Historiography, Identity and Gender in the Works of Anna Eliza Bray.

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No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.
Abstract

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Historiography, Gender and Identity in the Works of Anna Eliza Bray

This study addresses the writings of Anna Eliza Bray in three different areas, which illustrate her main literary interests: her autobiographical works, her travel writing and her contribution to the historical romance. I begin with an examination of Bray’s autobiography, exploring the ways in which the editorial processes reduced Bray’s three volume manuscript to one, and examining how socially constructed gender roles impacted on Bray’s construction of her own public image and the image constructed for her by the male members of her family. I also examine how Bray appropriates the language and devices of fiction to idealise the past and as a form of concealment. Finally Chapter One explores Bray’s desire to memorialise the past, which includes her own.

Chapter Two addresses the development of travel writing after the resumption of continental travel following Waterloo. The changing epistemological conventions in historiography and travel writing provided opportunities for women to publish works on continental journeys and thereby address a real lack of published works by women in that genre. Bray’s work comprised a collection of letters to her mother which allowed her to inscribe the publication within a domestic framework and a female discourse of family relations. Within this frame, however, Bray addresses some political issues on revolution, conservation and gender politics, concerns that become central to her romances. In order to establish some of Bray’s stylistic strategies I make a detailed textual analysis of her work and that of Helen Maria Williams. The fact that Williams and Bray both wrote about Rouen, but with a very different style and perspective serves to identify aspects of style and ideology that are specific to Bray.

The final two chapters focus on Bray’s historical romances. I choose to separate these into two sections, the early romances set in France and Flanders during the fourteenth century, and her later regional romances set in Devon and Cornwall. These works fall neatly into two types, those that are largely lifted from Froissart, and those which Bray deems original, that deal specifically with local history and tradition. In Chapter Three I examine how the changing epistemological conventions noted above impacted on Bray’s as a writer whose subjects are history and antiquarian studies, but I also examine how Bray appropriated her subject matter to suit a personal and political agenda, using the Middle Ages as a model for what she believed would be a more desirable society, a belief that was commensurate with the nineteenth century political belief in paternalism. I also examine how Bray appropriated this period to re-vision and control her own history. As in her travel work Bray inscribes her political comment in a domestic framework of family relations, a model which she develops in her local romances, which I argue in Chapter Four, can be read as examples of an English national tale.
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Abbreviations Used

All of Bray’s romances used in this study are taken from *The Novels and Romances of Anna Eliza Bray*, 10 Vols., Revised Edition (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845-6), unless otherwise stated.

The editions of Scott’s works cited in this study are *The Waverley Novels* Centenary Edition, 25 vols. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1886), in order that they include Scott’s later prefaces.


CW Bray, *Courtenay of Walreddon*.

DF Bray, *De Foix*.

DS Bray, *A Daughter’s Sacrifice*.


FF Bray, *Fitz of Fitz-ford*.

I Scott, *Ivanhoe* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1886)


LN Bray, *Letters Written During a Tour Through Normandy, Brittany and Other Parts of France in 1818: Including Local and Historical Descriptions: with Remarks on the Character and Manners of the People* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1820)


MS Autobiographical manuscript.


TH Bray, *Trials of the Heart*.

W Bray, *Warleigh*.

WH Bray, *White Hoods*.

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My first introduction to the writings of Anna Eliza Bray was through her marginalia, in this case her annotations to a five-volume edition of Amelia Opie’s tales, published in 1846-7. Volume one of this collection has Bray’s name and address on the front endpaper, with the date 1851, suggesting they were from her extensive library where, as John Kempe notes in his introduction to Bray’s Autobiography, ‘not a book was uncut, or unmarked by her appreciative pencil’ (A. p. 17), a statement supported by the fact that every one of these five volumes is carefully sidelined. Sometimes her markings are further referenced on the back endpapers of each volume, where she gives the page number, and a brief note on the theme or a personal response to the content. One significant passage was from Opie’s tale ‘The Mysterious Stranger’. It referred to an ‘exemplary wife, and well principled widow, who had borne her husband’s faults, while living with dignified and affectionate forbearance, [...] screen[ing] his memory from reproach’ (p. 100). This whole section is sidelined and on the back endpaper Bray writes what appears to be ‘like’, although the final ‘e’ runs into a long wavy line which finishes as a dash. In every similar example the word ‘like’ is clear and the dash distinctly separated from the previous word. I was intrigued that this change in style appeared to accord with sentiments that had some resonance for Bray, who by 1851 had been married, widowed and remarried, and wished to investigate further the connections between autobiography and fiction.

Two passages from Opie’s ‘Confessions of an Odd-Tempered Man’ are similarly marked; one highlights a positive female role model- ‘[b]enevolence beamed in her soft blue eye [...] happiness must reign wherever she took abode’ (p. 112) - the other offers advice to women ‘never to put their happiness in the power of a man who has ever exhibited such marks of caprice’ (p. 119). These are passages which, as this study will show, coincide with Bray’s own views on conduct, views which are illustrated throughout

her writing. Similarly Bray adds the endnote ‘like departing of’ to Caroline’s death scene in ‘Confessions of an Odd-Tempered Man’, where the voice of love ‘recalled her fleeting spirit, and roused departing consciousness’ (p. 175). The words suggest that Bray is making a comparison here, but the identity of the person to whom she is referring remains concealed. Clues lie in Bray’s autobiographical manuscript where she describes the death of her own mother in 1835, an event which caused her great distress. Bray’s presentation of her mother’s death has clear links with Opie’s passage as Bray recalls how her own distress roused her mother from death. A desire to interpret these annotations is what prompted this first major analysis of Bray’s writing.

Little has been written on either Bray’s life or her work, despite the fact that she had a distinguished circle of friends and acquaintances from the world of art and literature, and had published twenty-three works in her own right and edited two more. She knew Romney and Stubbs, Thomas Stothard who was her father-in-law, and in later life she was acquainted with Landseer. During her marriage to Stothard she met Amelia Opie, and in the 1830s she began an extended correspondence with Letitia Landon and Robert Southey. It was her long-standing friendship with Southey, conducted mainly through a series of letters which were published in 1836 as The Borders of the Tamar and the Tavy, that has kept her name in the public domain long after the appearance of her Autobiography, and the last republication of her romances in 1884.

Dennis Low, in The Literary Protégés of the Lake Poets, which focuses on Southey and his protégés, expresses regret that the confines of his own study did not allow him to devote more space to Eliza Bray’s life and works. He argues that ‘nothing less than a full length biography could hope to do any justice to her life, her writing and her relationship with Southey’. In 2006 a living relative of Eliza Bray, David Kempe, produced that biography which was privately printed, but there is still no academic study of her large and

2 MS. ii, pp. 319-26.
varied oeuvre, comprising thirteen historical novels, a collection of short stories for adults and one for children, two travelogues, a memoir, four historical biographies, an autobiography, a topographical work on Devonshire, a historical work on the Protestants of the Cevennes and edited collections of her second husband’s poems and sermons.⁴ A number of her romances were translated into German, some were printed in America and some were republished in England.⁵ De Foix (1826) was reprinted by Smith and Elder in 1833, and Courtenay of Walreddon (1834) was republished by Longman in 1869, just before the release of her histories, The Good St. Louis and his Times and The Revolt of the Protestants of the Cevennes in 1870. Moreover there were two collected editions of Bray’s historical romances. The first collection of ten was revised by Bray and published between 1845 and 1846, and later Bray provided the funds for John Kempe to release a twelve volume collected edition of her romances after her death.⁶ In addition there is a large amount of archival material available in the West Sussex Records Office, consisting of unpublished manuscripts, her autobiographical manuscript, paintings, drawings, poems and a vast amount of correspondence, all contributing useful insights into her life and times.⁷

Bray is still remembered in the Tavistock area for her topographical work, The Borders of the Tamar and the Tavy, and therefore local magazines have at various periods during the twentieth century featured articles on her life and work, although usually restricting their comments to her topographical writing on Devon. The Devonian Year Book published one such article in 1926, written by Rev. W. Gregory Harris and entitled, ‘Literary Life in a Devonshire Village’. During the 1990s, John Pegg ran a series of thirty-six articles on Bray’s Borders in a quarterly publication The Dartmoor Magazine, but outside her own locality Bray has garnered scant critical notice. There is an entry in

⁵ Anna von Gent, Fitz-ford and The Talba (Kiel:Universitäts-Buchhandlung ,1835); Warleigh (Kiel:Universitäts-Buchhandlung ,1837); De Foix (Augsburg: Jenisch und Stage, 1837); The Talba (New York: J and J Harper, 1831).
⁶ See Chapter I, p. 29.
⁷ WSRO, accession 12182, E. M. Kempe papers, boxes 1-4.
Clements, Blain and Grundy’s *The Feminist Companion to Literature: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to The Present Day* and in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, although there are few academic publications on Bray. Dennis Low has provided some useful insights into her relationship with Southey in his work on literary protégés, and Miriam Burstein includes Bray in a chapter on anti-Catholic writing in *Narrating Woman’s History in Britain 1770-1902*. Significantly Burstein interprets Bray’s *The Protestant* in much the same way as Bray’s own contemporaries, as an example of anti–Catholic writing, an interpretation that Bray expended much time and energy to dispel. This thesis is the first major academic study of Bray’s work.

However, because of her considerable output over a period of sixty years, even this research has to be selective, and therefore I need to say a little more about my choice of material and methodology. As little critical material has hitherto been produced on Bray I decided to begin the thesis with a study of Bray’s autobiographical writings, thus providing readers with an introduction to her life and the main concepts that underpin her writing; her desire to be a successful, published author and an antiquarian/historian which conflicted with an equally strong desire to be viewed as what Mary Poovey terms, a proper lady.

From Bray’s autobiographical work I move chronologically through her publications to give an overview of her position as a pre-Victorian writer. Owing to her extensive output in a variety of genres I have elected only to include an analysis of her early travel work, not because her later travel writing is less interesting, for there are significant

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comparisons to be made between Bray’s work and both Byron’s ‘Childe Harold’ and Mary Shelley’s *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, but for reasons of space. To include this work, however, would mean excluding an examination of Bray’s historical romances, works which are fundamental to an understanding of her career as an author, for history itself was an essential element of her writing. I have therefore chosen to study both Bray’s first two mediaeval romances because of their connections with a period that she loved, and which was intrinsically connected with her life as the wife of Charles Stothard, an antiquarian and architectural painter. Her later romances are equally significant for different reasons, namely their contribution to research on the regional novel and the national tale, as I explain in Chapter Four. However, why Bray was so keen to preserve aspects of her own region and her own life has much to do with the events of her own history and the historical period in which she wrote.

History is central to Bray’s work, not only the history she chooses to narrate, but also her own historical period which shaped her writing. Bray was born during a time of immense cultural change, which had an enormous impact on her work. Revolution in France and the formation of a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland were two major historical events that established her conservatism, both her public conformity to socially proscribed gender roles and her desire for conservation. Bray was no radical; she supported established hierarchies, proclaiming her loyalty to king, country and the state religion, Anglicanism. She also strove to record for posterity aspects of English national culture, as well as her local landscape and traditions that she felt were being eroded by the modernisation of society, just as her first husband had been commissioned to provide visual record of English material culture. It is, however, their focus on England, not Britain, that makes these works significant, for although the Lake District was celebrated in poetry, no English region had been previously celebrated in prose fiction with such consistency: Bray wrote nine romances set in the South West.
History was Bray’s passion, but to write about national conflicts was problematic for a woman writer, as few women wrote national histories.\(^\text{10}\) State politics, commerce and military exploits all comprised a male version of national history with which those women who wished to be considered culturally conventional, such as Bray, would not wish to be associated. However, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Greg Kucich recognises a shift taking place in the ‘basic epistemological structures of history’ which privileged what he calls ‘the new history of social and affective life’, a social history which would allow women writers to detach themselves from political involvement and write within the bounds of conventional feminine conduct.\(^\text{11}\) While Bray wished to subscribe to the socially accepted codes of feminine behaviour, she also wished to write history, and ironically, the history she chose to narrate was consistently that of rebellion. Moreover, into this clearly political discourse she introduced antiquarian scholarship, which was also, as Gary Kelly avers, ‘traditionally gendered male’.\(^\text{12}\) Thus Bray’s subject matter is set at odds with the public image of a proper lady that she also wished to create, and the tension between these two positions was exacerbated by her constant denials of any political involvement, denials that merely draw attention to the very subjects Bray tries to obfuscate.

Socially constructed gender roles and their impact on women’s behaviour are therefore of paramount importance in this study. Gary Kelly argues that ‘historiography was conventionally reserved for men, and women usually practised it obliquely, in ‘feminine’ forms such as prose fiction’; therefore it is not surprising that Bray elected to present her historical and antiquarian subject matter through the medium of romance. Moreover, Kelly notes that in the aftermath of the French Revolution, women writers

‘became even more reluctant to assume professional public identity’.\textsuperscript{13} The public image of modesty that Bray constructed for herself was used to counter her professional identity and dissociate her from commercial matters, just as she hoped it would distance her from political matters. Her autobiographical writing, however, reveals a woman who was rather less detached from both public life and the commercial world. These contradictory impressions of Bray proliferate throughout her work, providing a clear picture of how gender politics impacted on the construction of a woman’s identity in early nineteenth-century Britain. My title highlights the terms historiography, gender and identity because I specifically want to examine the ways in which Bray appropriates national history to illuminate how socially constructed gender roles affect women’s lives. I also explore how Bray reclaims women’s stories from the margins of male historical narrative, creating for these women a voice and an identity.

Historical narrative was beginning to change in the late eighteenth century. William Godwin’s essay, ‘Of History and Romance’ (1797), calls for a change in the methods of recording history to include the private lives of individuals: ‘I would follow him to his closet, […] I should rejoice to have […] a journal of his ordinary and minutest actions’, but his comments suggest these are the lives of men, not women.\textsuperscript{14} In Bray’s work it is women who are given central roles. She is also keen to present her own ideas on how history should be written, but here too it is possible to see the contradictions that appear frequently throughout her work. In a letter to her nephew she accuses both Hume and Shakespeare of pandering to ‘national prejudice’, averring that history should be objective, yet, as I argue in Chapter Three, she too was prejudiced, censuring Henry V and praising Joan of Arc.\textsuperscript{15}

On the other hand historical narrative was moving from the grand historical narratives with their invented dialogue, to the more empirical approach adopted by

\textsuperscript{13} Kelly, \textit{Women, Writing.} p. 174.
\textsuperscript{15} Bray to Eppy, 28\textsuperscript{th} July 1864, WSRO, box 1; Chapter 3, p. 139.
antiquarians, who Rosemary Sweet argues ‘had more in common with the professional historian of the twenty-first century, in terms of methodology, approach to sources and the struggle to reconcile erudition with style’. 16 Thus while historical content provided more opportunities to write social, not political history, the more erudite style of empirical history worked against prospective women historians. The grand historical narratives, however, did not completely disappear but were, as Ann Stevens notes, transferred to fiction, and thus by the early nineteenth century, Scott and his followers had popularised the historical romance. 17 This generic form was ideal for Bray who wished to combine the grand historical narratives of the mediaeval chronicles which she admired, with accurate antiquarian details, as Scott had done in his romances.

Of the historical romances written during the early nineteenth century, only Scott’s fiction has received any significant critical attention. G.P.R. James’s Richelieu was published in 1829, three years after Bray’s De Foix, and James, like Bray, acknowledged his debt to Scott. William Harrison Ainsworth’s first novel Rookwood appeared two years after Richelieu, in 1831, and Lord Lytton’s The Last Days of Pompeii in 1834, but what is significant is the fact that these male novelists, although receiving little critical attention, have at least been given some critical notice. Lukacs’ definitive work on the historical novel focuses mainly on Scott, while Lukacs’ successors, Avrom Fleishman (1972), Nicholas Rance (1977), Andrew Sanders (1978), and Harry E Shaw (1985), include James, Ainsworth and Lytton in their analyses, but none of their female contemporaries are mentioned, and they are conspicuous by their absence. Sanders, however, gives some critical attention to the canonical Victorian women writers, Gaskell and Eliot. 18 It is this

decided lack of any significant body of criticism on early nineteenth-century women
historical novelists in general, and Bray in particular, that prompted this study.

Bray’s decision to adopt Scott as one of her literary models and follow his lead by
writing historical romances makes him an ideal starting point when studying Bray, for, as
Gillian Beer notes, a clear understanding of ‘the processes of gender formation within a
culture […] requires the reading of men and women’s writing side by side’.\(^{19}\) My selection
of texts has been predicated on a number of factors: Scott’s first historical romance was an
obvious choice as it illustrates the techniques he adopted to revolutionise the genre, just as
his second novel \textit{Guy Mannering} uses landscape and prophecy in ways that are comparable
to Bray’s first local romance, \textit{Fitz-ford}. Of Scott’s two mediaeval romances, \textit{Ivanhoe} offers
a clearer illustration of the similarities and differences between Scott’s choice and
presentation of his material and Bray’s. But as I demonstrate in this study, the differences
between Scott’s work and Bray’s are intrinsically connected with gender and identity.

Bray elected to work in a field that was traditionally gendered male, national
history and antiquarian studies, and even the romance genre, a traditionally female form,
had, as Gary Kelly and Michael Gamer argue, been masculinised by Scott.\(^{20}\) Thus, I argue,
Bray attempted to recast her romances in a more feminine, domestic framework. Gender
and identity are therefore of central importance to any study of Bray and her work, and
thus I move from a study of Scott to some comparisons between Bray’s methods of
presentation and other women writers who were her contemporaries: Helen Maria
Williams, Lady Anna Riggs Miller, Mary Shelley and Lady Morgan. I have elected to
concentrate more on detailed analysis of published texts and historical contexts rather than
on critical theory in order to establish Bray’s place in and contribution to her historical
period.

Sanders, \textit{The Victorian Historical Novel} 1840-1880 (London: Macmillan, 1978); Harry E.
\(^{19}\) Gillian Beer, ‘Representing Women: Representing the Past’, in \textit{The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism}, ed. by Catherine Belsey and Jane
Moore (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 63-80, (p. 65).
\(^{20}\) Kelly, \textit{Women}, p. 177; Gamer, p. 164.
However, since Eliza Bray was a woman writer who was clearly conscious of her public image one theoretical perspective which would apply to all aspects of her writing, despite its generic diversity, is a feminist one, and a seminal text for this particular study is Mary Poovey’s *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, for although Poovey does not examine Bray’s work, her presentation of the problems facing women writers during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can be applied to Bray. Poovey also identifies the strategies these women used to present themselves as proper ladies in spite of their success as published authors, strategies which are helpful when comparing their work with Bray’s, and Mary Shelley is an ideal comparison, not least because of the personal tragedies which haunted both women’s writings. Poovey says of Shelley, ‘the Proper Lady triumphs, not as an expression but as an evasion of self’, and Bray’s work displays similar characteristics. Despite her attempts to conceal her feelings and opinions behind a mask of modest conformity, her autobiographical writing reveals an autonomous self which can flourish, but only in private, for once Bray’s opinions become public, to remain a proper lady, she must constantly explain, excuse or justify them.21

Bray’s obsession with public conformity might be explained if we consider her friendships. One in particular is significant, that ‘most sincere friendship’ (A, p. 220) with Rev. Richard Polwhele, whose writings, William Stafford argues, became responsible for ‘the most systematic, explicit and comprehensive sorting of women into the approved and disapproved’.22 Polwhele had been ‘pleased [...] with the perusal of “Fitz of Fitzford”’ (A, p. 220), and Bray appears to have been happy with his approbation. The insertion of Polwhele’s comments into Bray’s *Autobiography* emphasises her desire to be viewed as socially compliant and conformist, an image of Bray which John Kempe also wished to promote.

21 Poovey, p. 46; Chapter 1, p. 43-45; and Chapter 4, p. 203.
Society’s attitudes towards women were important to Bray, and therefore works on female conduct published during Bray’s formative years are crucial to our understanding of her views on female behaviour. Janet Todd’s introduction to Pickering and Chatto’s six-volume set of facsimiles, *Female Education in the Age of Enlightenment*, is useful as Todd highlights the main ideological standpoints of each contributor from Fordyce to Jane West, highlighting the development of conduct book literature from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth century. Todd’s examination of Jane West is particularly helpful in establishing the importance of female influence on the moral tone of the nation. Bray’s work clearly illustrates the positive effects of female virtue on social behaviour, and ultimately on political outcomes, a view that was carried into the Victorian period by writers such as Sarah Stickney Ellis. Moreover Todd establishes the contribution of both radical and conservative writers to the debate on female education and the social roles of women, an important debate which is also highlighted by William Stafford. 

Similarly informative is Vivien Jones’ *Eighteenth-Century Constructions of Femininity*, which deals with behavioural codes and is helpfully organised thematically rather than by author.

Gary Kelly’s *Women, Writing and Revolution* examines how women’s writing developed, or perhaps regressed during the period following the French Revolution. Kelly explains how the Revolution shaped society’s perception of women and their writing, making it more difficult for them to become professional writers and still conform to acceptable gender roles. Bray herself notes that to write ‘with becoming modesty, and yet [...] to say what is absolutely necessary for a proper understanding of the circumstances before us, is not an easy task’ (MS, i, p. 2), a comment which supports Kelly’s view, and perhaps also partly explains Bray’s anxieties.

Feminist perspectives on the literary period termed Romanticism have attempted to rescue the works of women writers during the Romantic period from the margins of

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literary criticism. These works include Anne Mellor’s *Romanticism and Gender* and her edited work *Romanticism and Feminism*, Haefner and Wilson ed., *Re-Visioning Romanticism*, Elizabeth Fay’s *A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism* and Feldman and Kelley’s *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices*.\(^{25}\) Mellor even suggests a greater self-confidence in many women writers than has been suggested by critics such as Poovey. I examine this self-confidence when comparing Bray’s work with Lady Morgan’s in Chapter One.\(^{26}\) *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices* also contains two essays on nationalism and patriotism in relation to the travel writings of Lady Morgan and Helen Maria Williams which provide helpful insights into the development of the travel genre, exploring how these women used patriotism and nationalism to defend and support their work.

Similar feminist approaches helped with an understanding of Bray’s autobiographical writings, although I begin my analysis with some general perspectives on the genre proffered by James Treadwell. Treadwell charts the rise of autobiography as a genre, which he notes, began after the French Revolution. He also traces the influence of Johnson’s essays on autobiographical writing and charts how the interest in private lives grew from an ‘[e]ighteenth-century interest in the ‘closet’-domestic or private space’.\(^{27}\) The rise of autobiography as a genre also brings with it problems of interpretation. Treadwell argues that ‘[a]utobiography is therefore suspicious: it raise questions about motivation, purposes, and, inevitably, about authenticity’, but as Treadwell also notes, women were ‘effaced from the *Rambler* and *Idler* essays, as from virtually all these


\(^{26}\) See Chapter 1. p. 49.

critiques of autobiographical practice’, yet it was to these very essays that Bray looked to justify her own life writing.

Sidonie Smith and Shari Benstock’s edited work on autobiographical writing gives some insight as to why women write their own lives, as well as exploring the methods they use to create a persona for themselves that would be socially acceptable. The very fact that the critics now discuss the idea of a constructed image is, as Smith opines, because critical positions on the nature of autobiographical writing have changed. Before the 1970s Smith avers that there seemed to be ‘no agonizing questions of identity, self-existence, or self-deception’, whereas later twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics view truthfulness as ‘a much more complex and problematic phenomenon’. Bray too explores the complex and problematic nature of presenting a truthful perspective on her own life and that of her family in her autobiographical manuscript, a document which was not unreservedly intended for publication.

A second theoretical model which fits some, though not all, aspects of Bray’s work that I explore in this study, is the psychology of grief and trauma. Loss dominated Bray’s thoughts after the death of her husband and child, and she admits in her autobiographical manuscript that writing was a way of coping with grief. Guinn Batten and Miranda Burgess have examined how writing functions as a means of controlling trauma, a theory promoted by the psychoanalyst John Bowlby in Attachment and Loss. Similarly Julie Carlson’s work on commemorative writing, England’s First Family of Writers, though devoted to the Godwins and Shelleys, has some useful material on the literature of

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mourning, for I suggest that Bray, like Mary Shelley, used her writing to memorialise and re-vision the lives of the dead which might explain Bray’s obsession with re-imagining events of the past and writing herself into her work.³⁰

Fundamentally though Bray wrote history, although that history often included her own history, and therefore it is crucial to examine how the writing of history changed during the eighteenth century. Historiographical works such as Godwin’s ‘Of History and Romance’, cited above, examine the need for a shift in the documentation of history that would include private as well as public history. Similarly Mark Salber Philips’s work on genre and history examines how the move towards a more socially orientated form of history opened up opportunities for more women to write history. In addition twentieth-century critics such as Linda Orr, Hayden White, and Lionel Grossman chart the symbiotic relationship between history and literature, and ultimately between history and fiction which eventually led to Scott’s popularisation of the historical romance.³¹ Rosemary Sweet’s Antiquaries details the wealth of antiquarian research during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, offering explanations as to its rise in popularity, charting its methodology and examining its relationship with both history and fiction.³²

When studying any writer about whom there is little critical material, as is the case with Bray, it is important to turn to those texts that shaped the period’s ideologies. One such text was Burke’s Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), published the year Bray was born. The French Revolution was an event which in itself amassed oppositional responses from the literary and political world. Some saw the revolution’s potential for a new and liberated world; others, like Bray, deeply regretted its destructive force, and she

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³² Sweet, p. 27.
aligns herself with those views espoused by Burke: his valorisation of chivalry, the connections he makes between the public and private sphere and his belief that a new world must be built on old foundations, not on mass destruction. Throughout her work she nostalgically looks to the Middle Ages and the codes of chivalry as an ideal age built on benevolent, paternalistic values and knightly principles. The influence of the mediaeval period on early nineteenth society is reflected in seminal texts such as Richard Hurd’s *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), Kenelm Henry Digby’s *The Broad Stone of Honour* (1822) and G.P.R. James *The History of Chivalry* (1830).  

More recent academic research into the revival of mediaeval influences from the late eighteenth century to the First World War include Marc Girouard’s *The Return to Camelot* and Richard Barber’s *The Knight and Chivalry*. Both texts show how the codes of chivalry were appropriated to ‘form ideals of conduct’ for the English gentleman. Alice Chandler and Elizabeth Fay also examine how Middle Ages became a way of finding ‘potential solutions to the crises of the now’, which included for Bray too great an individualism. Veronica Ortenberg too has an interesting chapter on Scott’s interpretation of the Middle Ages which is particularly helpful in any analysis of Bray’s mediaeval


romances. The Middle Ages, however, were also appropriated by nineteenth-century conservatives for their feudal models which were transposed into paternalist politics, a political model that Bray supported. Mark Keay names these models Golden Age theories, arguing that they use ‘the recent or remote past as a supposed ideal of social life and moral relations’ for the present. Bray appears to have preferred her idealised version of the past to the outcomes of creating a modern Britain. Therefore the Act of Union had a significant effect on Bray’s writing as she felt the uniting of England with Scotland and later Ireland was eroding English customs and traditions, as well as subsuming English identity into Britishness. Linda Colley and Krishan Kumar’s works are helpful in charting the effects of uniting Britain on the British nation, and Kumar gives a clear account of how the traditions of ‘Old England’ belonged to the moralising literature of the eighteenth century, a tradition which Bray continues in her writing. Gerald Newman, however, in his work on nationalism, focuses more on England and the creation of an English national identity, which Newman defines as ‘innocence, honesty, originality, frankness, and moral self-reliance’, characteristics which epitomize Bray’s romance protagonists.

As I argue in Chapter Four, Bray’s attempts to encapsulate the essence of Englishness - English identity, customs, traditions and landscape - make her work fit many of the classifications Ina Ferris notes characterise a national tale. When discussing English writers of national tales Ferris and Trumpener and Burgess all substitute British for

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English, subsuming England in the identity of the new nation, just as Bray feared.\(^\text{39}\) Yet Scott thought it ‘strange that no attempt has been made to excite an interest in the traditions and manners of Old England’ (\textit{I}, p. xx), thereby illustrating that Bray’s contemporaries, unlike recent commentators, did see the possibility, even recognising a need, for an English national tale. Thus I compare Bray’s regional novels with the national tales of Scott, Edgeworth and Morgan to see how securely Bray’s work fits this category.

Before moving into a description of this work on a chapter by chapter basis, it would be helpful to define two potentially contentious terms. The first is my description of Bray as conservative which, as Lisa Woods argues, was a term that early nineteenth-century women writers would not have used to describe either themselves or their writings. Woods substitutes the term loyalist for conservative, a word used by Jane West as the title for a novel and one used by Bray herself when defending the political elements of her work: ‘I am, I hope, a sincerely loyal subject, and clearly love my country and the state under which I live, and the church into which I have been received as a member’ (MS, ii, p.106).\(^\text{40}\) Bray’s declaration of loyalty also underlines her orthodoxy and differentiates her from the more radical women writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and the youthful Mary Shelley. I use the term conservative to signify loyalist, but also to denote someone who is conventional, not only subscribing to established social structures, but also to established codes of female behaviour. I also use the term conservative in the sense that Bray wished to conserve the past, to preserve her country’s material culture as well as its customs, traditions and landscape, although Bray approaches these national issues through the prism of regionality.


\(^\text{40}\) Woods, p, 29; Chapter 4, p. 177.
In addition I need to define my use of the terms public and private, terms which twenty-first-century critics have shown to be more complex than a mere division into home and state.\textsuperscript{41} Angela Keane, for example, argues for a nuanced definition of the public sphere, for to define it merely as ‘matters of nation’ is both ‘too particular (non-universal) and too general (explicitly incorporating public and private life, in its civil and domestic forms) to be accommodated by the public sphere’.\textsuperscript{42} Bray, however, appears to have accepted a simplistic understanding of separate spheres, believing that a woman’s ‘happiness and her sorrow must invariably be of a domestic nature’ (MS, i, p. 222) and disapproving, at least publicly, of those women who interfered in political matters.\textsuperscript{43} Thus when I refer to the public and private spheres I refer to them in the broad terms noted by Elizabeth Fay where “‘the public” is associated with the generally masculine domain of political debate, legislation and social order; “the private” [...] with the feminine domain of family home and hearth’.\textsuperscript{44}

Yet as a published writer Bray was forced to enter a public space, and thus had to create for herself a public image which may not have consistently correlated with her inner thoughts and feelings. For although Bray acknowledges the simplistic, gendered division of public and private spheres, there is evidence in her writing that such simple divisions could become confused. Southey’s private correspondence with Bray, for example, became a public document, \textit{The Borders of the Tamar and the Tavy}, just as her autobiographical manuscript, although presented as a private memoir, was intended for publication.\textsuperscript{45} In the introduction to her work, \textit{Privacy}, Patricia Meyer Spacks notes that Boswell ‘deliberately chooses to violate his own privacy while simultaneously devising

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{43} See p. 14.
\textsuperscript{44} Elizabeth Fay, \textit{A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism} (Malden: Blackwell, 1998), p. 51.
\textsuperscript{45} Bray chose her editor, set aside money and provided full instructions for the publication of this document. See Chapter 1, p. 38.
\end{footnotesize}
strategies for protecting it’; this statement could equally be applied to Bray.\textsuperscript{46} But bearing in mind that such complexities do exist, I use public and private in their broadest sense, the sense which Bray acknowledges, unless otherwise stated; and for any discussion of Bray’s inner consciousness I use the term personal rather than private.\textsuperscript{47}

Finally a note on names. Eliza Bray was born Anna Eliza Kempe; she became Anna Eliza Stothard on her marriage to Charles Stothard in February 1818, and finally Anna Eliza Bray on her marriage to Edward Atkins Bray in September 1822. Throughout this study I refer to her as Eliza Bray to avoid complications.

In Chapter One I examine Bray’s autobiographical writing, comparing her autobiographical manuscript with the published autobiography, a text which was eventually reduced by two thirds. Bray never intended such drastic reductions, and her own editorial process is clear throughout the manuscript, but after her death in 1883, John Kempe, her great nephew and literary executor, made the final decision on what to include. An examination of these editorial processes exposes how socially constructed gender roles impacted on Bray’s construction of her own public image and the image constructed for her by the male members of her family. I also compare Bray’s writing strategies, the methods of revelation and concealment used to present her life for public consumption, with those adopted by Bray’s female contemporaries, Mary Shelley, Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan, who, like Bray, had her memoirs edited during the 1860s. Finally I examine the idea of memorialisation, the way Bray obsessively writes and revisions her own history, partly as a way to control the trauma of loss, and partly as a memorial for her family and posterity.

Chapter Two focuses on Bray’s early travel writing which, despite its apparent focus on regions of northern France, centres on Bray herself, her home and homeland. Gary Kelly argues that women often used travelogues as the means whereby they could write on academic subjects and create for themselves an identity. Bray ensures that the identity she

\textsuperscript{46} Spacks, \textit{Privacy}, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{47} Spacks, \textit{Privacy}, p.1.
creates for herself is that of a woman inscribed within a domestic circle, presenting herself as both a dutiful daughter and devoted wife; thus I argue that Bray domesticates the travelogue. To establish how she achieves this I compare her work with two other writers who used the epistolary form to report on the same area of France during a similar period, Thomas Frognall Dibdin and Helen Maria Williams. Bray and Dibdin both had antiquarian interests but their style and subject matter are very different, and these differences have significant gender implications. Dibdin, as a man, did not have either ‘the vulnerability of the woman travel writer […]or] the anxieties of Romantic woman novelists […] who deviate from the patriarchal ideal of feminine propriety and silence’. Williams, as a woman, had the same difficulties to face as Bray, but their methods of presentation were very different, possibly because of their political beliefs: Williams was a radical and Bray a conservative.

This chapter also examines Bray’s patriotism and her presentation of a national character, which, I argue, she develops in her regional romances.

In Chapter Three I begin a study of Bray’s early historical romances, works set in the fourteenth century and based on Froissart’s *Chronicle* which had been a favourite source of reference for Bray while touring France and Flanders in 1818 and 1819. In this chapter I explore the gender implications of Bray’s appropriation of her historical sources, literary models and history itself, in order to establish her contribution to the development of the historical romance after *Waverley*. I also explore how Bray appropriates her own history and writes it into fiction, a trait which she continues throughout the body of her work.

Chapter Four examines the more overtly political aspects of Bray’s historical fiction, through a close analysis of three out of her five local romances in the 1845-6 collection; works which deal with English history, local families, landscape, customs and tradition, which for Bray meant oral tradition. My choice of texts was predicated on their ability to illustrate significant aspects of Bray’s writing. *Fitz of Fitz-ford* was her first romance, and it includes a substantial amount of detail on the customs, landscape and traditions of the

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South West, as does her second romance *Warleigh*. Her two later works, *Trelawne* and *Henry de Pomeroy*, merely repeat much of this material; they have therefore only been noted if they have any further contribution to make to my argument. *Courtenay*, Bray’s last local romance, is significant because it focuses less on landscape and material culture, concentrating instead on local legend, which is possibly why she returns to an extensive use of Gothic motifs, a style she adopted in her first romance, *De Foix*. Autobiographical features are also more prevalent in this work, as they were in her early writings, and *Courtenay* shares with *De Foix* its debt to Radcliffe. Thus I use Radcliffe’s *Udolpho* as a main point of comparison. In this chapter I argue that Bray is not only writing an English regional novel, but that she is also writing an English national tale that identifies and preserves for posterity the essential nature of English culture before the Union. I therefore compare Bray’s contribution to the genre with that made by Scott, Edgeworth, Morgan.

