol. 2. (London, England: F.C. & J. Rivington, 1808), 395.
to the country phrase, yesterday Sally and I "fetched a charming walk" — at least six miles!"\(^{250}\)

In a reminder that even at the end of the period not all of women’s walking can be hailed as an exercise in agency, Dorothy Wordsworth observed in her journal two distinct circumstances prompting the activity: hers and those of an impoverished fellow ferry rider. In 1803, after sharing a ferry crossing with a poor family she writes:

> When we parted from this family, they going down the lake, and we up it, I could not but think of the difference in our condition to that poor woman, who, with her husband, had been driven from her home by want of work, and was now going a long journey to seek it elsewhere: every step was painful toil, for she had either her child to bear or a heavy burthen. I walked as she did, but pleasure was my object, and if toil came along with it, even that was pleasure, — pleasure, at least, it would be in the remembrance.\(^{251}\)

### Dangerous Rambles: Worrisome Women Walking

The disassociation of walking from poverty and its adoption as a legitimate form of travel, an enjoyable form of exercise, and a pleasurable form of socializing did not happen in a linear fashion, nor did it occur without backlash. Women’s pedestrianism, then as now, was at times dissuaded through fear tactics that emphasized the dangers of a woman’s bodily exposure to the world. The near gang rape of Aphra Behn’s Florinda in *The Rover* is a salient example of an early version of this threat, one which makes explicit the era’s connections between a woman walking in the street and a streetwalker. Florinda, having abandoned her brother’s home and walked out to find her lover at the Carnival, is almost raped by her English suitor’s comrades in arms who mistake her for a prostitute. The simple fact that she is out walking alone is enough to

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\(^{250}\) Mary Granville Pendarves Delany, Letter from Mary Granville Pendarves Delany to Anne Granville Dewes, September 2, 1758, in *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany, vol. 2*. Woolsey, Sarah Chauncey. (Boston, MA: Roberts Bros., 1879), 499.

Chapter IV: On the Move: British Women’s Equestrianism and Pedestrianism from the Restoration to the Regency

make her quality suspect. Tellingly, this sentiment is echoed a hundred years later by the fate of Frances Burney’s Evelina, when she, like Florinda, is accosted by men at Vauxhall Gardens who mistake her for a prostitute simply because she is walking in the “wrong” place.

In the novel, Evelina has been bullied on to the “dark walks” by her cousins the Misses Branghton. The two sisters are convinced it will be fun until the three women are surrounded by a rowdy group of young men who encircle them and taunt them. One of the men finally grabs Evelina “rudely seizing hold of [her].”252 She manages to wrest herself free from his grasp and run away, only to encounter a second group of men and by whom she is also accosted. The second time she manages to free herself she is “aided” by Sir Clement Willoughby who in turn only leads her further down the “dark walks” where they “shall be least observed.”253

Both groups of men and Sir Willoughby mistake Evelina’s “quality” because they find her walking alone on the “dark walks.” Though the notoriety of these pathways as a space frequented by streetwalkers could excuse the men’s error, in doing so it also points to the assumption that when women’s bodies are public, they are sexually accessible and/or vulnerable. The easy confusion between a woman on the street, and a woman of the street can be read as a species of sexual threatening, deployed to encourage women to keep to their “proper province” of the “domestic sphere.”

In the literature of the long eighteenth century, the threat of sexual violence to a woman walking is not unusual. In between these two texts, numerous other female protagonists learn the hard way about the dangers of women walking in public. Henry Fielding’s Fanny in Joseph

253 Ibid, 198.
Andrews (1742), Charlotte Turner Smith’s Monimia in *The Old Manor House* (1793), and Mary Hays’s Mary in *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799), are all harassed and threatened with sexual assault by men while walking. Fielding, per usual, has a humorous take on the dangers of poor women wandering, when he uses Fanny’s assault as an opportunity to stage a mock heroic battle and to satirize the English legal system. Smith’s rendition is less amusing; Monimia is repeatedly menaced by Sir John Belgrave, who at one point attempts to violate her while she’s on a walk: “attended by two servants, [he] rode up so very fast, that his horse almost trampled on me before I could cross the road. He checked it, however, when he saw me, and exclaiming with a great oath – ‘My lovely little wood-nymph! By all that’s sacred she shall not now escape me!’ He then alighted from his horse, and… rudely seized me.” Hays’s Mary, the least fortunate of the three, is ultimately raped by Sir Peter Osbourne, who first notices, and repeatedly harasses her, when she is out walking.

While these examples suggest that walking subjected eighteenth century women to considerable dangers, the harassment can be read as an attempt to limit women’s mobility in response to their growing capacity for movement. As Susan Brownmiller has famously argued, “Rape is a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear,” to which, I would add, “and at home.” Of course, the desire to keep women at home and the need to intimidate them back into the domestic sphere can arise only in response to women’s movement away from and outside of the same; the rape narrative is a backlash against the mobile woman and an attempt to forcibly (re)institute the dominance of domesticity. The threat of

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violation is depicted in these texts can be seen as a violent cousin to the conduct material instructing women to focus exclusively on the domestic, both reactions against advancements in mobility for women.

Here, it’s worth noting that frequently, the enclosed, private, domestic space is even more dangerous than the open public space these women traverse. In Hays’s novel, though Sir Peter harasses Mary when he catches her outdoors, he ultimately rapes her within the confines of his own home. While they are extreme, the plots of Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748) and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), make it vividly clear that women’s confinement to domestic spaces was potentially extremely dangerous, as do many of the gothic novels towards the end of the century.  

**Freeing Frolics: Women, Walking, and Liberty**

This is not to say that the rape narrative was omnipresent, and most eighteenth century texts that featured women walking did not subject their characters to assault. Even in the first half of the period, before pavestones and roadways had popularized walking, Hellena, the other sister in Aphra Behn’s *The Rover*, spends as much, if not more, time than her sister Florinda wandering the streets without incident or injury. As noted in Chapter I, Behn’s heroine in *The Wandering Beauty* walks from Cornwall to Lancaster, a distance of approximately 350 miles, without incident. The heroines of novels previously mentioned: Daniel Defoe’s legendarily mobile heroine *Moll Flanders* (1721), Henry Fielding’s Sophia Western in *Tom Jones* (1749), and Frances Burney’s Juliet Granville in *The Wanderer* (1814) all walk as part of their plot.

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257 For more about the relationship between the gothic novel and the domestic, see: Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology*, (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press), 1989.
In keeping with the narrative that walking was associated with poverty and crime in the early part of the long eighteenth century, it is when she is Pressed by poverty after the death of her banker husband, that Defoe’s Moll Flanders commences her life of crime. Two years into her widowhood, Moll begins walking around London, stealing. Though horrified by her first theft, she quickly acclimates to this lifestyle, becoming an accomplished thief. Her wandering becomes an essential part of her plot, as it allows her to perpetrate her crimes. Perhaps the most salient example of this is when she minutely describes the route she takes in the infamous scene where she steals the little girl’s necklace. Here, Moll charts her path “to a paved alley in Bartholomew Close,” after which she takes “another passage that goes into Long Lane, so away into Charterhouse Yard, and out into St. John Street; then crossing into Smithfield, went down Chick Lane and into Field Lane to Holborn Bridge.” Moll's careful mapping of her escape route, and its inclusion of various alleyways and lanes — streets too small for vehicles to pass through comfortably — show the advantages of walking. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Moll Flander’s mobility is how it highlights that she is the danger, not the endangered.

In 1749, Sophia Western walks for very different reasons. When her family threatens to marry her off to a man she does not wish to marry, Sophia decides to abandon her father’s house and make her way to her kinswoman’s house in London. Her maid, Honour, questions how she will accomplish this, as she cannot ride her horse to which Sophia responds, “I intend to escape... by walking out of the doors when they are open. I thank Heaven my legs are very able to carry me. They have supported me many a long evening” Honour counters this plan, enumerating the dangers that plagued other heroines, “I should not be able to defend you, if any robbers, or other

258 Defoe, Moll Flanders, 212-213.
villains, should meet with you. Nay, I should be in as horrible a fright as your la’ship; for to be certain, they would ravish us both. Besides, ma’am, consider how cold the nights are now; we shall be frozen to death.” Sophia is not to be deterred, however, and citing a “good brisk pace” as the key to defeating the cold and evading the criminals, she and Honour further organize their escape. Importantly, the scenes where the women walk are absent from the text, and the success of Sophia’s plan to “walk out of the doors when they are open” is underscored by this gap in the text. She and Honour clearly encounter no difficulties worth reporting during their pedestrian escape, and they stand in sharp contrast to the dangers experienced by the heroines in Fielding’s earlier work, or the texts of Smith and Hays.

Frances Burney’s heroine in the *The Wanderer* (1814) echoes Defoe and Dorothy Wordsworth, in that it conflates walking with poverty. At the same time it recalls Sophia Western in that it offers freedom. Juliet Granville, whose tale is one of progressively downward mobility, is finally reduced to walking around the New Forest to evade the various characters plaguing her. Here, she paradoxically finds safety not on the road, but off it, “far removed from the ‘busy hum of man,’” that by this late date was expected on the public roads. And while Juliet faces challenges on this and her following walks — the novel’s subtitle is, after all, *Female Difficulties* — she is safer and more autonomous in this section of the novel than she is in the scenes where she is subject to other people’s domestic spaces.

**Conclusion**

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The changing perceived, conceived, and lived space of eighteenth-century Britain via the improved roads network and the altering material world of conveyance and motion offered women increasingly greater opportunities for movement over the course of the long eighteenth century in Britain. The various forms of private carriages, the expansion of stagecoach routes, the introduction of post-chaises and mail coaches, the re-popularization of horseback riding, and the radical rethinking of walking meant that the female body was progressively more mobile over this period. Whatever concerns masculinist reactionaries had about the power and potential sexual freedom wielded by of women in private carriages, innovations in their designs and the spread of their use by women is documented in the literature and art of the time.

The rapid growth of the stagecoach, post-chaise, and mail coach systems further democratized women’s movement, extending possible mobilities to women of the middling and lower ranks. While these forms of public transportation came with their own drawbacks in terms of exposure and associations with socially suspect behavior like elopement, they nevertheless offered women greater agency over corporeal travel. The clear increase in all types of vehicular movement by women over the period shown here stands in defiance of the popular understanding of eighteenth-century British women as essentially domestic.