Finally, I examine how Bray was received in her own time and what her literary legacy might be. Her obituary in *The Times* read: ‘she was not and never claimed to be a great novelist’, but the criteria determining greatness are both subjective and culturally specific, making the term problematic when used to evaluate the significance of either writers or their work. 49 Elizabeth Fay comments on the ‘great poetry [...] of] the great Romantics’ before explaining how such critical terms excluded not only novels from the Romantic canon, but also women writers. 50 Perhaps a more appropriate question would be what contribution has Bray made to our understanding of this very complex and turbulent historical period. I hope I shall establish that a study of Bray’s work will make a significant contribution to this growing body of knowledge and thus extend our understanding not only of the development of historical fiction after Scott, but also of the roles of female authorship in the period before Victorian ideology became firmly established.

49 *The Times*, Wednesday, January 24th (1883), p. 8.
Chapter One

Presenting the self: history or fiction?

I begin this study with an analysis of Bray’s autobiography as it provides a good introduction to her life and writings. Two versions of this work exist, a one-volume edition, edited by her godson, John Kempe, and published in 1884, and a three-volume manuscript begun in 1844, which is now held as part of the Kempe archive in the West Sussex Records Office, Chichester. This manuscript is made up of fifteen notebooks arranged in bundles of five, each bundle constituting one volume of the projected final edition. Bray’s editorial process, undertaken during the 1860s, is visible throughout the manuscript. She also left instructions for her literary executor, her great nephew and godson John Arrow Kempe, to publish the work after her death. Kempe had difficulty finding a publisher, and when Chapman and Hall only agreed to publish one volume, he, along with a co-editor supplied by the publishers, had the difficult job of deciding what to omit.\footnote{The co-editor was Frank Harris, a friend of Oscar Wilde and later editor of the \textit{Fortnightly Review}, Kempe, p. 227.} By comparing these two works it is possible to see that significant gender issues are revealed. In this chapter I examine how from the contradictions inherent both within the manuscript and between these two versions of Bray’s history, much can be deduced about gender and the control of public image.

Bray was obsessed with the past, its history, tradition and material culture, but her interest lay not only in preserving a nation’s past, but also memorialising her own history, and throughout these texts conflicting images of Bray emerge. Bray’s depiction of herself reveals an inner self at variance with her public image, whereas John Kempe’s presentation of his great-aunt shows how his family loyalty is often at odds with the desire to uphold his academic credibility. Thus, despite the gender difference, Kempe appropriates the same techniques as Bray when commenting on her literary career; he is constantly justifying and qualifying his points. By reading the published \textit{Autobiography} in conjunction with both...
Bray’s autobiographical manuscript and her other published writings, it is possible to understand how, as James Treadwell notes, autobiographical writing, ‘[l]acking the stability of genre’, could be appropriated to serve many different purposes.\textsuperscript{52} In this chapter I examine how Bray’s autobiographical writing is used to support different presentations of her as a woman and a writer, comparing her writing strategies with those of her contemporary, Lady Morgan, whose memoirs were also edited during the 1860s. In addition I examine how this material reveals Bray’s passion for history and her desire to memorialise the landscape, customs and material culture of her area as well as her own life, comparing her commemorative writing with that of William Godwin and Mary Shelley.

To understand Bray’s methods of self-presentation it is first necessary to picture the original layout of her autobiographical manuscript which is prefaced by an address to her second husband, Edward. The date, June 26\textsuperscript{th} 1844, is set at the top of the page in a way reminiscent of a letter, a device which from the outset inscribes her work as a private, family document, thereby framing the text within a domestic environment where she can present herself securely as a central figure. From the opening sentences of this document, however, it is possible to note contradictions arising out of the tension between Bray’s desire to appear as a modest woman conforming to the social standards of female behaviour, and her desire to succeed in the public sphere as a successful writer. These contradictions form a significant aspect of Bray’s character and became exacerbated after her marriage to Edward Bray, possibly because of her role as the wife of an Anglican clergyman, who by 1833 had become rural dean. Her earlier life appears less constrained.

In May 1815 she travelled to Bath to embark on a stage career. In many respects this appears an odd choice of profession for a woman who appears constantly concerned about generating an image of female conformity. She even avers that ‘I have not the least

\textsuperscript{52} James Treadwell, \textit{Autobiographical Writing and British Literature 1783-1834} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 6; Myers, pp. 192-210, (p. 193). Myers argues that in the eighteenth century the ‘the autobiographical impulse is often deflected into other forms’. 
doubt that many will be shocked at the very idea of the English stage as a profession’ (A, p. 117), then proceeds to provide evidence which will justify her actions. She notes how cultural attitudes to women appearing on the stage had changed from the time of Sarah Siddons, whom she greatly admired, even citing some worthy female role models to validate her claims: ‘Miss Farren, afterwards Countess of Derby; Miss Stevens, the present Countess of Essex; Miss Brunton, afterwards Countess of Craven’ (A, p. 117). Moreover, what makes these women interesting is not what they contribute to our understanding of the theatre, but what they illustrate about Bray, for each one of her examples of respectability had used her ‘vigour, youth and beauty’ (p. 117) to secure wealth and social position as a member of the aristocracy.

Whether Bray too hoped to achieve social status through a career in the theatre is never made clear, although from studying her writings it is unlikely that, despite her snobbery, she would value status above respectability. Ultimately Bray never realised her ambition to become an actress; in fact she never appeared on the public stage. She contracted ‘flu, with an inflamed sore throat’ on the way to Bath, but confesses in her autobiographical manuscript that ‘health so delicate and precarious as mine, and a nervous system so sensitive would never be calculated for the wear and tear of public life’ (MS, i, p. 246). Bray’s sensitivity is also apparent in her responses to areas of potential criticism; the self-justification and explanations which typify her writing I suggest were spurred by a need for public approbation. Certainly such a cause would illustrate the beginnings of the tension between private self and public performance which marks her writing.

Lady Morgan is less reticent about her life writing. She begins by claiming the right to first hand experience of public life as ‘one who has lived all my days in society’ (LMM, i, p. 1). But instead of retreating into self-justification, she defends her position through attack. She castigates society for its propensity to ‘[r]idicule’ (LMM, i, p. 1) and thereby victimise individuals, including herself, then cleverly shifts her ground by flattering her

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53 Kempe, p. 41.
‘dear, kind, fair-judging public’ into supporting her for ‘show[ing] pluck’ by hitting out against her detractors.\textsuperscript{54} Bray possesses none of Lady Morgan’s self-confidence, or her clever manipulation of language, for rather than defending her writing as Bray does, Morgan claims the right to publish her life in order to publicly defend herself: ‘caricatured to the uttermost - abused, calumniated, misrepresented, flattered, eulogized, persecuted [...] she may, perhaps, be pardoned for wishing to speak a few true and final words of hers’ (\textit{LMM}, i, p. 1). In addition, by commencing her preface in a third person narrative before moving into her own voice, Morgan removes the sense of obsessive self-justification indulged in by Bray. Such sophisticated devices denote a more accomplished and confident writer than Bray, one who is fully aware of how image can be construed, manipulated and misconstrued. Bray justifies her work as a legacy for posterity, a private \textit{aide memoire} for her family as well as a social document, aspects which inscribe her writing within a feminine framework.\textsuperscript{55} Furthermore since she was more overtly anxious about self-publicity than Morgan and less careful in the presentation of her ideas, the justification of her writing is often lengthy and contradictory, as I demonstrate later.

Autobiographical writing was difficult for Bray because of its obsession with self, for as James Treadwell notes, ‘[e]gotism is, after all the name of a social offence’.\textsuperscript{56} It is no surprise, therefore, that Bray, who was anxious to cause no social offence, confesses ‘so strong a repugnance to relate in detail a story in which I must myself appear as heroine’ (\textit{A}, p. 114). Such an exercise in self-promotion would contravene the image of modesty that Bray tried to establish, for, as Sidonie Smith notes, ‘gender makes a woman’s life a nonstory, a silent space, a gap in patriarchal culture, the ideal woman is self-effacing rather than self-promoting’.\textsuperscript{57} Patricia Meyer Spacks observes a similar ‘conflict between the desire for self-assertion and the need for self suppression’ in eighteenth-century women

\textsuperscript{55} See p. 33.
\textsuperscript{56} Treadwell, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{57} Smith, p. 49.
letter writers. Spacks argues that the culturally controlled female models of behaviour which demand modesty work in opposition to autobiographical publications where women must place themselves at the centre of the text: ‘they worry about seeming too self involved’. It is the publication of a woman’s life that is vital here, as Mary Poovey notes: writing ‘for publication [...] jeopardizes modesty, that critical keystone of feminine propriety; [...] for it [...] calls attention to the woman as subject, as initiator of direct action, as a person deserving of notice for her own sake’, since, Poovey explains, the proper lady cannot triumph as an expression, ‘but as an evasion of self’. Bray understood how her desire to appear modest could be jeopardised by her ambition to succeed as a writer, particularly one prepared to commit her own history to print. She admits ‘I am conscious that in [...my heart] lay a strong latent feeling of ambition; and I am sensitive in the extreme degree in whatever concerned my labours’ (MS, ii, p. 67). As a result she adopts strategies to pre-empt public censure for her lack of modesty in publicly flaunting both her private life and her intellect. Yet despite her anxieties Bray was determined to secure her own memorial, and thus set aside five hundred pounds to cover the publication of her autobiography and the republication of her romances. She therefore needed to convince the public that her life was worthy of interest, a task she must undertake without being deemed immodest.

Typically Bray inscribes the justification for her life writing within the domestic sphere, explaining that the ‘recollections’ of her life were requested by both her husband and her nephew, John Edward Kempe, as a personal memorial in case of her death, not an unlikely prospect considering her frequent and extended periods of ill health. Such an opening signals a project intended purely for private consumption. Yet while she states that ‘no further apology than the wishes of a beloved husband’ (MS, i, p. 3) would be required to validate such a work, a contradiction occurs when she emphasises the encouragement

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58Spacks, ‘Female Rhetorics’, pp. 177-191, (pp. 177-8).
59 Spacks, p. 179; Bray, MS i, p, 222; A, p. 114.
60 Poovey, p. 36 and 46.
she received from a very public figure, the poet laureate Robert Southey, who advised her that she ‘could not better be employed’ (MS, i, p. 1). By adding Southey’s name to her list of supporters Bray is implying that this document may not be confined to domestic circles; Southey was an established and well respected literary authority, whose name would add credence and marketability to the publication, just as Stothard’s reputation would help sell her first literary publication, *Letters Written During a Tour Through Normandy, Brittany.*

Yet by citing Southey Bray cleverly negotiates the border between a public and a private document as by 1830 Southey had become a family friend, thereby still allowing her to focus on the private, domestic nature of this work while simultaneously broadening both her audience and the nature of her material. Previously Southey had supported Bray’s production of a topographical work on Dartmoor, *The Borders of the Tamar and the Tavy* (1836), on the grounds that the past needed to be preserved ‘(for every generation sweeps away much) […] omitting some of those “short and simple” annals of domestic life, which ought not to be forgotten’ (*A*, p. 227), although significantly Southey is expecting an account of private, not public history.

It took very little effort for Bray to validate her own autobiographical writing using a similar rationale. Preservation was central to her ideology and the preservation of private documents and letters was no less important to her than the preservation of material culture, traditions and landscape. Bray believed that personal histories had an integral part to play as historical records: for instance she records her anger when family letters sent to her mother were ‘[a]ll burnt by persons who did not know the value of such documents’ (MS, i, p. 70). Similarly ‘during the severe illness of my brother […] many interesting letters connected with Literature and antiquaries, many of them from my brother himself, were destroyed by the same hands’ (MS, ii, p. 70), letters which she believed contained

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61 Chapter 2, p. 80.
62 Southey was particularly supportive of Bray’s work, even though his advice to Charlotte Bronte has earned him a reputation for misogyny. Dennis Low, however, suggests he was merely warning Bronte against making writing a profession, her sole source of income. Low, p. 24.
useful information that extended beyond the private sphere of home and family into the public domain. Bray therefore presents her work as a private memorial, an aide memoire for family members, and a public document, a cultural record of her times, thereby illustrating the interrelatedness of public and private history.

Bray, however, was well aware of the conflict of interests between protecting personal privacy and compiling an accurate record for posterity. Male authority and tradition is once more appropriated to validate her decisions on what material to include and what to discard: this time she turns to Johnson, who avers that ‘there has rarely passed a Life of which a judicious and faithful Narrative would not be useful’. Yet James Treadwell notes that by the early nineteenth century Johnson’s argument, which a century earlier appeared ‘in the opening pages of many autobiographical works, as the readiest defence against anticipated criticism, [...] was becoming somewhat of a cliché’, perhaps one reason why Kempe chose to omit this section from his edited text. The fact that Bray still adopted this justification as late as 1844 goes some way to support Kempe’s belief that her ‘ideas and manner’ (A, p. 4) were influenced by the eighteenth century, a strategy he uses to emphasise Bray’s inability to engage with the present. But it is also a strategy she appropriates throughout her writing, for she constantly uses male authority to validate her work, as I demonstrate in the following chapters.

Furthermore, although Bray’s narrative may be judicious, it is not necessarily faithful in its representation of truth, as faithful is a questionable signifier, for it is unclear to whom the writer is being faithful, whether she is showing loyalty, to friends, family, or to historical record. The presentation of truth is as central to autobiographical writing as it is to history, but a judicious narrative implies a process of selection where information of a painful or sensitive nature might be withheld to protect the individuals cited: ‘it is not

64 Treadwell, p. 10.
65 Bray, Autobiography, p. 4.
possible always to lay bare all the circumstances which combine to bring about a particular action or event’ (MS, ii, p. 27). Therefore by her own admission, her autobiography will be a narrative of gaps, not the gaps which Miriam Burstein argues are present in national records, those of ‘[p]rivate life’ which fall outside the historian’s domain, but gaps within Bray’s own story. Bray justifies her omissions by explaining that ‘to preserve […] even fragments of what is truth by written record is alike valuable to ourselves and to our posterity’ (MS, i, p. 5). Shari Benstock, however, argues that the fragmentation of autobiographical writing is particularly interesting because it gives ‘the lie to a unified, identifiable coterminous self’, and autobiography is, in Benstock’s opinion, at its most interesting when the self and the created image do not coincide, as is the case in Bray’s life writing.\(^6^6\)

Bray was so obsessed with her own life that she saw fit to re-write it in many different forms, autobiography, memoirs, travel writing, which I explore in Chapter Two, topographical writing and, of course, fiction. For a woman who wished to retain a public image of modesty this degree of self-advertisement appears somewhat contradictory. However, Elspeth Graham et al in their work on seventeenth–century life writing claim that autobiographical writing, as in the case of Margaret Cavendish, ‘is concerned to vindicate her modest reputation whilst telling her story. The self presented in the text is one created with the reader in view’.\(^6^7\) Like Cavendish Bray purports to be writing her autobiographical manuscript for private circulation amongst family members and, as I demonstrate, her constant references to acceptable feminine behaviour suggest that she too wished to present herself as a woman who endorsed female conformity. Through an examination of her autobiographical writing it is, however, possible to see how this self-

\(^6^6\) Burstein argues that ‘historical record is itself fragmented, riddled with gaps where everyday life should be’. p. 9; Smith, p. 259; and Benstock, p. 12.

image is constantly at variance with her desire for a more independent autonomous self, one that is revealed in her autobiographical manuscript and throughout her fiction.

But perhaps an equally important reason for Bray’s obsessive use of autobiographical material was her fear of being effaced from history. She had been subjected to a number of tragic losses in her life; her first husband died in May 1821, followed by her only child in January 1822; her only memorial was her writing. Bray makes this connection explicitly in the letter to Edward Bray which prefaces her manuscript. It was, however, not just her own memorial that she wished to create. After the death of her brother, Alfred, followed by Charles Stothard’s younger brother Henry in 1847, Bray laments the loss of old friends, seeing Henry’s death as ‘another link broken in the chain of old and early friends with whom we can converse about those who are dead and gone’ (MS, iii, p. 290). By occupying herself with the dead she is, as Julie Carlson argues, creating ‘a constant visual reminder […] that the past is part of […]our] current reality and thus not to be forgotten. […] paralysing the hand of oblivion’. Bray’s work, therefore, becomes a way of preserving the past and remembering the dead, a literature of commemoration as much for herself as posterity. In particular through her writing she could reconstruct her life with Stothard as a romance, thereby revising the past and creating for herself a happier future. Thus her writing could be viewed as a form of therapy, a way of exploring and ultimately controlling her grief, an aspect which I explore later.

Editorial processes: textual history and concealment.

The textual history of Bray’s autobiographical manuscript is complex, and forms an excellent starting point for an examination of both her life and her literary oeuvre. Her introductory remarks are dated 1844, but the work was not begun in earnest until 1850. Fourteen years later, in 1864, Bray revised her manuscript, editing out extensive sections

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68 Carlson, p. 166.
of the original text, which was ultimately reduced to one volume by Bray’s editors.\(^{69}\) Comparisons between Bray’s autobiographical writing and that of her female contemporaries published at a similar time, notably Lady Morgan and Maria Edgeworth, show that Bray’s work is significantly different, possibly because of the level of male intervention. Lady Morgan’s memoirs, although ultimately edited by William Hepworth Dixon, were prepared and edited by Morgan herself and her friend Geraldine Jewsbury, and Dixon gives full credit to the work of both women in his short introductory preface:

Lady Morgan is here substantially her own biographer. Whatever escapes from the original author belongs of right to Miss Jewsbury. I claim no other merit in this affair than that of having faithfully obeyed the wishes of the dead (\textit{LMM}, i, p. v).

John Kempe, on the other hand, takes thirty-six pages to introduce his godmother.

Moreover, despite Bray’s provision of £3,000 for the publication of her autobiography and the republication of her romances and £500 for her editor, finding a publisher was not easy. John Murray refused the manuscript on account of its size and his inability to see any ‘prospect of obtaining even a moderate amount of public interest’; a plausible reason considering Bray had published very little for over thirty years, and nothing at all for the preceding ten.\(^{70}\) Chapman and Hall agreed to publish a one-volume edition and ironically it sold out, leaving Murray to congratulate Kempe on the production of ‘a very interesting volume’.\(^{71}\) Kempe reduced the manuscript’s size by ending the work with Southey’s death, deeming that nothing after that time would be of public interest, even though Bray had ‘left notes and materials for its completion down to the year 1857’ (\textit{A}, p. 336).\(^{72}\) Significantly Kempe shifted the focus of Bray’s material to give Southey a central role, suggesting that it was Southey that made Bray’s life interesting.

\(^{69}\) Kempe, p. 227.
\(^{70}\) Letter from John Murray to John Arrow Kempe, dated March 1883, Kempe, p. 224.
\(^{71}\) Letter from John Murray to Kempe dated May 8\(^{th}\) 1884, Kempe, p. 230.
\(^{72}\) Bray’s notes reveal little about her private life, concentrating mainly on the publication history of her texts and her relationship with publishers, namely Murray, Bentley and Colburn.
Bray provides clear evidence of her own editing process throughout the autobiographical manuscript. Some pages are covered in criss-crossed pencil lines with accompanying notes to her editor on the opposite blank sheet. Her record of Southey’s visit to the vicarage in 1836 is obscured in this way, but because it involves Southey, Kempe includes it in the Autobiography. 73 Occasionally Bray wrote clear directions for her literary executor in the margins and on the blank pages of her manuscript. Sometimes these directives would suggest omissions, but frequently they offered a choice: ‘My Dear Godson, You may leave this out if you like’ (A, p. 326), an example which Kempe cites in a footnote. 74 Other editorial markings are restricted to paragraphs, sentences or single words which are either crossed out in pencil or completely obliterated by ink lines. As the ink colour matches that of the original text it is reasonable to suggest that these are Bray’s alterations, executed at the time of writing rather than at a later date. Some words and phrases have been obliterated so completely that it is impossible to identify them even by using contextual clues. These are deletions which she clearly did not wish others to read, and they usually obscure aspects of the text which appear judgmental and disparaging towards people that she knew.

One such section is her description of the controversy surrounding the publication of The Mountains and Lakes of Switzerland. A reviewer in The Times accused her of plagiarising Murray’s Handbook, an accusation which she fervently denied. Longman subsequently ‘did not again advertise the work vigorously or with an extract from my answer appended, a thing that would it seems to me have removed all apprehension (they […] the work […] by […] neglect)’. The phrase in italics appears to have been added later, as it is written in different ink. The bracketed section is almost completely obscured by heavy ink lines, suggesting that Bray had either wished to modify her direct criticism, 73 David Kempe suggests that she wished to exclude the section on Southey’s visit because she had been disappointed that he had not been more open with them; only on leaving did he become ‘familiarly acquainted with us, more open, more warm, than he had ever been yet’ (AEB, p. 168).

74 MS, ii, pp. 35, 73–4 and 84.
making it appear an opinion rather than a fact, or had attempted to remove it completely, an act possibly motivated by her desire to maintain an image of modesty. As I explain below, she did not wish to appear unfeminine in any aspect of her behaviour since her social position was vulnerable, not only because she was a woman and a writer, therefore under public scrutiny, but also because of her husband’s profession. Moreover she confesses that she did not wish to cause others pain.75

Throughout her work Bray strove to maintain this image of modesty, yet readers can discern a certain tension when her internal autonomous voice, one that admits to ambition, runs counter to the conformist image she wished to create for herself, although she admits to being worried that she will be punished by God for her transgression:

> it was the will of God to try me, and to thwart me in every tender point, He knows our hearts better than we do ourselves. [...] I was far too sensitive (and far too ambitious) but I was not I hope vain (nor would I have deserved the censure had it been cast upon me) (MS, ii, p. 67).

The section above is crossed out, but not completely obliterated, although the words in brackets have been quite heavily scored out in ink, but it is still possible to identify the problems Bray encountered when she wished to express her feelings and opinions publicly without appearing immodest. Her constant back tracking and careful qualification of terms illustrates the way every word had to be weighed to avoid misunderstandings that might result in public censure. There is certainly evidence to suggest that she found language a tool that could easily condemn her, though throughout her work she tends to use words impulsively, only afterward realising how easily they might be misinterpreted. Consequently she must constantly clarify, qualify and justify her position.

Although Bray appears to acknowledge her own potentially transgressive nature, the ambition for which she is chastised by God, there is a sense of repressed anger, or possibly regret, that her ambition was being restrained by the social constraints placed on female behaviour. By subscribing to the codes of female modesty, she was unable to reap what she

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75 MS, ii, p.27.
considered were the just rewards of her ‘labours’: success as a writer. Yet despite the personal convictions of her worth as a writer Bray lacked confidence when addressing her readers. The nervous disposition which had blighted her career as an actress also dogged her career as a writer: ‘had I at once met with great success, it would have frightened me. I should have been afraid to go on, for fear of losing by an inferior production the reputation I had already gained’ (MS, ii, p. 68). Significantly there are two reputations at stake here, her reputation as a woman and her reputation as a writer, two distinctly different positions, which for Bray at least were not easily reconciled. Bray was sensitive to criticism, but to publicly justify her work required confidence and self-assurance, qualities that she displayed in private, but which sat uneasily with the public image of modesty and conformity that she attempted to create for herself. Similar problems of language and representation face an editor who wishes to control his subject’s public image, as Kempe was so keen to do with Bray. It is significant that both the above extracts were omitted from the final publication as they present Bray as a woman who sometimes found it hard to accept the role that society created for women, an aspect of her character that Kempe tried to underplay.

In addition to the above forms of editorial processes Bray’s autobiographical manuscript has missing pages, and whole sections have either been pinned or sewn together. Sections where pages have been cut out also appear throughout the three volumes, yet there is no apparent discontinuity of this text which deals with the deaths of friends and relatives. The largest portion of missing text is from volume one, coming between Bray’s description of the deaths of her siblings, Eliza Jemima and Edward Gibbons, born in 1782 and 1787 respectively, and that of her friend, Mary, from a burst stomach abscess in 1809. The continuity of the subject matter suggests that despite the passage of twenty years and the omission of sixty pages, there is no obvious loss of information. Bray explains that Mary’s death was the first she actually witnessed, and therefore it is unlikely that these missing pages had contained accounts of other deaths.

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76 Bray often complains about her lack of success, MS, ii, p. 62.
particularly as Bray moves on to recount the death of her brother’s close friend, Edward Wodehouse, which also occurred when she was still a young woman.

Similarly the pages recounting Wodehouse’s life and death are not numerically continuous, moving from page 141 to page 146, although the contextual continuity appears intact despite the five-page gap in pagination. Similarly Bray ends page 146 with a comment on Wodehouse’s skill as an actor: ‘he had to contend with a voice that had in it little flexibility, and was somewhat harsh’, ending the page with a semi-colon and resuming the sentence on page 188 with a qualification of her previous judgement, ‘but he possessed both energy and judgement so that any character which required strength or forcible expression he could (very) well play’. As the sentence maintains its coherence, despite a gap of forty-two pages, it appears that nothing has been omitted, although evidence of Bray’s editing process is apparent. I have bracketed ‘very’ as the word is crossed out in the manuscript, this time probably to improve her expression before publication. She later replaces ‘sometime’ with ‘for a while’ (p. 189), another stylistic change. These are typical examples of the lightly scored textual alterations apparent throughout the manuscript, modifications which either amend clumsy expression or clarify her meaning. Concealment does not appear to be her primary objective here, and therefore the numerical discontinuity and removal of pages may have been merely the result of her using exercise books that had previously been used for another purpose.

The pinned and sewn sections of volume three do, however, warrant further discussion. Pinning seems an odd way of concealing information as it creates few difficulties for those wishing to access the material. This process may have been undertaken by Kempe as a means of grouping those sections that he wished to exclude from consideration in the published volume. By the time I read the document many of the pinned sections had already been opened, although many pages still retained the rust marks from the metal. The sewn sections are more interesting because of the slightly more permanent nature of their reading restrictions. All the sewn sections are located in what
Bray intended to be volume three of the projected autobiography, the volume which deals predominantly with her life after Southey’s death, therefore after Kempe’s cut-off date for the published volume. Many pages also deal with personal feelings and very private issues.

The first sewn section relates to the publication of *The Borders* which was censured, not by the press this time, but by some local residents. One reason for concealing this information is her contempt for the pettiness of her critics. She cites one individual who was angry because she called his father, ‘(who cut hair and shaved in this town for many years) a barber […] I ought to have called him a philosopher’ (MS, iii, p. 14). It may be the pettiness of the criticism that persuades her not to publicly respond to her critic, or the fact that she suggests gender construction is dictated by God, and therefore only ‘[m]en are made for battling, hence are they ready to take up offence; but women are formed for peace; designed by their creator for the domestic affections, and […] passive virtues’ (MS, iii, p. 15). Yet if this is truly Bray’s viewpoint she does not consistently maintain it since the anger and frustration that she reveals throughout her writing contradicts the idea that her nature, as a woman, is either unwilling or unable to do battle in order to uphold her reputation as a writer.

Although she recommends that authors ‘very much mistake their own interests as well as neglect what is due to their own peace when they reply to attacks or notice ill natured reviews’ (MS, iii, p. 14), she assiduously defended her own work in public on two occasions, though she claims to have done this ‘only […] when the proof of the truth was in my own hands’ (MS, iii p. 14). One was a public response to an accusation by *The Times* of plagiarism in her *Mountains and Lakes of Switzerland* (1841); she even demanded that her explanation be published in the newspaper. It appears that the passive virtues which she claims for women in her earlier philosophising are forgotten when her literary reputation, or personal standing as a woman noted ‘for honour and integrity’ (MS, ii, p. 186) are at stake. Indeed she was further angered when her letter to the editor denying the charge and justifying her position was only allocated a small space at the bottom of a page.
where her defence might go unnoticed by readers. Similarly, after an adverse review of *The Protestant* in the *Quarterly Review*, she sent a letter to Lockhart, the editor, denying any political intent, accompanied by a copy of her novel for the reviewer, who happened to be Robert Southey.

This section of her manuscript, despite its controversial nature, is neither pinned nor sewn; in fact it is not obscured in any way, thereby suggesting that she wished her vindication to become public. Neither Bray nor Kempe would wish to conceal the details of this controversy as it supports Bray’s denial of political intent, placing the blame for her misrepresentation firmly on the shoulders of her publisher, Colburn. In fact Bray even instructs Kempe to include them in the final volume. *The Protestant* is a romance examining the persecution of Protestants during the reign of Mary Tudor. It was published in 1828 amidst the stormy debate over the Catholic Emancipation Bill; therefore it is not difficult to see why Colburn exploited its political potential in his advertisements. Alfred Kempe believed it was done to heighten sales, explaining to his sister that ‘Colburn has well succeeded in giving it a party air, which was what he evidently wished, calling it “the production of a high churchman’s lady”’ (A, p.203). The critical response to *The Protestant* was vitriolic; the Liberals named her a ‘bigot’, whilst others condemned her ‘cruel and unfeminine disposition, labouring to incite the Protestants to persecute, and if possible to burn the Roman Catholics’ (A, p.204). If Kempe was right about Colburn’s strategic marketing of Bray’s work as a political polemic, the scheme certainly worked. On November 29th 1829 he wrote to his sister: ‘the public judge for themselves, and – a second edition is the consequence […] you are written down a powerful writer, but a violent party one’ (A, p. 203). This incident is significant as it illustrates Bray’s naivety, or maybe her disingenuousness, in believing that the public would read this work as ‘a domestic story […]of] the tenderest feelings and domestic affection’ (A, p. 198), especially as she had privileged her own religious affiliation in the title.
However despite *The Protestant’s* success, Bray was unhappy with what she considered to be a tarnished reputation. She fought hard to justify herself, even accusing her critics of a biased and wilful misreading of her work, since ‘it will be seen by any impartial reader that nothing could be invented farther from the truth’ (A, p. 202). In her manuscript she elaborates further on the private concerns examined in this romance, the ‘cruelty and hardness of heart which bigotry and tyranny give into […] under such baleful influences […] domestic peace invaded; its dearest ties broken […] by persecution’ (MS, ii, p. 82), yet the very mention of persecution suggests a more political subject matter. Although domestic matters are used here, as elsewhere in her writing, to mask political commentary, it is never fully apparent whether her inability to understand the ramifications of what she writes is naivety or duplicity. What is clear, is that Bray was afraid of being deemed a political writer, a position which she connected with masculinity: ‘I never liked what is called a political lady; and never, I trust, deserve a character so masculine or out of place’ (MS, ii, p. 106). The underlining here signifies an indignant outburst, a desperate attempt to deny any political intent that might undermine the image of modesty and domestic virtue that she tried to promote. Yet her work is littered with material that can be read as political, making this a complex issue. If her comments stem from a belief that private opinions are separate from public politics she complicates that position by presenting the public and private spheres as interlinked. Moreover she is publicly airing these opinions in her texts, so that they do not remain private property.

One possible reason for these contradictions was that Bray was impulsive. She held strong views, particularly about gender and religion, which she wished to express. It was only when she realised the possible ramifications of her words that she embarked on extensive explanations and self-justifications to limit any damage to her public image. Alfred Kempe certainly associated *The Protestant’s* success with its political engagement, and the controversy surrounding this work is crucial to an understanding of Bray as both a

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77 See p. 35.
woman of her era, and a writer who wished to combine literary success with conventional feminine behaviour. In her manuscript Bray reflects on how ‘[t]he faults of literary ladies who have been very successful are most commonly vanity’ (MS, iii, p. 14), which she wished to eschew, for Bray saw clear connections between self-confidence and vanity.\(^{78}\) John Kempe chooses to exclude this outburst from the Autobiography, possibly because it might undermine Bray’s image as either a successful writer or a modest woman. Instead he includes only her affirmations on the domestic nature of her work, and the justification which she sent to her most virulent critic, Robert Southey, thereby securing Bray’s position within the private sphere, especially as Southey accepted her explanation and subsequently became a personal friend. Thus Bray is given a public platform from which to present her defence, but in a more private manner, far more fitting for her image than the public vindication of The Mountains and Lakes published in The Times.

Another sewn section in the manuscript concerns the relationship between the Brays and Southey who had been corresponding with Bray since 1830. Both Eliza Bray and her husband were disappointed in Southey because they believed that he had misled them into supposing that he did not write The Doctor, a seven-volume work published in 1834, and she criticizes her friend and mentor for betraying their friendship: ‘I cannot but think, he carried the matter a little far; more especially with his friends’ (MS, iii, p. 16). This criticism, however, remains confined to the manuscript. Typically, she justifies her own gullibility by citing authoritative figures who were also taken in by Southey’s deception, namely Sir William Bolland, a circuit judge. Moreover, despite Southey sending her a letter of explanation, she avers that the true apology has been made by his son in the life of his celebrated father –namely that the [...] work [...] was carried on to amuse and divert his melancholy [...] when his heart was nearly broken by the sorrows of his poor wife’s suffering (MS, iii p. 16).

Kempe only includes Southey’s letter to Bray in the Autobiography, and by doing so completely shifts the focus of the incident:

\(^{78}\) See Chapter 4, p. 200.
It was said that poor Coleridge told him [Murray] that I was the author [...]. Coleridge never said any such thing to him or anyone else [...]; but I have some reason to think that [...] the Coleridges [...] have let this be known and in such a way as to render me suspected; by doing so they may think both to aid the sale of the book [...], and in doing so have presumed on my goodwill, and my good nature (A, p. 290).

By excluding Bray’s words, Kempe shows support for Southey, giving the impression that he has satisfactorily excused his behaviour. Bray, however, makes it clear that she never fully forgave Southey for the deception, but it would perhaps not be politic for Kempe to present Bray as a woman who reproached her influential friends.

Between pages twenty-nine and thirty-seven of this same volume is another sewn section elaborating on the disagreement between Southey and Lockhart, the editor of The Quarterly Review, who refused to publish Southey’s review of Ebenezer Elliot’s Corn Law Rhymes because the poems were, in his opinion, too radical. As a consequence Southey had neglected to submit any further reviews. Murray was disappointed and, under the guise of a personal visit, took his family down to Tavistock to enlist Bray’s help as a mediator. Here again is an example of the contradictions apparent in Bray’s character, for although she avoided presenting herself as having any involvement in commercial affairs, she appears to have relished Murray’s flattery, his assertion that she alone could influence Southey, and the position of empowerment that such a role possessed. Moreover she could not afford to upset Murray, who was about to publish her topographical work, The Borders. Bray’s efforts succeeded, but it is significant that she does not mention her negotiations; only the domestic arrangements of this visit are fully detailed, spanning two full pages of the manuscript.