The resistance to homebound sessility is witnessed in the uptick in women’s equestrianism and pedestrianism, as well. The “amazons” on horseback were sometimes derided for their adoption of masculine pursuits with veiled accusations of inappropriate power, sexual licentiousness, and enmasculinity were leveled at them. Women walkers were at times subjected to harassment and assault on the road. However, the era also witnessed the association of women’s riding and walking with healthful behavior and increased freedoms. For any dangers
though women’s possible mobilities were attended by various challenges, physical and social, these literary and pictorial representations of women indicate their steady adoption nonetheless. Eighteenth-century women were increasingly capable of adventuring outside of domestic spaces, both in the real world and representations of that world. While the conduct literature of the time may have stressed the notion of the home as the proper sphere of influence for women, the texts and artwork cited here show that other opportunities for women and female characters existed — and that women took them. The development of new vehicles for private and public transportation, the increased access to horses and renewed interest in equestrianism, and the changing perceptions around walking all conspired together to create an environment which allowed alternatives to women’s ascription to the home. These changes in the physical world and its material culture are salient markers of the growth of women’s mobility and all of the variants of the mobile woman in the examples offered above, stand in contrast to the stereotype of the increasingly limited domestic woman.
Chapter IV: Dangerous Habits: The Eighteenth Century British Ladies's Riding Habit and other Travel Fashions

The changes in the perceived space of eighteenth-century Britain, and the increasing physical movement of female corporeal travelers, is witnessed by the growing popularity of carriages, coaches, chaises, horseback riding, and walking for women. Furthermore, these advances are materialized in changing sartorial fashions for women in the period. Beginning with the introduction of the ladies's riding habit towards the end of the seventeenth century, clothing specifically designed for mobile women developed alongside the modes of women’s conveyance discussed in the previous chapter. By the end of the eighteenth century, in addition to riding habits, dresses marketed specifically as “carriage dresses,” “walking dresses,” and “promenade dresses,” dominated women’s fashion magazines. However, much like the mixed reactions to women engaging in the new forms of travel and movement, the fashions developed for these activities were not universally welcomed. The ladies's riding habit in particular seems to have initially sparked a fair amount of socio-cultural anxiety, particularly amongst the middle and upper classes, with changing attitudes over the course of the long century revealing a growing, if begrudging, acceptance of the outfit. In this chapter I trace the progression of responses to and associations with the ladies's riding habit and consider the ways these reactions to material markers of women’s activity reveal conflicting, though increasingly accepting, attitudes about women’s growing participation in physical movement over the period.

In “Dress as a Social Record,” Anne Buck argues that, “Fashionable dress presents a sequence of changes, a pattern in time.”  

key material markers of a world in which movement is progressively more and more available and accessible to women. As the evolution of travel and transportation discussed in the previous chapters afforded more possible mobilities, women’s travel clothing was developed in response to the new demands of this changing world. Even more pointedly gender specific than the advancements in conveyance which could and were enjoyed by both sexes, ladies's riding habits and other travel wear — and the tensions around them over the period — materially record the advance of the mobile woman.

This chapter first explores the historical context for the early anxieties around the adoption of the riding habit by women. Through close analysis of a variety of different literary and visual texts, it diagnoses the most common complaints about the habit. Next, it examines how some, though not all, of these concerns were inverted or undermined by other literary and visual sources which viewed the outfit and its occasion positively. It examines conflicting opinions around the adoption of the riding habit, considering them as part of the dialogue around women’s participation in physical movement. By working through texts over the course of the century and focusing on how the early worries and contentions give way to a largely accepting attitude in later works, it charts a slowly won acquiescence towards the ladies's riding habit that mirrored the larger sociological acceptance of women’s increasing potential for movement outside the home. Finally, the chapter argues that the acceptance of the riding habit anticipated the later proliferation of other types of women’s travel clothing. It notes the dominance of travel-inspired occasional dress in the women’s fashion magazines of the Regency period, maintaining that the popularity of this type of clothing which, like the riding habit, was designed for more
comfortable movement, indicated a world of mobile women at odds with the ideologies inherent in the domestic thesis.262

**Historical Habits: Morality, Dress, and Gender Anxiety**

While riding habits for men had long been de rigueur, the advent of women’s clothing specifically for travel on horseback in the mid-seventeenth century ushered in new attire for women. Styled on the cut of the men’s riding habit, the costume consisted of a jacket and skirt, with an optional waistcoat, frequently made of wool or other durable materials. As Cally Blackman explains in “Walking Amazons: The Development of the Riding Habit in England during the Eighteenth Century”: “The fabric, colours and trimmings [the ladies's riding habit] used copied those of the male suit as well as its cut and construction, and it continued to be made by male tailors long after most other garments for women were being made by the newly established female mantuamakers.”263 The ladies's jackets buttoned left over right, like a man’s, and “other masculine features include[d] the high collar and revers, the large buttons and cuffs *a la mariniere.*”264 The waistcoats that were a popular addition to the riding jacket over the period, a masculine article of clothing in and of itself, frequently featured frogs and other military inspired trim. The petticoat that replaced men’s breeches in the feminine version of the habit “was simple in cut... and the hoops under the petticoat could be specially designed ones that were

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262 Early women’s fashion magazines like *Lady’s Magazine* (1770–1832), *Ladies Museum* (1798-1832), *La Belle Assemblée* (1806-1837), and *Ackermann’s Repository* (1809-1829), all regularly featured colored fashion plates of various forms of mobility-inspired clothing. These periodicals enjoyed a wide readership, and both reflected and encouraged the adaptation of these fashions for women.


lighter and more flexible than normal, adding to ease of movement and comfort when riding.”

Women accessorized the outfit with feathered or beaver caps, crops, and outdoor shoes or boots. The habit was worn not just for riding, but for many years was donned for any type of travel and was considered a fashion statement in its own right. Though the style of the riding habit evolved over the period, it stubbornly maintained its masculine attributes, as these modern sewing patterns, intended to recreate the fashions from a variety of time frames within the broader period show. (Illustrations 27, 28, 29, and 30) 

Illustration 27: 1670s-1720s Lady's Riding and Traveling Outfit

Illustration 28: 1730s-1760s Lady's Riding and Traveling Outfit

265 Blackman, 50.

266 With permission by the artist Robert Davis at ReconstructingHistory.org
The introduction of these masculine fashions for women caused quite a stir in the periodicals and artwork. Early in the period, the adoption of the riding habit by women was represented as evoking a fair amount of anxiety, particularly amongst reactionary-complimentarian male observers of decorum. This anxiety around women’s fashion has been ascribed by Vern L. Bollough and Bonnie Bollough in *Cross-Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (1993), as an aftereffect of the traumatic destabilization of conventional gendered social structures by the English Civil war. In their book the Bolloughs argue that, “Though the monarchy was restored in 1660 with Charles II, kingship was never quite the same... As traditional hierarchies were under attack, the simple fact of being born male seemed to some men not enough of a guarantee of their dominance over women. It was necessary to be more, to wear masculinity as a badge of
Women who donned the manly riding habit were seen by many men to be appropriating masculinity and threatening proper gender distinctions between men and women. This type of eliding the difference between sexes — even the ostensible inability to distinguish between them — was often viewed as threatening to traditional patriarchal categorizations and in the long eighteenth century sartorial practices that obfuscated one’s sex tended to be met with suspicion.

The Bulloughs’s contention that post-civil war Britain was a particularly destabilized social space is rearticulated by Michael McKeon in his “Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660–1760.” In his article, the author contends that it was due in large part to this social instability that the period saw the development of a “modern patriarchy” which replaced traditional “patriarchalism.” McKeon’s essay begins by tracing the decline of patriarchalism, his term for the analogical system in which the family order reflected a national royalist government. For McKeon, the events of the English Civil War and the succession crises following the Restoration fatally undermined this analogy. He maintains that the subsequent social restructuring lead to the “emergence of the modern division of labor and class formation,” which created a distinction between “inside” and “outside” work. This, McKeon claims, led to the shift to “modern patriarchy” a system he defines as dependent upon the “structural separation of the genders.” McKeon goes on to weave advances in science in the era into his discussion of this marked sociological shift, paying particular attention to the new understanding of biological sex. McKeon argues that the era oversaw the move from the traditional “one-sex model” to the modern “two-sex model” which he maintains largely caused

the shift “from a totality differentiated by matters of degree ... [to] the imperative to distinguish and divide differences of kind,” which he sees as ushering in a new distinctions between genders.²⁶⁸

If McKeon is correct in his interpretation that British society, “in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ...acquired the modern wisdom that there was not one, but two sexes; that they are biologically distinct and therefore incommensurable; and that they are defined not by behavior, which is variable, but by nature, which is not,” the resistance that the ladies's riding habit enjoyed from some quarters is unsurprising. The ladies's riding habit demonstrates the instability between gender and sex, behavior and biology, and undermines the burgeoning gender essentialism of the period. The tensions around the ladies's riding habit highlight what Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub have neatly explained in their work on gender ambiguity:

distinctions between male and female bodies are mapped by cultural politics onto an only apparently clear biological foundation. As a consequence sex/gender systems are always unstable socio-cultural constructions. Their very instability explains the cultural importance of these systems: their purpose is to delimit and contain the threatening absence of boundaries between human bodies and bodily acts that would otherwise explode the organizational and institutional structures of social ideologies.²⁶⁹

Epstein and Strauss'ss work suggestds that the drive to neatly categorize and classify gender and sex, and the relationship between the two, exists because of the precariousness of their meaning. The ladies's riding habit, with its masculine look and purpose, was a material marker of this unstableness, and thus incited mixed reviews. In a period of time particularly vulnerable to anxiety around instability, and in a time-space where multiple versions of

²⁶⁸ McKeon, 301.
patriarchal control were in question and in play, “The masculine influence on women’s dress, of which the habit was but one example, caused consternation and critical comment.”

**Dangerous Habits: The Bad**

The “consternation” and “critic[ism]” caused by the ladies's riding habit was public and published, with a variety of prominent literary figures from the era speaking out at length about the inappropriateness and the danger of the practice. One such critic was Richard Steele, whose *The Spectator 104* (1711), was given the telling title, “Decency of Behaviour: Letter to a Female Equestrian.” This issue dealt exclusively with the “problem” of women in riding habits. Given *The Spectator’s* position as one of, if not the, most prominent didactic periodicals of the early eighteenth century, its focus on this subject in this issue highlights its topicality.

This particular edition of *The Spectator* is divided into two parts, a preface written by Steele, followed by a letter written by the poet John Hughes (1677-1720). Steele’s introduction begins by extolling the virtues of women’s “decency,” couched in large part in terms of conformation to societal standards and external expectations:

> It would methinks be a short rule for behaviour, if every young lady in her dress, words, and actions were only to recommend herself as a sister, daughter, or wife, and make herself the more esteemed in one of those characters. The care of themselves, with regard to the families in which women are born, is the best motive for their being courted to come into the alliance of other houses. Nothing can promote this end more than a strict preservation of decency. I should be glad if a certain equestrian order of ladies, some of whom one meets in an evening at every outlet of the town, would take this subject into their serious consideration.…

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270 Blackman, 48.

For Steele, women’s “decency” is tantamount to how a woman’s overall “behaviour” is viewed by others and how her conduct reflects upon her family and especially the men in her life. Steele implies that a woman’s “decency” is equatable with her ability to adhere to a sociologically constructed concept of femininity. As a “sister, daughter, or wife” — terminology that suggests the critical figure of the domestic woman — women are defined by their relationship to others. Steele’s contention that a woman’s behavior is most important in terms of how it reflects on the men in her life, is translated into an assertion that it is essential that a lady maintain decorum and behave in a way deemed appropriate by what is framed here as society at large. If a woman wishes to “come into the alliance of [an]other house,” the ultimate private perceived and lived space of the domestic woman according to the domestic thesis, Steele insists they will do so by preserving their decency, which he frames as incompatible with “a certain equestrian order of ladies.” Of course, this “equestrian order” must actually exist in order to warrant Steele’s condescension, and as this issue and other texts indicate, mobile women existed in large enough numbers to draw comment and critique. Here, and in other works, the equestrian ladies are offered as a tacit foil for the domestic woman.

The assertion that equestrian women are failing to maintain a “strict preservation of decency” and are, thus, unmarriable is grounded in an argument against their sartorial choices, and is explored in greater depth in the subsequent letter, which makes up the second half of the lesson. The letter, though lengthy, bears exploring in its entirety, given that both the introductory tale and the moral dictates that follow directly address the unease that equestrian women in riding habits engendered. The opening anecdote reads:
Chapter IV: Dangerous Habits: The Eighteenth Century Ladies's Riding Habit and other Travel Fashions

Mr. Spectator,

‘Going lately to take the air in one of the most beautiful evenings this season has produced, as I was admiring the serenity of the sky, the lively colours of the fields, and the variety of the landskip every way around me, my eyes were suddenly called off from these inanimate objects by a little party of horsemen I saw passing the road. The greater part of them escaped my particular observation, by reason that my whole attention was fixed on a very fair youth who rode in the midst of them, and seemed to have been dressed by some description in a romance. His features, complexion, and habit had a remarkable effeminacy, and a certain languishing vanity appeared in his air: his hair, well curl’d and powder’d, hung to a considerable length on his shoulders, and was wantonly ty’d, as if by the hands of his mistress, in a scarlet ribbon, which played like a streamer behind him: he had a coat and wastecoat [sic] of blue camlet trimm’d and embroidered with silver; a cravat of the finest lace; and wore, in a smart cock, a little beaver hat edged with silver, and made more sprightly by a feather. His horse too, which was a pacer, was adorned after the same airy manner, and seemed to share in the vanity of the rider. As I was pitying the luxury of this young person, who appeared to me to have been educated only as an object of sight....

Hughes's story suggests a variety of the anxieties around sartorial choices, spectacle, and women’s assumption of the riding habit that are echoed the works of Epstein, Straub, and the Burroughs. The narrator’s initial attraction to the “romantic” figure on the horse is predicated on the “youth’s” effeminacy as effected by “his” appearance and, particularly, his clothing. The rider is presumed by Hughes to be male, and his attire a catalogue of luxury: the “well curl’d and powder’d” hair is tied back with a scarlet ribbon. His coat and waistcoat are fashioned of camlet; a luxurious cloth purported to be woven of camel’s hair and silk, and trimmed with silver. His cravat is “of the finest lace,” another expensive expenditure. His cocked beaver hat matches his coat and waistcoat with its silver edging, and is topped off with a jaunty feather. Even the rider’s horse (an expensive pacer rather than the less expensive trotters) shares his “airy manner.”

Hughes's immediate identification of the young rider with “languishing vanity” and his close

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272 Spectator. 104.
examination of the “fair youth’s” outfit and equipage speak to the belief that attire can be reliably read in order to assess the sex, class, and character of other people.

Hughes's first response to the rider, after ascribing him with the feminine vice of vanity (twice), is “pity.” Hughes reads the rider’s assumption of such sumptuous clothing as indicative of someone who has, “been educated only as an object of sight,” i.e. an object for visual consumption by others. Because Hughes initially believes the rider to be male, the adoption of attention-seeking apparel is particularly appalling. It is unsurprising that the idea of a man as object rather than subject “offend[s]” Hughes, because it makes the presumed male rider “womanish.” As Laura Mulvey’s pioneering work on the male gaze in “Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema” reminds, it is a woman’s position in society to be looked at, a man’s to be the onlooker.

Shawn Lisa Maurer reiterates these gendered positions in her exploration of attitudes towards eighteenth century women and dress in, “Designing Women: The Fabric of Gender Politics in the Tatler and Spectator Papers,” arguing that the periodicals, “enact gender difference by establishing women as the proper objects of visual as well as ethical scrutiny and men as their obligatory scrutinizers.” She maintains that men who offer themselves as objects for visual and, thus, ethical scrutiny, asking others to look at and admire them are “unequivocally censured” in Addison and Steele’s broadsheets. Certainly Hughes is quick to censure the presumed horseman for his sartorial choices. Even more telling is what the author assumes can be known about the rider on the basis of those choices.

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Chapter IV: Dangerous Habits: The Eighteenth Century Ladies's Riding Habit and other Travel Fashions

Notably, Hughes's subsequent realization that the observed object is in fact a woman dressed “like a man” elicits an even more negative response. Hughes's initial pity turns first to shock, then disdain, when he becomes aware that the horseman is a horsewoman:

I perceived on my nearer approach, and as I turned my eyes downward, a part of the equipage I had not observed before, which was a petticoat of the same with the coat and wastecoat [sic.] After this discovery, I looked again on the face of the fair Amazon who had thus deceived me, and thought those features which had before offended me by their softness, were now strengthened into as improper a boldness; and tho’ her eyes nose and mouth seemed to be formed with perfect symmetry, I am not certain whether she, who in appearance was a very handsome youth, may not be in reality a very indifferent woman.  

The rider’s petticoat alone is enough to “re-sex” her in Hughes's eyes. He immediately redefines her as a “fair Amazon,” rather than the “very fair youth” she had lately been and this reassessment, completely alters Hughes's opinion of the rider — and his second appraisal is even less kind than his first. Suddenly, the features he had found to be too “soft” for a man are equally as “improper” in their masculine “boldness” for a woman. And while the effeminacy that had dismayed him when he believed the rider to be male had at least rendered the rider “very handsome” due in large part no doubt to heteronormative sexual attraction on the part of Hughes (i.e. the rider looks a lot like a girl for a boy), the rider’s looks are not feminine enough to sustain that attraction when her sex is revealed (to wit, she doesn’t look enough like a girl for a girl). While the female equestrian’s face still seems to be in “perfect symmetry,” there is now something about her — her clothing — that is not feminine enough, and Hughes concludes that she makes for a “very indifferent woman.”

275 The Spectator 104.
The rider’s new “indifference,” is the direct result of her riding habit and the ways in which her attire troubles her supposedly innate, biological femininity. Her assumption of masculine clothing and the confusion around her sex problematizes any notion that sex is “defined not by behavior, which is variable, but by nature, which is not.” By illustrating the unreliability of gendered material markers in ascertaining a person’s sex, the ladies's riding habit points to the precarious relationship between gendered clothing and sex. If a woman can be “made a man” by her clothing, than womanhood is not a fixed and essential identity and perhaps more importantly for these male critics, neither is manhood.

This tenuousness does not sit well with Hughes, as the remainder of the letter makes clear. He first takes issue with the effect of the habit claiming that the “occasional perplexities and mixtures of dress” that the donning of a riding habit by a woman “breaks in upon that propriety and distinction of appearance in which the beauty of different characters is preserved.” The lack of preservation of the “different characters” of men and women through sartorial choices results in an erosion of the “distinction of appearance” and any elision of the distinction between the “characters” of the sexes, i.e. any gender ambiguity, is “naturally” objectionable. As the letter makes clear, the supposedly natural, sex-based differences between men and women that constitute the modern patriarchy are at risk of being reconfigured or lost by changes in women’s attire. Hughes is adamant that gendered clothing should reflect one’s biological sex; not obfuscate or complicate it.276

The shift from criticizing the individual woman to critiquing the practice indicates that Hughes's anecdote is allegorical. His negative reaction is not limited to this woman’s choice of

276 Sumptuary laws in England came to an end in the early 17th century, but the desire to be able to identify who a person was by what that person wore lived on.
attire, but encompasses a possible (and worrisome) trend among women: “if [these perplexities and mixtures of dress] should become more frequent than they are at present” than the resultant “breaking in on propriety” will have dire — if unspecified — effects. Here, Hughes's denunciations of the unnamed rider’s clothing figure into a much larger fear of social instability. This anxiety around instability and change reveals itself in Hughes's contention that any widespread adoption of this kind of cross dressing will turn “our publick assemblies into a general masquerade.” The masked balls that were popular in the period were the source of a considerable amount of socio-cultural anxiety, and this comparison suggests that the ladies's riding habit elicited similar fears. For many contemporary critics, masquerades were associated with social chaos and a broad licentiousness. This licentiousness was viewed as a by-product of the disguise which, by definition, aided its wearer in resisting immediate and accurate identification. The sartorially-evoked unidentifiability offered by the lady’s riding habit defied modern patriarchy’s insistence that the gender was “defined not by behavior” by complicating the onlooker’s ability to correctly identify biological sex based on clothing.277

Problems with proper identification and the ability to define based on categorization were not limited to sex, however, and Hughes moves on to express other concerns about the ladies's riding habit and its potent dangers. Faulting the outfit’s origins, Hughes's complaint locates the advent of the ladies's riding habit in French fashion:

The Advance of the Mobile Woman: Representations of British Women’s Physical Mobility, 1660-1820

The model of this Amazonian hunting-habit for ladies, was, as I take it, first imported from France, and well enough expresses the gaiety of a people who are taught to do anything so it be with an assurance; but I cannot help thinking it sits awkwardly yet on our English modesty.\textsuperscript{278}

The well documented tensions between Great Britain and France in the long eighteenth century, and the contemporary notion of distinct and contrasting (even opposing) national identities provide the basis for Hughes's criticism. As Aileen Ribiero has argued, “there was in the eighteenth century... a curious ambivalence with regard to France; coupled with a dislike of French policies at home and abroad went the feeling that only the French possessed the secrets of haute couture and high fashion, particularly with regard to women’s dress.”\textsuperscript{279} The ambivalence about France that Ribiero describes, combined with this firm belief in the power of national characters, meant that “English identity in dress was defined in a constantly shifting relationship to continental types and tropes of fashionability.”\textsuperscript{280} Because English identity in dress, as in so many aspects, was defined primarily against the French, much in the same way that masculinity was defined against femininity, the rider’s assumption of a French practice is read by Hughes as a vaguely traitorous act. Hughes hints at the widely held contention by the British that the French were morally suspect when he complains that the riding habit “well enough expresses the gaiety of a people who are taught to do anything so it be with an assurance; but I cannot help thinking it sits awkwardly yet on our English modesty.” The outfit’s French origin is ascribed to their national “gaiety,” further explicated as their willingness not only to accept, but to actively

\textsuperscript{278} The Spectator 104.


encourage, doing “anything” as long as it is done with “assurance.” This is couched as being fundamentally incompatible with the superior “English modesty,” which is explicitly linked to the ideology of a more restrained, reserved national character. For Hughes one’s nationality, like one’s sex, should be natural, innate, identifiable, and consistent.

The association of the ladies's riding habit with France and with French identity indicates another aspect of this inappropriate assumption on the part of “Amazonian” women. In contrasting the French “gaiety” with “English modesty,” Hughes returns to the concerns around the masquerade. As the French are described as being willing to “do anything so it be with an assurance,” the outfit in and of itself suggests a licentiousness that is counter-British; the wearing of it equated with a kind of ungovernable woman. These uncontrollable women are threatening to the already precarious social stability of the time and the “traditional hierarchies” that had been so badly damaged by the English Civil War.

Hughes's concerns don’t end there. His third overt grievance in the letter is a variation of the first. Here, instead of complaining about the ways in which the ladies's riding habit obscures one’s sex, the author instead contends that the wearing of masculine clothes will lead to the masculinization of the woman saying, “If it be natural to contract insensibly the manners of those we imitate, the ladies who are pleased with assuming our dresses will do us more honour than we deserve, but they will do it at their own expence [sic].” He claims that, “The dress and air of a man are not well to be divided; and those who would not be content with the latter, ought never to think of assuming the former.” This assertion that the clothes make the man recalls the part of his contemporary Lord Shaftesbury’s ‘sensational psychology’ which held that there is “a
physical basis for differences between men and women and fashion [is] a type of proof.”