Kempe, however, omits the incident from his volume, which is odd considering his desire to focus on Southey and the lack of any specific instruction from Bray to exclude it. She enjoyed making public her associations with celebrated individuals, and as she had given the incident a domestic focus, she probably saw no objection to its publication. Bray’s particularly high profile role in business negotiations may not, however, have fitted
comfortably with the image of Bray Kempe wished to promote, that of domesticity and retirement.79

Only two other sewn sections remain. One details another business negotiation with Bohn over the sale of Stothard’s plates for Monumental Effigies, and it is again couched in the language of domesticity, a loyal wife attempting to carry out her dead husband’s wishes and do justice to his work. There is, however, an alternative reading which presents Bray as a woman of business who was annoyed at losing out financially on what she felt was a valuable asset, an interpretation that again would undermine the image of domesticity and isolation which Kempe wished to promote. The final sewn section spanning pages 192-96 deals with two incidents, neither of which is controversial. One is Bray’s invitation to dinner on the ‘Impregnable’, a warship docked in Plymouth sound; the other covers Mr. Jerdan’s visit to Tavistock. Jerdan, the editor of The Literary Gazette, negotiated terms with Bentley for the publication of Henry de Pomeroy; she received £125 for the first edition, limited to 500 copies. Perhaps Kempe wished to conceal these financial details, although Jerdan’s role as a negotiator would certainly support Kempe’s agenda, the presentation of his great-aunt as a woman removed from business affairs. His choice to omit this section may be purely the result of an acute shortage of space when trying to reduce three volumes to three hundred and thirty-five pages.

Generally Kempe adhered to Bray’s editorial requests. Her suggested omissions usually related to her own health issues or those of their immediate family whose personal history, health or financial matters, he also tends to conceal. In addition she offers Kempe the option to exclude many of the anecdotes that pervade the manuscript. Public demands were very different in the late nineteenth century as histories were empirical and less anecdotal, a trend which encouraged Bray to remove the anecdotes and personal references from the 1878 edition of The Borders; as Murray notes, she ‘curtailed only such matters as,

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79 Significantly, while John Kempe stresses her lack of ‘acquaintances among leading spirits of the day’ (A, p. 18), David Kempe claims that ‘her literary outer circle was impressive’ (AEB, p. 234).
from lapse of time and change of circumstances, would be without value to the reader of the present day’.  

**Style and content**

Bray begins her own history in a traditional way, with an account of her father’s pedigree, and thus from the outset she aligns her work with male tradition and authority. In her manuscript she precedes this pedigree with references to Johnson’s advice on writing biography. Significantly Kempe removes this section, beginning the published work with Bray’s validation of his grandfather’s credentials as the source of her information - she describes her brother as ‘an able antiquary’ (A, p. 39). Rosemary Mitchell notes that during the mid nineteenth century, to cite family pedigree was a conventional form of self-presentation amongst those women who wrote history and who wished to assert their status as ‘ladies first and authors second’. Bray, however, tried to balance three very different personas: the reliable historian, the modest woman and the successful author, without reducing any to a position of secondary importance, a task she did not manage very successfully.

Lady Morgan also begins her *Memoirs* by referencing male precedent, but unlike Bray, Morgan manipulates these traditional writing methods to suit her own agenda. She rejects the male tradition of facts and chronology and focuses instead on feeling. Her initial rhetorical question, ‘what has a woman to do with dates?’ (*LMM*, p. 6), suggest that she subscribes to a gendered form of writing history, but Morgan cleverly subverts the idea that traditional male histories are superior. She eschews dates, not because she, as a woman, is unworthy of using such material, but because the material itself is unworthy: ‘[c]old, false, erroneous, chronological dates’ (*LMM*, p. 6). Thus Morgan privileges an alternative version of history which celebrates the values and concerns traditionally

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81 Chapter 4, p. 215.

82 Mitchell, 107-134 (p. 119).
considered to be female, domestic incidents and personal relations, and she presents her argument with confidence and wit.

Bray, on the other hand, rather than use social stereotypes to her advantage, tries to convince readers of her conformity, although her narrative often offers a very different kind of reading. For example, she does not continue in the traditional vein of privileging male ancestors; she introduces women into her narrative and privileges their history. The story of her grandfather’s attack by a highwayman, for instance, becomes a celebration of her grandmother’s prompt action and forethought. At times, however, it is debatable whether she privileges some examples of women’s history because of their gender or because of their social connections. Her great-aunt, for example, was part of the royal household and was, according to Bray, partly responsible for saving the life of the infant Prince of Wales. 83

Although on the surface Bray appears to support social conformity, she did believe in the potential for women’s independence, stating that ‘much may be accomplished by unassisted exertions’, providing women do not transgress that ‘rare pattern of modesty and humility’ (M, p. 491) which she understood as fundamental to a woman’s character. Yet her attempts not to transgress the boundaries of modesty and humility appear a constant hindrance to her work as she, unlike Lady Morgan, does not so successfully adopt strategies to negotiate the conflict between modesty and her ambition to succeed as a serious writer. Lady Morgan was far more adept at managing this kind of difficulty through the manipulation of language. Unlike Bray, who justifies her autobiography as an historical record, Morgan justifies hers as a self-help manual, encouraging others, regardless of their gender, to follow her path to success.

One of the chief temptations to present the principal facts of my life to the public, has been to prove the readiness with which society is willing to help those who are honestly and fervently ready to help themselves. I would wish to impress on young people who are beginning life as I did, dependent on their own exertions, the absolute need of concentrated industry; a definite purpose, and above all, conduct dictated by common sense (LMM, p. 3).

For Morgan it is not modesty and humility that generate success, but ‘industry’, another Protestant principle, and ‘common sense’, a subjective quality, therefore difficult to quantify. Bray is so obsessive about modesty, that it becomes unclear whether she is attempting to convince her readers or herself that she is a compliant, and not a transgressive woman. Moreover this obsession with image often causes her to respond with anger and indignation to any criticism which might hint at a lack of propriety in her conduct, as she did in responses to criticism of The Protestant and The Mountains and Lakes of Switzerland.

It was Bray’s anxiety about her public image that ultimately dictated what material should appear in print and what should be suppressed. By selecting quotations from Johnson, Bray attempts to justify her work as an historical record and establish her own credentials as an historian who will strive to be impartial:

> [t]he writer of his own life has at least the first qualification of an historian, the knowledge of the truth; and though it may be plausibly expected that his temptations to disguise it are equal to his opportunities of knowing it yet I cannot but think that impartiality may be expected.

Yet despite the emphasis on truth and impartiality, Bray suggests that those writing their own history may be ‘plausibly expected’ to attempt some degree of concealment in order to protect others. She explains that: ‘[i]t is not my intention to recall anything in these pages which might be at least painful to others, or of little moment to my friends, if of much to myself’ (MS, ii, p.27). Bray’s autobiographical manuscript is also distinctive because it is a document of two halves. The early part of her life, before her marriage to Edward Bray, is presented in a style more usually associated with the novel of sentiment, whereas her later life is a less emotional and more factual account of her writing career.

The early sections of volume one of Bray’s manuscript comprise a series of short tales, all complete in themselves, where family members are cast as the leading characters

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84 Poovey, p. 27.
85 Johnson ‘The Idler’, No. 84, Greene, p. 299.
and information is revealed through action and dialogue. This method of presentation is significant for two reasons. One, it links Bray’s history with historical fiction, for as Ann Stephens notes, the dialogue, which had traditionally been found in the grand narratives of history, had, by the nineteenth century, been reassigned to historical fiction. Two, it connects Bray’s work with the theatre, as each cameo is depicted as a scene from a play, a style which characterises much of her work. Therefore it is difficult to categorise this early section of Bray’s history generically, for not only does it blur the boundaries of history and fiction, but also the stories it contains range from comedy to tragedy and from romantic adventure to Gothic romance. Moreover each tale is related in the emotionally charged and exaggerated language of the novel of sentiment and gives centrality to women, features which later also become hallmarks of her fiction.  

When relating the death of her older brother and sister it is Jemima’s story we are told, and Bray emphasises her sister’s conformity to the female stereotypes of beauty, passivity, gentleness, sensitivity and virtue, through a dialogue between the girl and her brother.

‘Oh Jemima,’ he said, ‘come and see the fine funeral’  
‘No Alfred, No, [...] I will not look at it nor shall you; it may be somebody’s Papa or Mama going to be buried.’

Jemima Kempe is presented as the perfect child, but also as a stereotypical heroine of tragedy. She was bright, compassionate and musically gifted, with a pale complexion, ‘light hair [...] dark blue eyes [...] and a countenance so thoughtful, so tender that she seemed scarcely fitted for this earth’ (MS, i, p.76). This portrait seems too perfect to be other than a romanticised memory, not the candid account Bray promised her readers. In fact each cameo is carefully structured to maximise its emotional appeal. When Bray relates her sister’s death she juxtaposes highly sentimentalised descriptions with the simple statement, ‘“Mamma I am very ill”’ (MS, i, p. 77), to emphasise both the child’s simplicity and the story’s tragic outcome. Jemima’s story highlights Bray’s ability to recognise and

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*86 See Chapter 3, pp. 117-18.*
capitalise on the potential for stories in everyday events, but it is also a way of 
commemorating the dead by immortalising them in fiction, a process she later applies to 
her own husband, Charles Stothard. Bray admits that memory romanticises the dead, and 
those who die young ‘become hallowed in the memory. Time cannot alter it, their very 
loveliness seems to survive the tomb’ (MS, i, p. 76), an admission that casts doubts on the 
complete veracity of her representations. She also believed it a ‘duty to say all the good the 
survivor knows’ (MS, ii, p. 30) of the dead, thus suggesting a judicious erasure of all that 
was flawed from her record. The fact that Stothard’s memory is constantly associated with 
youth, enthusiasm and happiness reflects this agenda. She is much more restrained when 
describing her relationship with Edward Bray, as I discuss later.

A very different account of Bray’s family history can be found in the tale of her 
grandfather’s brush with a highwayman during his journey across Hampstead Heath. Here 
Bray builds up the dramatic tension for an incident which, though comic, has the potential 
for tragedy, which is ultimately realised when the highwayman is executed. As in her 
fiction, it is a close attention to detail that sets the scene in a very visual way; the ‘four fat 
long-tailed, slow trotting horses’, and the old coachman who anticipates the horror to come 
by feeling ‘some tremors of nerves’ (MS, i, p. 13). This slow build up is juxtaposed by a 
comic depiction of her grandfather’s bluster and bravado when under attack, qualities 
which are emphasised by the use of active verbs:

jumping up [...he] thrust his head and part of his body out of the opposite 
window, crying aloud to the veteran who sat perfectly unconcerned for 
himself quietly holding the reins, [...] “Drive on Rowley, drive on I say, 
why don’t you drive on; I won’t be robbed” (MS, i, p. 13).

Ironically these actions merely highlight the man’s arrogance and impotence, while his 
wife’s calm dexterity in picking her husband’s pocket and quietly throwing his purse to the 
highwayman releases them from danger. Female pragmatism is therefore shown to be more 
potent than male bluster when ensuring that neither party is shot. Moreover, Bray’s 
depiction reveals that not all women conform to the social stereotype of weakness and 
passivity. But perhaps more significantly she links private history with a public and
political agenda by using the highwayman as the stimulus for a social critique, a method frequently adopted by Dickens. 

Bray does not romanticise the figure of the highwayman; she reveals how social conditions drove him to steal. His family was destitute, his pistol was unlaunched and, in Bray’s view, his fate, execution, was inhumane. She evokes sympathy for this man’s ‘dire distress’ (MS, i, p. 225), castigating the social insensitivity that caused such physical hardships and precipitated his early death in Newgate prison. Bray’s commentary has a political edge, but she is careful to exclude her grandfather from the harshest criticisms. After initially supporting his class in their role as enforcers of law and order, he realises too late the domestic poverty which drove this man to a life of crime, and is therefore unable to either retract his accusations or convince his peers, the judiciary, to reconsider their verdict. Bray’s critique of established hierarchies, in particular the judiciary, illustrates how her conservative ideology is tempered by her sympathetic response to human suffering, manifested in her espousal of aristocratic paternalist politics. Like Dickens, her belief in the need for social reform is made clear through a critique of the penal system, but unlike Dickens, she was not a social campaigner, a role far too politically overt for a woman who wished to promote an image of modest conformity. What is significant about her damning account of Newgate, ‘then as wretched, as pestilential, and demoralising as it is now admirable’ (A, p. 46), is that here the past is not romanticised. It appears that prison reform was one aspect of modernity which she did not consider to be

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87 David Kempe suggests that Bray may have known Dickens through Tavistock House and that she wrote for Household Words (AEB, p. 234), but there is no evidence of this cited in Anne Lohrli, Household Words: A Weekly Journal 1850-1859 Conducted by Charles Dickens — Table of Contents, List of Contributors and Their Contributions Based on The Household Words Office Book in the Morris L. Parrish Collection of Victorian Novelists, Princeton University Library (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973). Moreover, when John Kempe refers to Bray’s extensive library no reference is made to Dickens (A, pp. 178-181).


89 Bray also shows how family issues illustrate a wider social criticism through the case of a poor, but beautiful woman, driven to madness after her aristocratic lover left her and his child, (MS, i, pp. 215-220).
negative, for she is prone to generalise when expressing her disapproval of modern ways, a propensity that often led to the contradictions which she then must qualify and explain.

Marriage is another social issue which Bray examines through the prism of her family. Like Jane Austen, Bray understood how financial security for women was often acquired through marriage, but she is still highly critical of marriages arranged purely to increase personal fortune or elevate social status.\textsuperscript{90} The account she provides of her grandfather’s marriage to Elizabeth Meriton is significant because it exposes the complex interconnections between gender and marriage. She explains how her grandfather was ‘lucky in his choice of wives, for when pretty well advanced in years he took for his second spouse a young and celebrated beauty’ (A, p. 42), later adding that the inducements to marriage were not merely external since the woman was also ‘very rich’ (A, p. 42). Yet Bray expresses what amounts to indignation and disbelief at her step-grandmother’s choice of husband: ‘[w]hat induced her to marry a man so much older than herself I do not know’ (A, p. 42). Much can be deduced about Bray’s own beliefs on marriage from this outburst. She appears to assume that Elizabeth Meriton not only had a choice, but also that her choice would be founded on mutual love and respect, criteria that coincide with Bray’s own opinions on marriage, that it should not merely be undertaken for social or economic reasons.

Elizabeth Meriton improved her social position through her marriage to Nicholas Kempe as his friendship with the Duke of Cumberland’s circle allowed her access to the highest social echelons, an aspect of her grandmother’s character that Bray is keen to decry. Bray’s values are commensurate with what Vivien Jones describes as ‘the classic conduct book opposition between acceptable and unacceptable modes of middle-class femininity: inner virtue and “use” compared with superficial display’.\textsuperscript{91} Elizabeth Meriton

\textsuperscript{90} Bray comments on the anxieties suffered by her parents because of the financial crisis arising from her brother’s ever increasing family (MS, i, p. 207).
is presented as a woman who favours display, and one whose lack of sound moral education has left her without judgement, and thus without the ability to make appropriate marital choices; a feminine stereotype, beautiful, but lacking in intelligence, education or the wisdom to save her from a disastrous second marriage.92

Elizabeth Kempe’s choice of a second husband, a Mr. Dixon, appears to have been based on criteria which, on the surface, appear in keeping with Bray’s own. Dixon was ‘in the prime of life, very handsome, of great information, a fine artist and of gentlemanly manners’ (A, p. 63), yet once he had gained control of his wife’s fortune, he transformed into a tyrant, making Elizabeth rue her decision.93 But rather than focussing on the socially constructed politics of power in marital relationships, Bray explores the importance of sound moral education for women. Such an education would have enabled women like Elizabeth Kempe to discriminate between falseness and true sentiment, thus protecting them from entering into such disastrous marriages. A truly virtuous woman would, Bray avers, be wise enough only to love one worthy of that sentiment, and virtue was taught in the home.

It is an easy step to move from a eulogy on the generic home as a place where virtue is inculcated by a worthy and virtuous mother, to Bray’s own home, thereby transforming her public critique into a tribute to her own mother. The virtues of Bray’s mother and father, Ann and John Kempe, are further extolled through her portrayal of them as the hero and heroine of romance. John Kempe becomes the epitome of true Englishness, encapsulating all the characteristics espoused by Gerald Newman.94 Bray even connects him explicitly with national character, explaining that he was ‘truly English […with] a great deal of spirit, and under circumstances of alarm was insensible to all fear’ (MS, i,

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93MS, i, p. 40.

94Newman, p. 129.
p.44), a man who prefigures the heroic knights and gentlemen of her romances. Kempe is portrayed as a man with the moral independence and self-reliance to overcome trials, ultimately proving himself worthy of winning the hand of the virtuous lady, Ann Arrow. When wronged by his stepmother, whose second marriage caused him to lose his paternal inheritance, he is shown to rise above this injustice.

By presenting her history using the devices of fiction, Bray is able to portray her family as virtuous or heroic without the embarrassment that might accompany any direct comments on her immediate relatives. But this reticence to engage in direct comment on her family’s history is even greater when applied to her own past. Her reasons are three fold: the sensitive nature of the subject matter, the embarrassment of telling a tale in which she is ‘the heroine’, and an intention not to offend any living person ‘by recalling in detail the misfortunes or the sufferings of the dead’ (MS, i, p. 221). It is her courtship with Stothard that is alluded to, but never fully revealed in her autobiographical manuscript, although it is examined repeatedly in her historical romances. Bray even connects her life with the Gothic romance by suggesting that ‘(were I depicting any history but my own) I could depict with a power of truth, derived from experience, that would make her [the reader] tremble’ (MS, i, pp. 222 and 226). This quotation is significant because it is open to a number of possible interpretations. It is, for example, not made clear whether Bray is assuming only a female readership here, or merely presuming that only women will be affected by her revelations. Furthermore her phrase ‘a power of truth’ suggests a presentation which will involve emotionally charged language, thereby removing the objectivity that she believed ought to be appropriated when writing any history. Shari Benstock, however, argues, that when writing one’s life, ‘what begins on the presumption of a self-knowledge ends in the creation of a fiction’, and fiction was the best way to reveal those aspects of her life which could compromise her self-constructed image of modesty.95

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It is not surprising that Bray showed this reluctance to publicly expose the intimate details of her own life as the cultural conditioning of women required modesty and self effacement.\textsuperscript{96} Certain feelings, however, could be expressed publicly, her grief at Stothard’s death for example, since mourning, though a private affair, was also a shared ritual. The intimacies of passion, however, remained private, so her emotional response to her troubled courtship and runaway marriage is only available to readers in her novels. Why she wished to make her life with Stothard public, albeit behind the mask of fiction, might be explained using the theory put forward by Guinn Batten and Miranda Burgess, who argue that writing was a way to order and control emotions, a form of therapy, ‘a publicly moving but privately ordered narrative’.\textsuperscript{97} In Bray’s case writing was one way through which she could both examine and control her responses to the traumatic events of her early adult life. The themes of transgression, guilt and punishment dominate her depiction of incidents pertaining to the ten-year period prior to Stothard’s death in 1821.

Even in her autobiographical manuscript, Bray’s account of her courtship with Stothard is vague. Initially she avers that her feelings for him were those of esteem: she admired his ‘talents, the solid worth, the refinements and tenderness, the sincerity […] but] I confessed that my feelings for him were too much like those of a sister towards a kind and amiable brother, to allow me to accept or encourage his affection’ (MS, i, p. 224). Yet she never explains how, when or why the shift took place that transformed these feelings into the passion that resulted in their runaway marriage during February, 1818. Perhaps she did not fully understand these feelings herself, which is why she chooses to explore them throughout her fiction, for as Janet Todd argues, in the novels of sentiment ‘there is an assumption that life and literature are directly linked’.\textsuperscript{98} Alternatively she may have been exploring the incest theme that was prevalent in the writing of the Romantic period and

\textsuperscript{96} See pp. 32-33.  
\textsuperscript{97} Batten, pp. 2 and 8; Burgess, p. 51.  
later domesticated in the Victorian novel. Whatever her reasons were, behind the mask of fiction she was able to become the heroine of her own story, making Charles Stothard the hero.

Throughout her writings Bray presents Stothard as a man possessing all the prerequisite characteristics for a hero of sentimental fiction: those encapsulated in Mackenzie’s *Man of Feeling*. She explains how ‘[h]e had what defines so ably as the great perfection of tenderness in a man, to be feminine without being effeminate’ (A, p. 116), and once Stothard is established as a romantic protagonist she directs readers to her historical romances, where ‘I will candidly avow that [...] many a scene depicting the feelings of the heart were drawn from what I myself saw or experienced’ (A, p. 114). She cites her novella ‘A Daughter’s Sacrifice’, published in 1848 with ‘A Father’s Curse’, as *Trials of Domestic Life*, as a major source of autobiographical material:

I do not here scruple to avow that the principal characters and even some of the events, with all the feelings and passions portrayed were nothing more or less than copies from [...] real life. Real as I had seen them, felt them, and most painfully participated in them. [...] All persons have admitted the faithful delineations of the passions and the feeling; but they know not at what a price the experience necessary to delineate them had been bought (MS, iii, pp.231-2).

That Bray did not wish these intimate details to appear in print is clear as the section has been unmistakably crossed out in her autobiographical manuscript. The heroine of ‘A Daughter’s Sacrifice’ is significantly named Elizabeth, the formal version of Eliza, her own forename, a device which she uses throughout many of her romances. The tale is set in Devon during the Civil War and involves a young woman torn between two suitors,

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99 Cronin, pp. 5, 14 and 249.  
101 Bray later uses this quotation to describe her second husband, Edward Bray, in *Poetical Remains Social, Sacred, and Miscellaneous of the Late Edward Atkyns Bray Selected and Edited with a Memoir of the Author*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1859), i, p. xliv.  
102 In her mediaeval novels Bray uses Isabel and Anna as derivatives of her own name, Chapter 3. pp.163 and 165.
Colonel Holborne, who is preferred by her family, and Edmund, who is preferred by the heroine. She explains that this text has deep personal significance, for Edmund is ‘in many respects, though not in all, drawn from Charles Stothard’ (A, p. 114-5). Bray also explains that it depicts one very painful incident occurring ‘some time previous to our marriage, in which […] Charles Stothard] and another individual also of great worth were engaged’ (MS, i, p. 221). As usual she tantalises the reader with details that are never fully revealed: the incident is not specified, nor the other individual named - it could be her father, a personal friend, or perhaps even Edward Bray, whom she may have known from London society.  

Through fiction Bray is able to explore the time ‘when I was sorely and fearfully tried, during […] that long and most anxious engagement with poor Charles Stothard’ (MS, iii, p. 213), a time only alluded to in her Autobiography. Feelings become a main focus in this tale, and when Edmund realises that Elizabeth is to attend a ball with his rival, Colonel Holborne, his feelings are depicted in a way often associated with Gothic heroines ‘pale as death,[…] lips ashy white, every feature agitated as if convulsed […] limbs […] shaken with tremor […] breathing a sigh of agony as from the very heart’ (DS, iii, p. 102-5). Much of Edmund’s pain derives from the frustration of knowing that the success of his suit must depend on economic stability, for neither Edmund, nor Stothard have settled incomes: the former is dependent on the outcomes of civil war, the latter on his ability to earn a reputation as a monumental artist. Edmund’s words, ‘you know well that fortune and these wretched times have yet been my enemy, and that I waited but for brighter prospect to seek you as you deserve’ (DS, ii, p. 189), are an apt summation of both men’s prospects, although Bray’s parents were opposed to Stothard on economic, not political grounds.

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103 See Bray’s memoirs of her second husband in The Borders, iii, pp. 187-242. Edward Bray knew Amelia Opie, even writing a poem to her, which Eliza Bray included in her husband’s collected works, 1857. During her marriage to Stothard, Bray also visited Opie in Norwich, (MS, ii, p. 284).

104 Stothard believed that the public mind was ‘like a stringed instrument, which every indifferent performer can play upon, if he knows the means of putting it in tune: I hope […], I may be able to find them’ (M, p. 210).
Ultimately Edmund dies, leaving Elizabeth to make the best of her marriage to Holborne, and allowing Bray to explore her own anxieties concerning second marriages. Bray was troubled by the criticism she received after her marriage to Edward Bray, and critiques the way some people wish

those who have once been heavily afflicted to be thereby rendered miserable for life [...] like not to see them consoled or restored to peace and hope. [...] they] are never charitably disposed. I know this to be truth (MS, i, p. 29).

Through Elizabeth, Bray is also able to explore her own feelings after Stothard’s death, the ‘inward and cankering care’ that she must conceal

from the observations of my most affectionate husband [...] that calm but deep despondency which tells the tale of hope extinct, of blighted affection. [...] The way of duty was before me [...] but oh how dark and wretched did it look (DS, ii, pp. 239-41).

She confesses in her manuscript that recovery from Stothard’s death was slow and hard, and she constantly suffered from bouts of depression:

My thoughts [...] were constantly with the Dead; for ever dwelling on the past; and not on the happiest part of it. And many deeply melancholy reminiscences took such a hold upon my spirits that (still keeping the load within my bosom) I began to tremble for the consequences. [...] It was my imperative duty to my husband, my venerable mother, to myself, to all who care for me, and above all to my God, to combat this dreadful depression of spirit which was daily gaining such a hold on me (MS, ii, pp. 82-3).

She explains that it is only a sense of duty to God and her family that kept her from despair, but she also saw that her duty was now divided between what she owed to Stothard and what she owed to Edward Bray. Kempe omits this passage from the published volume, although Bray does not indicate her desire for its omission, perhaps wishing to justify her remarriage by illustrating just how deeply Stothard’s death had affected her.

Colonel Holborne might also be modelled on Edward Bray, as Holborne’s ‘calm and dignified affection, but not [...] passionate love’ (DS, ii, p. 34) would match Kempe’s assessment of Bray’s husband: ‘scholarly [...] with refined judgment [...] if less ardour’ (A, pp. 4- 5) than his wife. In ‘A Daughter’s Sacrifice’ Bray constructs a meeting between her male protagonists, Colonel Holborne and Edmund, the man to whom she was secretly
engaged, where Holborne is able to reassure Elizabeth that Edmund bears her no ill will for her desertion to marrying another: ‘he is satisfied - he sends his blessing’ (p. 276). Later, after his death, Elizabeth is given a letter from Edmund which tells her to ‘be at ease with regards to me’ (p. 281), allowing her to live happily with Holborne: ‘the only return adequate to his merit was to love him […] so that Duty and Love might go hand in hand’ (p. 283-4). In reality Bray did not have Stothard’s blessing, the ghosts were not laid, and if Kempe is to be believed, ‘[s]he constantly imagined that the husband of her youth, Charles Stothard, had been to visit her’ (A, p.35) a haunting which Kempe seems to attribute to guilt at ‘[h]er disobedience to her parents in her secret marriage to him’ (A, p.35).

After her second marriage, the style in Bray’s autobiographical manuscript changes, making it a work of two distinct parts; the former is anecdotal and romanticised, the latter more objective and businesslike, dealing mainly with her writing process, the publication of her works and her many visits to London. Bray uses less material relating to emotions as she is now dealing with the living, whose biographies need to be treated ‘with the same modesty we would observe when speaking of ourselves’ (MS, ii, p. 30). Moreover she is no longer either the romance heroine or the tragic heroine; after her second marriage her life becomes very much a daily routine of visiting and work. It is only when she relates her mother’s death in 1835 that she returns to the emotionally charged language appropriated in the initial sections of her manuscript. Fifteen years after the event she explains ‘I cannot bear to dwell on the scene’ (MS, ii, p. 319). Yet she describes in detail her emotional outpourings of grief and hysteria at her mother’s deathbed, the ‘piercing shriek [which] seemed to recall […]her mother’s] spirit at the instant it was about to depart from earth’ (MS, ii, p. 321). This tension between words and actions is typical of the contradictions apparent throughout her work. Just as she is obsessively driven to write her own story, she appears compelled to recreate her mother’s death, again suggesting that writing became a form of therapy, a way of controlling her grief. Furthermore, deathbed scenes were also
good ways of depicting Bray’s favourite themes, ‘feelings, the workings of the human heart; the passions, the errors the virtues and the follies of mankind’ (MS, ii, p.109).

Death was very much on Bray’s mind in the years prior to her embarking on her autobiographical manuscript. She began the work eight years after her mother’s death and the year after Southey died. Two years later, in 1846, her brother died, followed in 1847 by Charles Stothard’s younger brother, Henry.\(^{105}\) One by one the links with her past were breaking and even Edward Bray’s own health had begun to fail, creating an obsession with death that included her own. It is therefore not surprising that Bray favours the past, a time coloured by memories of happiness, above the present, and romanticises that period in her writing. She explains how

> [f]riends of a later period, however good or kind, can never bring with them the recollections of the sympathies of early days; they have not about them the charm that belongs to […] youth; a time on which memory delights to dwell with so many clear but vain regrets (MS, iii, p. 290).

The future looked bleak and writing her autobiography not only provided an aide memoire, but it also, like her fiction, allowed her to escape into the romance of a past which she saw as all too quickly slipping away.

**The Presentation of the Woman and the Writer: editing the text.**

Bray’s autobiographical writing, however, does more than merely reveal her wish to preserve and sentimentalise the past: it also holds the key to our interpretation of her as a woman and a writer. The image she wished to convey to her readers was one of modesty and compliance with the cultural codes of acceptable feminine behaviour. Virtue and modesty were qualities which she valorised and privileged in her writing, yet, as I established earlier, to adhere to this image often worked against her professional persona as a competent writer and serious antiquarian/historian. Even her many attempts at self-justification did little more that accentuate the fact that language itself worked against her, creating instead of a unified self-image, one that appears fragmented, inconsistent and

\(^{105}\) See p. 37.
contradictory. Kempe’s role as editor was also complicated by issues of gender and family loyalty as he struggled to unite the various perceptions of his great-aunt in a way that did justice to her as the family’s benefactor; to his own family, of which she was a member; and to himself as a member of the male establishment. Despite her efforts Bray’s literary legacy did not fully remain within her control.

In his thirty-five page introduction which replaces Bray’s own preface, Kempe presents her as a woman who would fit the model of femininity which Mary Wollstonecraft decries, one whose ‘overstretched sensibility naturally relaxes the other powers of the mind’. He describes Bray as having ‘defective logical judgment’ borne of poor education, a trait ‘popularly attributed to her sex’ (A, pp. 5-6 and 18), and intellectual deficiencies which, he claims, were ‘enhanced by a life of retirement’ (p. 18). In fact he capitalises on the remoteness of Bray’s situation in Devon, constantly returning to it in order to emphasise her nervous disposition, detachment from the modern world and ‘quaint, old-fashioned ideas and habits’ (p. 6), encapsulated by his exclamation, ‘what a picture of tranquil life in that snug parsonage is conjured up’ (A, p. 27). Furthermore he uses this ‘limited intercourse with the outside world’ (p. 4) to detach her from national politics and inscribe her more firmly into the feminine and domestic sphere, affirming that her only sympathies with the present were those connected with ‘family affections’ (p. 4).

Yet Bray herself would not have wholly disagreed with Kempe’s view of women’s lives as ostensibly domestic, believing marriage to be ‘the great concernment of a woman’s life; as her happiness and her sorrow must invariably be of a domestic nature’ (MS, ii, p. 222).

She would, however, have taken exception to his emphasis on her retirement. She visited London regularly, certainly while her mother was alive, and nearly always in conjunction with the publication of a new novel. Some, though not all, of these visits are cited in the published autobiography. Moreover the Brays had a regular flow of visitors

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107 David Kempe, pp. 72, 84, 87, 106 and 140. In 1835 she visited London as her mother was dying.
from the city to the vicarage, many of whom would be classed as both private and professional friends and acquaintances.\footnote{John Murray along with his family visited the Brays in Tavistock, as did Colburn and Mr. Jerdan, the editor of the \textit{Literary Gazette}. In 1836 Southey himself visited the vicarage after many years of literary correspondence. It is important to note that Kempe’s judgement appears to have been based on her life after Edward Bray’s death when she moved to Brompton and was already ‘approaching her 70\textsuperscript{th} year’ (p. 3). Prior to that he admits having only visited Bray once ‘at Tavistock when a child’ (p. 6).}

At the height of her literary career, and certainly before the death of Robert Southey, Bray’s autobiographical manuscript reveals a far greater interest in national politics than she would attest in her published writings. Much of the correspondence from Southey was of a political, as well as a literary nature and their shared Tory politics ensured that each had a sympathetic listener in the other. In letters dated 1831 and 1833 Southey writes enthusiastically on Catholic emancipation and the Irish question.

\begin{quote}
Our ministers will now soon reap what they have sown. […] Neither they, nor any other set of men can carry on the business of Government with such a Parliament […] O’Connell calculates upon an alliance offensive and defensive […] I am not sure that anything short of irremediable ruin would awaken this besotted nation to a sense of their danger in time to save us (MS, ii, p. 233)
\end{quote}

Bray stipulates that the letter must be omitted from the published autobiography to avoid any overlap with Warter’s 1856 collection of Southey’s letters, yet it was not included in that collection. Possibly her real reason was to detach herself from any association with politics. Kempe included only two sentences of political comment from Southey’s letter, dated February 1833, which read, ‘[a]t present we are in a transition state. The old constitution, under which England became great and glorious, has been destroyed’ (A, p.\footnote{Sir Davies Gilbert, ‘President of the Royal Society’ (A, p. 238), visited them in the summer of 1831, followed in 1833 by Sir Robert Harry Inglis, a politician, who spoke to the Brays ‘of public men and measures’ (A, p. 268).})
sentences which express the conservative principles espoused by both Edward Bray and the Kempe family.

A considerably longer version of this letter is included in David Kempe’s privately published biography of Bray. Yet even this edition excludes many of those letters from Southey which Bray inserted into her autobiographical manuscript, and which included comments on such controversial topics as Catholic emancipation, the state of the Protestant church and ‘the horrid system of slavery in the factories—which exceeds all horrors that were ever brought to light’ (MS, ii, p. 234). Sadly her replies are not in the archive. Bray also received frequent letters from her brother Alfred, a regular contributor to the Gentleman’s Magazine that kept her informed about the latest political and literary events. Thus, during her time in Tavistock she was politically aware and had opportunities to discuss current political issues, albeit in private letters to a friend; such opportunities may have been either less available or less desirable after her return to London in 1857. It appears that Kempe is trying hard not to present his great-aunt as in any way politically engaged; neither would she have wished for such an image of her to be publicised.\(^\text{109}\)

Another reason that Kempe gives for Bray’s literary defects is being ‘[s]urrounded by appreciative (not to say flattering friends)’ (p. 5), which included Southey. After his initial condemnation of The Protestant Southey never again castigated her work. Her brother also, when proof-reading Bray’s work, often left his comments suitably ambivalent:

I have reviewed, corrected and returned for the press the last pages of your romance White Hoods […] I can pronounce it amazing, moral, sensible and imaginative […] and I have no doubt that with proper management now will have decided success (MS, ii, p.80).

While on the surface his opinion appears favourable, it is unclear whether the ‘proper management’ he advises refers to the publication process or the style and content of the work. Neither is it clear whether he believed his sister capable of managing the process herself, or whether she would require outside assistance, which, considering her circle of

\(^{109}\) See p. 45.
acquaintances would be from men. Bray’s mentors and proof-readers were all educated men, but they were also either close family members or friends, thus subjecting her manuscripts to the scrutiny of only a tight domestic circle, many of whom did not wish to upset their benefactress. Her eldest nephew, John Edward, a clergyman, was often sent manuscripts to appraise and correct, and though on the surface he was very obsequious to the woman who supplied his family with the money for their Cambridge education, he is often dismissive, passing the real job of editing over to Edward Bray. In a very flattering letter to his aunt dated 11th April 1848 he writes of the Little Doctor: ‘I noticed here and there a few trifling faults of style, but was too much interested […] to note them. Get Mr. Bray to examine it with care’.¹¹⁰

With his rigorous attention to grammatical correctness and his legal training Edward Bray proved invaluable as both a critic and a proof-reader. She explains that ‘criticism was Mr. Bray’s peculiar forte’ (MS, ii, p. 54) and describes her extreme anxiety when the latest chapter of her work was due to be subjected to his critical comments in a daily after dinner ritual. Bray explains that her husband’s judgement was firm but fair, commending ‘with no less warmth and sincerity than he censured, he cheered, encouraged and advised’ (MS, ii, p. 54). In fact Edward Bray also appears to have played an active role in the creative process by suggesting ‘how [events] might be managed better; and often […] giving birth to a new train of ideas, or a very different order of circumstances […] which very greatly improved the whole’ (MS, ii, p. 55). It is interesting that Bray wrote very little successful fiction after his death in 1857, only two novellas, one of which, Roseteague, had been started in the 1840s, long before its publication in 1873. Yet John Arrow Kempe did not share his great-aunt’s belief in her husband’s role as either a severe, or even a useful critic, noting the ‘courteous and complacent criticism with which the pair habitually regarded one another’s productions’ (p. 28).