The belief that clothing could and, perhaps more importantly, should make the man meant that women’s adoption of masculine costumes could defeminize and enmasculate them, again complicating “modern patriarchy’s” desire for gender essentialism.

Hughes goes on to interpret yet another type of betrayal, based on the same desire. Here he claims that women who embrace the riding habit are rejecting their own innate femininity, rather than consciously deciding to “deceive” others. Hughes complains:

There is so large a portion of natural agreeableness among the fair sex of our island, that they seem betrayed into these romantick [sic] habits without having the same occasion for them with their inventors: All that needs to be desired of them is, that they would be themselves, that is, what nature designed them.

The author’s repeated emphasis on the notion of a “natural” femininity that is “betrayed” by the habits recalls the attempted gender essentialism of McKeon’s “modern patriarchy.” Hughes’s instruction to women to “be themselves, that is, what nature designed them,” is dependent upon their rejection of this fashion and this, added to the earlier Shaftsburian contention that fashion could define gender, both underscore how sartorial choices are paradoxically viewed as both constructing and deconstructing gender.

Hughes then scolds not just this female rider, but all women once more, exhorting them to heed his warnings, and “learn how their sex must appear to us.” In a rhetorical moment that portends Mulvey, Hughes suggests that men’s visual reception of women’s clothing should be of paramount importance in the women’s choice of dress. Women are made to be looked at, and to be looked at by men. The idea that women might don a riding habit for practical purposes, due to

its superior comfort and fitness for the activity of horseback riding, never figures into Hughes's calculation of the outfit’s merit. Instead, his critique rests exclusively on its attractiveness to men. Presuming to speak for all men (the “us” in the sentence), the author flatly proclaims the assumption of this garb a “mistake.”

Ultimately, what Hughes's essay articulates most loudly is what is perhaps the fundamental patriarchal anxiety; the loss of men’s privileged position. In the letter, this fear is concealed and revealed in the way that the ladies's adoption of the riding habit is couched as a theft of something inherently masculine; a taking of something that rightfully belongs to men alone. Tellingly, Hughes uses the language of war to describe what these women are really doing when they wear clothing inspired by men’s wear: “if the Amazons should think fit to go on in this plunder of our sex’s ornaments, they ought to add to their spoils, and compleat [sic] their triumph over us, by wearing the breeches.” Hughes describes these women as “Amazons,” a fraught term in the eighteenth century, though here clearly being used in a pejorative sense of women at war with men. He accuses the lady equestrians of “plundering” and refers to their remaking of men’s clothing as “spoils”; both terms that call to mind a violent dispossession not simply of clothing, but of the martial arts that are rightfully and exclusively male. The author claims that only women’s lack of breeches forestalls their “compleat... triumph over us.” The letter thus neatly frames the situation as one in which the sexes are in conflict with each other — the supposedly eternal battle of the sexes. It accuses women of deceiving men by masking their femininity, of betraying their innate British femininity, of ignoring their duty to hold male

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viewing pleasure as the most important component in choosing clothing, and of taking what
rightfully belongs to men. The overall narrative arc of the letter’s argument is that genders (and,
to a lesser extent nationalities) are defined against each other, as mutually exclusive entities, a la
McKeon’s “modern patriarchy” but that the equestrian women are battling against this division
via their clothing and their activity. It iterates a war of the sexes, and hints at the anxiety that it is
a war that the riding habit wearing women are winning — petticoats notwithstanding.

Similar fears and accusations around women’s adoption of the riding habit are taken up
again in *The Spectator* 435 (1712), “Female Dress — Mixture of the Sexes in One Person —
Female Equestrians,” when the author (this time Joseph Addison, rather than Steele and Hughes)
complains:

> Among the several female extravagancies [sic] I have already taken
notice of, there is one which still keeps its ground. I mean that of ladies
who dress themselves in a hat and feather, a riding coat and a perriwig,
or at least tie up their hair in a bag or ribbon, in imitation of the smart
part of the opposite sex.”

In this edition, also entirely dedicated to asserting the folly of women in riding habits, the
narrator revisits several of Hughes's concerns, asserting that this dress results in “a mixture of
two sexes in one person,” locating the fashion’s origin in France and in the “levity” and
“vivacity” of the French (as opposed to, again, the “modesty” of the British), and claiming that
men are more attracted to “a figure entirely female” rather than these “masculine” ladies. This
narrator refers to the figure of the lady equestrian as a “hermaphrodite” and a “greater monster
than a centaur,” reiterating the argument that the costume unites the disparate and inimical sexes
in an unnatural manner. When the author insists, “I think it however absolutely necessary to keep

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up the partition between the two sexes and to take the notice of the smallest encroachments which the one makes upon the other,” he again highlights the anxiety around the erasure of gender divisions and proper spatialization (“partition between the two sexes,”) and renews the charge that women are forcibly taking something from men (“encroachment,” from the Old French “encrochier”: to seize).284 In a nod to the increasing traction of scientific terminology and categorization in the eighteenth century, the costume is described in this piece as “amphibious dress,” alluding to its capacity to traverse supposedly mutually exclusive spatial elements, land and water a metaphor for masculine and feminine spheres. This author, too, derides the practice as an “immodest custom,” with “modesty,” like “decency,” a watchword for reactionary-complimentarian socio-cultural ideologies. The narrator, reiterating Hughes, views the ladies's riding habit as a bad habit; the costume as dangerous custom.

The essay continues with the narrator broadening his analysis from individual women’s choice of clothing to the ways in which that clothing challenges a national identity he has ascribed to Britain, and echoes Hughes's warning that the assumption of this attire diminishes a British woman’s attractiveness to British men writing, “Modesty is our distinguishing character... and when this our national virtue appears in that female beauty, for which our British ladies are celebrated above all others in the universe, it makes up the most amiable object that the eye of man can possibly behold.”285 Again, the author’s anxiety about the masculinization of British women via their riding habits is rooted in its supposed ability to undermine their natural and national affinity to modesty and to being objectified. The donning of riding habits by ladies, both

284 Ibid.
285 Ibid.
here and in Hughes, is thus more than a personal choice in style; it threatens the correct division between the sexes and menaces a specifically British identity and undermines the “proper” subject-object relationship between men and women.

All of these concerns track closely with Hughes's. However, here a new quibble is added. In this edition of *The Spectator*, the author is frustrated that his previous counsel has been ignored by his female audience. He complains: “I am sure my she-disciples who peruse these my daily lectures, have profited but little by them, if they are capable of giving into such an amphibious dress. This I should not have mentioned, had not I lately met one of these my female readers in Hyde Park, who looked upon me with a masculine assurance, and cocked her hat full in my face.”

In an extension of Hughes's argument that women should preoccupy themselves with men’s approval of their dress, this narrator is angered by his own personal lack of authority. He goes on to reassert a more generalized disapproval which, though attributed to a universal masculine, unsurprisingly exactly mirrors his own. British women’s natural, national beauty-through-virtue is for the narrator, “the most amiable object that the eye of man can possibly behold,” and practices that question or complicate their femininity and their nationality are strictly disapproved of.

*The Spectator* was not alone in its preoccupation with women’s riding habits. The following year the author of *The Guardian* (1713), wrote about them in its analogical essay on dress and poetry. In this piece, the author argues that “The Sciences of Poetry and Dress have so near an alliance to each other that the rules of the one, with very little Variation, may serve for the other,” concluding, “As in a Poem all of the several parts of it must have a Harmony with the

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286 Ibid.
Chapter IV: Dangerous Habits: The Eighteenth Century Ladies's Riding Habit and other Travel Fashions

whole.”287 In a passage that is in conversation with The Spectator 435 quoted above, the author writes “There is another kind of occasional dress in use among the ladies, I mean the riding habit, which some have not injudiciously stiled hermaphroditical, by reason of its masculine and feminine composition; but I shall rather choose to call it the Pindaric; ... as it is a mixture of the sublimity of the epic with the easy softness of the ode.”288 This essay, which employs the extended metaphor comparing literary genres to contemporary practice in dress assumes its reader’s familiarity with a prominent literary kerfuffle of the time. In equating the ladies's riding habit with the pindaric, The Guardian’s readers are invited to associate it with William Congreve’s highly publicized and polemic criticism of the contemporary British form of the pindaric, a brief examination of which is essential to understanding the implications of the analogy.

In 1706, Congreve wrote a scathing assessment of the poetry of the seventeenth century poet Abraham Cowley and his imitators, essentially accusing them of the bastardization of the pindaric ode. Congreve’s “A Discourse on the Pindarique Ode” explained that the original structure, as developed by Pindar, consisted of three stanzas: a strophe, an antistrophe, and an epode which had traditionally been understood in two distinct ways, only the first of which is relevant here. The interpretation that Congreve’s essay seems to favor is one in which the strophe represents the primum mobile, or the movement of the outermost sphere in the geocentric model of the universe. This sphere was, per Aristotle, moved by a love of God and was thus a metaphor for the central or most important action. The antistrophe was said to represent the secunda

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288 The Guardian No. 149.
The Advance of the Mobile Woman: Representations of British Women’s Physical Mobility, 1660-1820

mobilia, or movement of the interior spheres. In Ptolemy’s version of the universe these spheres housed the moon, the planets, and the stars and were moved by the primum mobile. In the traditional pindaric it represented actions of lesser importance. The primum mobile and secunda mobilia moved in contra-rotation around the common axis of a stable earth viz., the epode in the poem. In this understanding of the Pindaric ode, the structure of the poem mirrors a cosmic hierarchical organization and the various stanzas work in harmony with each other to echo the order of the universe.²⁸⁹

In contrast to this order, Congreve accuses the contemporary British pindaric of being, “a bundle of rambling incoherent thoughts, express’ed in a like parcel of irregular stanzas, which also consist of such another complication of disproportion’d, uncertain, and perplex’d verses and rhimes.”²⁹⁰ When The Guardian’s author archly compares the ladies's riding habit with the British Pindaric, he is pointing out its inappropriate jumbling of incoherent and irregular attributes: its masculinity (“the sublimity of the epic”) and its femininity (“the easy softness of the ode.”) The ladies's riding habit, like the British pindaric, is “disproportion’d, uncertain, and perplex’d.” The outfit lacks an “appropriate, fitting, or pleasing relation... between things or parts

²⁸⁹ The second interpretation of the original pindaric, according to Congreve’s scholarship, is that it represents Theseus's twistings and turning in the labyrinth.

²⁹⁰ http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu/TextRecord.php?action=GET&textsid=33763

This metaphor follows the author’s assertion in *The Guardian* that, “As in a Poem all of the several parts of [dress] must have a Harmony with the whole.” The ladies's riding habit, with its mixture of masculine and feminine properties, is not harmonious and because of this it confounds what should be unconfoundable differences between men and women. In ways akin to how the British pindaric has deviated from the poetics of a “true” pindaric ode, the ladies's riding habit signifies a new “disproportionate” version which has strayed from the fitting original. As the correct pindaric form is one that represents cosmic organization and harmony, the strict sense of order has been lost in its British progeny’s deformity, just as the universal order lent by appropriate and “natural” gendered sartorial distinctions has been subverted by the ladies's riding habit.

This undermining of the correct celestial order, much like the anxieties around the “unnaturalness” and treachery of the ladies's riding habit, points to a reading of the outfit as a material marker of an attack on Britain’s patriarchal hierarchy. Women wearing this clothing and participating in masculine endeavors like riding and hunting, indicate a shifting sociological order in which women’s movement was becoming more and more common. The adoption by women of these habits, both the clothing and the practices, threatened spaces, physical and

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ideological, that were traditionally the property of masculinity. The fretting around the ladies's riding habit may have been predicated on a critique of trims and frogs, but it stemmed from a much deeper anxiety around a patriarchy that felt it was once again under assault.