¹¹⁰ Letter to Bray, WSRO, box 4.
Kempe’s introduction reveals an inconsistency of judgement concerning Bray and her work. In many respects his style of presentation corresponds with her own: a comment followed by qualification. For example he accedes to her genius, then undercuts the compliment by adding that ‘[t]he faculty which was wanting in her, and for the want of which her genius fell short of first rank […] was that of selection and condensation’ (A, p. 5), later commenting on her ‘defective logical judgement’ (p. 5). What he does prove is that language itself works against his attempts to present her as both successful and modest. To show that she had no vanity, an undesirable quality in a woman, he describes her ‘simplicity of thought’ (p. 5), a sentiment that infantilises her, reducing her mental faculties to the level of a child. Similarly he explains how she ‘believed profoundly in herself and her works, and made no secret of it’, qualifying this statement with another reductive comment to counter any association with vanity: ‘there was a childlike openness and sweetness in her self confidence which attracted instead of repelled’ (p. 5). Here Kempe, like Bray, highlights how women were not considered modest if they advertised their intellect or professional success in the male world of publishing and commerce. To be deemed modest Bray could either underplay her achievements or become infantalised. Kempe even suggests that this child-like ‘sweetness’ is an attractive quality in Bray, and possibly, by association, in women per se.

Whether Bray is guilty of poor judgement, or the victim of a cultural definition that gives women little chance to explain themselves except in language that condemns them is open to debate, but there is evidence to suggest that socially prescribed gender roles were partly responsible for the problems she encountered in recording her life and controlling her image. It is also clear that Kempe encountered similar difficulties when attempting to negotiate a path between presenting Bray as a successful literary talent and a woman who conformed to socially acceptable standards of modest behaviour, one reason why he, like Bray, must constantly justify and qualify his statements. He did, however, have strong family reasons for not wishing to demean his great-aunt’s work or tarnish her reputation -
she provided financial support for the family, evidently at a high cost. In a letter to Kempe’s father dated February 18th 1850 Bray charges the family with ingratitude:

all the burden of Reggie going to Oxford in addition to your mother and Nelly is to be thrown onto us [...] I cannot help feeling that after all I have done in my life long among you it is an ungrateful return.  

Perhaps Kempe resented that dependence on someone, particularly a woman, whose work he did not truly value. Certainly throughout his introduction he represents Bray as a stereotypical female whose learning was questionable and whose ill health verged on hypochondria: ‘to the last hours of her life, her health - or rather her ill-health - had been her favourite hobby, […] But few people have been blessed with so sound a constitution’ (A, p. 30). These are particularly unsympathetic comments considering that there were sound medical reasons for Bray’s ill health, even without the psychological traumas she suffered before her marriage to Edward Bray. Bray’s brother had been dogged by similar infirmities, suggesting a constitutional weakness within the family, which Kempe omits to mention. Moreover Bray had suffered from rheumatic fever and chicken pox, the latter leaving her with recurrent eye problems, which grief, after the death of her husband and child, had exacerbated to the point of threatening her with blindness:

[distress] of mind speedily brought on ill health; and finally, such an affliction of the eyes that the worst consequences were apprehended [...] from the year 1821-1825 I was almost a constant sufferer, and debarred from any regular pursuit (WH, p. xi).

Even her pregnancy had been difficult, one reason why she had not accompanied her husband on his last visit to Devon in 1821. Anxiety may also have added to Bray’s health issues, particularly the illness which cut short her plans to enter into a stage career.

Considering her nervous disposition, such a career, which would have involved constant

111 Bray to Kempe, WSRO, box 4.
112 Bray’s brother contracted scarlet fever as a child and almost died; there is also a suggestion that money worries added to his ill health, (MS, I, pp. 206-212). References to her own ill-health abound in the early editions of The Borders, in her autobiographical manuscript and in a collection of fifteen letters written from Bray to an Edward Blore and a "Mr. Balmanno", August 5, 1852, held in the University of Princeton archive. <http://diglib.princeton.edu>.
exposure to the public gaze, seems an unlikely choice, yet it does fit in with her propensity for reinventing herself as different characters in her fiction. Behind the mask of character Bray had a certain freedom denied to women in their daily lives, and as a writer she could also explore different roles and portray a variety of emotions without having to appear in person before her public.

Gender and illness are, however, often closely associated, possibly reflecting the frustration felt by intelligent women at what Guinn Batten terms the ‘enforced impotence in public life’.113 Anne Stott and Marilyn Butler, the biographers of Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth respectively, note their subjects’ predisposition to recurring illnesses, usually headaches or stomach disorders, which Stott suggests are, in More’s case, associated with anxiety.114 In a letter to his future wife dated August 6th 1815, Stothard comments on her mood swings: ‘[w]ith all your gaiety, I never knew a mind more prone, at times, to melancholic train of thought than you’ (M, p. 180): this would have been written just after her failure to fulfil her ambitions for a stage career. Constant ill health supported society’s view of women as constitutionally weak, but illness had its uses as a way of avoiding unpleasant or unacceptable tasks, and there is little doubt that Bray used health issues tactically to avoid what she feared to either confront or undertake.

In an angry letter to her nephew John Edward dated February 18th 1850 she writes that his persistent requests for money to facilitate his brother’s Cambridge career would ‘worry her to an early grave’, and as ill health prevented her from dealing with the problem he must apply to Mr. Bray. Letitia Landon used the excuse of ill health in a similar way and ironically evidence of her excuses can be found in her letters to Bray. Landon managed to avoid visiting Tavistock by citing ill health or publishing difficulties as reasons for remaining in London. Since Bray encountered similar problems she does not appear to have viewed Landon’s explanations as excuses, often commiserating with Landon while

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113 Batten, pp. 2 and 8.
taking the opportunity to write about her own health issues. Moreover Landon offers Bray sympathy and advice: ‘I am most sorry to hear of your wretched health; you overwork yourself and then suffer’.\textsuperscript{115} Bray also uses ill health as her excuse for not pursuing a better education: ‘[h]ow I lament I did not better employ my youth. I might have learnt many languages; now health prevents me’ (A, 27). Whether she would have pursued a more studious life were it not for her persistent health problems is debateable, but Kempe’s constant citing of these illnesses without her accompanying explanations of their causes, directs readers to accept his judgment, not only of his godmother’s hypochondria, but also of Bray as a woman who conformed fully to the feminine characteristics of intellectual and physical weakness.

Eliza Bray understood the importance of public image to women writers whose choice of career opened the floodgates for public censure if they were in any way viewed as transgressive, a problem highlighted by Mary Poovey in her work on Wollstonecraft, Shelley, Burney and Austen. She therefore took great pains to avoid public censure.\textsuperscript{116} Even in private correspondence she inscribes herself as a stereotypical female by highlighting her lack of learning: ‘I never was so silly as to fancy that I could write anything devoid of faults’.\textsuperscript{117} In fact she traces the connections between gender and education back as far as the reign of Queen Anne, and in doing so reveals the problems encountered by educated women. Her comments that ‘it was not the fashion to be what was called a learned woman’, for anyone laying claim to this title would be ‘held in terror as a creature labouring under some sort of disgrace; she excited the jealousy of the men, the fear of the women and the dislike of both’ (MS, i, p. 66), echo the sentiments found in John Gregory’s \textit{A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters}:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{115} Landon to Bray, December 1831, WSRO, box 4.
\textsuperscript{116} Poovey, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{117} Letter to John Edward Kempe, transcribed into a notebook and undated, WSRO, box 1.
\end{flushright}
if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on women of great parts, and cultivated understanding. ¹¹⁸

Yet though Bray blames tradition for women’s lack of formal education, there is a clear tension between her wish to remain within that tradition and an equally strong desire to break away from it and succeed as a serious writer. Ultimately she turns this potential defect to her advantage in a way which echoes Lady Morgan, validating her work by critiquing the more scholarly masculine tradition: ‘but how often do we see that the chief distinction of a dull, cold, sterile book are great pains and correctness’, a critique made only in a private document.¹¹⁹ Yet Bray also followed that tradition, providing scholarly footnotes and detailed citations of any deviation from historical facts to support her aspirations as an erudite historian. However, by confining such information to the margins of her text she manages to negotiate a path between the masculine tradition of erudition and a more feminine, and in her view a more entertaining narrative.

Conclusion

Bray claims that in her autobiographical writing she will attempt to present a ‘judicious and faithful narrative’, a difficult task for someone who was careful to protect the reputation of her family as well as guarding the image of modest conformity that she had carefully constructed for herself. In the initial pages of her autobiographical manuscript she admits that any attempt to combine a frank representation of her own life with the modesty she wished to preserve would be difficult, and the tensions between these two positions are clearly visible in her writing.¹²⁰ Frustration and repressed anger also manifest themselves in her autobiographical manuscript when she feels restricted by social conventions, but there is little evidence of these feelings in the published volume, as here Bray’s public image is being manipulated by her male editor. It is only the angry

¹¹⁹ Letter to John Edward Kempe, transcribed into a notebook and undated, WSRO, box 1.
¹²⁰ Introduction, p. 9.
outpourings concerning the publication of *The Protestant* that Kempe includes because these support Bray’s position as a proper, not a political lady. Thus while truths about Bray’s own history might be concealed, truths about her society and its expectations are clearly being revealed.

One way in which Bray herself reveals the tension between personal and cultural expectations is through her desire to succeed as a serious cultural historian which she sees as conflicting with the image of herself as a modest woman. Yet despite her desire to conform, Bray’s presentation of herself is less conformist than the image presented by John Kempe in his introduction to the published autobiography. Kempe enlists the aid of social stereotypes to support what is clearly a criticism of his great-aunt’s work, alternating between praising the ‘unmistakeable fire of genius’ before reducing her to the realms of a second rank writer because of her want of ‘selection and condensation [...] and her] defective logical judgement’, making her, as Kempe himself admits, ‘typical of her sex’ (A, pp. 4, 5 and 6). In fact Kempe’s introduction draws on an impressive list of stereotypical feminine characteristics to describe Bray: her limited experience, her facility for over-dramatisation, her reliance on feelings and her sympathetic nature. She was, in his opinion, ‘too impulsive in her benevolence, too excitable in her sympathies, too credulous [...] and often] sadly imposed upon’ (A, p. 14), but he omits to add that the main perpetrator of this imposition was her own family. Moreover, for a woman who was so impulsive and careless with money she left £15,906 on her death in 1883, and Kempe even admits, despite his previous comments, that his godmother was a ‘good woman of business most careful and exact in her accounts’ (A, p. 30). Thus Kempe’s presentation of Bray, read in conjunction with her own autobiographical material, reveals much about the politics of gender in nineteenth-century England.

These contradictory positions are not, however, restricted to the written word. Opposite the title page in volume one of her collected novels and tales is inserted a portrait of Bray as a relatively young woman. Her hair is set in feminine ringlets which, though
controlled, fall loosely on either side of her face. Furthermore the cross about her neck hangs so low that it does not detract from the lace adornment which sets off her bare shoulders. What meets the eye is a woman who appears young and feminine; she wears no bonnet, and there is laughter about the eyes. Yet this portrait illustrates how each male member of Bray’s family had a very particular view of the woman, a view on which none could agree. Mr. Bray was annoyed because he felt it was an inexact copy of the original which would affront his sense of correctness.\textsuperscript{121} The Kempes, on the other hand, felt it lacked feminine softness, giving Bray’s face ‘a hard angular Scottish character,’ (MS, iii, p. 241), thus highlighting their desire to inscribe her into a conventional model of soft, compassionate womanhood, which this portrait failed, in their view, to fully capture. Thus each response reveals as much about the character and ideology of the speaker as it does about the woman herself.

Moreover although Bray’s autobiographical manuscript goes some way to providing evidence of her own reflections and fears, her public voice was, like her public image, controlled by men: her husband, brother and nephews who acted as her initial critics, advisors, proof-readers, and in John Kempe’s case the editor of her final publications. This portrait therefore becomes a visual representation of the conflicting positions which comprised her life as not only a middle-class woman, but a clergyman’s wife and a professional author. Yet this image captures all the contradictions of Bray’s personality, her romantic and frivolous nature which was only partially controlled by the constraints of society and religion, but also the firmness of a women who had strong opinions and a belief in her ability to achieve independence through literary success.\textsuperscript{122} Thus Bray’s character appears complex and contradictory as she both conforms to and rebels against a social structure which to some degree both defines and confines her; the very structure which, Owenson notes with ironic humour in the introduction to \textit{France}, transforms a

\textsuperscript{121} MS, iii, pp. 240-1.
\textsuperscript{122} Bray used her writing to support herself and her child after Stothard’s death as her parents had many financial commitments, (MS, i, pp.342-9); and n. 37.
woman into ‘not a good writer of novels, but a *useful friend, a faithful wife, a tender mother*, and a respectable and happy *mistress of a family*’ (p. viii). John Kempe would probably agree with the literal interpretation of Owenson’s words as he was keen to stress the limitations of Bray’s writing; Bray wanted to achieve both positions.

By recording her own life obsessively throughout her works Bray was securing her own memorial, but Bray also saw her work as a way of memorialising the past in general, and in particular the history of her own county and country. This obsession with her own life, and in particular her own past, however, does not end with her autobiographical writing, but permeates her travel writing and her fiction, which I examine in the ensuing chapters.
Chapter Two.

Domesticating Travels in France: Bray's Early Travel Writing.

Family Matters.

After considering Bray's autobiographical writing it is perhaps appropriate to begin a major study of her work with an examination of her first publication, a piece of travel writing, Letters Written During a Tour Through Normandy, Brittany and Other Parts of France, in 1818: Including Local and Historical Descriptions; with Remarks on the Manners and Character of the People, written during her journey to the continent with Charles Stothard four months after their marriage. The work was published by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown in 1820 and comprises thirty-two letters originally sent to Ann Kempe, Bray’s mother, from the various places the couple visited during their travels through France. Every page is clearly marked with the name of the location that is being described, and Bray’s text is accompanied by twenty-three illustrations, six of which are aquatints, all executed by Stothard, except plate two, ‘A Singular Column in the Church of Notre dame D’Eu’, which is Bray’s work.123

Here, as elsewhere in her writing, Bray mixes observation with cultural comment, history and autobiography, for throughout her work her stance on cultural conservation, loyalty to crown, country and social behaviour are all clearly presented within a domestic framework. Despite its apparent focus on northern France, home, as both nation and domestic space, paradoxically becomes a central concept in the text, a concept which is also central to her historical romances.124 The reasons why Bray makes her own country and her family central aspects of her travel writing are fundamental to any exploration of her work. Therefore by examining her works chronologically it is possible to explore how she develops these themes throughout her writing.

123 Bray, Autobiography, p. 135.
124 See Chapter 4, p. 179, for a discussion of the home in relation to her local romances.
As a woman who was anxious about her public image Bray needed to adopt strategies which would allow her the freedom to publish her ideas and opinions without being viewed as in any way transgressive. She was averse to the idea of political women, and to express her opinions on national issues, either those of her own nation or the nation she is visiting, might give her the reputation of a political lady, a reputation which she publicly decried.\textsuperscript{125} By the time Bray came to publish her first work history had expanded its boundaries to encompass ‘the history of literature, of the arts and sciences, of manners and customs, even of opinion and sentiment. [...] the experiences of women as well as of men’, all of which, with the exception of science, are explored and discussed in the letters which Bray regularly sent home during her first journey abroad.\textsuperscript{126} Bray was writing letters about France, but she was also writing history, and history is a subject that unites Bray’s work.

What Bray published, however, were family letters, but more importantly they were letters written to another woman, one that also happened to be her mother. Gender is fundamental here, because Bray exploited the close connections between herself and her mother to produce a public document which would not contravene the image of modesty she desired to create. As Mary Poovey argues, ‘respectable women [...] wrote for their own or their friend’s amusement [...] faintly or frankly disreputable women [...] published for profit’.\textsuperscript{127} Thus Bray could establish her credentials as a loyal daughter, wife and subject of England (for she only refers to England, never Britain) rather than a woman seeking commercial success.

It is Bray’s specific targeting of domestic issues in her \textit{Letters} that makes them different from the travel writings of her contemporaries. She explains that her journey was undertaken as a belated honeymoon, even though Stothard was also fulfilling a more public role, a commission to record French material culture which included sketching the Bayeux

\textsuperscript{125} See Chapter 1, p. 45 and Chapter 4, p. 177.
\textsuperscript{127} Poovey, p. 36.
Tapestry. Furthermore, to emphasise her role as a wife, Bray nearly always presents herself and her husband as a couple enjoying the sights and sounds of each new place, and in turn passing their experiences on to Bray’s mother who, despite her physical absence, appears ever present in the text. Thus Bray re-creates her family unit in France, even drawing into this group some of the people she meets.

Bray’s eagerness to create sociable groups can be read in terms of what Salber Phillips names the eighteenth-century’s ‘discourse of the social’ which is characterised by a belief that ‘human beings are naturally led by their passions to form communities, and [...] the way to understand society is to picture it as a place shaped by experiencing and sociable minds’. 128 Throughout this work Bray presents herself as a sociable woman who is keen to interact with the inhabitants of each town, and thus elicit information about Norman and Breton culture, information which she shares first with her mother, and then with her readers. Moreover Bray is not only keen to learn, but also to debate aspects of cultural difference. The ease with which she interacts with those she meets, and her enthusiasm to communicate what knowledge she has gained to her readers is very different from the aloofness displayed by many of her contemporaries.

In her Letters from Italy (1876) Anna Riggs Miller generally maintains an aloof distance between herself and the Italian people. She writes that ‘the porters tried to amuse us by their conversation’, but indicates from her tone, and the verb tried, that they did not succeed. 129 Thomas Frognal Dibdin’s work, published after his tour of France and Germany in 1818, shows a greater inclination to communicate with the French people, but despite displaying a working knowledge of the language by recording his conversations in French, he generally restricts his interactions to business matters or academic subjects. Although Dibdin ‘sat down and conversed’ with the printer’s wife this conversation is not recorded, probably because the conversation would not be of interest to his addressee, a

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129 Anna Riggs Miller, Letters from Italy, describing the manners, customs, antiquities, paintings: &c. of that country, in the years MDCCCLXX and MDCCCLXXI, to a friend residing in France, by an English woman, 3 vols. (London: Dilly, 1776), p. 68.
fellow academic. Bray on the other hand is eager to interact with everyone. After disembarking in Dieppe she approaches some of the older women she sees, asking them their age, and using them, even at this early stage, to make favourable comparisons with England: ‘I never saw such very miserable decrepit-looking women in any part of England’ (p. 6). Later she extracts information on marriage from the concierge at Eu, a conversation which I examine later for its gender implications. Yet even in this exchange Bray exhibits that strong sense of national pride often found in English travelogues. Nowhere in this work is that national pride ever shaken.

One reason why the home might have played such an important role in Bray’s writing was her inexperience as a traveller, a fact which is apparent throughout this text. She was twenty-eight when she married, and though she had travelled from home she had never done so without the companionship of her mother. These letters reflect Bray's slow readjustment from the status of daughter to that of wife. They also give centrality to women, both in the text itself and in its journey from private ownership to public property. Although Bray explains that ‘two literary men’ (A, p. 134) saw the potential in these letters as documents of public interest, it was her mother who refused to separate the letters for inclusion in the Gentleman's Magazine. Ann Kempe felt that they would be more valuable if published as a complete collection, and as a result Charles Stothard and Alfred Kempe oversaw the transference of this private correspondence into public property. Thus Bray ventured into the public arena backed by the male authority of family members and friends. Just as she detaches herself from the professional aspects of Stothard's work as a monumental artist, so she effects the same detachment from her own move into the professional sphere by the use of passive voice, presenting herself as an acquiescent subject acted upon by others: ‘the plan was decided upon, and much to my surprise—for I had never contemplated such an issue— I was about to become an author’ (A, p. 135).

Family is a distinctive feature of this work, for not only were family members closely involved in preparing the work for publication, Bray’s marital status is clearly
marked on the title page. She appears not as Anna Eliza Stothard, but as Mrs. Charles Stothard. This strategy might lend her respectability but would also lend the work a degree of commercial viability, as Stothard was a well-respected historical draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries, whereas Bray was an unknown author. When Bray’s brother, Alfred, suggested a collaborative exercise he may have been influenced by the already established practice of artists accompanying young male travellers on the Grand Tour to provide visual material which would support and enhance their patrons' texts, as E. S. Shaffer notes in his essay on William Beckford.\footnote{E. S. Shaffer, ‘To Remind us of China- William Beckford, Mental Traveller on the Grand Tour. The Construction of Significant Landscape’, in Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon ed., \textit{Transports: Travel, Pleasure, and Imaginative Geography, 1600 –1830, Studies in British Art 3} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 207-242, (p. 210).} The artist's role was much like that of a modern photographer whose pictures both supported and enhanced the text. He may, however, have seen the advantage in utilising Stothard’s growing reputation, for significantly, although Bray produced sketches herself during this tour she states that she would ‘only consent to the admission of one of mine in the collection’ (A, p. 135). Although her phraseology suggests that others may have encouraged her to submit more, her refusal to do so could also be read as a clever marketing strategy rather than merely a modest acceptance of her husband's superior talent. Both readings illustrate a great deal about Bray’s work and her career.

Bray was not unaware of what sold books, although she claims to follow her own inclinations rather than current trends, particularly in the field of historical fiction.\footnote{See Chapter 3, p. 125.} But, as a study of her later writings will show, she constantly strove to maintain an image of modesty, which might be achieved in this instance by concealing herself behind her husband’s identity. It was not uncommon for women travel writers to collaborate with their husbands or use citations from authoritative male texts to support their publications. Mary Shelley and Lady Morgan used both these strategies, but their material was paratextual not visual.
In her autobiographical writing Bray gives a detailed account of her text's problematic journey from its commencement to its publication, citing all the difficulties she encountered and which, by association, might be encountered by any aspiring author when negotiating the politics of publishing houses, which she presents as being controlled by nepotism and the vagaries of public demand. The events leading up to the eventual publication of *Letters* were, in her view, difficult and traumatic; she even feared at one point that the volume would never appear in print. Initially Murray promised to publish the work, and then reneged on his promise because of a conflict of interest with Dawson Turner. According to Bray, Murray refused Turner’s work because the publishing house did not accept works of an ‘architectural nature [...] and as he was not going to publish that gentleman's, he did not like to publish mine’ (*A*, p. 148). Murray was caught between dishonouring his promise to Stothard and offending his friend Turner, who was ironically also a close friend of Stothard's. Murray appeared uncomfortable with the business, and consequently kept Bray in a ‘painful state of suspense’ (*A*, p. 148) for some weeks. Throughout all this she was accompanied and supported by her husband, and she significantly uses the pronoun ‘we’ when describing the events which followed: ‘we next turned our thoughts to Longmans [...] we were to have half the profits’ (*A*, pp. 149 and 151).

The publication difficulties surrounding Bray’s *Letters* illustrate her anxieties about venturing into the public sphere to publish and market her work. She voices her dislike of those publishing houses, like Henry Colburn's, who aggressively market their product, turning instead to Mr. Rees from Longman, whom she thought of as a ‘warm hearted man’ (MS, ii, p. 62), a father figure, whose firm, she explains, ‘conducted their business in the old-fashioned quiet way’ (*A*, p. 150). These comments reveal a tension between her leaning towards the safety of Longman’s familiar and unthreatening marketing strategies and Colburn’s more aggressive approach, which she nonetheless believed was more ‘suited to the bustle and the rush for popularity of modern times’ (*A*, p. 150). Moreover,
throughout these early dealings with the commercial world Bray never portrays herself alone; she is always part of a family unit or in the company of her husband, a representation which supports her image of domestic conformity.

Bray had a nervous disposition, and thus her lack of confidence when embarking on a new career as a writer is perhaps understandable, but this anxiety about the reception of her work and her public image is one that persists throughout her long literary career. Even her emphasis on Mr. Rees' admiration for Stothard's engravings might be just another strategy to detach herself from commercial matters and give centrality to her domestic role as a loyal wife. Yet Stothard’s contribution to these letters becomes for Bray both a blessing and a curse. Although she uses Rees’ admiration for her husband’s drawings to justify their choice of publisher, his insistence on including some engravings as aquatints had, according to Bray, made the work prohibitively costly, and had consequently affected sales. She also bemoans the fact that publication had to be delayed until the markets had stabilised following the trial of Queen Caroline. There is a certain irony in the fact that a woman of dubious virtue could so eclipse the efforts of one striving to conform.

France and the Development of Travel Writing as a Genre During the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.

In this section I explore the development of travel writing as a genre, if during this period travel can indeed lay claim to a generic categorisation, though restricting my study to writing which focuses on continental Europe, in particular France, the subject of Bray's first publication. Although Bray’s journey was partly driven by Stothard’s business concerns, they were also tourists, and tourism was generally becoming a growth industry during the early nineteenth century. Until the second half of the eighteenth century the touring of continental Europe had been included in the education programme for young male aristocrats, a journey known as the Grand Tour, but by 1750 there was a change in

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132 See Chapter 1, p. 51, 67 and 69-70.
133 Autobiography, p. 151.
134 Salber Phillips argues against the assumption of ‘the unity and fixity of genres,’ p. 20.
travel practices, signalled, Jeanne Moskal argues, by the publication of William Lucas's
guidebook, *Five Weeks Tour to Paris, Versailles, and Marli* (1750). Lucas’s work
formalised ‘an abbreviated Grand Tour for the middle classes’, a trend facilitated by the
wealth from commercial enterprise. For although the French Revolution and subsequent
Napoleonic wars had caused a reduction in European travel, after Britain’s victory over
Napoleon in 1815 the flow of British tourists to Europe resumed and intensified. Not only
had the war ceased, but Britons also wanted to visit the site of Wellington's great victory
and pay homage to their national hero. Sir Walter Scott visited Waterloo in 1818, as did the
Stothards during their 1819 tour of Belgium. Nigel Leask notes that it was a sense of
national pride as well as curiosity that started to tempt British travellers to venture outside
their native country. Isabelle and Robert Tombs argue that national identity was partly
formed ‘through comparing one’s own with foreign ways’, although there is something
paradoxical in the fact that in order to strengthen their sense of nationhood travellers
needed to leave their own country.

As travelling increased, however, travel works needed to include a very different
kind of information. They were now not merely the means whereby travellers could share
their experiences with those who were unable or unwilling to leave home, they could also
provide practical information for prospective travellers, advising on the best methods of
transport, the safest routes, the most interesting sites to visit and the most comfortable and
affordable accommodation. Bray’s work reflects these changes, providing clear
information to inform and entertain her mother in England, information which might also

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135 Black, p. 318.
136 Moskal, p. 175; and Salber Philips, p. 16.
137 Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: 'From an
138 Isabelle and Robert Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy: The French and British from the Sun
139 These early travel guides were developed by Murray into the handbooks that marked
another shift in the focus of travel writing after 1836; see p. 10. Tombs and Tombs state
that 5 per cent of the population might have journeyed abroad, mostly to or through France
during the late eighteenth century. Some historians state that travellers increased from
12,000 to 40,000, but Tombs and Tombs treat these statistics with some caution (p. 64).
be useful to a prospective traveller. In addition her comments on the standard of transport and hostelry she encounters on her journey show the beginnings of what would eventually develop into a handbook for travellers.

France had always been a popular destination for British tourists, not least because cross-Channel ferries sailed to the French ports of Calais, Boulogne and Dieppe, but location played a crucial role in determining both the content and the political bias of travel works. Paris, along with Florence and Rome, was one of the major destinations for aristocratic males embarking on the Grand Tour which was designed to enhance their cultural education. According to Tombs, Paris was ‘the arbiter of taste […] and the British wanted to acquire Parisian gloss’. 140 Many women travellers wrote about the culture and society to be enjoyed in the French capital. Lady Blessington’s *Idler in France* (1841) celebrates her associations with the Parisian literary and social elite. Parisian society also furnished writers, both male and female, with an opportunity to discuss French politics, in particular the Revolution. 141 Yet Paris attracted a particular kind of traveller, and Bray is critical of those who only travel to the European capitals to be immersed in the culture of the social elite, building their judgement of a country only on those cities which have international intercourse. 142 Parisian society, she states, did not reflect ‘the manners and mode of living of the French nation at large’ (p. 2). Those travelling as she did to Brittany, an area far removed from the influence of international commerce, would encounter a very different cultural climate and Bray believed that ‘[t]o form an impartial judgement of any country, we must view the people in the provinces, […] unconnected by a constant and immediate intercourse with England and other nations’ (p. 2).

140 Tombs, p. 74.
141 Helen Maria Williams and Mary Wollstonecraft, for example.
142 Ann Radcliffe notes that the commercial centres of Holland were also greatly influenced by the English, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, Through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return Down the Rhine: to which are Added Observations During a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland, 2nd ed.*, 2 vols. (London: Robinson, 1795). Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale Group <http://galenet.galegroup.com>[accessed 20 May 2008], p. 11.
Despite these locational and political differences, the French Revolution became a fundamental and unifying feature of British travel writers’ responses to France. Helen Maria Williams and Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, resided in France and provided eye-witness accounts and political commentary on the Revolution, although neither espoused the conservative ideology adopted by Bray. Most writers, however, despite their political persuasion, responded negatively to the destruction wrought by the Revolution and its aftermath. Mary Shelley, during her travels down the eastern side of France, presents an evocative account of the devastation wrought by Napoleon's march on Russia, while Bray describes the damage to French material culture.

The sense of English superiority, however, pervades Bray’s narrative. She constantly draws reader’s attention to the superiority of all things English, and the inferiority of French food, architecture, art, theatre, morality, even marriages, and she was certainly not alone in her view, given the xenophobic tendencies of British travel writing noted by Jeremy Black.143 Benjamin Hobhouse travelled in France during the 1780s and his observations are recorded in letters to his father. Although these were letters home, there was a distinct difference between Hobhouse's creation of an elite group of privileged males and Bray's more domestic coterie of women. Hobhouse’s work reflects his belief in English superiority, as well as perhaps his own male privilege. There is very little about France that he approved of, disliking French roads, buildings and even the French style of performing tragedy. They “‘tear a passion to rags and tatters they out Herod Herod”’(p. 13), he claims, selecting the same quotation from Hamlet as Bray, to illustrate his almost identical point. Bray took this criticism even further, however, using the opportunity to shower praise on her two idols, Kemble and Siddons. Hobhouse’s only concession to the superior nature of French material culture was a confessed admiration for the cathedral at

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Amiens, probably because he believed it was constructed by the English, a point that has been strongly contested by a French antiquarian.  

Linda Colley argues that the British people's belief in their superiority had its roots in religion. British Protestants ‘seem to have believed that, under God, they were peculiarly free and peculiarly prosperous’. Not everyone, however, saw the distinction between France and England as so clearly oppositional. Monsieur Licquet, chief librarian to the public Library at Rouen, notes that because of the Norman Conquest

[the Englishman who travels in Normandy, meets at every step, with reminiscences of his kings, his ancestors, his institutions, and his customs, [...] everything seems to tell him that, in former times, HERE was his country.]

Bray too affirms the interrelatedness of French and English history in her preface to Joan of Arc, but in her travel work she is quite definite about her preferences.

I have seen much to interest the observer, both of art, character and national peculiarity; and I return with a sincere and augmented love of my own country, the real value of which is best appreciated by a residence abroad. [...] I cannot describe the delight I feel in being once more in my own land, and from henceforth I will set down in my prayers, to thank God that I was born in England (p. 322).

Travel may broaden the horizons, but for Bray the main lesson learned from travelling abroad was a greater appreciation of her own nation. She asserts her conviction that English government and culture is in every way superior to those of France. Bray's representation of herself as a loyal subject was one way in which she tried to frame her work within a conventional structure. Another was her emphasis on domestic details

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145 Colley, p. 32.
146 Dibdin, p. xviii.
147 Eliza Bray, Joan of Arc (London: Griffith and Farran, 1874), p. v.
148 Bray explicitly describes herself as a loyal subject in her autobiographical manuscript, Introduction, p. 8.
facilitated by the shift in travel patterns which had begun to evolve before the French Revolution.

**Gender and Travel Writing.**

I begin this section with a brief examination of the epistolary form. Letter writing was arguably at its height during the eighteenth century and, as Brian Dolan observes, was ‘an essential part of a well-born education’ for both men and women. But Dena Goodman argues that for women, letter writing was ‘not simply a form of recreation or a second-best alternative to public writing: it was a crucial step in developing a consciousness of themselves as gendered subjects’. Moreover, Angela Keane notes how the salonnière culture, hosted by women, had a major influence on the development of letter writing, for ‘correspondence itself was being explicitly politicised in England’. But letter writing was also a natural way for travellers to communicate with their friends and family, and by writing letters home women were offered ‘a rare opportunity [...] to articulate views on the world around them and their responses to it’, while still inscribing themselves within a feminine sphere. Bray is quite clear that hers were family letters addressed to her mother, but by categorising these as family letters and revealing the gender of her recipient, she is also imposing restrictions on her subject matter. Lady Miller reveals neither the gender nor the kinship bond between herself and her recipient, although Dolan identifies it as her mother, thereby liberating her work from any such restriction. Mary Shelley and Helen Maria Williams adopt a similar strategy of concealment to free their publications from reader’s expectations as to what might constitute suitable subject matter for men and women to either read or write.

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151 Dolan, p. 12; and Angela Keane, p. 53.
152 Dolan, p. 5.
Generally male writers tended to communicate with other men, or perhaps a female patron, as is the case with the anonymous male traveller whose work is discussed later.\textsuperscript{153} Aristocratic male writers such as Lord Russell and Hobhouse directed their letters to their respective fathers, not mothers, and many published letters to male friends. These men had much in common besides their family connections: political interests, a similar education and their participation in the Grand Tour, experiences which their mothers were unlikely to have shared. Thomas Frognall Dibdin published his letters to a fellow clergyman, Reverend John Lodge, who is clearly identified and given his full academic credentials, Fellow of Magdelen College and Librarian to the University of Cambridge. Dibdin is thus identifying Lodge as a fellow academic and connoisseur with whom he can share his bibliographical and antiquarian interests.