The breadth and depth of this anxiety is not limited to the contributors to *The Spectator* and *The Guardian*, and the negative responses to the ladies's riding habit were not limited to the literary circle of Addison and Steele. As Cally Blackman has noted, as early as 1666, Samuel Pepys's complained that women’s riding habits looked, “all the world like mine” and that “nobody could take them for women in any point whatever — which was an odde [sic] sight, and a sight did not please me.”

Pepys’s pique shares some of the later anxieties voiced in these papers, grumbling about the inability to distinguish the sex of people in riding habits and insisting that the women were wearing something that belonged to him, as indicated by the possessor in the phrase “all the world like mine” (emphasis mine).

Blackman also cites no less eminent a figure than Samuel Richardson in her brief outline of the backlash against women in riding habits. As the title of Richardson’s “Against a young Lady affecting Manly Airs: and also censuring the modern Riding-habits” (1741) makes clear, Richardson, like Pepys, Addison, Steele, and Hughes before him, sees the riding habit as inappropriately masculine for women. Blackman quotes Richardson, writing to his niece: “one cannot easily distinguish your sex by [the riding habit.] For you neither look like a modest girl in it, nor an agreeable boy.” Richardson’s original text goes on to scold his niece:

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294 This passage is misquoted in Blackman, where she has mistakenly replaced “mine” with “men.” Blackman’s argument goes on to suggest that the real issue men took with women wearing riding habits was centered on the inappropriate places they wore them to i.e. to make visits, to church, and to other public spaces, but I see the issue as simultaneously broader and deeper than that.
Some conformity to the fashion is allowable. But a cock’d hat, a laced jacket, a fop’s peruke, what a strange metaporhoses [sic] they make! And then the air assumed with them, so pert, and so insipid, at the same time, makes, upon the whole, such a boy-girl figure, that I know nothing that would become either the air, or the dress, but a young Italian singer. For such an one, being neither man nor woman, would possibly be best distinguished by this hermaphrodite appearance.

In short, I would have you remember, my dear, that as sure as anything intrepid, free, and in a prudent degree bold, becomes a man; so whatever is soft, tender, and modest, renders your sex amiable. In this one instance we do not prefer our own likeness; and the less you resemble us, the more you are sure to charm: for a masculine woman is a character as little creditable as becoming.295

Like his predecessors, Richardson’s “offense” to his niece’s attire is grounded in the ways in which the outfit breaks down the appropriate gender roles ascribed to men and women. Set against each other once again, the “intrepidity,” “freedom,” and “boldness” which should belong to men are positioned as mutually exclusive to the “softness,” “tenderness,” and “modesty” which should define women, pitting a masculine agency and mobility against a vision of feminine domesticity and sessility. Richardson, too, bases a large part of his advice against the adoption of the riding habit in language that makes clear that what men will think of his niece should govern her behavior.

In reiterating the importance of masculine responses to women’s habits, all of these texts seek to reinforce a patriarchal authority that believes its power is being eroded by the growing opportunities for women’s physical mobility. It is not by accident that the critics of the ladies's riding habit frequent allude to its transgressive properties. “Transgression” (“to step across,”) is an act of crossing boundaries between different spatial allocations for women and men. The gendered spaces which were depicted as being not simply distinct, but in opposition to each other

295 Samuel Richardson. *Familiar Letters*. 125-126
under the modern patriarchy, are here threatened in a new way by women’s changing possible
mobilities and their increasing access to corporeal travel. Given that riding habits were the outfit
of choice not simply for equestrian pursuits, but for many forms of women’s movement and
travel, when Hughes argues in his letter that the equestrian ladies “seem betrayed into these
romantick [sic] habits without having the same occasion for them with their inventors,” the larger
implication is that women needn’t move. This denial of women’s right to mobility reminds that it
was viewed as form of agency and control; the kinds of autonomy and power that adherents of
the domestic thesis ideology sought to limit.

Perhaps even more tellingly, reference to the actual practice of riding a horse (or any
other form of movement) is absent in all of the other criticisms outlined above. As Chapter III
has discussed, alongside other kinds of physical movement, women’s equestrianism was
enjoying growing widespread popularity. It is doubtful that the critics of the habit were unaware
of this trend. It’s possible, though dubious, that these male commentators didn’t realize that the
ladies's riding habit was constructed for optimum mobility: sartorial details like the close cut of
the jacket (less cumbersome than the typical fuller cut of a dress); larger buttons (which made for
easier, even one-handed, opening and fastening of the jacket and waistcoat: an important
consideration when horseback riding); and simplified petticoats and lightened hoops (to free up
movement), had come together to create a garment designed for maximum comfort and
convenience for movement. What is crucial is that, aside from Hughes's flat denial that women
might need or want to ride (while watching a woman do just that), the other critics remain silent
about the occasional purpose of the outfit. This lacuna suggests a conscious resistance to the
activity that the outfit represents. In casting the ladies's riding habit solely as a deviant fashion
without a practical purpose, the authors betray their anxieties around the ways in which the outfit is a material marker of the increasingly mobile woman. By ignoring the functionality of the ladies's riding habit, its critics imply a disapproval of the travel with which it was associated, and the tension around the costume suggests that women’s growing corporeal travel served to disrupt neat gender divisions in ideological and perceived space.

The anxiety around the “equestrian order of women” trespassing into masculine spaces was not completely unfounded. As a particularly illuminating anecdote reported in *Bell’s Weekly Messenger* (1802) demonstrates, the ladies's riding habit could create enough gender ambiguity to allow women to access perceived spaces which were ideologically prohibited to them. The paper recounts the exploits of one Mrs. Sheridan, who managed to sneak into the gallery of the House of Commons dressed in a riding habit because she was mistaken for a boy. As the paper reminds, “No ladies [were] admitted” to the House of Commons, an exclusively masculine space, reserved for men with power and a salient reminder that lived ideological space is predicated on perceived space. 296

Critiques of and concern about women’s trespassing into masculine space did not limit themselves to the literature of the time. Alongside these texts, the anxiety and anger that women in riding dresses evoked found an outlet in satirical prints as well. Parodic prints from the long eighteenth century echoed the aforementioned authors's discomfort with (and sometimes disdain for) women in riding habits, using visual satire to poke fun at what many critics considered to be an inappropriate assumption of men’s clothing and masculine attributes. “The Female Turf

296 “Mrs. Sheridan obtained admission into the gallery of the House of Commons on Monday, in a riding-habit; a dress in which the doorkeepers mistook her in the crowd for a school-boy. No ladies are admitted. Two gentlemen accompanied her.” *Bell’s Weekly Messenger.* April 18, 1802
Macaroni” (1771), “The Three Graces of Cox-Heath” (1779), and William Holland’s “A Masculine Doe” (1792) all caricature women in riding habits, depicting them as absurd in, and because of, their “masculine” attire. In each of these prints, the inappropriateness of the woman’s riding habit is the focal point of the satire. Given that satire is, by definition, a form of didactic literature, it’s important to note that the lesson being taught in these pieces is consistent in tone: women in riding habits are inappropriate, ridiculous, and dangerous.

The first print (Illustration 31) features a full length depiction of a woman in profile, wearing a military red riding habit with a green cravat and scarf. Her hair is tied up in a club and she sports a jaunty cap finished with erect feathers. She holds a riding crop in her right hand and her left riding boot peaks out from beneath her skirt, creating the sense that she is in motion. The print is probably a satire on Elizabeth, Duchess of Grafton, as its partner print, The Male Turf Macaroni, is thought to be her husband, Augustus Henry FitzRoy, 3rd Duke of Grafton. The title of the print, The Female Turf Macaroni (1771), indicates its satirical nature, as well as pointing out the centrality of her clothing to the critique. (Illustration 31) The eighteenth century term “macaroni,” almost exclusively applied to young men who had taken their Grand Tour of the continent and brought home the “follies and vices of other nations,” was largely predicated on the dress of the individual.297 Described in the Oxford Magazine (1770) as, “a kind of animal, neither male nor female, a thing of the neuter gender, lately started up amongst us. It is called a Macaroni. It talks without meaning, it smiles without pleasantry, it eats without appetite, it rides without exercise, it wenches without passion.” The “macaroni” was another form of gender ambiguity, a sort of inverse of the “Amazon” mentioned above, a figure also broadly based on

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297 R. Hitchcock Macaroni i. 5
clothing and exposure to foreign influence, and thought to be a direct result of travel. That the Duchess of Grafton is here being mocked as a female version of this pejorative term while depicted in a ladies's riding habit, gestures to the accusations of the hermaphroditical and foreign properties of the outfit as expressed in the earlier works of Steele, Hughes, Addison, and others.

Illustration 31: The Female Turf Macaroni, 1771.

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298 Oxford Magazine June 228/2
The second print, *The Three Graces of Cox-Heath* (1779, Illustration 32) is thought to feature a masculinized Duchess of Grafton wearing a riding habit, as well. Here, she is joined by the duchesses of Gordon and Devonshire, who are also vested in riding habits. Although you wouldn’t know it from this print, the duchessess of Gordon and Devonshire were great rivals, as a stout Tory and a firm Whig, respectively. This print is believed to be a depiction of the three wives of the commanders of Cox-Heath who were all presented to the King there in November of 1778. In it, the three women are mocked for their masculine dress which included wearing military coats with masculine touches like “epaulettes, cravats, and frilled waistcoats.” The hats
they sport are “looped and cockaded” and feature tassels hanging from them. Each of the women carries an elongated riding crop. All of these touches have masculine connotations and suggest an inappropriate assumption on the part of the women — perhaps exacerbated by the fact that they were wives of military men.

*Illustration 33: A Masculine Doe, 1792.*

The third print (Illustration 35) is considerably more blatant in its disapproval. In *A Masculine Doe* (1792), the subject is dressed in a full riding habit, complete with cravat, bow tie, and a masculine shaped high hat and a plume of feathers. Her hair is unruly under her hat, and her nose covered in bristles. She is depicted with one foot on a stool, in the process of lacing up

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299 My description of this print draws heavily from The British Museum’s [website](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?assetId=74537&objectId=1449314&partId=1).
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her heavy riding boot. Her whip lies on the ground before her, with her hunting hounds in the background. A contemporary note written under the title of the print identifies its subject as “Lady Salisbury,” a noted horsewoman in her day.300 The title, much like that of The Female Turf Macaroni, implies the oft-expressed concerns around the capacity of the ladies's riding habit to masculinize its wearer. Here, gender gets reworked yet again as Lady Salisbury, a “doe” (“a female deer”), is rendered masculine by her attire and her activity. (Illustration 33)

Perhaps the most prolific in his mocking of women in riding habits was the well-known printmaker John Collet (sometimes mistakenly spelled “Collett,” 1725-1780), whose mezzotints typically feature women wearing riding habits.301 Often referred to as the “second Hogarth,” and thought to be one of his students, Collet published a wide a variety of caricatures of women in riding habits, engaged in active pastimes.