Thus Dolan argues for a specifically gendered form of travel writing, ascribing subjects such as ‘[c]onquest, connoisseurship and domestication of the wild’ to male travelogues, topics which, with the exception of connoisseurship, have close connections with British imperialism and its mission to conquer and civilise. Women, on the other hand, write about the ‘more diverse experiences concerned with individual growth, independence and health’ are the subjects of women’s travel works.\textsuperscript{154} Bray’s writings would fit Dolan’s criteria as she was eager to dissociate herself from any charge of political involvement by aligning herself with subjects that would provide suitable reading material for her mother: the home as a domestic space, art, history and morals. Yet it was a woman, Lady Miller, that Dolan identifies as producing a seminal text which defined the progress of travel writing during the late eighteenth century. It offered a rare difference from what other travel writers provided, […] a female perspective. In fact it was her gender that at times urged later, male, commentators to draw out specific distinctions between their work and hers.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{153} See p. 91.  
\textsuperscript{154} Dolan, p. 11.  
\textsuperscript{155} Dolan, p. 191.
When exploring late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travel writing there is a significant dearth of published travel works by women, particularly striking since, as Brian Dolan notes, women travellers were not uncommon. Drawing on a wealth of personal journals, letters and diaries, Dolan suggests that that many wealthy women saw continental travel as a way to broaden their minds and escape the rigours of English society. Yet he also explains that for those women who wished to be viewed as modest and virtuous, the association of foreign travel with too much personal freedom, particularly sexual freedom, made journey’s abroad problematic. Jeanne Moskal develops this point, arguing that there was in England an ‘inherited cultural tradition that associates travel with sexual freedom’. Even Hannah More warned of the impropriety of French ways, calling the French ‘infidels’ whose aim is to ‘destroy the principles of Christianity’ in Britain.

It was, however, not just women whose character might be corrupted by the appropriation of unacceptable ‘foreign’ ways. Benjamin Colbert in his work on nineteenth-century travel writing avers that nineteenth-century moralists were anxious that middle-class morality might be corrupted by foreign manners and habits and thereby ‘enervate the British national character by weakening domestic and commercial foundations’. The superior moral position of Protestant Britain had to be maintained and defined, as Linda Colley argues, against France, ‘the world’s foremost Catholic power [...] and] the French as they imagined them to be, superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree’.

Isabelle and Robert Tombs argue that British visitors found French women ‘alluringly (and/or shockingly) bold. Some were titillated, others repelled, by the

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156 Dolan, p. 48.
157 See Moskal, p. 174.
158 More, Strictures, i, p. 319
160 Colley, p. 5. This point is confirmed by David Pownall, Nationhood and Identity: The British State since 1800 (London: I. B. Taurus, 2002), pp. 9-11.
For single women such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams who were co-habiting with men, French culture appeared freer and less judgemental than Britain with its rigid social mores. But Bray, who neither espoused their unconventional lifestyle nor their radical politics, found no difficulty in subscribing to the definitions of national stereotypes. In Letter VI she writes a very opinionated critique of Parisian women, basing her comments on what would appear to be a mixture of observation and national prejudice:

a coquette from birth: all she does is with a design to please you and to attract your notice; [...] nor have they the example of strict morality and reserve to curb the natural vivacity of character. It may be presumed that this neglect of decorum in their manners leads to many vices and much evil; for the mind gradually loses a sense and perception of delicacy and virtuous conduct, when it is habitually accustomed to levity; and we soon cease to respect that woman who forgets to respect herself (p. 77).

Bray always takes the high moral ground when judging French customs and manners, possibly because she is writing to a likeminded individual, her mother, from whom she learned her own moral codes. She may also wish to allay any fears her mother might have of her daughter becoming corrupted by French morality. As I demonstrate throughout this study, Bray fervently believed that social behaviour should be built on Christian principles, which she viewed as intrinsically linked to Anglicanism and English national character.

Morality, however, was not the only issue that might have inhibited those women who wished to travel on the continent and later publish their writing, for, as Jacqueline Labbe argues, travel writing had specifically male narrative conventions: ‘facts, transparent writing and accurate and dispassionate observation’. Yet the eighteenth century brought changes to both the content and style of these works. By the end of the eighteenth century the contents of travel works had started to become more sociological, including studies of the lives and customs of ordinary people, subjects that were advantageous to women such as Bray who wished to inscribe their work within the realms of female experience. Labbe

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161 Tombs, p. 100.
also observes that travel works were ‘increasingly beginning to privilege authorial “egotism” and entertaining reflections’, the kind of anecdotal features which Bray regularly adopted in her own writing. Thus by 1800 there a growing tradition of published female travel writers, including Hester Piozzi, Anna Riggs Miller, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams and Ann Radcliffe, an author Bray both read and admired. However, although these changes benefited women who wished to publish accounts of their travels, they appear to have been universally welcomed by both women and men.¹⁶³

An anonymous male author publishing *Travels into France and Italy in a series of letters to a lady* in 1771 also criticises travel works which focus only on ‘minute descriptions of towns, buildings, histories of reliques etc.’ (p. 3), and travellers who, as Piozzi notes, ‘run from town to town with no impression made but on their bones’.¹⁶⁴

Yet it was not only content that gendered travel writing, but also style. Jacqueline Labbe argues that the very different education assigned to men and women produced distinctly different writing styles.¹⁶⁵ She argues that women were educated to attend to detail, and therefore associate themselves with the immediate scene rather than assuming a distant position from which to view what she terms ‘the prospect’, a generalised overview which reflects men's ability ‘to climb, to organise, to see the relations between objects […] while disregarding the details themselves’. This ability, Labbe notes, ‘functioned as an indicator of one's potential to be admitted to an exclusive club’.¹⁶⁶ The anonymous male traveller in France, discussed above, would fit Labbe's view of male vision as he provides a general, rather than specific account of the dress and manners of Norman peasants: ‘each has a peculiar habit, some very graceful and fine’ (p. 18). Lady Miller, on the other hand,
has, like Bray, a keen eye for detail evidenced in her descriptions of the king's palace at Turin:

The lustres that hang from the ceiling are of rock crystal. I measured one of the ornaments which was within my reach [...], it was shaped like a pear; was it squared, it would measure a cube five inches; but they have, by their scalloping and crinkling, spoiled the rock crystal as much as possible. (i, p. 98-99).

Dolan sees Miller's work as a ‘testimony to her commitment to the principles of particularisation and accuracy’. Bray's work, though less empirical than Miller's, is no less detailed. Her descriptions resemble paintings or scenes from a play, focusing on colour and movement. There is life and energy in Bray’s vivid depictions of the women from Dieppe, whose high caps fly

out on each side, towards the back of the head, [...] resembling in form the tail of a peacock when it is spread: these caps are white, and neatly plaited. Their petticoats are so short that they scarcely reach below the knee. Blue stockings with a red skirt or jacket, seems their favourite dress (p. 6).

While art formed the main focus of Lady Miller’s work, it was a very different kind of art. Miller's editor, probably her husband, avers that it is the eye of a critic, not a painter that is reflected in her writing. The text, he claims, could be used as a guide to buying artwork, providing by its ‘truthfulness’ a useful counter to art catalogues where criticism is ‘oftimes fortuitous, frequently false, and [...] calculated by the proprietor to promote the sale of such pictures of indifferent merit’ (p. ix). While Miller's attention to detail supports her role as a critic, Bray's reflects her interest in painting itself, and although these two women share an attention to detail, there is a commercial dimension to Miller's work which distances it from the private, domestic domain into which Bray inscribes her writing. Even Bray's interest in history, an enthusiasm which dominates her work, gives centrality to the history of those women whose lives were intrinsically linked with the places she

167 Dolan, p. 192.
168 David Kempe writes in his biography of Bray that ‘painting was one of the four arts to which she had immediately been attracted and had herself attempted’, p. 33.
visits and whose stories, apart from Joan of Arc, are pushed to the margins of historical record, women such as the Duchess Anne of Bretagne and the Countess de Montfort.

**Bray, Miller and Dibdin.**

As Lady Miller and Eliza Bray are both writing to their respective mothers it is perhaps appropriate to draw some initial comparisons between the work of these two women. Had Miller revealed the identity of her addressee, her work would have been more securely inscribed within the family and domestic space.\(^{169}\) However, not only does Miller conceal her mother’s identity, whereas Bray does not, but also these two women respond very differently to their respective parents. This was Bray's first journey abroad, a newly married woman who was for the first time separated from her mother, and consequently there is an innocence and insecurity about Bray's work which is not found in Miller's. Bray craves constant connections with her home. Letter IV begins, 'I am much surprised at not finding a letter from you, as I expected. [...] If I am disappointed again to-morrow, your silence will occasion me great anxiety' (p. 43). In Letter VII she spends almost a whole paragraph chastising her mother for the anxiety this delay in communication has caused:

> in another country so far removed from home, with no [...] means of hearing from my family except by post, how serious, how painful is the suspense of repeated disappointment. [...] Had you been prevented from writing, I thought my brother surely would have sent me a letter (p. 74).

Miller on the other hand presents the necessity of writing to her mother as more of an inconvenience: ‘I fear you have been uneasy in not hearing from us’ (i, p. 57), the anxiety lying more with the parent than the child. Miller even gives the impression that she would not have written at all had her mother not required it of her: ‘[y]ou took care at the moment of our separation to bind me doubly by friendship and honour, [...] be assured I hold myself obliged to fulfil my engagement’ (i, p. 2). In contrast Bray is ‘anxious to redeem the pledge I gave on parting from you’ (p. 1), highlighting the close bond between mother and daughter. By Letter XV, however, Bray has become more like Miller, making excuses for

\(^{169}\) Dolan, p. 190.
her tardy responses: ‘I am extremely glad to hear my communications afford you some little amusement, but I think you are very unreasonable to expect I should write oftener (p. 154). The difference between the passive reader and the active traveller is emphasised here, as Bray's mother waits patiently at home for news, but these remarks might also highlight Bray's growing confidence with her new status as both a married woman and a traveller enjoying some new found freedom away from home. Although it was not unusual for women travel writers to use family connections as a way of ratifying their work, for example Williams’s use of the du Fosse family, which I discuss later, Bray not only inscribes her work within a domestic context, but she also creates surrogate family situations as she travels.

Similar differences occur when examining these two women’s attitudes to male authority. Miller does not, like Bray, rely on male authority to substantiate her opinions; instead she uses authoritative texts such as those of Jérôme - Lefrançois de Lalande and J. G. Keysler as springboards from which she can ratify her own judgements. She disagrees, for instance, with Keysler's views on accommodation, stating, ‘one would think old Keysler had been doting when he says, “there is very good accommodation in a spacious inn at St. Michaels”’ (i, p. 49-50), while deeming `Lalande's account of the natural productions on Mont Cennis, and his observations on mountains in general [...] curious and interesting’ (i, p. 70). Miller also uses paratextual material quite extensively, generally to provide further information on a topic, and only occasionally does she reference male sources.

Throughout Bray’s letters there is a sense that she is absorbing and reiterating the knowledge that she has acquired from her husband, who acts as her guide and mentor. She explains how, after their visit to the Louvre, ‘Mr. S__ had engaged to show me some very curious manuscripts’ (p. 91) in the Royal Library, later imparting Stothard’s views on the monument of Francois, Duke of Brittany and his wife, ‘a much finer monument than any

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170 Dolan, p. 282. This technique was also used frequently after 1836 when travellers either supported or opposed the information presented in Murray's handbooks.
we have in England’ (p. 277). The nature of her writing as family correspondence rather than an authoritative text is also reflected in the lack of footnotes. What sources she does quote, usually either Monstrelet or Froissart, are cited in the text itself: ‘Monstrelet mentions that it was on the evening of Ascension-day, when the Holy Maid sallied from Compiègne’ (p. 28).

Moreover Bray's *Letters* are as much about her as they are about France or its people: she is never far from her subjects as she enthusiastically interacts with the locals, although she does not always receive a positive response, possibly because of her naivety or nationality. The proprietor of a store-house which had been set up in the ruins of a church destroyed during the Revolution responds to her exclamation of ‘what a pity!’ by laughing ‘rudely at my regrets, and with a savage air, exult[ing] in the devastation’ (p. 34). Bray knows she will have an approving audience in her mother, just as Dibdin expects his friend to share his interests and enthusiasms, but Dibdin appropriates a less personal, more academic style than Bray, marked by a more elevated vocabulary, fewer personal pronouns and the inclusion of Latin quotations: ‘We must visit some relics of antiquity, and take a yet more familiar survey of the town, ere we strive [...] superas evadere ad auras. Indeed the information to be gained well merits the toil endured in its acquisition’ (i, p. 56). When not quoting in Latin he reverts to French, highlighting his knowledge of French literature and culture through literary analogies, commenting on how his postillion bore ‘no very faint resemblance [to…] Voltaire, when he might have been verging towards his sixtieth year’ (p. 23). Dibdin’s writing supports Casey Blanton's view that authorial egotism had crept into travel works by the late eighteenth century.

Bray too uses her knowledge of French literature, but in a very different way, to critique its adverse effect on morals, particularly those of young women. She mouths the orthodoxy on gender construction, that ‘[w]omen are generally formed with more sensibility than judgement: they require every means to strengthen rather than enervate the
mind’ (p. 103), and censures Madame de Stael's *Delphine* (1802) for its adverse effects on morality:

> the very feelings it excites are a proof of its pernicious effect. [...] Human nature needs no incentive either to practise or excuse what is morally bad, and this work would lead to both’ (p. 103).

Bray writes at great length and quite opinionatedly on the ‘highly immoral tendency of such a book’ (p. 104), thereby emphasising her own high moral standards and her belief in the superiority of English over French Literature. Ultimately she turns this critique of French literature into a criticism of the French nation itself, for ‘[t]he extraordinary success [...*Delphine*] has received in France, evinces [...] a want of moral propriety’ (p. 104), which, by implication, is not to be found in England.

These are strong opinions, but they are on the subject of morals about which women could speak, and they were offset by a domestic cosiness, encapsulated in her description of the text as ‘a little illustrated tour for the fireside’ (p. 2), and emphasised by her conversational style. At intervals throughout the text readers are aware of a two-way conversation with her absent mother, ‘[y]ou ask my opinion of the Parisians; but I would rather you should form your own, from what I shall relate’ (p. 64). Direct speech is used frequently throughout the text, giving the work a sense of immediacy; for example when she records an anecdote passed onto her by the Abbé Du she records it in direct address, not reportage: ‘[t]he prince replied, “Those times are past, and it becomes the King to forget the injuries of the Duke’ (p. 89). She also uses direct speech and present tense to record many of her own conversations with the people she meets, again creating a sense of immediacy that makes readers feel as if they are there with her listening to an impromptu commentary on all she sees.

Miller also uses the present tense to record her observations, without the use of direct speech her work loses its immediacy; it is also far less enthusiastic than Bray’s, often amounting to little more than a chapter of complaints: ‘I believe no place in the world, for its size, contains more beggars’ (i, p. 30). Even Miller's self-confessed passion for the
theatre - ‘I walked until I was ready to expire to see a Sylvan theatre’ (i, p. 158) - ends in
disappointment and further complaint – ‘never was anything of its kind so ill attempted’ (i,
p. 158). Even her scenic descriptions do not convey the enthusiastic engagement with the
past typical of Bray. Miller’s ‘figure to yourself a ruined castle, situated on the side of a
mountain, embosomed in a forest of fir-trees’ (i, p. 6), makes no attempt to evoke an
atmosphere or stimulate the reader’s imagination, and therefore it is very different from
Bray’s evocative depictions of Hennebon where:

[I]lines of retiring light, […] gleamed upon Gothic fretted pinnacl es, and […]
dark masses of shadow, showed imperfectly the broken hollows of the
surrounding rocks, and gave an awful grandeur to their form (p. 234). ¹⁷¹

Yet it is not grandeur that dominates Bray’s work, but domesticity, as throughout
the text she gives centrality to family. Although she begins in a way not uncommon in
travellers’ letters, with enquiries about health and welfare - ‘I received your letter this
morning and am truly happy to find you are well’ (p. 74) - she keeps readers in mind of the
fact that these are family letters by occasionally adding a note from her husband - ‘Mr. S.
unites in kindest regards’ (p. 73) - or to a friend at home - ‘when you see Miss___, say to
her, that she mistakes in thinking I neglect her’ (p. 91).¹⁷² The strong sense of connections
with home forged through these letters not only frames the text within a domestic arena,
but also reflects Bray’s deep sense of isolation and her need to keep the channels of
communication between England and France open. Yet despite this sense of dislocation in
a land where ‘[n]o face of kindred country, no accent of my native tongue, spoke the happy
assurance we all feel when surrounded by our people’ (p. 3), she creates an equally strong
impression of excitement: ‘everything creates a feeling of curiosity and wonder that
whispers, Where am I? Where is England? Nothing recalls the remembrance of it here’ (p.
3). It is her curiosity and sense of wonder, emphasised by the frequent use of present tense

¹⁷¹ See p. 120.
¹⁷² Dolan, p. 11.
rather than passive voice, that adds a freshness and immediacy to this work which is not present in reflective travel works such as Wollstonecraft’s *Letters*.

Finally Bray’s travel writing encapsulates all the major themes of Bray’s later fiction: her love of history, her conservative and conservationist principles, and a deep desire for a return to the codes of chivalry, beliefs which she held long before her marriage to Edward Bray. In order to highlight the features of Bray's writing I have elected to make direct comparisons between Bray and Helen Maria Williams. Both women had important aspects in common, their gender, their Protestant religion (although Williams was not Anglican) and the locations they describe, in particular Rouen. There were, however, important differences. Williams’s experiences of Rouen were drawn twenty years earlier than Bray's; she was a French resident, not a visitor; and her politics were far more radical. I have selected three main areas for comparison: the city itself, conventual life and the revolution. As Bray is the main focus of this work I will begin with Bray's perception of the city.

**Responses to Rouen in the Letters of Williams and Bray.**

By Letter III the Stothards had reached Rouen, and Bray’s opening sentence is characteristic of a letter sent home during an extended absence. She begins, ‘I am now writing to you from the ancient city of Rouen where we arrived on Thursday morning, at five o’clock, having quitted Dieppe on Wednesday evening’ (p. 21), so immediately the reader is familiarised with the surroundings and given a clear sense of the couple's progress through France. The style is informal and familiar, indicated by her use of personal pronouns, initially the singular, ‘I’, but by the start of the second sentence moving into the plural, we - ‘[w]hat we observed [...] seems to us’ (pp. 22-23) - a device which accentuates the idea of a family unit. Only occasionally does Bray revert to a singular form, usually to express her own opinions: ‘[t]he cathedral church, [...] of all the Gothic structures I have yet seen, is the most costly and magnificent’ (p. 21). Bray unites herself with Stothard who was now a member of the Kempe family; the couple even lived with Eliza's parents in
Rodney Buildings, Surrey, and families are central to Bray’s work. Moreover Bray not only creates a feeling of rapport between herself and her husband, but she also extends this sense of unity to the wider community.

When in conversation with the local people there is generally harmony not discord, and opinions, however polarised, are discussed amicably. Bray records a discussion on national attitudes to marriage which she had with the concierge of the Chateau d'Eu, stating her dismay at the woman's confession: ‘[n]o woman in France hopes to keep her husband's heart longer than the time occupied in wedding rejoicings’ (p. 16). Bray’s response reveals a great deal about her own faith in marital fidelity and her confidence that English culture supports that belief. But Bray’s inexperience is revealed by her rather naive enquiry as to how a married woman copes with her husband’s neglect. She is informed that the woman ‘is not neglected by others, and has many friends to console and admire her’ (p. 16), a situation which the concierge adds with an ‘arch smile, [...] is selon l’usage’ (p. 17). Yet despite the cultural differences between Bray and the French woman, they appear to converse with great ease and find enjoyment in each other’s company, ‘laugh[ing]’(p. 17) together about the possible connotations of the concierge's observations. Cultural difference is presented here without awkwardness or constraint; there is no explicit criticism of French culture; readers are left to decide which they prefer, although Bray’s opinion is clear: England is always the favoured nation. Williams, however, as we will see, is drawn to what she views as a freer French society.

At the heart of Bray's letters there is a genuine desire to disseminate information of both a cultural and personal nature in her ‘illustrated tour’ (p. 2) of Rouen. Yet the noun ‘tour’ is aptly chosen for its ability to depict Bray's very immediate style. She is a tourist, absorbing, and then reproducing in vivid detail all the sights and sounds of Rouen for her mother. The quality of Bray’s descriptions again suggests a painter capturing all the city’s
features that can be assimilated at a glance, on canvas, a technique she adopts regularly in her work. \(^{173}\)

What we observed of the scenery in the vicinity of Rouen, when the day broke was very delightful, steep hills covered by hanging woods, valleys, and chateaux, gave a peculiar and beautiful character to the country [...] its high cliffs of white chalk are nearly perpendicular, and form a beautiful contrast to the surrounding woods and valleys. At the base of these lofty hills runs the Seine, in the midst of which are little islets covered with verdure (pp. 21, 33).

Bray’s mother seems ever present as a companion for Bray addresses her directly—‘turn with me towards Mount St. Catharine, and there look around you’ (p. 33) - inviting her, and also the reader, to share Bray’s enjoyment and wonder. The emphasis is very much on shared experience.

Bray had been tutored in painting and drawing by Charles Stothard, and her love of art is reflected in the visual qualities of her descriptions and in her ability to see the artistic possibilities in a scene. She would have been aware, for example, of the eighteenth-century conventions that dictated the construction of landscape art, and mentions Claude Lorraine and his influence on a number of occasions in this collection of letters. Moreover her descriptions of landscape, usually undertaken on her arrival at a new location, are replete with the variety which Uvedale Price deems necessary for a scene to qualify as picturesque, another term which Bray uses regularly throughout this text and her 1841 travel work on Switzerland.\(^{174}\) She describes lofty mountains which contrast with hanging woods and valleys, thus providing a picture to interest and attract the eye. In Rouen the picturesque qualities of the city are heightened by its antiquity. Yet Bray's links with the eighteenth century are not confined to her appropriation of the picturesque; she also buys into the eighteenth-century traveller's habit of ‘enumerating the various lords’ and

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gentlemen’s seats [which] the view contains’. Yet unlike travellers such as Francis Russell, Lady Blessington and Lady Miller, Bray’s observations are not made to emphasise her social status by trying to include herself in aristocratic circles or comment on the position of aristocratic families in France. For Bray architecture descriptions are provided as documentary evidence of France’s historic past. Her identification of the hilltop chateau in Rouen, therefore, remains merely an observation, which is fundamental to Bray’s style.

She places herself in the position of an onlooker recording a progression of events unfolding before her eyes; consequently she writes in the present tense and her selection of details emphasises the vitality of the scene:

the Seine winds and undulates through a vast tract of country; near the city it is filled with shipping. Many large and picturesque buildings are upon its banks: on the east-side arise the majestic spires of the Cathedral St. Ouen, and several churches. Motley groups of figures are all around us; the horses that draw the carts, sometimes eight or nine, placed one before another in a string, are generally adorned with blue-dyed sheep-skins, a painted board projects from the collar, on each side of the neck; which is sometimes ornamented with pieces of looking-glass: other carts are frequently drawn by yoked oxen. Norman women are carrying their large baskets, with various fruits and flowers, that tempt you to their purchase. Immediately before our view, appears a chain of beautiful hills, so high and abrupt, that they may be termed mountains; upon them are built many white stone houses, which extend even to their summits (p. 33).

Commercial enterprise is alive in Rouen; the Seine ‘is filled with shipping’ (p. 33) and the Norman women are promoting their wares. There is a real sense of engagement here as Bray, along with her readers, is drawn into the group and tempt to a purchase. She celebrates the variety and individualism of regional traditions in her descriptions of Rouen as she does in her later romances, highlighting colour and variety, the ‘blue-dyed sheep-skins, […] painted boards’, and Norman women carrying their wares in large baskets (p. 33). This method of portraying a scene as if it were a painting or, perhaps more appositely, a play, becomes a distinguishing feature of her fiction, for the same animation and

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175 Barrell, p. 27.
infectious energy are apparent when she describes Ghent in *White Hoods*: ‘[a]ll was busy-all in motion (WH, p. 3).’

Such an enthusiastic portrayal of commercial activity does, however, give rise to contradictions in her work since usually she is disparaging of commerce for its destruction of the past. Another positive presentation noted here is that of women working comfortably in a public marketplace. Bray appears to have overlooked the gender implications here; in fact she makes no comment about these activities, presenting only the spectacle. Possibly she believed that the spectacle could be enjoyed for its own sake; after all it was not English women who were participating in commercial enterprise, for as Angela Keane argues, ‘the English bourgeoisie [...] exist[ed] in an economy of division’. In fact Keane notes that it was the French bourgeois economy ‘wherein work and leisure, public and domestic life are less radically divided’ than in England that Williams admired. On the other hand Bray’s lack of comment on the scene may be because she was swept away by her own enjoyment and enthusiasm, failing to consider anything beyond that moment. Often her impetuosity, or enthusiasm, led to the inconsistencies which characterise her work.

Despite showing a knowledge of artistic terminology, such as ‘[c]hiaro-oscuro, silver tones, keeping, harmony, and warmth of colour’ (p. 89), she confesses to having specifically eschewed this technical vocabulary in her own descriptions, relying more on the sensory-emotional values of sentiment and taste. During a visit to Rouen’s old town she describes the cottages near the cathedral as ‘singular and picturesque, several entirely Gothic’ and ‘so decayed that they appear ready to fall upon their inhabitants’ (p. 21), illustrating Malcolm Andrews’ point, that in picturesque taste, ‘the visual delight in scenes of decay and dereliction [...] are] fully indulged as feelings of moral repugnance are

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176 Bray’s visit was undertaken only three years after she had returned from Bath after her failed attempt at a stage career.
177 She describes the changes wrought by commerce in Newington (MS, i, p. 75).
178 Keane, p. 58.
Moral repugnance is subordinated, for Bray makes no attempt to champion the plight of the poor, but she does show some repugnance on aesthetic grounds, as the decay, like the ‘close and dirty’ (p. 21) streets, blights the magnificence of the cathedral itself. Bray, however, appreciated cathedrals for more than just their aesthetic qualities; she believed them to be the repositories of a country's history, which gave a nation its soul:

A country will never wholly lose its spirit, whilst it feels a pride in the records of its most honourable actions. In a land where a love of its ancient deeds is widely extended, there is something of a romantic virtue that will always save it from the contamination of modern luxury (MLS, iii, p. 36).

Bray’s depiction of Rouen’s close and dirty streets serves a different purpose from Williams’s whose use of the terms ‘narrow, dark and frightful’ (p. 107) adds a sense of fear and claustrophobia which resonates with the symbolism of Gothic romance, where claustrophobia is synonymous with hegemonic repression. Similarly, aspects of material culture, the statues of the Duke of Bedford and Joan of Arc, as well as a consecrated banner covering the altar of Rouen cathedral, are appropriated to show how a nation’s monuments and artefacts could be used as a constant reminder of modernity’s freedom from feudal repression: ‘I hope every Frenchman who enters the cathedral of Rouen, while he reads the inscription on this consecrated banner, repeats from the bottom of his soul “Vivons libres ou mourir!”’ (p. 108). Moreover, Williams is explicit about how Joan’s statue both literally and metaphorically ‘seems to cast a most formidable shade over the good Duke’s virtues’ (108), and her italicisation of the epithet ‘good’ serves to underline her intended irony. Similar images of aristocratic repression are apparent in her presentation of the Baron du Fossé, which I discuss later, for as Fraistat and Lanser argue, in Williams’s work the violence and terror is confined to the ‘old regime’, for Williams,

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like Wordsworth, ‘celebrated the Gironde years before retreating from the Jacobin terror’. ¹⁸⁰

In contrast, although Bray championed Joan of Arc, she never showed any support for the forces of revolution. ¹⁸¹ She is explicit in her vehement denunciation of what she viewed as the mindless destruction, not only of French material culture but also of the nation’s history:

> [a]fter glutting their fury with human blood: restless till employed in havoc, they turned their savage spirit against the finest public edifices, anxious to annihilate, not only every place devoted to the worship of God, but even the very name of the deity. The records of their churches they burnt; all papers within their reach, connected with history, they destroyed: they endeavoured to cancel out every remembrance of their King and government (p. 35).

This is a long and passionate response to the revolution; full of strong active verbs but without any resort to symbolic representation. Bray makes no attempt here to conceal her political opinion, perhaps because her letters were meant purely for a private audience, her mother. The only other place where Bray is so obviously outspoken about her political position is in her autobiographical manuscript, a document also initially intended for a private readership.

Readership is an important factor when comparing the works of Williams and Bray. Although both women chose the epistolary form, Fraistat and Lanser aver that Williams’s choice of this style was a clever device through which she could regulate her material, omitting what it did not suit her political purpose to include. Bray, on the other hand, was genuinely writing informative letters to her mother, an Englishwoman who resided in England and not only appeared to share her daughter’s lack of firsthand knowledge of French culture, but also shared Bray’s conservative viewpoint. Williams’s agenda was different from Bray’s. She did not intend to compile a ‘little illustrated tour for the fireside’ (p. 2); her work was, as Fraistat and Lanser aver, an ‘eight volume eye-witness history of

¹⁸⁰ Keane, p. 50; and Helen Maria Williams, *Letters written in France*, edited by Neil Fraistat and Susan Lanser (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), p. 44.
¹⁸¹ For information on Bray’s support for Joan, see Chapter 3, p. 139.
the Revolution’. Moreover Williams, along with her family, resided in Rouen, and therefore she had no need to pass on information that would benefit a tourist, neither did she need to re-create a family situation in her letters. In addition, as a resident who later took up French citizenship, Williams was fully conversant with the French language and its literature, making regular references to a French female literary tradition. She quotes Madame de Sévigné who, according to her editors, ‘revolutionised the epistolary genre’ (p. 107), when describing Rouen’s streets which ‘abusent de la permission qu'ont les rues Françaises d'être laides’ (p. 107). These frequent shifts from English to French, along with her equally frequent citations of French writers and their works, in French, point to Williams’s sense of herself as culturally integrated. Furthermore, although her work is directed at an English reader, there is the expectation that this reader will share the writer’s open-minded, Francophile values. Only on rare occasions does Bray use a French expression, which generally takes the form of a greeting or the names of food and clothing, practical language, easily acquired by a tourist and useful to prospective travellers.

Williams, as Angela Keane suggests, presents herself as a ‘persistently cosmopolitan character’ whereas Bray is not, and this difference is reflected in their style. Bray’s enthusiasm for the new and different gives her work a quality of freshness and vibrancy, while Williams’s text is much more cleverly crafted, and her political beliefs are transmitted through a variety of strategies: metaphor, symbolism and rhetoric. For example her belief in female equality is examined through the saints, who she notes are ‘placed in little niches in the walls’ (p. 107), and Williams is careful to select not only two female saints, but two educated women: ‘The Virgin Mary [...] with the infant in her arms; and [...] St. Anne, who has the credit of having taught the Virgin to read’ (p.107). Education, Williams suggests, was passed to Christ through his mother and grandmother, but more importantly, she implies that God had shown his divine acceptance of female education by choosing an educated woman to bear his son.
Using the same focus on female saints, Williams moves into a description of Rouen’s dominant feature, the hill of St. Catherine which serves as a fixed point in the city. It is perhaps pertinent that the fixed point should be symbolised by a woman, but ironically this hill holds the ‘ruins of a fort called St. Michel, from which Henry the Fourth besieged Rouen’ (p. 107), a gothic symbol of the transience of patriarchal feudal power. The female saint is privileged because the hill had ultimately withstood male power, and Henry’s siege of Rouen was eventually raised. Thus Williams makes political capital out of this ruin, ironically stating: ‘I love to be put in mind of Henry the Fourth and am therefore very well pleased that whenever I go to walk, I can fix my eyes on the hill of St. Catharine’ (p. 107).

But the destruction of a king’s tyranny also symbolises Williams’s hope that the beginnings of a freer, more equal society would emerge from the ruins of the ancien régime.

Williams’s writing is not only intelligent, but it is also assured, having the authority of a resident, not a tourist. Bray does not have such authority, and instead reverts to the mediaeval chroniclers, Monstrelet and Froissart, for her three-page history of Mount St. Catherine and its siege, a very detailed and extended account when compared to Williams’s one short paragraph. Two significant points arise from this section. One is the political agenda underpinning these works. Williams constantly adopts metaphor and symbolism to support her belief in the potentially freer society which the revolution in France appeared to offer its people. Bray is more interested in establishing the superiority of English culture through selective comparisons. Ultimately Bray’s work does not display the confident, assured style of Williams’s writing and despite her long and varied career as a writer she never loses her heavy reliance on source material. But what may be seen in her early work as inexperience later develops into a deep anxiety about her public image as a woman and a published author.

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Responses to Conventual Life.

While in Rouen both women visited at least one convent, and thus it is perhaps appropriate to examine their respective attitudes to religious practices, a theme which later dominates Bray’s fiction. During their travels in France Bray recalls two visits to convents, one in Ploermel, the other at Rennes; similarly Williams visits two convents in Rouen, although neither Williams nor Bray was Roman Catholic. Williams came from a dissenting background while Bray's family was Anglican, but despite her commitment to Anglicanism, Bray hated religious persecution and admired integrity and kindness. In the appendix to Trials of the Heart she quite succinctly expresses her views on the French Roman Catholic clergy who endured every sort of persecution, exile, poverty and even death rather than betray their church and conscience. Such noble self-devotion from principle demands the respect and admiration of all men; and by none has it been felt more sincerely [...] than by the members of the Protestant faith. Opposed to them in doctrine, and adverse to their superstitions, they nevertheless strongly felt that esteem for their character which no generous mind would withhold from any of opposite opinions, who follow those opinions in sincerity of heart and simplicity of conduct (p. 442).

It is the individual rather than the institution that Bray values: she can appreciate admirable qualities in Roman Catholics, particularly those of the old order whom she associates with chivalry, through their ‘urbane and gentlemanly manners [...] and [...] the general superiority of their character’ (p. 442). She also has an ambiguous response to Catholic pageantry, acknowledging its splendour, ‘solemnity, [...] grandeur and awful dignity, [as] very imposing and calculated to inspire a serious feeling in the most unthinking mind’ (p 216), but criticises the way this pageantry coerces the impressionable. Williams, while expressing similar views, frames them more succinctly than Bray in terms of the eighteenth-century debate on imagination and reason; Catholicism, she observes, is ‘striking to the imagination’ (p.111), but ‘a sad stumbling-block to reason (p. 111). Furthermore, although both writers focus on gender issues their perspective is very different. Bray explores the concept of family, while Williams focuses on the incarceration
of women and the eroticism created by keeping them concealed from men, distant and unobtainable. Williams is eager to convey the mental as well as the physical torment such treatment creates, a focus which is much darker than Bray's, and complements Williams’s claustrophobic descriptions of Rouen.

Throughout her work Eliza Bray is eager to convince her readers that she is tolerant, a moderate Anglican who hates fanaticism of any kind, but although she will tolerate individuals who are Roman Catholics, she is critical of their church and its practices, seeing Catholicism as a repressive force of entrapment and its ritual as a way of encouraging superstition. Bray's Protestantism was unshakable, and even before her marriage to an Anglican priest, she was able to discuss Protestant doctrines at length, illustrated through her intercourse with the nuns at Ploermel. During her interviews, first with the Abbess, and later with a sister and a novice, Bray reveals a strong empathy with these women, despite her disapproval of their religious doctrines, showing how she values the private individual over the political perspective, a position which she maintains throughout her writing. In fact Bray's sympathy for a character is often what makes her work seem at best ambiguous, and at worst contradictory.