The first print, “Miss Wicket and Miss Trigger” (1778, Illustration 34) depicting two women engaged in sport, plays with the capacity of activities and clothing to elide gender differences. While both women are here engaged in “masculine” pursuits (cricket and hunting, respectively), Miss. Trigger alone is dressed in a ladies's riding habit, a reminder of its practical purpose. Miss Wicket is clothed instead in a bright yellow dress with red trim, and is depicted in a relaxed stance, leaning lazily against her cricket bat. In contrast, the energetic Miss. Trigger is costumed in a more subdued deep red, topped off with a brown fur coat, and accessorized with a plumed hat with matching red trim. Her hands are sheathed in bright yellow gloves, calling attention to them. In her right hand, she holds aloft three dead pheasants which she is proudly

300 See Charles Pigott’s The Female Jockey Club, 1794.
301 For more on John Collet, see chapter III.
displaying to Miss Wicket. In the left hand, she cradles her shotgun and the body of a fourth bird.

The print depicts her in mid-stride, arm raised triumphantly, surrounded by rambunctious hunting dogs. In this scene, everything about Miss Trigger is conventionally masculine; her clothes, her activity, her display of prowess.

Illustration 34: Miss Trigger and Miss Wicket, 1778.

That Collet intends this piece to be a critique, rather than a celebration, of the women, their clothing, and their activities is made obvious by his depiction of Miss. Trigger treading on a slip of paper which reads “Effeminacy” with her sturdy walking boots. As Peter G. Shilston has noted, this “was a conventional way for a cartoonist of the time to indicate rejection of
something.” While Shilston reads Collet’s mezzotint as approving in tone, a closer consideration of the meaning of the word “effeminacy” suggests otherwise. A variant of the adjective, “effeminate,” which means, when speaking of persons, “that has become like a woman.” the term differs in meaning from the terms “femininity” and “feminine” defined as “belonging to the female sex; female” and/or “designating the female sex.” Rather than functioning as an attribute or a designation, effeminacy is predicated on a process through which one “becomes like a woman.” The word is almost exclusively applied to men and is invariably negative in connotation.

When John Collet depicts Miss Trigger as stepping on “effeminacy,” the implication is not simply that she is not feminine, but rather that she actively eschews “becom[ing] like a woman.” Her unwillingness to become what she (theoretically) already is gestures to the break between gender and sex reflected in her choice of clothing and pastime. She is a woman dressed in “unfeminine” clothing and engaged in masculine sport; her ability to wear clothes and undertake activities that are supposed to be exclusively masculine underscores the inessential nature of gender, as well as its tenuous relationship with the biological sex upon which it is ostensibly predicated. This reminds us that there is an element of agency in gender that allows for an embrace or rejection of all or parts of the sociological expectations that it is a product of: that gender is assumed, both reflexively and sociologically, rather than innate.

Even the print’s inscription indicates a satirical disapproval of Miss. Trigger. Collet’s work is captioned with the rhyme, “Miss Trigger you see is an excellent SHOT/And forty-five

302 http://petergshilstonsblog.blogspot.com/2012/06/jane—austen—on—baseball—and—related.html
notches Miss Wicket’s just got.” The word “shot,” here privileged by all capital letters, obviously alludes to Miss Trigger’s hunting. However, perhaps less readily recognized now, a popular secondary definition of the term “shot,” in the eighteenth century was, “An ill-grown ewe; a refuse animal left after the best of the flock or herd have been selected.”

Given that the term “ewe” is sexually specific (that is, it refers only to female sheep, much like the “doe” in Holland’s print) the term echoes Mrs. Trigger’s own sex, and compares her to the undesirable sheep. The implication that she will be “refuse[d]” and “left after the best of the flock or herd have been selected” recalls the earlier authors’s contentions (threats?) that masculinized women, i.e. women in riding habits, will be passed over for marriage.

Collet’s prints didn’t limit themselves to threats of unmarriageability. Several of his paintings and prints of women in riding habits speak directly to the aforementioned authors's concerns which conflated the ladies's riding habit with potential sexual licentiousness. In, “The Favorite Footman or, Miss Well-Mounted” (1778, Illustration 35) the title’s double entendre is mirrored in the work itself, which focuses on a young couple preparing to go horseback riding.

In this print (from an original painting), the riding habit-clad young woman is being helped into her saddle by an attractive young officer. His chest and arms encircle the lower half of her body, his hands cupping her left foot to assist her mount. The young woman’s skirt is

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306 Note that she is “Miss” Trigger.
bunched up, exposing the entirety of her right lower leg, which is brushing against his knee. She

looks down at him fondly — even longingly — her hand wrapped around the saddle horn:

One would be hard-pressed to miss the erotic undercurrents in this print. The close
proximity of the subjects's bodies and their intimate positioning echo the title’s sexual innuendo.


Chapter IV: Dangerous Habits: The Eighteenth Century Ladies's Riding Habit and other Travel Fashions

The woman’s exposed leg, in a period when women’s legs were kept carefully concealed, points to a familiarity between the two, and suggests that further bodily access either will be, or has already been, granted to her “favorite footman.” This intimacy is reiterated in the way the female rider gazes at him, and is apparent in the footman’s own preoccupation with her right hand, in which she grasps the rather phallically shaped pommel. The entirety of the print, both in terms of content and title, suggests sexual licentiousness.

For all its suggestiveness, “The Favorite Footman or, Miss Well-Mounted” is not Collet’s most sexually provocative print featuring a ladies riding-habit. That honor likely goes to, “A Soft Tumble after a Hard Ride” (1780, Illustration 36). This Collet print depicts a fallen female rider, dressed in a green and white riding habit, lying supine on the ground, in a posture that recalls the satirical caricatures of George IV’s mistress Maria Fitzherbert discussed in Chapter III. She is about to be landed on by her male companion who has also lost his seat. In the background of the picture another female rider, dressed in a purple riding habit, clears a fence seemingly without difficulty:

This painting combines competing complaints about the ladies's riding habit. It, like “The Female Fox Hunter” and “The Rising Woman and the Fallen Man,” features a female rider of superior riding ability, in figurative and visual ascension over her male companion. Dressed in regal purple, the female rider in the background is urging her horse over the fence and, like the women in Collet’s prints featured in Chapter III, is depicted as competent, confident, and in control of her mount. The imperial color of her riding habit, with its obligatory masculine touches, indicates a power which is echoed in her positioning in the work. Her overall appearance and demeanor underscore the potential capacity of the ladies's riding habit to convert
women into Amazons; female warriors successfully waging war on men, women who “steal” masculine pastimes and places.

At the same time, the action unfolding in the foreground recalls another concern surrounding the ladies's riding habit, as suggested in “The Favorite Footman or, Miss Well-Mounted.” Here, too, the positioning of the “fallen woman” and the tumbling man is unmistakably sexual, with the male rider set to land between the female rider’s open legs. The “fallen woman’s” open arms and legs suggest acquiescence — anticipation, even — and again the connection between riding, riding habits, and sexual activity is highlighted. The double entendre of a “soft tumble” after a “hard ride” is so obviously exploited in the mezzotint’s content that it barely maintains the ambiguity necessary for two meanings, and Collet’s print might more accurately be thought of as a single entendre.

These works, literary and pictorial, articulate a set of reoccurring fears regarding the ladies's riding habit which directed the discussion of the attire in the long eighteenth century. Concerns about the outfit’s potential power to confuse gender identity, to Frenchify British women, to enmasculade women and, paradoxically, to simultaneously sexualize women are tropes which find themselves repeated and reiterated in various works over the period. Each of these anxieties, however, remains subservient to the overarching fear that the ladies's riding habit was a material marker of women’s assumption of masculine qualities, properties, and condition.

**Dangerous Habits: The Good**

However, exclusively negative representations were not the only reaction to the popularization of the ladies's riding habit. Though many of the early responses took on the critical or satirical tone of the works above, there existed a concurrent, if decidedly more limited,
body of art which approved of the adoption of the riding habit by women. In one of the earliest examples, an edition of the *Tunbridge Miscellany*, which came out the same year as *The Guardian* quoted above (1713), published a poem entitled “Upon Two Ladies in a Riding Habit”:

> The greatest conqueror of old renown’d,  
> Achilles in a female dress was found,  
> The virgins habit did that arm adorn,  
> Which was to make a thousand virgins mourn;  
> Now in revenge behold the brightest fair,  
> Who conquer most, the manly habit wear,  
> And try to hide beneath the male attire,  
> Those charms, for which a thousand youths expire;  
> Yet think not thus, ye fair, ye mock our eyes,  
> Too well we know ye thro’ the faint disguise,  
> Your looks appear superior to your dress,  
> And all the beauties of your sex confess.  
> So angels when they mortal forms assume,  
> Allay and temper much the heav’nly bloom;  
> But yet some glories of their native frame,  
> Betray their essence, and from whence they came.  

Unlike the previous authors and artists, the poet here is not critical of ladies donning a riding habit. Although he adopts many of the same tropes of the practice’s decriers, his response is playfully appreciative rather than disapprovingly pedantic. In initially likening the ladies in riding habits to Achilles in a dress, whose true nature couldn’t be disguised by his adoption of women’s clothing, the author teasingly accuses the women of attempted deception, echoing the complaints of the writers in *The Spectator* and *The Guardian*. His claims that the ladies are trying to “hide” themselves and are “mock[ing]” men’s eyes with their “disguise” is a reiteration of the notion that deception is being predicated on an elision of gender distinctions through sartorial choices; the women having donned “manly habit” and “male attire.” He then shifts the

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307 *The Tunbridge Miscellany*. 1713.
act of disguise, likening the women’s actions to those of angels assuming human form, maintaining that while the ladies “allay” and “temper” some of their beauty with their clothing, the habits are no match for the “glories of their native frame” and their “essence,” which shines through despite their efforts. Though this author mirrors the assertions of the critics in The Spectator and The Guardian that riding habits are deceptive, explicitly agreeing with the notion of gender/sex essentialism, he challenges the women’s adaptation of masculine clothing not on the grounds of its appropriateness, but on its efficacy, illustrating Patricia Crown’s contention that, “The adapted habit did anything but suppress women’s sexuality. In fact, it drew attention to the breasts and hips, which were prominently defined, even emphasized,” a point discussed in further detail below.\(^{308}\)

Another shared aspect with the earlier critiques is this poem’s employment the language of war. While the protagonists here are not referred to as “amazonian,” the poem begins with the comparison of the women to Achilles the famed Greek warrior, hero of the Trojan War and, “greatest conqueror of old renown’d” and throughout the text the ladies are cast as militaristic. They are said to be seeking “revenge” for Achilles's assumption of women’s clothing and, in parallel with his capacity to “make a thousand virgins mourn,” the women are said to possess charms “for which a thousand youths expire.” This frames heterosexual attraction in terms of opposition and battle, as did the outfit’s critics. Most explicitly, the author describes women clad in riding habits as “the brightest fair... who conquer most”; the doubled superlatives serving to underscore the ladies success in romantic conquests.

\(^{308}\) Crown, 121-122.
The anonymous poet was not alone in his sexualized approval of women in riding habits. Three short years later, as part of his Myra series, the poet Baron George Granville Lansdowne published a brief ode, “Myra in her Riding Habit” (1716), which continues in the same vein:

When Myra in her Sex’s garb we see,
The Queen of Beauty then she seems to be; 
Now fair Adonis, in this Male-disguise,
Or Cupid, killing with his Mother’s Eyes: 
No Stile of Empire chang’d by this remove,
Who seem’d the Goddess, seems the God of Love.  