At Ploermel Bray’s interaction with the nuns is easy; their conversation is friendly and open, quite the opposite to Williams's dark and claustrophobic descriptions of convent life. Bray is ‘invited to pass […]her] time at the convent’ while Stothard was engaged in making sketches of the effigies housed there, and she records her interview with one of the young novices. A real sense of community is developed between the Abbess, the novice and the young married woman. Bray was just as keen to elicit information about their lives as these women were to satisfy their curiosity about England and the world at large, showing their thirst for experience and knowledge. Perhaps the most sensitive part of this visit is Bray's conversation with a young nun, now isolated from her mother who had recently died, and far away from her remaining family, a situation which was in some

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183 See her depiction of the Catholic priest in Courtenay, Chapter 4, p. 214.
respects akin to Bray's own. She records this young nun's visions of her dying mother 'extending her dying hand to greet mine, but mine was not there to greet it' (p. 209).

Familial duty and maternal affection are subjects close to Bray's own heart, which is why she appears so concerned about this young woman's decision to leave home, where to 'have been a happiness to your family [...] could equally have secured you salvation' (p. 209). Through the concept of family Bray evinces a reversal of Catholic teachings; it is not the heavenly family that secures salvation, but an earthly one. In fact the concept of motherhood and familial relationships dominates this interview and it is through these concepts that many doctrinal issues are discussed.

One prime example of Bray's methods is her examination of the Roman Catholic veneration of Christ's mother, the Virgin Mary. Bray explains Protestant doctrine to these women: that Mary was 'merely as a mortal, who was ordained to give birth to our Saviour' (p. 210), and as such was not endowed with any power to intercede on man's behalf. Moreover through this reference to the holy family Bray illustrates the problematic family dynamic within convents. Although 'an amiable woman [...] kind and parental' (p. 205), the Abbess of Ploermel had never experienced real motherhood. Her counterpart at Rennes, however, receives less approbation: she is depicted as the stereotypical abbess of Gothic romance portrayed by writers such as William Henry Ireland, Catherine Smith and Radcliffe. Bray derides the Abbess’s visions as delusion, and criticises her harsh countenance, a look 'more accustomed to scolding than devotion' (p. 186). For Bray, those who don the title of 'mother' should exhibit the characteristics stereotypically associated with motherhood: tenderness, care and affection.

The Abbess was not, however, alone in earning the title 'mother'; many of the 'aged nuns' (p. 211) were also viewed as surrogate mothers to the young novices, otherwise known as sisters. This is a family comprised only of females, which Bray highlights as being both unnatural and unstable. Stotheard, for example, is barred from meeting the novices and young sisters for fear that 'the very sight of a young man might
make them dream of the world again’ (p. 215), and thereby disrupt the family dynamic, although entrance to the convent itself is shown to disrupt the dynamic of an earthly family. Bray illustrates her point through a tale which starts as a romance, ending as a scathing critique of the destructive nature of superstition bred by Catholicism and its practices. Using the metaphor of fractured families she relates the tragic tale of a young woman who, believing the death of her parents to be a sign from Heaven, left her lover to enter a convent. While feeling deep sympathy for the young man's 'despondency’ (p. 215), Bray is less sympathetic toward the young woman, whose decision to become a nun she interprets as selfish vanity, not self-sacrifice. The woman ‘gloried in having resigned all her hopes, by devoting herself to God’ and was ultimately exalted as a saint elect for wearing the hair shirt […] and practising every kind of austerity’ (p. 215). Once again a discussion which commences in an exploration of domestic relationships and familial duty, is mapped onto a wider examination of religious doctrine and its effects on private individuals.

Unlike Bray, Williams shows no desire to interact with her subjects. There is no recorded conversation, only selected quotations to reinforce her observations and opinions, although like Bray, she focuses on the situation of a woman being removed from the world, and as a consequence, from her lover. Despite the comparable subject matter, the writers present the scene in a different way. Bray concentrates on a more emotional, sentimental response, focusing on romantic love. Her musings on the wasted ‘youth and beauty of several of the novices awakened a sense of compassion for their melancholy life’ (p. 216), which Bray views as one of missed opportunities, despite the ‘solemnity of their devotion’ (p. 216). Williams too presents the life of these young women as one of isolation and withdrawal, but her presentation of the waste is through the male psyche. The romantic ideal of Bray’s depiction is substituted by an image of mental torment and sexual frustration as a young man sees the woman he loves for the last time. Williams makes readers aware of his feelings, ‘placed in a perilous situation: for where can a young woman
appear so interesting, as when seen within that gloomy barrier, which death alone can remove?’ (p. 111). Williams gives the whole scene a sense of futility and finality that makes more explicit the reality implied by Bray’s description of a ‘melancholy life’.

A similar sense of real hardship is conveyed through Williams’s presentation of the nuns’ daily routine in a Carmelite convent which ‘wear[s] an aspect of the most gloomy horror’ (p.113). Bray's mere allusion to the harshness of the Abbess at Rennes is fully realised in Williams's portrayal of the Carmelites through macabre images of gothic incarceration: the thick walls, curtains, gratings, graves, and suffering:

no voice was heard, no human creature appeared; and when we rang the bell, a person, whom we could not see, enquired, through a hole in the wall, what we wanted. [...] in a few minutes the Superiure came to a thick double grate, with a curtain drawn at the inside, to prevent the possibility of being seen. [...] The Carmelites slept in their coffins, upon straw, and every morning dug a shovel-full of earth for their graves; [...] walked to their devotional exercises upon their knees; [...] were not suffered to be seen, or if they were seen, they were not suffered to speak [...] and they only tasted food twice a day (p. 113).

In contrast her portrayal of the Benedictine Abbess has echoes of Chaucer and shares some of the satire adopted by Bray in her portrayal of the Abbé Du. The Abbess may have been physically withdrawn from the world, but she still enjoyed some of its pleasures. Williams explains that the Abbess ‘dined at three o'clock, and it was now past six’ (p. 112), and this worldliness is extended into the descriptions of the care the Abbess took with her appearance: ‘She is a woman of fifty, but is still handsome; has a frank agreeable countenance, fine eyes, and had put on her veil in a very becoming manner’ (p. 112).

Neither portrait presents the convent in a positive light, but for very different reasons. Bray’s main focus is on family relations and her critique is executed through a dialogue which makes it more like a polite exchange of different opinions than the eloquent and persuasive criticisms delivered by Williams. Moreover Bray is not just an observer; she gathers personal histories from the nuns themselves and weaves them into her letters in a way reminiscent of the old chroniclers.
Histories of a Nation and its People.

Bray's interest in the histories of nations and individuals, and her ability to garner personal stories from those around her, are defining characteristics of her life and work. One character on whom she chooses to focus her attention is the Abbé Du, a man from whom the Stothards rented a house during their stay in Bayeux. Yet despite the fact that they lived in a separate property from the Abbé, Bray writes as if she were part of his family, rather than merely a paying guest, describing him as both a father figure and friend, one to whom ‘we are bound in gratitude as well as esteem’ (p. 169). Moreover, in order to allay any fears her mother may have concerning her daughter's welfare when travelling abroad, she emphasises key household matters, focussing on food and sleeping accommodation and paying careful attention to detail.

Victoire, the housekeeper, is depicted as a competent, reliable woman, and Ann Kempe is informed of the couple’s ‘excellent dinner’ (p. 143), although these particular descriptions tell us as much about Bray herself as about French food and manners: ‘my politeness carried me so far as to eat of garlic pudding stuffed with egg and meat, [but] could not conquer […] cold fish with no sauce or get over my aversion for boiled sorrel mixed with veal’ (p. 144). Bray is clearly not adventurous in her taste, but too polite to decline the dishes, although her aversion to aspects of French cuisine is in itself a celebration of English food and her mother's cooking. This incident also highlights the impulsive and immediate nature of her writing, the conversational style which often leads her, on reflection, to qualify or justify her comments. After due consideration Bray appears to realise that such lively expressions of revulsion at French food might cause her mother anxiety, so she immediately qualifies her comments, adding ‘you must not imagine I starve in France’ (p. 144).

Bray presents the Abbé's cook and housekeeper, Victoire, as a woman whose culinary skills are, in French terms, a triumph. She makes ‘the best preserves and liqueurs, and in the art of cookery, might rival Dame Jacintha herself’ (p. 110). But by explicitly
connecting Victoire with her fictional counterpart, Dame Jacintha, the housekeeper in *Gil Blas*, Bray is signalling a shift in narrative style akin to that adopted in her autobiographical writing when she is describing the past, one more often associated with fiction or drama. Bray begins her narrative with the attention to detail typical of her writing, clearly imagining the scene in visual terms and recording every movement and gesture as if she were writing stage directions for a play, another typical feature of her writing style. Victoire

is busied in scolding the maids, or the boys, [...] feeding chickens, or turning her wheel, for Victoire spin's the finest flax in Bayeux: at the hour of dinner she assumes the most important function of her office. The good-natured housekeeper then appears in her clean little white jacket, and her best cap turned back, to show the long gold pendants, attached to her ears [...] her plump cheeks glowing with exercise, and her little grey eyes sparkling with the self-satisfaction of her good cheer. Victoire directs all, sees the dishes, the fruits, the wine, all arranged in their proper and regular station; she presents the Abbé his napkin, and, standing by his chair, placing one hand on his shoulder, and pointing towards some dish or ragout, with the other (p. 110).

Stage entrances are signalled: `[t]he good-natured housekeeper then appears`, hand gestures are recorded and costume details are noted with great precision, even down to the cap, which is ‘turned back, to show the long gold pendants, attached to her ears'. If Victoire ‘directs all’ the activity at the Abbé’s table, Bray directs Victoire on the page, the final section reading like a set of stage directions. She explains where Victoire must stand and how she should position her hands. Furthermore by allocating her character's lines of direct speech - ‘taste that monsieur l' Abbé, it is the best (p. 110)' - Bray is even more surely connecting her portrayal with cameo scenes from a play. Although Williams includes some quotations in her work, she does not present such detailed or extended descriptions of costume, movement, positioning or conversation as Bray.

Bray also inscribes the Abbé into a domestic, though not exactly a family situation, presenting him as the master of a household with Victoire as his ‘faithful housekeeper, [...] attentive servant, and the kind friend of her worthy master’ (p. 111). Immediately readers are surrounded by a sense of comfortable domesticity which will be invaded and
subsequently destroyed by the revolutionaries. In her autobiographical manuscript Bray writes that domestic peace is ‘invaded; its dearest ties broken […] by persecution’ (MS, ii, p. 81) and through the Abbé and his housekeeper Bray shows in her travelogue what she will later illustrate through her historical romances, how political conflict can invade and destroy the domestic space. The Abbé is a representative of those principled Catholic priests discussed above, and his housekeeper encapsulates the loyalty, virtue and intellect that Bray valorises, characteristics which are both explained in the narrative and revealed through the dialogue. Bray reconstructs a scene between the housekeeper and her interrogators, representatives of the revolution, which, if she had prefaced each speech with a character name, would have the appearance of a play script. Instead Victoire's lines are signalled by the use of italics. This scene is inserted between two comic narratives depicting the Abbe’s desperate attempts to escape from the revolutionaries:

“Where has he been, and where is the place of his unknown concealment?”
“Where he has been I cannot tell; and where his unknown concealment is, would be no longer unknown, if I knew it.”
“You are impertinent, and do not fear the council?” - “I am innocent, and cannot fear it.”
“Will you serve us?” - “If I am obliged.” (pp. 117-118).

Again Bray is using the strategies of fiction and drama to entertain her readers, while simultaneously informing them of the invasive and destructive characteristics of revolution.

The comic incidents that frame this dialogue are also visual, and reminiscent of a stage set ready for action with ‘a little door, […] the garden, […] the terrace, […]and] some bushes’ (p. 115). When the action commences it is both exaggerated and atmospheric.

In the covert of some bushes beneath he remained concealed. The house was searched in every corner; the affrighted Abbé now perceived they were traversing the garden, uttering dreadful exclamations indicative of their murderous intent. He crept closer within the thickest covert of the bush, and soon saw them advancing towards the very spot where he was concealed. The foremost man carried a lantern, that threw a broad light upon every surrounding object. […] the steps advanced, the light glimmered, […]the ruffians paused a moment […] adjacent to the spot of his retreat. They again advanced (p. 115).
Every movement here is carefully recorded. Bray explains exactly how the lantern threw its light ‘upon every surrounding object’, and is equally exact about the place where the pursuers should pause. Moreover readers are put into the position of the Abbé so they too can experience his fear of discovery as the searchers advance, pause and then advance again, a device which heightens the dramatic tension. In addition Bray appropriates literary techniques to tell her story and manipulate the reader/audience. She uses alliteration and repetition to intensify the tension which is protracted by the ruffians pausing in their search ‘adjacent to the […] Abbé’s] retreat’. Exaggerated language is also used to exacerbate the atmosphere of suspense. The revolutionary’s ‘dreadful exclamations’ and ‘murderous intent’ all add to the sense of fear experienced by both the Abbé and the reader. Yet this exaggeration which heightens the suspense also adds to the comic effects of the passage. Bray's presentation of action without reflection, and the repeated hesitations of the Abbé's pursuers who never manage to apprehend their prey, is reminiscent of pantomime.

Her appreciation of the comic possibilities in potentially tragic situations can be found in her presentation of the Abbé's first escape from the revolutionaries, accomplished by hiding in a chest, which, when delivered safely to his family home, acquires a life of its own: ‘[T]he lid began to move, and […] the good Abbé popped his head out of the chest, without having sustained any other inconvenience, than that of having had his wig shaken off during the ride’ (pp. 112-113). This episode is comparable with Bray's presentation of her grandfather's encounter with a highwayman described in her autobiographical writing; it is also reminiscent of Tom Jones where Fielding exploits the comic potential in philosopher Square’s predicament: he is found hiding behind a rug ‘in a posture (for the place would not near admit his standing upright) as ridiculous as can possibly be conceived’. Moreover, by presenting these scenes as comedy and the Abbé as a kindly man, able to command great loyalty, but also to some degree a buffoon, she is not only making his persecution by the revolutionists appear even more arbitrary and pitiless, but

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she is also making him more acceptable to readers who might be disturbed by her sympathetic treatment of a Catholic priest.

Williams’s work uses strategies designed more to persuade her readers to adopt her political viewpoint than either merely to entertain or inform. In an attempt to persuade her readers of the plight of Monsieur du Fossé and his wife, Williams chooses rhetorical devices such as direct address and repetition to build up her argument:

You will perhaps conclude that his hard heart felt at length the relenting of a parent. You will at least suppose, that his imagination being haunted and his conscience tormented with the image of a son stretched on the floor of this subterraneous cell, he could support the idea no longer, and had hastened to give repose to his own mind by releasing his captive. Far different were the motives of his visit (p. 124).

Her methods echo those adopted by public speakers, suggesting that she anticipates a wider public platform than just one friend in England, signalled by her choice of the pronoun ‘you’ which is both specific and generic.

Williams saw the French Revolution as a force to liberate France from the repression and tyranny of the ancien régime, views very different from Bray’s conservative beliefs. But, like Bray, she uses both an individual character and the concept of family to manipulate her readers’ opinions. Williams supports the idea of a new society based on familial bonding rather than aristocratic tyranny, and in order to illustrate her point she recounts the story of a family fractured by autocracy, not republicanism, where the patriarch prioritises aristocratic privilege over family affection. Monsieur du Fossé is the son of such an autocrat who is being punished by his father because he has rejected his aristocratic privilege to support the revolution, and thus his sufferings at the hands of a tyrannical aristocrat are presented in familial terms. The Baron du Fossé's heartless treatment of his son not only subverts readers' expectations of fatherly affection, but it also destroys his own family and that of his son, by separating the young du Fossé from his father, his wife, Monique, and his child. The Baron represents the ancien régime which Williams believes to be emotionally dead, and by appealing to her readers' perception of
familial affection she courts their concurrence with her perspective. Williams, like Bray, implicitly argues that although she is a woman, she can intervene in political debate when the forum for that debate is the family.

Both Bray and Williams are trying to evoke sympathy for the victims of revolution, but these victims come from opposing sides. Du Fossé is victimised for his support of the Revolution, the Abbé for his resistance to revolutionary change, and the family is used in both cases as the medium through which these ideas are explored. Williams presents the aristocrats of the *ancien régime* as anaesthetised victimisers whose primary concern is the preservation of aristocratic privilege. The supporters of the revolution, those who desire change, are in Williams's work the victims, and she appropriates Gothic conventions of excess, torture and incarceration to assert her views on the heartless nature of the old order and its desire to enforce conformity. For her it is the new order that privileges feelings and thereby can successfully recreate a functional family unit. Monique du Fossé is presented as a caring wife and mother, particularly concerned for her young child, a girl, whose close bond with her father is emphasised by her enquiries concerning his return.

The child was three years old when her father left England; recollected him perfectly; and, whenever her mother went to visit her, used to call with eagerness for her papa. The enquiry, […] "When shall I see my dear, dear papa?" was heard by this unhappy mother with a degree of agony which it were vain indeed to describe. (p. 125).

Through this fractured family Williams is able to highlight the national disease wrought by autocratic rule. Monique represents all women, who in a repressive society are reduced to a state of weakness and vulnerability, and, as in her presentation of the nun and her lover, her emphasis is on the psychology of her subjects, filtered through the style and language of the novel of sentiment. Although Bray uses emotive language in her letters she does not probe the psychology of her characters, instead recording her own responses to what she observes. She explains how, in a dark stone room of the Conciergerie prison, Marie Antoinette ‘suffered all the miseries of insult, cruelty and imprisonment’ (p. 87), before describing in detail the contents and layout of the room and then imparting her own
opinion on the situation: ‘how disgraceful a cruelty, so repulsive to every feeling of common decency and humanity’ (p. 87).

Bray’s main interest, however, lies with the distant past and her response to the Revolution is generally concerned with its destruction of national history and culture. Her imaginative engagement with mediaeval French history makes her work very different from Williams’s whose concerns are more with contemporary events and their ramifications. Furthermore, her visits to the sites of major historical incidents allow her to engage imaginatively with the past, as she does when visiting Waterloo and Hennebon, the French town where Joanna of Flanders, Countess de Montford resisted the armies of Charles de Valois and Philp de Blois in 1342. Bray explains how:

memory pictured to the fancy the events of former days, when the gallant Countess so valiantly defended Hennebon [...] I amused myself with conjecturing from what tower she watched the arrival of the English fleet (p. 234).

This empathy with location becomes even more apparent when Bray embarks on writing historical romances set in the south west of England.

Bray and Williams not only empathise with women, but they also give them centrality in their respective narratives. Williams depicts the plight of the du Fossé family through her focus on family relations and in particular a mother, Monique, just as Bray depicts the Countess de Montfort’s heroic ride to save Hennebon for her husband and child. Although Bray’s scenes are lifted directly from Froissart, she makes careful and significant adjustments by altering selected verbs to embellish Froissart's account and thus create a more dramatic scene. Where Froissart explains how the Countess encouraged her women to carry `stones to the ramparts, and throw them on their enemies' (p. 106), Bray changes ‘throw’ to `hurl' (p. 235) for a more dramatic effect. Moreover she focuses on the individual’s response to events rather than just depicting the action, as Froissart does. She describes Hennebon as a ‘beleaguered town, reduced to the extremity of distress, [its inhabitants…] beholding their walls totter’ (p. 235), and thus, like Williams, she illustrates the way public history impacts on private lives, a strategy she later adopts in her fiction.
This interaction between public and private is also illustrated as Bray chooses not to present the Countess's actions as a fight to defend her property, as Froissart does, but as a fight to protect her immediate and extended family, her husband, her infant son and her people. Here Bray uses the Countess's role as a wife and mother to empower her, to minimise the impropriety of her actions without detracting from her courage. Heroism was a characteristic Bray admired, both in women and men; it was the heroism and loyalty of Joan of Arc that Bray admired, not her connections with French unity, or freedom from English rule. Again Bray uses the concept of family to impress on her readers the full implications of the Countess' situation: a family unit fractured by her husband's absence, leaving herself and her son unprotected, thus giving public events a private face. Froissart does not connect the Countess with her maternal role, although he mentions her 'young son' (FC p. 96), neither does he adopt emotive terminology; Bray depicts the boy as first an 'infant' (p. 235), then as a 'helpless child' (p. 235). Moreover she omits to mention the monetary rewards the Countess offered her soldiers to ensure their support, which is clearly implied in Froissart's version: 'Look at my little child, here: if it please God he shall be his restorer and do you much service. I have plenty of wealth' (FC p. 96). It is the chivalric ideal and not money that inspires Bray’s soldiers to act, and it is to the codes of chivalry that Bray's Countess appeals. This scenario raises some interesting points concerning gender representation, not least as it illustrates Bray's personal conflict between a desire to become involved in political debate and interact with the public sphere, and her fear of overstepping the boundaries of feminine modesty.

Conclusion.

Although Bray’s letters home, with their personal, anecdotal style and focus on manners and traditions, have features in common with the works of her contemporaries, there are many significant differences. One is the area about which she wrote. She claims to be the first to publish on Brittany, a district ‘almost unnoticed by the literary traveller’ (p. iv), and it certainly appears that Normandy was the area of northern France outside
Paris most often documented in travel works. Dawson Turner’s account of the architectural antiquities of Normandy was published in 1820, the same year as Bray’s, and Dibdin’s tour of Normandy and Brittany was not published until 1829, many years later than Bray’s, so there is evidence to substantiate her claim.\(^{185}\)

Another way in which Bray’s work differs from that of her contemporaries is the centrality of home, not so much as a country, because to celebrate England was not uncommon, but as a domestic space. Although many of her contemporaries, Russell, Hobhouse, Miller etc. wrote letters home, Bray’s work focused more securely on family matters. She discusses the health of her family and friends and allays her mother’s fears concerning how a young woman might fare abroad. She also creates communities, extended family units, with those she meets, for despite her unshakeable belief in the superiority of English culture she is, on the whole, quite receptive to the French people and integrates with them rather than maintaining a haughty aloofness. Thus Bray provides a more personal view of French life than Lady Miller and many of her contemporaries.

Bray’s style also differs from other travel works as her letters provide evidence of a two-way conversation, either Bray answering her mother’s queries, or when describing a scene, directly addressing her mother. In the published work, however, Bray’s comments would instead be directed to her reader/audience. The fact that she writes for an audience is illustrated in two ways. One, she addresses the reader as if she were addressing a tourist accompanying her on the journey; two that she presents some aspects of her work as if she were describing a play, reproducing scene sets in details, even explaining her characters’ movements in the manner of stage directions. This style is particular to Bray’s work, as is her consistent use of direct speech and present tense, which gives her work an immediacy not present in the more reflective or detached observations of other travel writers such as Wollstonecraft and Williams. Bray writes as if the scenes were unfolding before her eyes.

Finally it is her focus on mediaeval history throughout this work and many of her works of fiction that adds yet another distinguishing feature to her travel writing. At every opportunity Bray draws connections between the places she visits and their role in the events reported by Froissart in his chronicles. Bray is obsessed with history, and in this work we see the beginnings of her conservationist agenda. She decries the revolution in France for its destruction of this past, and like Charles Stothard, she attempts to create some kind of memorial in her writings.

Thus this work tells us as much about Bray as it does about the culture, landscape and history of the country she is visiting. It also illustrates what will become the main concerns of her writing - culture, landscape and history - but the history that she writes includes her own, and therefore her works have a very personal focus. Bray is writing her own story, recording her life, ambitions and anxieties about being a woman and a writer in the early nineteenth century. After the death of Charles Stothard in 1821, the year after this work was published, Bray prepared her late husband’s memoirs for publication and included in the text some journals from their second visit to the continent in 1819. The couple visited Bruges and Ghent, locations which she includes in her historical romance, *White Hoods* which, along with *De Foix*, a work also set in the middle ages and based on incidents from Froissart, I examine in the next chapter.
Chapter Three

Historiography, Identity and Gender in Eliza Bray’s Mediaeval Romances.

After Stothard’s death and her remarriage, Bray turned back to a work of fiction that she had begun in 1818, a work set during the fourteenth century and based on the mediaeval chronicles of Sir Jean Froissart. De Foix, as she entitled it, was published in 1826 and marked the beginning of her career as an historical novelist. By 1828 she had published her second historical romance, White Hoods, again set in the fourteenth century and based on Froissart’s Chronicles, but this time located in Flanders. This chapter examines Bray’s appropriation of history, looking specifically at how this appropriation reflects gender issues, not just those of women as readers and writers of history, but also those relating to women’s absence from national historical records. In addition, it explores how Bray reveals the tensions and frustrations inherent in women’s acquiescence to socially prescribed gender roles and the romance genre’s complicity in the process of acculturation.

In Devon, the circumstances were particularly conducive to writing; she had stability, security and a husband who not only shared her interest in antiquarianism and writing, but also had the time to spend encouraging his wife and correcting her copy. Previously her life had been busy, taken up with her travels and a difficult first pregnancy at the age of thirty-one. Moreover, as a young woman Bray was capricious, lively and enthusiastic, characteristics which, as Stothard intimates, were not conducive to application and study:

I have before me […] the plan of your proposed work, […] you say you have already written the book in your head; […] I would rather it were done on paper, before the spirit of the plan evaporates; […] I say nothing more; but the dusty Latin books, the unfinished Apollo, the broken stringed harp, with certain poor neglected friends, tell a tale of inconstancy (M, pp. 328-29).
The early death of both her husband and child may have depressed these animated spirits, since she writes constantly of her melancholia and recourse to the black drops. Writing was one way to overcome this depression, and despite the fact that hard work made her ‘weak nervous and consequently obliged to recur to medicine to keep me in tolerable health’ (MS, ii, p. 82), she composed ‘three chapters of De Foix in a week’ (A, p. 196). The manuscript was eventually completed on 17th December 1825, at a time when she believed historical romances had become less marketable: ‘even among Colburn’s novels, those which sold the best were laid in modern times ‘novels of fashionable life’ as they were styled’ (MS, ii, p. 65). Why Bray chose to publish in a genre she felt was less popular, thus less marketable, then bemoan her only modest success, is one question I examine in this chapter. Before moving into a close analysis of Bray’s early historical romances, however, it is necessary to examine how changes in the content of published histories allowed women, including Bray, opportunities to write in a genre which had hitherto been dominated by men.

History had been primarily a branch of literature until the late eighteenth century, when, as Grossman explains, a definite division began to emerge, history providing a ‘faithful record of […] reality whilst literature acquired a more mythic status through its associations with the poetic and figurative’. Linda Orr notes that ‘historians before the eighteenth or nineteenth century saw no contradiction […] in the fact that history functions as both a system of poetics and truth’. During the eighteenth century, however, with the growth of antiquarian studies, a discipline that advocated a scientific approach to reporting and documenting information, history became more empirical. These antiquarians, Rosemary Sweet argues, had more in common with the professional historian of the

186 Chapter 1, p. 61.
187 She offered De Foix to Mr. Rees who gave no ‘hints as to the actual state of things in the Book trade. But Mr. Rees was a good natured man and […] probably fancied he was doing me a service by accepting my work at all at such a time (MS, ii, p. 60).
188 Grossman, 3-39, (3 and 5).
189 Orr, pp. 1-22, (2).
twenty-first century, in terms of methodology, approach to sources and the struggle to reconcile erudition with style’. When reviewing Scott’s first historical romance, *Waverley* (1814), John Wilson Croker challenges the validity of historical novels where ‘[r]eal and fictitious personages, and actual and fabulous events are mixed together to the utter confusion of the reader and the unsettling of all accurate recollections of past transactions’, as he felt happened in Scott’s historical romances. Croker was one of those defending the need for history and fiction to remain, as Ina Ferris notes, in binary opposition, ‘history signifying rational qualities like accuracy, law, argument, […] but] always under threat from the non-rational, oddly aggressive power of fiction’, which can be interpreted in gendered terms. Ferris argues that the male preserve of law and logic is set in opposition to imagination, traditionally associated with the female mind. It is therefore not surprising that she chooses the adverb ‘oddly’ to describe the aggressive power of this feminine form, fiction, in its challenge to the traditionally masculine discipline of empirical history. Yet history could not escape its dependence on the constructions of fiction, as Hayden White avers, for although events alone are ‘value-neutral’ they need a narrative ‘[…w]hether they find their place finally into a story that is tragic, comic, romantic or ironic […] depends on the historian’s decision to configure them according to the imperatives of one plot structure […] rather than another’.

Bray’s historical romances therefore belonged to a period when the methods of recording history were in contention; critics such as Croker argued for empiricism, while others, such as William Godwin and Thomas Babington Macaulay, supported an approach that appropriated the structures of fiction. In his essay ‘Of History and Romance’ (1797), Godwin avers that the best histories comprise ‘a scantly substratum of facts and dates [combined with…] ingenious and instructive inventions […] correspond[ing] with the

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190 Sweet, p. xiv.
192 Ferris, p. 138.
193 White, pp. 221-36, (p. 224).
denomination [...] of historical romance'. 194 This specific connection between history and the romance genre has significant gender implications, for, as Mark Salber Philips notes, ‘[f]emale audiences and female authors were never far from the question of fiction’, and perhaps more particularly romance, and few women, as Rosemary Mitchell argues, wrote national histories. 195 Catherine Macaulay’s

multivolumed political history of seventeenth-century England had few successors. Women rarely wrote mainstream political history, [...] choosing instead to explore hitherto marginal and subsidiary areas of study, such as female biography, court history, social ‘morals and manners’ history, art history, as well as travel. 196

However, around the turn of the nineteenth century, Greg Kucich recognises a shift in the ‘basic epistemological structures of history’ privileging what he calls ‘the new history of social and affective life’. 197 Different reasons have been suggested for this shift. Kucich avers that it resulted from the growth of commerce, while Deirdre Lynch attributes it to the French Revolution, which caused relations between the public and private spheres to be ‘reconsidered and sometimes renegotiated’. 198 Whatever the reason, or perhaps reasons, for this change, the fact remained that by writing within the framework of domestic experience, women could become not just readers of history, but writers, while remaining within the boundaries of acceptable gender codes. Yet, as Godwin clearly illustrates, it was still men’s lives that were generally recorded:

I am not content to observe [...] a man upon the public stage; I would follow him to his closet, [...] I should rejoice to have [...] a journal of his ordinary and minutest

194 Godwin, p. 368.
196 Bray’s work follows this pattern. Her generic hybrid, Letters Written during a Tour through Normandy, discussed in Chapter 2, was followed by the historical romances and historical biographies The Good Saint Louis and his Times (1870) and Joan of Arc (1874), as well as her own history. Her archive also contains unpublished histories, many for children.
actions. I believe I should be better employed in studying one man, than in perusing the abridgement of Universal History.\(^{199}\)

Yet the portrayal of individuals within their domestic environment did provide opportunities for the inclusion of women’s lives in these histories, lives which had hitherto been absent from the national narratives written by men. Bray used this opportunity to extract from the mediaeval chronicles the histories of women whose lives are only briefly mentioned, and whose stories provide an alternative version of documented history.

Women writers also benefitted from the way history was becoming closely connected with the romance genre. Although there was opposition to the blending of history and romance, some writers, Joseph Strutt for example, saw the potential in blending history with fiction, for its ability to convey much useful instruction, imperceptibly, to the minds of such readers as are disgusted at the dryness usually concomitant with the labours of the antiquary, and present to them a lively and pleasing representation of the manners and amusements of our forefathers.\(^{200}\)

Strutt is here supporting Godwin’s view that to make history too academic would be to exclude a large proportion of society from reading about and learning from the past, a group which included women. Twentieth–century critics such as Ann Stevens and Gary Kelly are quite specific about how this differentiation between the academic and the general reader works. Stevens argues that by repackaging the contents of historiography in a fictional form, novelists aimed for an audience likely to be composed of more women, older children, and middle-rank readers, the patrons of the circulating libraries, than the more aristocratic male readers of antiquarian and specialised historical publications.\(^{201}\)

Kelly argues that the inclusion of ‘large amounts of factual “solid information”’ [was] to educate those social groups, namely [c]hildren, […] the common people (and perhaps

\(^{199}\) Godwin, 359-73, (364).
\(^{201}\) Stevens, (para. 3 of 29).
women), who were temperamentally unsuited to what Bray describes as the more ‘severe pursuit’ of empirical research or academic study (M, p. 36).202 Strutt’s antiquarian romance

*Queenho-Hall* was completed by Walter Scott and published in 1808, seven years before *Waverley*, and was a major influence on Scott’s decision to write his own series of historical romances, *The Waverley Novels*.

The introduction of historical material into romance fiction, however, did little to raise the genre’s status, one reason why Scott decided to publish his first historical romance, *Waverley*, anonymously. Yet Scott’s inclusion of traditionally male pursuits, scholarship, national politics and adventure, into his works began to improve the status of historical fiction.203 For Bray, who used Scott as a model for her own romances, this remasculinisation was both a blessing and a curse. The introduction of scholarship might support her attempts to be viewed as a serious writer, but it could equally undermine the image of social conformity which she took great pains to create. Not only was she appropriating a traditionally male discipline, antiquarianism, she was also, by the very nature of her material, confronting state politics and thus engaging in political debate. In this chapter, I examine how Bray adopted and adapted Scott’s methods to negotiate for herself a style which amalgamated scholarship and political debate with the more feminine aspects of domesticity and romance, perhaps even buying into the tradition of domesticating the British Royal family which John Brewer argues had been taking place during the reign of George III.204

The romance genre, despite its associations with women writers and feminine concerns, could be appropriated to present both national and gender politics. Bray’s work examines both issues, although national politics are not the main focus of these early

romances, and she masks any political concerns by making women central to her narrative and privileging personal relationships over national events. Scott, on the other hand, gives the appearance of writing a domestic tale, but his work still reflects the structure of national histories, with their greater focus on political and military matters than on women and the home. The codes of chivalry, appropriated by both Bray and Scott, form a significant link between military matters and gender politics. These codes sustain the masculine world of military glory and inscribe women into stereotypical roles as weak victims of male power, which ironically is enlisted to protect them. But they also form the foundation stones of ethical behaviour, and it was to women that the task of moral education was generally assigned. Clara Reeve advocates romance as a means of acculturation. It taught [young women …] that virtue only could give lustre to every rank and degree. —It taught the young men to look upon themselves as the champions and protectors of the weaker sex; -to treat the object of their passion with the utmost respect; […] and, […] to expect from her the reward of their virtue.  

Scott also uses romance to exemplify correct social behaviour for both men and women, but to these social matters he adds a more overt political agenda which addresses the complex national issues arising from England’s union with Scotland.

In this chapter, I examine how Bray too uses the codes of chivalry to inculcate right conduct in both the men and women of her own society, but how she differs from Scott in her approach to national politics, although in her early novels national politics are not as clearly focused as they are in her local romances, an issue I examine in Chapter Four. De Foix, for example, includes no information on the allegiances of her key historical figures with the English king, Edward III, which Froissart examines fully in his chronicles, but it does explore some of Bray’s personal convictions; her support for the maintenance of established hierarchies and the preservation of the past. Bray’s second romance, White Hoods, engages directly with the question of rebellion against hereditary rule and therefore

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205 Reeve, i, pp. 67-68.
could be read allegorically as a comment on the revolution in France, which Bray abhorred.\textsuperscript{206} Finally, another important difference from Scott, which I examine here, is her extended use of autobiographical material, an obsessive reworking of her own history achieved through the romance plot. Before moving into a detailed examination of these issues and the way they affect our view of Bray’s work in relation to that of her contemporaries, it is important to establish how the historical romance developed in the age of Scott.