Lansdowne, too, codes the riding habit as masculine attire. However, he neither shares the anxiety around gendered reappropriation of the narrators in *The Spectator, The Guardian* et al, nor does he insist, as does the author of “Upon Two Ladies in a Riding Habit,” that a woman’s beauty is based on essential qualities of her sex, thus betraying that she is a woman despite her male attire. Instead Lansdowne’s poem celebrates the gender-eliding properties of the ladies’s riding habit. He first likens Myra, when she is in traditional women’s clothing, to Aphrodite the “Queen of Beauty.” Through the adoption of “this Male-disguise” Myra is then transformed into the ideal of male beauty, Adonis, and finally into a hybrid of genders: “Cupid, killing with his Mother’s Eyes.” The poem goes on to assert, “No Stile of Empire chang’d by this remove” a claim that begs multiple readings, dependent on the interpretation of the word of “Stile.” If taken for its archaic meaning of “weapon of offense, for stabbing,” the line reiterates the violence of the “killing” eyes from before, and “Stile of Empire” suggests they are the preferred weapon of sexual conquest.  

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309 *Poems on Several Occasions*. 1716. 2nd Edition. p. 43

consistent subtext of the “war of the sexes” underlying the discourse surrounding the ladies's riding habit.

If “Stile” is read as a “condition with regard to external circumstances” then “Stile of Empire” may refer to the following line, “Who seem’d the Goddess, seems the God of Love.” This reading contends that Myra’s reign over the dominion of “Love” is undiminished by her choice of clothing and the change to and confusion of her sex the author claims it renders. Her transformation from Aphrodite to Adonis to Cupid, her “remove” from one sex to another and finally to a hybrid of both, fails to weaken her reign over love. Instead her sartorial transsexualism and/or hermaphrodisism more fully reinforce her sovereignty over the emotion, making her both its god and goddess.

Additionally, if the word assumes its definition as “a particular mode or fashion of costume” and “Empire” is thought to mean the actual British Empire, the line indicates a tacit resistance to the denationalizing fears voiced in the writings against women wearing riding habits. In contrast to the writers who read the ladies's riding habit as an inappropriate assumption of French fashion (and thus French identity), this poem can be read to assert the essential Britishness of the outfit. Myra’s riding habit can then be interpreted as reinforcing the notion of British superiority; a superiority expressed by her selection of a fitting weapon of war and her unimpeachable authority, perhaps casting her as a sort of embodiment of Britannia.

The ambiguity of the line concentrates the arguments against the appropriateness of the practice, while opening them to reinterpretation. Assumption, disguise, battles, and (successful) reappropriation, all of which are both predicated on and product of gender elisions, are here read as attractive qualities rather than inappropriate behaviors. In the final lines of the poem, the
ladies's riding habit simultaneously alters and retains Myra’s identity in that her gender shifts, but her reign over love does not. Ultimately, the outfit derives its power and attractiveness from its position as a material marker of the instability of gender divisions.

This understanding of and response to the ladies's riding habit as creating a deity of love is taken up in several other works in the succeeding decades. Its central conceit is reiterated in Richardson Pack’s 1726 poem “Seeing Her in a Chaise, with a Cap and Feather, and Riding Habit,” wherein Pack exclaims to the female subject of the poem: “Blest Nymph! Who both Godheads act with Ease/Who wound like Cupid, and like Venus please.”

In the anonymous “To Florelia, upon seeing her in a Riding Habit, at Scarborough” and its response “Upon seeing Miss B in the same Habit” from 1734 there lie slightly varied approaches. The first poem compares Florelia in her riding habit to Jove in various disguises, contending that women wore riding habits for the benefit of their male admirers; to conceal their otherwise “divine,” and thus

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311 Richardson Pack. “Seeing her in a Chaise, with a cap and feather, and Riding Habit,” Miscellaneous Works in Verse and Prose. (Dublin: S. Powell, 1726), 274: She who but now as Love’s bright Goddess shone,/ In this Disguise seems that arch Youth her Son./ And well she does their different Emblems prove/ Her Eyes are Arrows, and her Heart’s a Dove. /Blest Nymph! Who both the Godheads act with Ease;/Who wound like Cupid, and like Venus please.
Chapter IV: Dangerous Habits: The Eighteenth Century Ladies's Riding Habit and other Travel Fashions

destructive, beauty. The second poem, in return, counsels against the riding habit, pleading that Miss B forfeit the outfit for the sake of her “fond Votaries.”

Positive depictions of women in ladies's riding habits were not limited to the literary works of the period. Alongside the satirical prints that echoed the negative writing of those who disapproved of women in riding habits, there were positive artistic representations reflecting the attitudes of those who approved, and flattering depictions of women in riding habits can be found in a variety of visual arts. In a print attributed to Isaac Whood from the mid-eighteenth century

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312 Anonymous, “To Florelia, upon seeing her in a Riding Habit, at Scarborough” and “Upon seeing Miss B. in the same Habit,” The Scarborough Miscellany of 1734. (London:J. Wilford, 1734), 65-66:

To Florelia, upon seeing her in a Riding Habit, at Scarborough
I. When Jove of old intriguing came
To Nymphs of Mortal Race,
He fell in Love with ev’ry Dame,
That own’d a pretty Face.

II. His Godship did in various Shapes,
At various Times appear
Not to conceal his frequent Rapes
From jealous Juno’s Ear;

III. But lest unveil’d Divinity
Should the Destruction prove,
Of all the Beauteous Nymphs,
whom he did passionately Love.

IV. Just so Florelia, thus attir’d,
Does not propose to be,
By gazing Crowds, the more admir’d;
But to hide the Deity.

Upon seeing Miss B in the same Habit.
I. Forsake, Dear Nymph, this awkward Dress;
For who in Prudence can
Divest the loveliest Goddess,
T’ assume the mimic Man.

II. The Rival Ladies out of Spight,
Or Envy, soon will say
The Person is Hermaphrodite,
That’s seen in such array

III. Wou’d you the Human image bear?
Let me, my Fair, advise,
Hence forward be no more severe
To your fond Votaries.
and entitled simply *Lady in a Riding Dress*, the subject of the mezzotint is an attractive young woman, identified only as Mrs. Rudge, wearing her riding ensemble. (Illustration 37)

*Illustration 37: Lady in a Riding Dress, mid-eighteenth century.*
This classically composed portrait centers its subject on the canvas, posing her against a natural background; an allusion to the riding habit’s outdoor purpose. She is positioned confidently, one hand on her hip grasping her riding crop, the other arm crossing her body, holding what looks to be a beaver skin cap. Her face, though tilted, is drawn so that her eyes gaze directly at the onlooker. Her riding dress, while perhaps less masculine than some of the examples to follow, features multiple masculine sartorial touches: the right side buttons, modified mariniere cuffs, and pseudo-militaristic brocade around the coat’s edges are all traditional aspects of riding gear for men.

Rather than mocking or scolding Mrs. Rudge’s sartorial choice, the print celebrates them. The inscription beneath the mezzotint reads: “Where Sweetness thus and Innocence unite/ Vertue the Soul, and Beauty charms the Sight/ The Loves and Graces with Peculiar Care/ Through every scene of Life attend the Fair.” The caption’s emphasis is on the blurring of the spiritual and the visual aspects of femininity, and the onlooker’s soul is “charm[ed]” by the subject’s “Vertue,” while his eyes are “charm[ed]” by her “Beauty.” The insistence that “every scene of Life” is attended by “Loves and Graces” of “the Fair,” recalls the earlier assertions in the poems on women in riding habits that a woman’s attractiveness is not diminished by her choice of this attire, and was accentuated by the outfit.

This print is not unique in its positive depiction of a woman in a riding habit. Around the same time Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s riding habit was causing a stir on the continent, her sister Lady Mar wore one for her portrait, painted by the renowned Godfrey Kneller (1646 -
Kneller, who was one of the early to mid-century’s most sought after and prolific portrait artists and mezzotint producers, often depicted his female subjects in their riding habits. This particular painting, held at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery describes its subject as: “Full length, standing, to right; long dark brown curls; dark eyebrows and eyes; brownish-white riding habit; riding whip extended in right hand; glove held in left hand; servant holding horse to left” Kneller’s painting of Henrietta Cavendish, Lady Huntingtower from the same year is similar to Lady Mar’s; she poses in her riding costume with a whip, glove, servant, and horse. (Illustration 39) While his portrait of Lucy Pelham-Holles, Countess of Lincoln (1722) is simpler, depicting its subject in a blue riding habit with gold trim, riding crop lightly held at an angle in front of her body with her hat tucked in her left hand at her hip. Unlike Lady Mar and Lady Huntingtower, the Countess is alone in the painting, without a servant or a horse. (Illustration 40) However, as with the painting of Mrs. Rudge, each of Kneller’s portraits locate the women in an outdoor setting, surrounded by nature, a salient reminder that the habit’s primary purpose as clothing was for travel and movement outside of the home.

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313 “I was in my travelling habit, which is a riding dress, and certainly appeared very extraordinary to [the Turks.]” Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M—y W—y M——e: written, during her travels in Europe, Asia and Africa, to persons of distinction, Men of Letters, &c. in different Parts of Europe. Which Contain, Among other curious Relations, Accounts of the Policy and Manners of the Turks; Drawn from Sources that have been inaccessible to other Travellers. (London: A. Homer and P. Milton, 1764), 81.


Habitual Habits

While debate about its appropriateness dominated the earlier years of the long eighteenth century, certainly during the second half the wearing of a riding habit by ladies of quality seems to be taken for granted. Historian William Conner Sydney’s contention that, “Riding habits were extensively patronised” and “presented a very attractive appearance” is born out in the fictions of the time. Many of the most well-known authors of the period at least occasionally dress their titled or gentrified female characters in riding habits. By 1749, when Henry Fielding’s Sophia Western flees her father’s house to avoid his matrimonial plans for her, her public identity as a lady is predicated on the luxuriousness of her riding habit. When she and her maid Honour stop at an inn during their flight, they are described as “two young women in riding habits, one of which was so very richly laced that Partridge [the landlady] and the post-boy instantly started from their chairs, and my landlady fell to her courtesies, and her ladyships, with great eagerness.” That same year, Tobias Smollett’s *The Adventures of Roderick Random* was published, in which the “fallen woman” Miss William’s choice of a riding habit is an essential part of her assumed identity as a lady; “I made my first appearance in a blue riding habit trimmed with silver; and my maid acted her part so artfully, that in a day or two my fame spread all over the neighbourhood, and I was said to be a rich heiress just arrived from the country.”

Smollett’s *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, originally published in 1751, also contains a tale of a lady in a riding habit. In a salient example of the elision between biographical and

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literary texts, historical and fictional women, the reference appears in Chp. LXXXI, “Memoirs of a Lady of Quality,” an insertion purportedly written by Lady Vane, his historical contemporary and friend. In it, Lady Vane writes of meeting with a French prince and his sisters during her travels, remarking, “They complimented me on my person, and seemed to admire my dress, which was altogether new to them, being a blue English riding-habit, trimmed with gold, and a hat with a feather.” This particular inclusion of a ladies's riding habit into Smollett’s novel in a chapter that is ostensibly biographical in nature provides a particularly salient example of how commonplace the outfit was in the historical and in literary worlds.