The publication of Scott’s \textit{Waverley} in 1814 began to challenge the status of historical romance in a number of ways. Ina Ferris argues that many of Scott’s contemporaries viewed the Waverley Novels as a healthy alternative to ‘diseased female reading’, thereby raising the status of romance, making it suitable material for both men and women.\textsuperscript{207} She explains how the ‘complex motifs that make up the Waverley romances, nature, freshness, invigoration, and the active body’ appealed to the masculine world of action, while Scott’s focus on perilous deeds appealed to male and female fantasies of brave and chivalrous deeds.\textsuperscript{208} This emphasis on male adventure was one way in which Scott could relocate romance into the masculine world; another was through the introduction of Latin phrases to illustrate his classical and legal training. Scott eschewed the elegant languages of fashionable circles, French and Italian, often used by women writers; Lady Morgan for instance was particularly keen to display her mastery of these languages. Michael Gamer argues that the appropriation of antiquarian history by the historical romance was another way of raising its status through scholarship, just as Scott’s use of historical specificity dissociated his work from the romances satirised by Cervantes which he describes as ‘such total perversion of intellect as misconstrues the objects actually presented to the sense’ (\textit{Wly}, p. 23). Similarly, he wished to dissociate \textit{Waverley}

\textsuperscript{206} Chapter 2, p. 96 and 105.
\textsuperscript{207} Ferris, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{208} Ferris, p. 244.
from the Gothic romance, the novel of sentiment or the tale of fashionable life. Veronica Ortenberg summarises Scott’s achievement, explaining how he used well-researched and documented material with historical ‘accuracy’, [...] creat[ing] secondary characters as heroes, so that he did not have to distort the historical material, [...] he could thus take into account the historical background itself, in terms of politics and society, which because well researched, felt utterly authentic.

But with little in terms of an explanatory preface to detail his use of historical material, his readers, as Alice Chandler argues, ‘took Waverley for historical truth rather than fiction’, creating the very confusion which Croker viewed as a major problem with the historical romance. In 1829, Scott extended his prefaces and endnotes adding an even more scholarly dimension to these texts, which by this time had been universally recognised as his.

Published in the same year as Waverley, Jane West’s Alicia de Lacy (1814) also uses a preface to set her fiction in an historical context and explain the differences between her characters and their historical counterparts. As a woman, Alicia de Lacy’s history is poorly documented, unlike that of the Earl of Lancaster, and therefore to ‘save the enlightened reader the trouble of reference, and to prevent the juvenile one from so confounding the Lancaster of romance and the Lancaster of history’, West provides this information in her preface. Bray followed in the same tradition, using prefaces and endnotes to differentiate between history and fiction. Her short introductory advertisement to the first edition of De Foix explains her sources, while the closing chapter serves as an endnote, providing the reader with historical information pertaining to Gaston de Foix and his court. She also used specific antiquarian terminology, as Scott did, especially to describe items of dress. In her later editions she added full prefaces, more detailed footnotes and extended endnotes to reference her sources and relate her work to documented history. This methodology added

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210 Ortenberg, pp. 47-8.
211 Chandler, p. 1.
212 West, p. xv.
authority to her texts, but it was also problematic for Bray, who was trying to create an image of feminine modesty, a problem that challenged her throughout her writing career, and one that became more apparent as her historical romances developed to encompass English history, which I discuss in the following chapter. One way in which Bray tried to negotiate a path between scholarship and femininity was to avoid classical references and Latin expressions; another was to emphasise her reliance on male scholars, for, as Mary Poovey avers, women ‘were advised to acquire knowledge only indirectly’. Bray ensures that her writing fits this criterion by acquiring most of her information from family members and friends, and thereby inscribing her work in an informal and domestic framework. Charles Stothard provided the technical vocabulary for her romance, advising his wife that

[i]n the thirty-seventh year of Edward III, the wives and daughters of esquires, not possessing the yearly amount of two hundred pounds, are forbidden to wear any purfiling or facings on their garments, or to use esclaires, crinales, or treofles (M, pp. 331-32).

Bray’s desire for technical accuracy illustrates her debt to Scott, whose historical specificity set his work apart from that of his predecessors and marked a development in the historical romance. Walpole’s preface to *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) reveals some attempt to maintain historical plausibility, for although the settings appear exaggerated, even fantastic, he comments on ‘the possibility of the facts’ and explains how his characters ‘comport themselves as persons would do in their situation’. Character was important in eighteenth-century historiography, for, as April Alliston argues, ‘whenever

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213 Poovey, p. 27.
214 In *Henry de Pomeroy* Bray uses Latin inscriptions as part of her antiquarian agenda when describing the interior of Tavistock abbey; the inscriptions are transcribed from the abbey windows, and probably translated by Edward Bray. Similarly, she relates a conversation between the Abbott and his pupil as part of her portrayal of the dress, habits and language of the monks (pp. 41-2). Scholarship is presented through the characters and not directly through the historian/narrator.
doubt arises as to the truth of incident [...] historians depend upon the truth of character'.

Walpole’s work reflects this tradition, as does Sophia Lee’s *The Recess* (1783), although unlike Walpole, Lee appropriates key figures from national history - Queen Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots and Robert Dudley - as well as real historical events. Critical opinion differs as to the historical accuracy of her portrayals. Montague Summers believed that ‘for the most part [the characters] act according to history, but […] from entirely different motives’, a criticism which could also be applied to Bray who, like Lee, took liberties with the age and political motivation of her characters. Veronica Ortenberg, on the other hand, is less enthusiastic about Lee’s realism, arguing that she took ‘great liberties […] with the names, characters and events of history’.  

The changes Lee made to historical chronology were wrought to suit an agenda which privileged the private face of public events. Historical outcomes in *The Recess* were often the result of personal not political motivation, and thus, as in Bray’s case, were underpinned by gender. Both Bray and Lee emphasise the more feminine, emotional responses of their characters, which Alliston notes, historians such as Robertson and Hume ‘relegate as much as possible to the private realm’. It is by focussing on the private realm that Bray, like Lee, gives centrality to emotions and reclaims women’s stories from the margins of historical narrative. Moreover, by restricting her characters to those on the peripheries of national history Bray could avoid any appearance of direct political involvement, while simultaneously escaping from the limitations confronting a novelist whose characters are key historical figures with clearly documented destinies. She never includes key figures from British history, as Scott does; neither is her work included in critical debates on the national tale, even though her local romances, as I argue in Chapter Four, celebrate aspects of national history, culture and identity.

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218 Alliston, p. xvii.
Although the national tale was popularised by Sydney Owenson and Maria Edgeworth many years before the publication of *Waverley*, Scott had encapsulated aspects of national culture in his poetry. In his general preface to *Waverley* Scott illustrates the political and nationalistic aims of his first historical romance by comparing his work with Edgeworth’s, in which the English were made so familiar with [...] their gay and kind-hearted neighbours of Ireland, that she may be truly said to have done more towards completing the Union than perhaps all the legislative enactments by which it has been followed [...] I felt that something might be attempted for my own country (p. xiii).

Yet his reference to a tradition of women writers in the field of national literature, including Maria Edgeworth, Elizabeth Hamilton and Mrs. Grant of Laggan, focuses more on the differences rather than the similarities between his work and theirs. He writes fiction, not non-fiction like Grant, includes less dialect than Edgeworth, and does not confine himself to rural areas like Hamilton in *The Villagers of Glenburnie*. Without expressing any overt criticism, Scott is illustrating the restrictions which are either socially or psychologically imposed on women writers, from which he, as a male, is free. As a well-educated male he had no need to prove his academic credentials or conceal his political comments behind a mask of domesticity or regionality. Yet because of his academic background he was anxious about admitting to the authorship of a prose romance.  

*Waverley* combines masculine concerns - military issues, state politics and scholarship - with the conventions of romance, and therefore provides something for all readers. He even highlights the domestic nature of his romance by explaining that the real disposition of his hero, Edward Waverley, ‘notwithstanding his dreams of tented fields and military honour, seemed exclusively domestic’ (p. 326). Edward Waverley is potentially a domestic subject because he is prepared to renounce male adventure and settle into marriage and the responsibility of running an estate. Fergus Mac-Ivor, on the other hand,

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219 See p. 129.
can never become a domestic subject because of his constant thirst for honour and adventure. He is unable to live in the newly formed social order, a point marked by his execution. Ultimately, his military campaigns on behalf of a romanticised prince, Charles Edward Stuart, are consigned to the past, or inscribed in art, in both Scott’s tale and the painting which presides over the dining parlour of Tully–Veolan and the celebration of Waverley’s marriage to Rose Bradwardine. This painting encapsulates the romance of adventure and ensures that the rebellion is not completely forgotten. It represents Fergus Mac-Ivor and Waverley in their Highland dress, the scene a wild, rocky, and mountainous pass, down which the clan were descending in the background. [...] Beside this painting hung the arms which Waverley had borne in the unfortunate civil war. The whole piece was beheld with admiration and deeper feelings (W, p. 444).

The timid, domesticated Rose might bring Edward Waverley back to his homeland and home, but this ending carries little conviction for the reader. The impact of this painting, which memorialises Waverley’s support for the Jacobite cause, suggests that he may only appear to be settled into domesticity, and that Scott has not banished national politics from his novel’s ending. In Waverley the birth of national union engenders a sense of regret rather than elation, for to achieve this harmony the inspirational Fergus Mac-Ivor must die, evidence perhaps to support the Jacobite leanings which critics such as Miranda Burgess have ascribed to Scott.  

The denouements of both De Foix and White Hoods are much less ambiguous than Scott’s. Bray banishes any hint of military conflict from the ending and instead celebrates the happy marriage of her two invented protagonists. Moreover women are never absent from her narrative, as they are for long periods in Waverley. In De Foix military action is initiated because of women, and the military conflict which Bray does portray is one to rescue the heroines from captivity. Similarly the brief military

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220 Burgess, p. 151.
221 Her later works have a very different tenor as tragedy often overshadows the endings, even those which conclude with a happy marriage. In Courtenay, for example, marriage is accompanied by the loss of friends and relatives, as well as the near destruction of home and fortune, and therefore happiness is undercut by tragedy. Thus, through the medium of domesticity, Bray makes significant insights into how national politics directly affect the home and family (p. 380).
campaign in *White Hoods* is designed to both portray and critique idealised love and self-sacrifice as Bianca, dressed as a man, throws herself over the body of her dying lover and receives the wound that is meant for him.

For Bray and Scott, the historical romance was one means through which to inculcate moral education. This educative function of romance was one way through which both male and female writers could address the romance genre’s negative reputation, which Gillian Beer suggests rested on it ‘offering a dangerously misleading guide to everyday life’ by suppressing reason and stirring ‘up passions best held in check’.\(^\text{222}\) In his introduction to *Ivanhoe*, Scott defends his decision to marry Wilfred of Ivanhoe to Rowena and not Rebecca on moral grounds, for such

> is not the recompense which Providence has deemed worthy of suffering merit, and it is a dangerous and fatal doctrine to teach young persons, the most common readers of romance, that rectitude of conduct and of principle are either naturally allied with, or adequately rewarded by, the gratification of our passions, or attainment of our wishes (pp. xvii-xviii).

Bray notes a similar function for her romance in the general preface to her 1844-5 collection of novels and tales:

> [i]t becomes therefore of the highest importance that the effects they (romances) are calculated to produce should be all on the side of what is permanently good; that they should be capable of raising the tone of the mind; of stimulating it to a love of what is noble in sentiment and generous in action (*WH*, pp. xxi-ii).

Yet she eschews the didactic model of ‘sermonising, so out of place in a novel, [...] and advocates] holding up the mirror of example’ (*WH*, p. xlv), perhaps because, as Lisa Woods argues, didactic fiction had declined in popularity after 1815, and Bray, like Scott, adapted her fiction to reflect this change in the consumer market.

*Waverley*, despite its critics, achieved much critical acclaim. T. H. Lister in the *Edinburgh Review* praised Scott as the first to show ‘how history ought to be made available for the purposes of fiction’, and modern critics like Veronica Ortenberg view him.

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as a ‘renovator’ of the historical romance. He certainly became a model for other writers hoping to succeed in the genre: G. P. R. James, Bulwer Lytton, Mary Shelley and Eliza Bray all acknowledge their debt to Scott. Yet critical attention on the historical novel after Waverley focuses on male writers, notably James, Ainsworth and Lytton. Lady Morgan and Maria Edgeworth are noted for their national tales, while Mary Shelley is primarily remembered for Frankenstein. More recently, critical works have been published on Shelley’s historical novels, Valperga and Perkin Warbeck, but Eliza Bray, who wrote fourteen historical romances, is virtually ignored, despite the fact that many of her works were reprinted, some twice, even before the first collection of 1846. This study sets out to address that imbalance.

Bray’s Use Of History and Romance.

Bray states that ‘the great aim of historical romance is to add to truth the attractions of fancy; and without perverting the former, to select and combine particular portions from the general mass of matter which history affords’ (WH, p. xxi). Yet Bray found truth impossible to define, and her attempts to explain and justify her own definitions of historical truth create many of the complications and contradictions that characterise her work. She states that fiction has its own truth ‘by its adherence to nature and probability’ (MS, ii, p. 56), which suggests that Bray does not see truth as an absolute. She even argues that oral history, ‘be it false of true, […] was an oral tradition, and as such was sufficient for my purpose’ (W, p. 7). Significantly she does not qualify that purpose: it could be romance writing, the recording of folk history or the construction of an alternative version of history, a female version. I suggest that Bray’s lack of qualification underlines two important features; one that she did not have a single purpose when writing these romances, the other that she found truth difficult to define.

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225 Introduction, pp. 15 and 16.
The problem of making historical facts palatable to the general reader without distorting ‘truth’ was debated by Godwin, Strutt and Scott himself. They, like Bray disliked the dullness of empirical history, but she did not have the confidence that Scott, as a well-educated male writer had, to blend history and fiction without proving to her readers that she was able to differentiate between the two.\footnote{226} Perhaps her reason for such anxiety can be traced back to Hume, who avers that women naturally have ‘an aversion to matter of fact, and such an appetite for falsehood’.\footnote{227}

It is also difficult when writing history to avoid some subjectivity, for histories rely on the interpretation of source material which reveals the ideology of the historian. Yet Bray believed in the need for ‘impartiality’ (MS, i, p.3), and is critical of those whose writing reflected prejudice of any kind. Yet ironically she does not appear to detect her own prejudice. In a letter to her nephew, Eppy, she accuses first Hume, and later Shakespeare, of adopting ‘without sufficient caution […] the traditions and popular prejudices of the day’. Shakespeare’s representations of Henry V and Joan of Arc she found particularly unsatisfactory, full of inaccuracies caused by ‘not being fully acquainted with the truth’, whatever she conceived that to be, or pandering to ‘national prejudice’. Bray thought Henry V ‘a thoroughly cold hearted, selfish man devoted to the glorification of a boundless unreasonable ambition’, not the heroic figure who legitimised his claim to the English throne through conquests in France. She believed, however, that Englishmen disliked having ‘their demi-gods shown up as rogues, knaves, or worse than the brute creation in cruelty; many of their heroes were such’, and thus condemns a specifically masculine understanding of history which privileges military success and neglects feeling. It is the affective rather than militaristic qualities which Bray focuses on when praising Joan of Arc, whom she describes as ‘[p]ure in life, brave, gifted, generous, enthusiastic and

in the true spirit of patriotism devoted to deliver her country from the tyranny of a foreign power, she was an honour to human nature’. Despite Joan’s military career, bravery is the only military quality Bray cites. Even her campaign to unite France under King Charles is presented as patriotic, showing a loyalty to king and country which Bray appears to have condoned as acceptable female behaviour. In supporting Joan and denigrating Henry V, however, Bray is exhibiting her own historical prejudices, which are also clear in her published writings.  

Fully objective history is therefore difficult to write if the work is to be other than a collection of incontrovertible data, and Bray’s source material, the mediaeval chronicles of Froissart, Monstrelet and St Palaye, were not without bias. Froissart’s Chronicles are composed from a mixture of eyewitness accounts and his own observations of events as he journeyed through France and Spain, accounts which in themselves are subjective, but which are further compromised by the influence of patronage. Johnes’ translation of de St. Palaye’s memoir of Froissart, which prefaces the Chronicles, highlights how Froissart praises ‘the piety and virtue of the Gaston de Foix’ whose patronage he was then enjoying. In De Foix Bray portrays how power and politics construct our view of history by modelling Brother John the Chronicler on his historical counterpart, Froissart. Brother John’s superior, the Prior, dictates how a nobleman, Peter of Roussillon, will be portrayed, thereby dictating how history will remember him:

“I am to chronicle the acts of the late noble lord.”
“Noble!” said the Prior, “he little merited that title brother John,”
“I speak it, […] only in respect to his rank and state.”
“[…] set him down in your chronicle, as his acts deserve-a villain.” (p. 24).

Thus ‘truth’ becomes a slippery term when historical records are dependent upon personal testimony and governed by, in this case, religious politics. Bray also reproduces Froissart’s dramatic style and his technique of allocating dialogue to historical characters, a technique

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228 Letter to Eppy, 28th July 1864, WSRO, box 1.
which, Ann Stevens notes, was being transferred from history to fiction during the eighteenth century.\footnote{Stevens, (para 17of 29).}

Bray, like Scott, found that writing historical figures into her romances was problematic, for to maintain the truth of history, even for minor historical players, often ran counter to the requirements of romance fiction. As Francis Bacon states, ‘the successes and issues of actions as related in true history are far from being agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice’.\footnote{Francis Bacon, The Works of Francis Bacon, collected and edited by James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, 14 vols. London, 1861-1879, iv, The Making of Modern Law. Gale. 2010. Gale, Cengage Learning. <http://galenet.galegroup.com> [accessed 23rd April 2008], p. 316.} Jane of Boulogne was a marginal character in Froissart’s history, ‘not a Queen Elizabeth or Mary Queen of Scots, therefore much too obscure and unimportant a personage in History to make [her fate] of any consequence’ (MS, ii, p. 53), but Bray struggled to decide Jane’s fate. Ultimately, she remained true to historical outcomes and married Jane to the old Duke de Berry rather than to his son, a decision she later regretted. In her autobiographical manuscript she explains that Jane’s marriage to the young duke would have been far more pleasing to the feelings of the reader and infinitely more in conformity with poetical Justice, […] all this arose from a want of proper consideration as to what in a Romance founded on historical truth ought to be held inviolate and what might be treated with some licence (MS, ii, p. 53).

When editing the manuscript in the 1860s, Bray crossed out the word ‘infinitely’, thus lessening the strength of her opinion or perhaps the seriousness of her mistake, a process which shows that even with time and maturity such decisions still proved difficult. Bray’s problem arose from the tension between moral justice and historical accuracy, a problem which Dr Johnson highlights in his criticism of Shakespeare’s tragic ending to King Lear.

Thus Scott is criticised by his readers for his decision to marry Wilfred of Ivanhoe to
Rowena. In her first romance, Bray was not confident enough to alter history, despite Jane’s minor role in Froissart’s *Chronicle*; instead, she invented a parallel plot to satisfy the demands of romance and illustrate two very different models of positive masculine behaviour. Sir Equitan is the brave and loyal knight who rescues his lady from the hands of her enemies, while Sir Eustace is a feminised knight who, despite being described as brave and noble, is imprisoned with the women and never sees true military conflict. Sir Eustace, therefore, is more idealised than Sir Equitan and as I show later, is probably modelled on Charles Stothard, thus illustrating how Bray appropriates figures from her own history, representing them as characters in her fiction.

If Sir Eustace is a possible representation of Charles Stothard then Sir Equitan’s prototype is probably Wilfred of Ivanhoe, who proves his bravery in action and adheres to the laws of chivalry, ultimately rescuing Rebecca from death at the stake. However, Scott’s decision to make Rebecca racially different, a Jewess whose people were social pariahs, perhaps simplified his decision to deny her Sir Wilfred as a husband, although some of Scott’s readers were happy to allow such a marriage, at least in a fictional context. Had Scott pandered to his reader’s suggestions, however, another problem would have arisen: Rowena’s loyalty and virtue would not have been rewarded, Sir Wilfred’s social position would not have been elevated and, more importantly, home and nation would not have been united. This love match therefore serves a political end. In *De Foix* the opposite is true: it is not the love match which serves a political end, but Jane’s decision not to follow her heart. In her later works, Bray was less anxious about inventing an ending that counters historical truth, explaining the historical outcome in her endnotes. If the use of history created problems for Bray they were offset by great advantages. History provided ready-made story lines, which she needed to support her imagination: ‘I was always

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232 Johnson explains that, ‘Shakespeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause contrary to the natural ideas of justice’, Greene, p. 465; Scott, *Ivanhoe*, p. 137.  
233 See p. 155.
desirous to build on some Historical fact or interesting tradition, or on some occurrence in real and domestic life, rather than have nothing to build on but fancy’ (MS, ii, p. 56).

One major problem for Bray was the close relationship between history and politics, as she did not wish to be viewed as a ‘political lady’ (MS, ii, p. 106), although her choice of subject matter made political involvement impossible to avoid. Moreover, her constant denial of any political interest makes her appear at the least naïve, if not disingenuous. That Bray did confront such issues is clear in her writing, which explores religion, legitimate rule and the art of kingship, as well as setting out models for correct social behaviour, although she adopted strategies to mask her opinions behind politics of a more social and domestic nature. It was the political nature of historical fiction that might have encouraged her to try and separate it from the domestic novel as she does in her autobiographical manuscript: ‘I am here speaking of what may be termed the Historical Romance, of the domestic novel (my favourite species of composition, and that in which I hope there is no very great conceit in saying I did the best) I shall have more to say hereafter’ (MS, ii, p. 50). She never mentions the domestic novel again; neither does she write a work which could be classified as a domestic novel rather than an historical romance. Her constant attempt to inscribe her work within a domestic rather than the political framework merely indicates her discomfort when uniting political material with the image of social conformity she wished to create.

Yet even more radical women writers than Bray adopted strategies to inscribe their work within the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour. Lady Morgan’s Italy (1821), for example, confined the overtly political subject matter on law, government, medicine and economics to appendices written by her husband, Charles. The political comment in her fiction she aligns with morals, thereby giving it a more feminine focus, for Hannah More rallies women: ‘to the best and most appropriate exertion of their power, to raise the
depressed tone of public morals’. Bray’s work is significant as it forms the middle ground between the antiquarian and historical specificity of Scott and the focus on female characters in the works of women writers such as Radcliffe, Reeve and Shelley. Ivanhoe, Scott’s first mediaeval romance, was published five years before Bray’s, and her admiration for Scott probably prompted her decision to write in a genre which, she claims, had lost its popularity: ‘even among Colburns’ novels, those which sold the best were laid in modern times ‘novels of fashionable life’ as they were styled’ (MS, ii, p. 66). Why Bray chose this period and how she negotiated a path between the traditionally male realm of history and politics and the more feminine sphere of romance is what I examine here.

**Bray’s Choice of the Mediaeval Period.**

The choice of mediaeval France and Flanders was initially predicated on her first husband’s interest in the period. Their journeys to the continent in 1818 and 1819 were undertaken so that Stothard could complete a commission to sketch the Bayeux Tapestry and embark on a companion volume to his Monumental Effigies, with an aim to preserve aspects of French and Flemish material culture. Bray was aggrieved at how revolution had promoted the systematic erasure of France’s past, and to preserve the past was one reason for her decision to write historical romances. The French Revolution also had repercussions in England. Mark Girouard argues that the Middle Ages, ‘based on the social structures of feudalism, when kingship was reverenced and the Church at its most powerful, became increasingly attractive to peers, gentlemen and clergymen’ and ‘[g]ood, serious, conservative Farmer George [...] became the focus of a new affection and loyalty’. Furthermore this national revival of mediaevalism was linked to nationalism and epitomised by the refurbishment of Windsor Castle where the ‘feudal glories [...] were

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235 Girouard, p. 23.
restored and enhanced to make it worthy of a nation whose modern paladins had once again conquered France.\textsuperscript{236}

Bray’s choice of the mediaeval period therefore reflected her own conservative ideology, yet despite the fact that allegiances to the English king, Edward III and his son, the Black Prince, were central to the conflicts between the French nobility during the Middle Ages, she avoids any reference to the English national politics in \textit{De Foix}. Her focus is on the maintenance of hereditary right, paternalistic rule and her love of chivalry, the codes of knightly conduct which provided her with positive models for gentlemanly behaviour. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Middle Ages, Girouard notes, came to be viewed as a time ‘of simple faith and loyalties and as the source of much that now appeared both sacred and threatened’.\textsuperscript{237} He argues that the belief in ‘[l]oyalty to a king or leader, […] faithful love, […] readiness to fight for one’s honour, […] and truth to one’s word’, though romanticised, embodied what seemed to be lacking in post-revolutionary France and England.\textsuperscript{238}

Burke makes explicit these connections between eighteenth-century society and the mediaeval knightly ideal by comparing the execution of Louis XVI and his queen with the death of chivalry: the end of an era in both France and England. He transforms the figure of Marie Antoinette into a symbol of ideal womanhood, victimised by the mob and therefore in need of protection, but shows how it is not just the mob, but also the aristocracy, her own class, who fail to fulfil the idealised role of their knightly ancestors:

\begin{quote}
[i]n a nation of men of honour, of cavaliers, I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insults, but the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of England is extinguished forever.\textsuperscript{239}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{236} Girouard, pp. 23,27 and 28; and Elizabeth Fay, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{237} Girouard, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{238} Girouard, p. 19; Fay, \textit{Romantic Mediaevalism}, pp. 2-3; and Davidoff and Hall, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{239} Burke, p. 77.
Chivalry is therefore transformed into not just an embodiment of the old order, destroyed by revolution and commercialism, but a code of behaviour for everyone: the chivalrous knight and the gentleman become synonymous. This transference from a military ideal to a social code of manners also reflects the shift from military to affective history discussed earlier. Janet Todd explains how the novel of sentiment helped focus attention on feeling and its role in state politics:

the few books that try to imagine a better society generally never find it in any political or economic progress but in a re-establishment of a kind of feudalism, making ties out of patronage and loyalty rather than out of the economic needs of the emerging capitalist order.  

Bray valorised feelings and she saw the ‘emerging capitalist order’ desensitising society as those ‘intoxicated by unbounded wealth, […] no longer submit to the wholesome rule which had been the very cause and support of their prosperity’, resulting in social ‘misery and death’ (WH, p. xii), showing her support for the benign paternalism espoused by Burke.  

Like Burke, Bray appropriates the chivalric ideal to provide models of correct social behaviour, knightly values for the English gentleman and virtue for the English lady, but her presentation of chivalry is neither as nuanced nor as probing as Scott’s. In Ivanhoe, Scott presents chivalry from different national perspectives, those of the Norman, the Saxon and the Jew, and Rebecca’s place outside both the Christian and the male military tradition allows her to introduce a very different view of these codes, which I examine later. Bray’s work is more stereotyped than Scott’s; her knights either follow the codes of chivalry or they do not. Those who do not are presented as villains, violent, dishonourable and abusive to women. This mode of presentation is akin to the fairy tale which, Eric Auerbach notes, ‘is the true element of the courtly romance, which after all is not only interested in portraying external living conditions in the feudal society of the closing years

\[\text{241}\] See Chapter 4, p. 190.
of the twelfth century but also and especially in expressing its ideals’. 242 It is these ideals that Bray emphasises, underplaying the true ruthlessness of the age, although she understood that ‘three-fourths of Europe might be justly considered in a barbarous and uncultivated state […] the exercise of arms […] supp[lying] the imperfect administration of defective laws’ (DF, p.12). She romanticises the period, believing that chivalry would soften ‘the rigour of the times, and prevent […] those dangers which threatened society at large from the universal practice of constant and domestic warfare’ (p. 13). 243

It is the conflict between families and individuals, not exclusively between states or nations, that Bray examines in these novels, for she notes that public decisions were subject to ‘the fatal effects of individual private passion and individual feeling’ (p. 13). Here Bray is not only illustrating the close relationship between personal feelings and affairs of state, but she is also emphasising the need to control passion, a view Scott makes explicit in Ivanhoe when De Bois Guilbert dies ‘[u]nscathed by the lance of his enemy, […] a victim to the violence of his own contending passions’ (p. 438). For Bray, chivalry breeds virtue and is therefore the route to controlling passion; characters who cannot subscribe to the laws of chivalry are therefore villains. Scott’s work reveals a much less simplistic presentation of chivalry than Bray’s, even exposing a darker side to this ideal, where the desire for military honours and the garnering of fame, the ‘glory which gilds our sepulchre and embalms our name’ (I, p. 275) breeds arrogance and egotism.

Bray’s early romances are nostalgic reflections on a past that is idealised and romanticised. To ‘embalm pastness in the present’ and thereby to reclaim the object of loss through art was as Elizabeth Fay notes, typical of the period known as Romanticism. 244 Bray’s personal loss during the early eighteen twenties gave her sufficient reason to idealise the past, although this tendency was also typical of Scott who used the past ‘for both asserting tradition and imagining a new past from which a desired present and future

243 Jane West also notes the differences between the mediaeval society of romance and the historical reality, Alicia de Lacy, pp. ix-xi.
244 Fay, Romantic Mediaevalism, p. 36.
Politically Scott created an imaginative reconstruction of the past in order to offer a possible solution to the national conflict between England and Scotland following the Act of Union and the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 45, a union symbolised in Scott’s *Waverley* through the marriage of English and Scottish aristocracy. Bray’s use of the past, at least at this stage in her career, is not as a device through which she can examine British state politics, except perhaps to signal her support for established hierarchies. Her wish was to effect social improvement, a change in personal values and behaviour. But on an even more personal level she wished to create for herself an idealised alternative to the present, a romance ending for her own life instead of tragedy. In the following section I examine Bray’s early novels, beginning with a comparison between Scott’s first mediaeval romance, *Ivanhoe*, and Bray’s *De Foix*. From this beginning, I explore Bray’s development as an historical novelist, examining her narrative strategies, gender politics and the significance of her recurring themes, apparent in both her fiction and non-fiction, which I examined in my earlier chapters, thus establishing a model of coherent development across her work.

**Comparing Ivanhoe and De Foix**

One way in which Bray’s *De Foix* is different from *Ivanhoe* is that there are no explicit connections with either English or British national politics, despite the possible opportunities to include national imperialist propaganda. Thus while Scott openly confronts English and Scottish politics, Bray dissociates herself from any overt political intervention as she never mentions Edward III’s campaigns in France which were integral to the allegiances she was presenting. She does, however, examine the need to maintain hereditary rule which was germane to the politics of her own period, and gender politics, aspects of her early work which she develops throughout her fiction. *De Foix*, however, does have many features in common with *Ivanhoe*, Scott’s first novel to be set in the remote past: the opening motif of a disguised knight, a meeting with a friar/prior in the

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246 See p. 130. In *Guy Mannering* the laird is Scottish, the bride English.
woods, a joust, paired heroines and the rescue of at least one woman from imprisonment. Gender issues can be used to explain the main differences between Scott’s work and Bray’s. Anxiety about her image is key to her constant denial of political comment in her work; the same anxiety dictates both her writing style and her use of sources. Once Scott had publicly admitted his authorship he appears less anxious than Bray to justify or verify his source material, often being quite vague about the provenance of his stories and even admitting to appropriating feminine forms, oral histories and the ‘stories of old romance’ (p. xii), to supply motifs for his fiction. Bray, on the other hand, is rigorous about referencing all her sources and asserting the historical accuracy of her material. In the preface to her 1845-6 collection she explains: ‘I determined to be very careful in the selection of my authorities, and introduce nothing that was not supported by that which was unquestionable’ (WH, p. viii). To verify her material in De Foix she aligns her narrator, an old knight Sir Espaign du Lyon, with the ‘same respectable and amusing old knight who so much delighted Sir John Froissart’ (DF p. 34), emphasising both his respectability and reliability, therefore his suitability for the role of historian. She is careful, however, to create a clear division between the narrator of events and the author/historian who has the knowledge of hindsight and intrudes on the narrative to comment on fourteenth-century customs, dress and material culture.

In Ivanhoe Scott provides a more thorough description of the historical period than he had given in Waverley because of the remote, medieval setting, but his methods of narration differ from Bray’s, and through these differences, significant gender issues arise. In Ivanhoe, after one short paragraph describing the location, the narrative voice is superseded by that of the author/historian who steps outside the story to inform readers of the political situation in England, ‘towards the end of the reign of Richard I’ (p. 1). Scott provides only a brief justification for this digression to remind, not lecture, those readers who may ‘be apt to forget’ relevant details’ (p. 3), and the information he provides amounts to approximately two pages. Bray’s historical background also begins with a
direct address to the reader, but she makes explicit the split between the historian/author and romance narrator: ‘[t]hus shall we leave them to finish their little journey towards the monastery, whilst we say a word or two to the reader, in our own character’ (DF, p. 12). Bray more than doubles Scott’s comment, and her descriptions of the manners and customs of mediaeval society ultimately become a eulogy on knighthood, the cult of chivalry and courtly love, which she states became entitled ‘Romance’ (p. 14).

What is particularly significant about Bray’s style, however, is the explicit links she makes between her romance and the theatre, which was a fundamental influence on her life and writing. In an extremely long passage of just one sentence, she links her role as author/commentator with

the Chorus in the plays of olden time, who when a seasonal pause occurred by the close of a scene or the ending of an act, just stepped in before the curtain, and gave the audience such intelligence as it was most fitting they should receive, for the better comprehension of the plot and circumstances that were going on during the performance of the piece, but which they were not likely to gather in plain and absolute terms, from the characters themselves (p. 12).

Here she explicitly appropriates the language of the theatre, likening the narrator to the Chorus figure in Greek tragedy, a style also adopted by Shakespeare in plays such as Henry V. Later in the same passage she refers to acts, scenes and curtains, even comparing the act of stepping outside the curtain to her own method of addressing her readers. Bray had close connections with theatre, having been an actress herself, but she is not alone in her use of theatrical terms. In her introduction to The Recess April Alliston notes that Lee ‘borrows the high-flown language of neo-tragedy’. 247 Jane West makes similar allusions in her preface to Alicia de Lacy: ‘Enough having been said in the character of Prologue […] order the Dramatis Personae on the stage’ (p. xv). But Bray takes this convention even further; she envisions her scenes in ways that reflect theatrical performances, detailing the

247 See also Walpole’s Otranto, p. vii; and April Alliston’s introduction to Sophia Lee’s The Recess, p. xi.
different sets and costumes, even directing her characters’ movements as she does in her travel writing.  

Scott’s description of a joust is more akin to a spectacle: wealth and ‘splendour’ abound rather than energy and movement, making his scenes appear as a tableau, although he does show how social status is reflected in costume:

crowded with all that was noble, great, wealthy and beautiful […] and the contrast of the various dress of these dignified spectators rendered the view gay as it was rich, while the interior and lower space, filled with the substantial burgesses and yeomen […] formed, in their plain attire, a dark fringe, […] relieving, and at the same time setting off, its splendour (p.74).