In Eliza Haywood’s *The History of Betsy Thoughtless*, also published in 1751, the eponymous heroine, who is described as particularly fastidious in her clothing, purchases green Venetian silk to make her riding habit, and later dons a riding habit (perhaps the same one) to disguise herself from Mr. Trueworth. Charlotte Lennox’s characters in *The Female Quixote* (1752), *Henrietta* (1758), and *The History of George Warrington; or The Political Quixote* (1787) all wear riding habits, as do characters in the works of Charlotte Palmer, Anna Maria MacKenzie, Mary Robinson, and Frances Burney. While this sampling of authors including ladies's riding habits in their works is by no means exhaustive, it gives a sense of how, by the mid-eighteenth century, this style of clothing for women was increasingly commonplace as well as how the emphasis on the “lady” in the “ladies's riding habit” had diminished. For while the ladies's riding habit may indeed have initially been limited to “ladies” in the strict socio-

320 Charlotte Palmer, *Female Stability; or the History of Miss Belville*. (1780); Anna Maria MacKenzie, *Burtonwood* (1783); Mary Robinson, *The False Friend: A Domestic Story* (1799); Frances Burney, *Cecelia*
economic sense, the adoption of the outfit spread throughout the social hierarchy as the century progressed, its significance evolving alongside the increasingly popular practice of women’s equestrianism and other forms of transportation and movement for women, as discussed in Chapters III and IV.

That the donning of the ladies's riding habit was limited neither to novels, nor to the upper classes is apparent in an interesting case in 1766, where the outfit became the chief marker of femininity. *The Annual Register* for that year contains a brief, but fascinating, report of a popular public house owner who co-habitated with a woman for 36 years. Upon the woman’s death it came to light that the publican was also a woman. The revelation that “he” was actually a “she” led to the publican fleeing the town, only to return later in the company of a man to settle her business:

> dressed in a riding habit with a black hat and feather; so that her acquaintance [sic] could hardly believe her to be the same person, she having generally appeared in an old man’s coat, woolen cap, blue apron, etc. Her behavior is now that of an affable, well-bred woman, and agreeable in conversation.  

Her change in physical appearance, actualized by her assumption of the ladies's riding habit, which is quite clearly accepted as appropriate feminine dress in this account, is matched by her new, feminine behavior. Out of the “old man’s coat, woolen cap, and blue apron” of her life as a man, the person-made-woman by her riding habit demonstrates “behaviour now is that of an affable, well-bred woman, and agreeable in conversation”; it’s as though the outfit itself has restored her womanhood. While inverted, this is the same logic used by the critics of the ladies's riding habit — that clothes and sex/gender are uncoupable. Here, however, the woman’s identity

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321 *The Annual Register, or a view of the history, politics, and literature of 1766*, 116.
as a woman is established, rather than questioned, by her donning a riding habit. This illustrates a sharp difference of opinion regarding the associations of the riding habit for women, alluding to a chronological shift that changed its significance from being coded as exclusively masculine early in the century to being a material marker that could potentially substantiate a woman’s femininity. In doing so, here the ladies's riding habit articulates the gender difference that, for some earlier critics, it had undermined. The the ladies's riding habit, though still contentious, underwent a fundamental transition in literature and in the historical world. Over the course of the long eighteenth century it grew to have the power to be an indicator of women’s gender/sex, rather than an obfuscator; a piece of clothing capable of shoring up socio-cultural constructions, rather than destabilizing them.

In the closing decades of the eighteenth century the ladies's riding habit, once a material marker of gender ambiguity and sexual licentiousness, metamorphosized into a sartorial sign of femininity. The sheer variety of styles and the consistent marketing of the habit, as discussed in the following section, indicate that the contentiousness around the ladies's riding habit was largely abating. In a telling letter in *The Speculator No VIII* from 1781, a residual foe of the ladies's riding habit simultaneously confirms the trend and concedes the war when he complains that although “Riding dresses were not worn by the ladies of this nation long before the days of Addison... No female of decent family is now to be seen without [one.]”

322 The spreading adoption and acceptance of the ladies's riding habit is again demonstrated in the professional text *The Taylor’s Complete Guide* (1796?) In its chapter, “Of Ladies Habits” the author maintains that though there was but one kind of riding habit for women thirty years ago, “there are fifty

now — for you hardly see a Franklin’s wife, or farmer’s daughter at a market, fair, or country wake without a Riding-Habit on.”

**Regency Fashion Plates and Occasional Dress**

In “Developing Consumerism and the Ready-Made Clothing Trade in Britain, 1750-1800,” Beverly Lemire discusses the proliferation of fashion pages in early periodicals for women, contending that:

> The most desirable end to all this circulation of fashion news was not that several thousand daughters of the country gentry should be attired in emulation of their London cousins, but rather that hundreds of thousands of women from the middling ranks and working classes should purchase gowns in a general approximation of their social superiors, and regularly refurbish their gowns in imitation of the latest modes.

The proliferation of the ladies' riding habit is perhaps most evident in its domination of the pages of these magazines, suggesting that even though riding habits had originally been the province of only the nobility and the gentry, in the waning years of the eighteenth century they had gained widespread appeal and availability. Through the latter half of the eighteenth and the Regency era, periodicals directed towards women of the middling and lower stations, such as *The Lady's Magazine* (1770-1837), *The Gallery of Fashion* (1794-1803), *The Lady's Monthly Museum* (1798-1832), *Le Belle Assemblee* (1806-1832), and *Ackermann’s Repository of the Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufacture, Fashions, and Politics* (1809- regularly featured ladies riding “habits,” “dresses,” and “costumes”: a clear indication of how this outfit, once limited to the upper classes, had become fashionable across social orders. (See Appendix A)

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Moreover, the popularization of the ladies's riding habit spurred on other variations in women’s clothing, and other forms of occasional wear designed for and constructed with movement in mind became available. The same fashion magazines that featured the latest in riding gear also regularly included prints detailing “carriage dresses,” “promenade dresses,” and “walking dresses.” (See Appendix B) These dresses were primarily worn during the earlier hours of the day, in place of or as a variant to the typical “morning dress.” Each of these styles was cut and accessorized with its specific activity in mind. For example, both carriage and promenade dresses were not simply cut to be suitable for riding and walking, respectively, but were designed to “see and be seen in” and thus are could be considered either “undress” or “half dress,” depending on their luxuriousness. While these dresses lacked some of the more cumbersome aspects of “full dress” (unwieldy hoops, ruffles, furbelows, etc.), they were still typically made of rich materials and elegantly embellished. The carriage dress was designed for style as well as mobility and was frequently made of silk, rather than the heavier, warmer, and more durable materials of used for a riding habit or a walking dress. It, like the promenade and walking dress, tended to be more comfortable, less formal, and less expensive than evening, ball, or court dresses. The carriage dress usually paid particular attention to necklines, shoulders, and arms — the parts of a woman’s body that could be readily seen while riding in a coach or carriage or otherwise seated. Conversely, promenade dresses were decorated and accessorized with the woman’s entire figure in mind, as she would most likely be seen standing or walking.

It was the ubiquitous walking dress that dominated the fashion magazines of the later part of the era, however. Their regular appearance in the ladies's periodicals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century indicates their popularity. The long running *The Ladies Magazine*
The Advance of the Mobile Woman: Representations of British Women’s Physical Mobility, 1660-1820 (1770-1837) contains descriptions and, later, colored plates, of walking dresses in multiple issues every year after 1799, sometimes sharing descriptions with *The Gallery of Fashion*. *The Lady’s Monthly Museum* regularly depicted walking dresses in its pages, sometimes side-by-side with more formal dress, making the contrast between the two more readily evident.

Notably, *Ackermann’s Repository of the Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufacture, Fashions, and Politics* which began publication in 1809 features a colored plate of a walking dress or a promenade dress (sometimes both), in every monthly edition of its first year, with the exception of February when a dancing dress was included instead (here, an obvious explanation for the variance would be that it is too cold to walk in February. Even so, the dancing dress was yet another outfit suited to movement.) The prevalence of this type of dress in not one, but almost all of the major lady’s magazines of the period, points to its popularity. The interest in other nation’s versions of walking dresses (*Ackermann’s* includes Polish and Tyrolese varieties of walking dresses in its March and December editions, respectively, while many of the other walking dresses in it are described as having Spanish inspired details) suggests that the repository’s primarily English audience was interested in more exotic versions on the theme, probably because of their widespread use. Walking dresses are by far the most frequently highlighted dress style in the Repository.

The persistent presence of the walking costumes in women’s periodicals reflects the popularization of the act of walking for women discussed in the previous chapter. The explosion of occasional outdoor dress developed concomitantly with changing attitudes towards women’s physical movement and with the shift away from conflating walking with poverty. While originating considerably later than riding habits, walking dresses were warmly adopted by
women and rapidly became popular in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Taking into account that the promenade dress was also worn while on walks, the extreme emphasis at the end of the eighteenth century on dresses specifically designed for ambulation is impressive. The widespread adoption of these fashions highlights the frequency with which women were walking, and underscores the activity’s movement away from its earlier exclusive association with destitution.\footnote{Though walking dresses don’t feature as prominently in the literature of the period as riding habits do, they are occasionally mentioned. The earliest reference to a walking dress I’ve found is in 1752 when one is worn by the eponymous heroine in Henry Fielding’s \textit{Amelia}. Mrs. Winter in the 1774 novel \textit{The Assignation} (republished in 1780 as Harcourt, and falsely attributed to Frances Burney) wears a walking dress, as does Lady R in Eliza Parson’s \textit{Woman as She Should Be} (1793). In none of these texts do walking dresses play a large role, mentioned, as they are, in passing. It’s important to note that there is a complete lack of the type of public debate around walking dresses that the ladies riding habit inspired in the essays and poetry of the preceding decades.}

\textbf{Conclusion}

The changes in the perceived space of Britain, as outlined in chapter II, and its ushering in of female corporeal travelers via a range of vehicles, equestrianism, and pedestrianism, as discussed in chapter III, found articulation in women’s sartorial choices. The figure of the mobile woman materialized in the adoption and popularization of the ladies's riding habit traced here. Negative reactions to the outfit, couched in terms of its deceptive nature, its Frenchness, its enmasculating qualities, and its “unnaturalness” all allude to a discomfort on the part of some contemporary critics with what the ladies's riding habit represented: the agency, control, and freedom that increasing possible mobilities were granting eighteenth-century British women. Where the costume’s detractors exhibited shock and disdain, the riding habit’s champions lauded it as a material reflection of mobile women’s power: physical, sexual, even divine.

The popularity of the ladies's riding habit grew concomitantly with women’s increasing movement with understandings of and attitudes about the it evolving over the long eighteenth
The Advance of the Mobile Woman: Representations of British Women’s Physical Mobility, 1660-1820 century. As the habit became more readily available to a wider range of women, it often times became a marker of appropriate womanhood — a sign that women’s physical mobility was growing in acceptance and a counterpoint to the assumption that the only proper femininity at the time was couched in domestic terms. While initially resisted because of its capacity for gender ambiguity, by the Regency period the ladies’s riding habit reinscribed a modified femininity — one which tacitly acknowledged the advance in women’s possible mobilities. This hard won affirmation brought in its wake a slew of other occasional clothing for women: walking dresses, carriages dresses, and promenade dresses, all designed to accommodate women’s corporeal traveling and to dress a mobile woman.
Chapter V: *Pride and Prejudice*: Pedestrianism, Peripatetics, and Plot


Chapter V: Pride and Prejudice: Pedestrianism, Peripatetics, and Plot


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From The Wandering Beauty to The Wanderer: Representations of Women’s Physical Mobility, 1660-1820


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