While colour is an important feature of this description there is little real detail given, a feature which supports Jacqueline Labbe’s point on the stylistic difference between male and female writers. Labbe argues that women writers concentrate on local detail while their male counterparts take in a more general, panoramic scene, comments which would reflect the respective gender and style of Bray and Scott. Bray focuses more on action, moving to different areas of the joust where she can concentrate on a number of specific scenarios; even her comment on class is based on action not on dress. It is their lack of manners, ‘impolite jostling’ (p. 135), not their attire that categorises the lower classes in Bray’s description. The overall impression Bray creates is one of constant movement effected through her focus on action. The lists were ‘paced and examined’ (p. 135), the count’s arms nailed to the roof and the multitude moved to and fro, like one immense body set in motion, […] the galleries thrown open to the people soon became an object of contest amongst them and many a scuffle ensued […] those who were disappointed, returned to join the populace below; […] eagerly employed in watching for the arrival of the Count (p. 135).

Similar differences can be observed in descriptions of knightly dress. Bray’s introductory account of her knight, Sir Equitan, abounds with the technical terminology specific to antiquarian studies, each term followed by a simple explanation in parenthesis.

The knight’s

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248 See Chapter 2, pp. 114-16.
249 Labbe, pp. 4–5.
habergeon (or coat mail) was covered by a surcoat of red velvet [...] the camail (a piece of chain-mail armour), worn about the neck dependent from the basinet to the shoulders. His feet guarded by soleret, or pointed shoe, rested in the stirrups (p. 2).

Scott, being more relaxed than Bray about his scholarly authority, still includes detailed descriptions of dress, but without the inclusion of technical names, although occasionally he will make contemporary comparisons to give readers a clearer picture of these mediaeval garments. De Bois-Guilbert was dressed in ‘a shirt, namely of linked mail, with sleeves and gloves of the same [...] as flexible to the body as those which are now wrought in stocking-loom’ (p. 12). Thus Scott’s descriptions do not disrupt the narrative, neither do they read, as Bray’s do, like a textbook or encyclopaedia. In her early works, Bray had not managed to achieve a full integration of her historical material with her own inventions.

Although Bray asserts that ‘the great aim of the novelist should be to render works read for amusement, useful and instructive’ (WH, p. xlv), her ability to balance entertainment and instruction, like her ability to integrate fact and fiction, is imperfect in De Foix, or appears imperfect because of her use of stereotyping. In order to fulfil their roles as models of positive and negative social behaviour Bray’s characters tend towards stereotypes of good and evil, vice and virtue, rather than functioning as believable historical figures, and the men are judged in relation to their treatment of women. One such example is Le Mengeant St. Basile.

Froissart explains that St. Basile was a mercenary knight who, along with many others, aided Sir Peter de Bearn in his attempts to maintain Lourdes castle for Edward III against Gaston De Foix. Bray does not show the full historical picture in her depiction of St. Basile. She ignores his support for the English king which, through the issue of conflicting loyalties, might complicate her representation, and transforms his character from Froissart’s depiction of a fearless warrior and honourable knight, a man of his times,

250 During the eighteenth century the treatment of women became one criterion on which to judge civilised behaviour. See Barbara Taylor, Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 156-57.
to that of an unmitigated villain, a ‘celebrated captain-robber and cut-throat [...] who resembled nothing less than the arch–fiend himself’ (p. 291). This reputation is predicated on his brutality to all those weaker than himself, particularly women. He is quite willing to murder Jane of Boulogne, providing the price is right. Historically St. Basile was a man of his time whose character alternated between lawless brutality and some honour. Froissart explains that he ‘harassed the country’, engendering hatred from those he terrorised, but he also ‘fought valiantly […] and at times] behaved gallantly’ to women and children. After capturing the castle of Le Paillier, St. Basile released the lady and her children, only retaining her husband as his hostage, an act aligned to the codes of chivalry which Bray never allows her villains to follow. Her knights fall into two categories: they are either exemplars of moral behaviour or are punished for their villainy. By using stereotypes, however, Bray is aligning her work with the more feminine models of fairy tale and romance fiction rather than historical narrative.

A similar treatment is meted out to Sir Evan and Sir Gracien, De Foix’s illegitimate sons. Froissart says very little about their characters except that they were handsome and that their father intended to connect them ‘very highly by marriage; for he has money enough which will find them wives to uphold and assist them’ (FC, ii, pp. 92-3). Bray’s characters, however, have ‘more than common pride’ (pp. 49-50) and ‘intolerable vanity’ (p. 72), with jealousy and avarice being later added to the list. There is no evidence in Froissart to suggest the arrogance, pride and insensitive materialism encapsulated in Evan’s schemes to use Jane of Boulogne as a pawn in his bid for greater wealth and power. Not only does he plot to murder Jane after their marriage, but he also schemes to destroy his half brother, Gaston, thus securing his position as heir to his father’s estates. Evan’s wickedness is, like that of Bray’s other villains, based on his lack of adherence to the chivalric ideals of ‘courage, especially when […] protecting the weak, loyalty, generosity,

251 Froissart, ii, p. 71.
252 Beer, p. 19.
[and] courtesy [...] in dealing with ladies’. Although Froissart records a quarrel between Gaston and Evan de Foix, he attributes it to Evan’s rash and capricious behaviour, not a desire for power, noting that the half brothers ‘mutually loved each other’ (FC, ii, p. 97). Bray on the other hand ascribes their quarrel to hatred born out of a deep-seated jealousy, an integral part of Evan’s corrupt and unchristian character. It is only the Duke d’Armagnac whose character needs no alteration. His dishonourable dealings over land and money are clearly recorded by Froissart and his deceit, treachery and thirst for power make him prime material for Bray’s presentation of manipulative evil.

In Ivanhoe Scott’s knights generally work like Bray’s as representatives of good or evil, but there is a national dimension to the rationale underpinning their depiction. Reginald Front-de-Boeuf, Philip Malvoisin, de Bracy and de Bois Gilbert are Norman, not Saxon knights, and as such display negative behaviour. Front-de-Boeuf, like Bray’s Basile le Mengeant, spent his time ‘in public war or in private feuds and broils, [...] features [...] which strongly expressed the fiercer and more malignant passions of the mind’ (I, p. 195). In de Boeuf’s treatment of Ulrica the Saxon Scott illustrates not only the knight’s tyranny and relentless pursuit of power, but also the Norman suppression of the Saxon nation. His depiction of the Normans afford ‘a striking contrast betwixt the Saxons, by whom the soil was cultivated, and the Normans, who still reigned in it as conquerors, reluctant to mix with the vanquished, or acknowledge themselves of the same stock’ (I, p. xi). In De Foix, d’Armanac’s treatment of Jane of Boulogne and Eustace de Bearn provides a similar portrayal of tyranny, but without any national ramifications. Veronica Ortenberg argues that Scott’s work ‘contributed to the continuation of the cliché of the Norman Yoke’ which, she explains, was ‘part of the whole nineteenth-century attempt to create a blueprint of the idea of Britishness’. Scott’s portrayal of the ‘Norman Yoke’ also had a contemporary relevance for Scotland after 1707, and race, national pride and the way to

254 Ortenberg, p. 48.
effect a successful union with England are integral to Scott’s narrative. *Ivanhoe* is in one respect a treatise on how to rule, or perhaps more specifically how not to rule, a vanquished people. Bray’s work focuses on what characteristics are desireable in a ruler, as I demonstrate in relation to Lewis de Male in *White Hoods*.

In the wake of the Napoleonic wars Bray could have made useful political capital out of an allegorical tale involving Edward III’s victories in France, for as Gary Kelly states, literature after the French Revolution became ‘a central institution of national culture, identity, education and power’. But she chooses to ignore this potential, concentrating instead on a tale of personal hatred and rivalry. By reducing the political element in her work and privileging the personal, Bray presents her history more as a moral tale, a form perhaps more suited to her role as a woman writer.

Codes of socially acceptable behaviour are epitomised by Scott’s *Ivanhoe* and Bray’s Sir Equitan; both are presentations of ideal knighthood which combines martial and gentlemanly qualities. In Sir Eustace de Bearn, however, Bray portrays an even more idealised knight than Ivanhoe or Equitan. Eustace is described as ‘the soul of honour, not merely […] in deeds of arms, but in its largest sense, as influencing every thought, every act of the heart, where honour is held sacred’ (DF, p. 71), yet he had never proved himself in battle, the tournament at Orthes being his ‘first essay in arms’ (p. 78). Moreover his appearances are usually in domestic rather than martial environments, suggesting a feminised nature. He was often amongst the ladies where he would ‘sometimes play and sing to them, or at others read aloud one of the MS. Romances that formed part of the library of the Count’ (p. 68), the latter pastime suggesting a comparison with Stothard who read the romances of Scott and Radcliffe, to the Kempe family. In fact, Bray’s

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256 See p. 143.
presentation of Eustace is almost identical to the descriptions of Stothard in her autobiographical manuscript, a sensitive man with a heart so alive to the refined and impassioned affections [...] tears would flow from sympathy or tenderness as readily as from the eyes of a woman yet without the slightest approach to what is unmanly, unless it is unmanly to have a warm and sensitive heart (i, p. 227).

Eustace, and by association Stothard, becomes the embodiment of chivalry as Burke perceived it, ‘the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise [...] that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour [...] which ennobled whatever it touched’ (RR. p. 76), and thus Bray makes explicit connections between the codes of chivalry and the conduct required of a nineteenth-century man of feeling. 258

Developing the Historical Romance in White Hoods.

White Hoods, Bray’s second novel, displays a rather more confident approach to the blending of fiction, history and moral education, as while still using Froissart as her source material, Bray does not attempt to construct a romance narrative using historical figures for whom a romantic ending would be historically impossible. The Literary Gazette deemed it ‘a most interesting story, some spirited sketches of character, and a most faithful picture of the times’ and Amelia Opie praised it in a letter to Bray. 259 White Hoods is set in Ghent during the rebellion of Philip Von Artaveld against Lewis de Male, Earl of Flanders, and it presents a clear development from her previous romance both in its adaptation of sources and presentation of character. Generally the characters are less stereotyped, although it is still possible to recognise some character types from De Foix. Peter du Bois, for example, one of the rebels, closely resembles the scheming d’ Armagnac, while another rebel, Arnold de Clerc, is an almost exact copy of Basile le Mengeant: both are caricatures of villainy. Interwoven with these stereotypes are some more complex characters such as Sir Simon de Bête, a burgher of Ghent and Walter d’ Anghien, the romance hero and ward of Lewis de Male. Although Bray takes the history of de Bête and d’Anghien directly from

258 Davidoff and Hall, p. 110.
Froissart, their lives have little impact on the historical outcome of Lewis de Male’s conflict with the White Hoods, thereby giving Bray some licence with their role in her romance. Both men died early in the dispute, and here Bray cleverly negotiates a path between history and fiction by taking them up to the point of death, thus suggesting their historical destiny, before staging a last-minute rescue, signalling their change of status from historical figures to the characters of romance. De Bête becomes the adopted father of Bray’s heroine, Anna Lyon, d’ Anghien her husband. Moreover, by staging a dramatic last minute rescue she is able to heighten both the tension and the emotional intensity of her narrative. After his rescue, Simon de Bête takes on a number of very different roles in the narrative. He ventriloquises Bray’s own political stance on the symbiotic relationship between commerce and legitimate rule, a role commensurate with his historical position as the Earl’s banker, for which he was knighted. He is also used to integrate antiquarian detail into the text without the degree of intrusion used in De Foix. Through de Bête we learn about social etiquette and the trappings of wealth: his public position made him ‘wont seldom to doff his cap to anyone’ (p. 8) and he possessed the luxury of a fireplace, ‘in preference to the common stove’ (p. 8).

A further development in Bray’s writing evident in White Hoods is its clearer political subtext, which examines the nature of ideal rule. However, rather than effect this examination through the lens of state politics, she examines how the character of a ruler is influenced, either positively or negatively, by women. Thus Bray consigns her political subject matter to the domestic arena of family relations and moral education. To do this she must transform Froissart’s presentation of Lewis de Male, ignoring the fact that he could be ‘wise and prudent, carefully avoid[ing] encouraging war between his vassals’ (p. 575), and concentrating instead on his greed and tyranny, to which she also adds licentiousness, a trait not recorded by Froissart. Historically Lewis had sanctioned the building of a canal, which would disadvantage Ghent by making Bruges the commercial centre. In Bray’s

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romance, Lewis’s tyranny is encouraged by his despotic mother, Margaret, just as his re-
education is effected by the teachings and example of Bray’s virtuous heroine, Anna
Lyons. Ultimately, Lewis is transformed from self-seeking despot to paternalistic
aristocrat, a change that illustrates Bray’s conservative ideals of maintaining established
hierarchies, but in a more enlightened form. Yet she complicates a simple conservative
reading of this novel by introducing a contender for the government of Ghent.

The fictional Philip Von Artaveld is presented in much more positive terms than his
historical counterpart, a strategy that complicates the reader’s response to this man. In one
respect it appears strange that Bray, a woman who supported hereditary right to rule,
should make Artaveld, the rebel, appear a suitable contender to govern Ghent, but she has a
more complex agenda which again involves the influence of women. Bray’s Artaveld has a
‘frank and open [nature], expressive of a gay and animated temper’ (p. 95), which is very
different from Froissart’s depiction of a man who wished to ‘advance himself in honour
and wealth more than he possessed’ (FC, ii, p. 648), living ‘like a great prince’ (FC, ii, p.
708) and vying with Lewis in magnificence. Bray’s Artaveld is similar to Othello in the
way that his ‘open’ nature is manipulated by the scheming of others, and Bray encourages
readers to make these comparisons through textual references to Shakespeare’s play and
the motif of a necklace, which parallels the handkerchief in Othello. To depict Von
Artaveld as evil would not only reduce the emotional response evoked by his fall, but it
would also detract from Bray’s main theme, to depict how women can influence rulers and
thus play a major role in social and political outcomes. Philip is presented as a tragic hero
whose fall, like that of Othello, is intrinsically linked with jealousy, but in Philip’s case it
is a woman’s jealousy, not his own, that orchestrates his downfall. Artaveld’s mistress is
called Bianca, again echoing Othello, and she illustrates the social ramifications of her
position as a mistress, not a wife. Cast off by Lewis de Male, she is now the lover of Von
Artaveld, but is socially unacceptable as a wife. Thus by bringing in the factor of personal

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261 See p. 144.
jealousy, not between leaders, but between men and women, Bray is shifting the focus of Froissart’s presentation from state politics to the private sphere. Yet she shows the interrelationship between private lives and the political arena by giving centrality to women. In *White Hoods* Bray presents the triumph of female virtue and the positive influence of virtuous women on men as the virtuous heroine, Anna Lyons, is able to transform Lewis de Male into a ruler who subscribes to the aristocratic paternalist ideal, to tame mankind through virtue.262 But despite this emphasis on virtue, Bray is also unable, or perhaps unwilling, to conceal the negative effects that socially prescribed gender roles can have on women’s lives.

**Reclaimed from the Margins: the presentation of women in Bray’s early novels.**

In this section, I examine how Bray rescues women’s stories from the margins of historical narrative to give them centrality in her texts. I also explore the way she presents the complexities and tensions created through the disparity between the natural and the constructed female self. It is significant that other historical novelists such as G. P. R. James and Thomas Colley Grattan produced works with eponymous heroines, James’s *Mary of Burgundy* (1833) and Grattan’s *Agnes de Mansfeldt* (1836), titles which suggest that these women should take a central role in the narrative. However, as in Scott’s work, it is men’s stories that are privileged, although the positive influence of female virtue on male behaviour is a major theme in these works as it is in Scott and Bray.263

In Bray’s work, women take a central role as they do in the works of Lady Morgan and Mary Shelley, although Bray’s female characters do not have the same role as political commentators. Bray does not take Shelley’s lead in presenting a politically active female

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262 See Lawes, p. 11-13, particularly p. 11.
like Euthanasia in *Valperga* (1823), published three years before *De Foix*. Furthermore, although Bray may be more knowledgeable about antiquarian details, Shelley appears far more critically aware of how historical narrative can conceal the harsh realities of the past. In *The Last Man* (1826) her narrator, Verney, explains how history becomes ‘an opiate; while it described my beloved friends, fresh with life and glowing with hope [...] I was soothed’, able to forget the harsh reality of plague, suffering and death.\(^{264}\) Shelley therefore rejects the propensity of history to create peace and harmony out of violence and disruption, what Deirdre Lynch calls ‘the aestheticising that converts the harshness of history’s verdicts into something picturesque’.\(^{265}\)

Bray uses history as an opiate to rewrite her own history and bring her dead husband back to life through the pages of her fiction. It is interesting that despite having suffered similar losses of husband and children, Shelley rejects the nostalgic romanticising indulged in by Bray. Furthermore, as Deirdre Lynch argues, Shelley uses women in a more politically significant way: by ‘[w]riting women into the historical novel [...] she writes against the grain of official historiography’s definitions of the truth about the past’.\(^{266}\) Bray’s women do not disrupt our perceptions about history, but they do reveal the problematic nature of gender stereotypes. She also illustrates how virtuous women can instigate social change by inculcating positive models of male and female behaviour, but Bray’s work also shows another, less attractive side of female virtue: its propensity to make women victims of male power. Jane of Boulogne is one such victim.

Froissart says little about Jane of Boulogne except that she possessed the qualities required of women: she was ‘young and handsome [...] a virtuous lady’ (*FC*, ii, p. 544-5), and a wealthy heiress. Moreover what aspects of her life are presented, and they are few, all relate either to her inheritance or to her husband, illustrating the point made by Ann


\(^{265}\) Lynch, p. 143.

\(^{266}\) Lynch, p. 143.
Elliot in *Persuasion*: ‘[m]en have had every advantage of us in telling their own story’.

Historically Jane’s lands had been usurped by the Duke d’Armagnac, a fact Bray retains, although she changes some aspects of Jane’s history in order to make her a more effective heroine of romance. Instead of a two-year-old child, Jane arrives at De Foix’s court as a young and attractive woman, whose beauty and status as a victim are enough to initiate military action to regain her territories. As a woman and not a child Jane becomes a more effective subject who understands the political implications of her destiny and through whom Bray can explore ‘the feelings, the workings of the human heart; the passions, the errors, the virtues and the follies of mankind’ (MS, ii, p.109).

Bray draws attention to the stereotypical qualities of Jane’s character through the use of flower imagery: ‘her cheek perhaps had a little too much of the lily in it, but when animated by feeling, [...] it emulated the vermillion of the rose’ (p. 51), images which might suggest to readers an English complexion. Yet Bray does not follow through this potential for national allegory; she returns to Froissart’s depiction of Jane’s ‘union of grace and majesty which is calculated to inspire a feeling of reverence with admiration’ (p. 51), and focuses on the influence of female virtue. In this respect Jane resembles Scott’s Rowena, whose royal lineage - she is a Saxon princess - is reflected in her demeanour: ‘the exercise of habitual superiority, and the reception of general homage, had given to the Saxon lady a loftier character, which mingled with and qualified that bestowed by nature’ (p. 34). But Rowena, like Ulrica, represents aspects of nationalism not found in Bray’s early works: they represent Englishness. Rowena’s fair beauty is the stereotype of Englishness, and her virtue is set against the dark otherness and sexual fascination of Rebecca, the Jewess. Moreover Scott allows Rowena enough independence to ‘resist and to resent any attempt to control her affections, or dispose of her hand contrary to her inclinations, and [...] to dispute the authority of guardians and parents’ (p. 168). Rowena’s autonomy, we are informed, was the result of her guardian’s indulgence, which reflects

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Cedric’s loyalty to his own Saxon lineage, for Scott explains that such indulgence ‘was in those days scarce paid to an acknowledged princess’ (p. 168). Jane has much less autonomy, although she does voice a passive resistance to de Foix’s suggestion of marriage to his eldest son to show her gratitude for his help in retrieving her usurped inheritance. She replies:

[he will be entitled to my gratitude; but should he seek the payment of the obligation by my hand, it is you he must thank for it, as you will give him what I have no power to bestow, for my hand would never freely surrender itself from my heart (p. 56).

Froissart never mentions the possibility of a match between Jane and Evan de Foix, which suggests Bray used this match as a device to present a moral tale showing how vice, symbolised by Evan, could never be rewarded by marriage to a virtuous woman. Moreover, its function as a moral tale means that Jane is not forced to surrender her hand without her heart, although ultimately she does acquiesce to duty and sacrifices personal happiness in an act of loyalty to save the man she loves.

Unlike Rowena, Jane’s virtue is not rewarded with the hand of the chivalrous knight, because Bray is not trying to represent the union of two races and cultures through the domestic motif of marriage. While Jane’s fate does create political harmony, it has no allegorical subtext for British national politics; it is merely the ‘pacific termination of [a personal...] quarrel’ between two powerful lords, de Foix and de Berry. Moreover, through Jane, Bray explores the idea of conflicting loyalties, illustrating the impossibilities inherent in trying to fulfil both social and religious expectations. The loyalty to parents demanded by God is presented in conflict with other loyalties also endorsed by God, those to king and country as well as to your husband/lover. Ultimately Bray also shows how these loyalties in turn conflict with loyalty to yourself. The exploration of duty and loyalty, however, had a personal resonance for Bray, who had disobeyed her parents and married Stothard. Thus Jane also functions as a device through which Bray can examine the impact of loyalty on

268 Girouard, p. 19.
personal happiness, exploring and perhaps even attempting to excuse aspects of her own past. Jane’s fate is presented through the cultural stereotypes of male dominance and female acquiescence; the unfortunate Jane of Boulogne was ‘sacrificed’ and ‘suffered’ (p. 361), while her guardian ‘demanded’ and ‘desired’ (p. 361). Bray therefore illustrates that female autonomy is either only achievable within the confines of male power, or is finally subject to male control, and therefore Jane, though at ease with her decision, can never find real happiness. Bray, on the other hand, by flouting parental authority found personal happiness but was haunted by guilt.

Isabel de Greîlly, the niece of Gaston de Foix, is very different from Jane because she has no recorded history, and therefore Bray has more freedom when developing her character and deciding her fate. Isabel provides the romance ending denied to the historical Jane, yet she is no paragon of virtue:

thoughtless, gay and animated. Conscious of the fascination of her own attractions, she was somewhat vain, and would too often (for the truth must be spoken) exercise their influence from the mere love of power, by playing on the feelings of another (p. 70).

Moreover, despite being described as having ‘fascination’ (p. 51), a word chosen by Scott to describe Rebecca, Isabel does not have the allure of racial otherness. Rebecca’s role as an outsider, although it bars her from marrying the Christian knight, gives her a privileged position from which she can comment objectively and even challenge ‘the fantastic chivalry of the Nazarenes’ (p. 276). From outside the Christian ethic with which they (i.e. chivalric codes) were so intrinsically connected, Rebecca illustrates a much darker side to the chivalric codes than is presented in the ideals of loyalty, honour and protection of the weak. In a conversation with Ivanhoe, Rebecca explains the human suffering wrought from a knight’s thirst for military glory and lasting fame, asking ‘is there such virtue in the rude rhymes of a wandering bard, that domestic love, kindly affection, peace and happiness, are so wildly bartered, to become the hero of those ballads?’ (p. 275). Although Ivanhoe’s definition of chivalry appears at first to be that of a civilizing force, ‘a pure
light, which alone distinguishes the noble from the base, the gentle knight from the churl and the savage’ (p. 276), he soon moves away from this position of purity and gentility, terms which apply to Bray’s Sir Eustace, and returns to glorify the martial culture censured by Rebecca: it ‘raises us victorious over pain, toil, and suffering, and teaches us to fear no evil but disgrace’ (p. 276). Ultimately, when Ivanhoe speaks of chivalry as ‘the nurse of pure and high affection—the stay of the oppressed, the redresser of grievances, the curb of the power of the tyrant (p. 276), one questions the nature of that affection, for although domesticity is invoked through the noun ‘nurse’, Ivanhoe ends on a military note. Rather than emphasising military honour Bray feminises her presentation of chivalry by focussing on its civilising characteristics, its use as a means to curb military action and reduce human suffering.

[T]he generous feeling, and the high sense of honour, which were considered indispensable qualities in the profession of a knight, not only served as protection to the weak, but in a very great degree [...] prevented those dangers which threatened society at large from the universal practice of constant and domestic warfare (p. 13).

Like Burke, Bray believed that the codes of chivalry were intrinsically linked with ‘the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion’. 269

Isabel, on the other hand, does not illuminate the darker and more self-seeking aspects of the chivalric ideals; neither can her flawed behaviour be excused by racial difference. She appears to have a more personal significance for Bray. Viewed as the first in a series of re-presentations of Bray’s own history in fiction, the aspects of Isabel’s portrayal which might at first appear either odd or contradictory, start to make sense. Initially Isabel has a light-hearted attitude to love. At one point she mortifies her lover, Eustace, by her ‘light and careless air’ (p. 77) of bestowing a token on Sir Equitan, thereby making ‘a stranger [...] equal with one who was the friend of years’ (p. 78). Stothard, albeit affectionately, presents his wife as capricious, ‘eager to follow [...] something else that comes in the shape of novelty’, and if Isabel is to some extent a self-portrait, it would

269 Burke, pp. 78-9.
explain Bray’s desire to excuse her heroine’s conduct, and her decision to marry Isabel to the virtuous knight. Isabella’s faults, according to Bray, sprang from excess of feeling which, fortunately for Isabel, was ‘generally on the side of what is right, or, like all persons who act from feeling instead of principle, she would perpetually have been doing what was wrong’ (p. 70). Ultimately Isabel becomes an illustration of how women’s behaviour can be controlled not through the assertion of power, but through love. Thus Bray presents an alternative to the binary opposition of gender politics. Her vision is for a world where behaviour is governed by reason, for as Stothard avers in a letter to Eliza: ‘[i]t is the exercise of reason that gives dignity to affection, [...] without it, we should have just cause to fear love would not last’ (M, p. 214).

Stothard viewed marriage as a partnership, ‘a perfect union of taste, feeling, and pursuits, with equality and no attempts at ruling on either part [...] where] the paradise of Eden would be restored’ (M, p.342), and the union between Isabel and Eustace reflects this ideal. After their marriage they move to their own Eden, in Languedoc, where Eustace governed with ‘moderation and justice’ (p. 363). But while Isabel may enjoy equality within the bounds of Eustace’s jurisdiction, outside that regime she becomes subject to very different gender politics. Although her life is acknowledged by the monumental brass and inscription on their joint tomb, her story is erased in the male version of history. The sacristan who conducts strangers round the Gothic church in Languedoc only mentions ‘the good Sir Eustace de Bearn’, not his wife. Isabel’s story, like Bray’s own history, is reclaimed through the medium of romance. Moreover as Isabel’s waywardness is ultimately controlled through the power of love, and eventually marriage, Bray creates a moral and domestic rather than a political ending for her romance. Much is revealed here that has a personal resonance for Bray. For example her representation of Isabel’s equality within her husband’s jurisdiction could be read as a metaphor for her own views on gender relations, that she, like Isabel is free to speak openly within the home, but outside these

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Bray, Memoirs, p. 329.
parameters she becomes subject to her husband’s government and the male version of history which will ultimately erase her story from public records. Bray is aware of how women’s stories become lost to history, perhaps an indication of why she so urgently wished to document her own life.

*De Foix* and *White Hoods* both examine Bray’s relationship with Stothard, and both reveal her preoccupation with the fact that she was not present when he died. She was ‘denied the sad consolation of watching his sickness, of alleviating his suffering, or of receiving his last blessing, with his expiring breath’ (*M*, p. 475), a consolation she appears to have received instead from her fiction. In *De Foix* Eustace pleads with his mother to convey a final message to Isabel before his execution, that he ‘died forgiving and blessing her, still true in affection’ (p. 315). Similarly in *White Hoods*, Walter d’ Anghien, before his execution, commends Anna to the protection of God and attempts to alleviate her sufferings with religious consolation: ‘think upon me with the subdued sorrow that we feel for the friend we have parted from only to meet again. We shall meet again Anna’ (p. 380). Thus Bray is able to explore the dialogue she was never able to have with Stothard before he died, and thus through her fiction, create the scenes from which she was excluded in life. The emotional intensity of these dramatic scenes explicitly reveals her personal suffering and deep religious conviction; even her autobiographical manuscript is more restrained. Scott does not use his heroes or heroines for such overtly autobiographical purposes. However, as Mary Shelley avers, to ‘turn to the human heart as the undiscovered country’ was a way for authors to project their personalities into their writing and explore their personal history with modesty and circumspection. As a writer Bray had a control over history that she did not have in her own life. She could explore, explain and even excuse such actions as the disobedience to her parents, which caused her much anxiety and

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regret. More importantly, she could create, albeit only through imagination, an ending for her own life, commensurate with romance, not tragedy.

Although it can be dangerous to read a writer’s work autobiographically, Bray admits that such details were included in her fiction, neither was it unusual for writers to project their lives into their work. Autobiographical material can be found in the prose fiction of Charlotte Smith, William Godwin, Mary Shelley and Thomas Holcroft. Richard Holmes argues that *Frankenstein* ‘[i]n its theme and settings, if not its actual plot line […] is closely related to the circumstances of Mary’s private life with Shelley and sometimes the resemblances are uncanny’. *Lodore* and *Matilda* are also autobiographical, the latter exploring Mary Shelley’s relationship with her father. Godwin too includes autobiographical elements in some of his work. *Deloraine*, for example, revisits the death of his wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, and sanitises the traumatic events he reports in his *Memoir* by reducing them to seven short sentences. In *Deloraine* Godwin does not, like Bray, try to expunge his grief; instead he tries to make sense of his wife’s death and his own feelings towards his daughter Mary, whom he saw as the cause of her mother’s death and ‘whom I gradually came to regard […] as her living representative’ (*D*, p. 36). He also attempts to rationalise or perhaps justify his remarriage to Mary Jane Clairmont, which is similar to *Trials of Domestic Life*, where Bray attempts to justify her second marriage. Finally *Deloraine* provides a way for Godwin to revise Wollstonecraft’s final words, which ‘had nothing to communicate to me upon the subject’ (*M*, p. 139) of her children, and re-inscribe them within a more acceptable feminine frame. In this fictionalised version of events, Godwin is in complete control over the characters and the conclusion. Bray too examines her second marriage in ‘A Daughter’s Sacrifice’. Fiction thus became a mask behind which authors could explore their feelings and responses to aspects of their own

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275 Chapter 1, p. 61.
history, but more importantly, it was a means by which historical outcomes could be both recreated and reversed. For Bray it was a way to reclaim and preserve her own history which might otherwise be forgotten.

**Gender in White Hoods**

In *White Hoods* the heroine, Anna, bears Bray’s own name, albeit not the one by which she was commonly known, and again Bray uses paired heroines, but this time neither Anna Lyon nor Bianca have counterparts in recorded national histories; instead they represent two opposing versions of womanhood, those of wife/mistress. Yet throughout this novel Bray complicates these simplistic divisions, thereby achieving a more nuanced work which relies less on stereotypes than *De Foix*. Although Anna Lyon, the heroine of *White Hoods*, provides a consistently conventional portrait of womanhood, she successfully resists her father’s attempts to commodify her by using her as a pawn in his pursuit of wealth and power. Her refusal to comply with her father’s wishes and surrender herself to Lewis de Male clearly illustrates how the obedience demanded by a parent or a sovereign is not always commensurate with virtuous behaviour, a situation which also questions the concept of obedience as a divine commandment. In a scene that prefigures *Jane Eyre*, Anna is captured and held hostage by Lewis de Male who, like the devil, tempts her to accept

> my power, my wealth, my love; all shall be laid at your feet. You shall inhabit my palaces; the treasures of foreign climes shall be open to you; whilst unbounded wealth shall give you means to satisfy your every wish (*WH*, p. 152).

Anna’s virtue, like Jane’s, teaches her to resist Lewis, who cannot offer her marriage, for to accept him would doom herself to the insecurity and ultimate social ostracism which attends his cast off mistress, Bianca. Unlike Anna, Bianca is tempted by worldly possessions, although Bray complicates such a straightforward reading of her character’s motive, as I discuss later. Similarly she complicates Anna’s refusal to accept Lewis’s advances. One reading might suggest that Anna was exerting independent autonomous
choice, another that her refusal merely showed that she was conforming to socially
prescribed gender roles where, as Jane Austen notes in *Northanger Abbey*, ‘man has the
advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal’ (*NA*, p. 95). Anna, however, is not
a gender stereotype of female weakness and vanity; she has a moral strength which enables
her to withstand the power of those men who try to control her in ways that contravene her
Christian principles: her father, her sovereign and the evil de Clerc who also wishes to
become her husband. This moral strength allows Anna a degree of autonomy within the
boundaries of an established class structure and socially assigned gender roles, for Anna
understands that social hierarchies need to be maintained, that ‘the high born prince and
the lowly vassal can form no union but that of protection, reverence and duty’ (*WH*, p.
152). Even Anna’s virtue and beauty does not give her the right to disrupt the status quo.276
Yet despite Bray’s support for the maintenance of hereditary rule she does not support
tyrranny or uphold the social repression of women, a creed which is often in conflict with
her constant professions of conformist orthodoxy.

Anna’s opposite, Bianca, appears on the surface to be a portrait of female
weakness, but a more careful reading reveals not only a critique of social mores,
but also an exposé of the complex nature of gender construction. One reading of
Bianca’s character is that of a woman who lacks the moral fortitude to choose a
virtuous path, her downfall being an example to any young woman unable to
withstand temptation. This conservative exemplum, however, is complicated by
Bray’s presentation of Bianca’s temptation and ultimate fall, which can be read as
the result of repression and female commodification. Bianca is entrapped by
social structures that ultimately condemn and destroy her; she is offered no escape
but death. Furthermore, Bray’s portrayal and ultimate condemnation of the

276 This comment may reflect Bray’s reaction to the crisis produced by a report that George
IV had allegedly been secretly married to a Catholic, Mrs Fitzherbert, which, Clare
Simmons argues, influenced Scott’s presentation of King John in *Ivanhoe*. Simmons,
*Reversing the Conquest: History and Myth in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (New
Catholic Church for its inability to inculcate sound morals and its incarceration of young women in convents is typical of other Protestant writers such as Radcliffe, whose influence is discernable in Bray’s appropriation of Gothic motifs to emphasise the repression of convents and monasteries, their distorted and dysfunctional family relations and the superstition that she felt they instituted in mediaeval societies, which, she believed, was eradicated by Protestant enlightenment. Bianca is tempted into sin not just because she was a weak woman, but also because she is offered a preferable alternative to the austerity of her conventual incarceration. When offered freedom and ‘golden dreams of pride and happiness’ (p. 88), Bianca is seduced by hope, not pride, thus transforming Bray’s moral exemplum into a social critique.

Bray reveals how there is no available social role for women like Bianca. She may have beauty, but with neither dowry nor social status she has no value in a marriage market founded on economic exchange. Without either assets or strong principles such women often become social outcasts, as Bianca learns to her detriment. Beguiled by Lewis de Male, she is afterwards cast off and taken under the protection of Von Artaveld, as a mistress and not a wife. With deep regret Bianca realises the full horror of her social status: ‘could I but have brought him innocence as my dower, he would have married me’ (p. 89), as despite his love for her, Von Artaveld’s social position will not allow him to marry a cast-off mistress. Ursula therefore becomes a death’s head, foretelling how Bianca ‘cannot escape my doom’ (p. 337): to be socially marginalized through either lack of financial security or marital protection, and ultimately condemned to a life of old age, poverty and deprivation. Bianca is wronged by Ursula and in turn seeks revenge on Anna for her beauty, innocence and ability to attract men, thus revealing the competition and jealousy bred from a culture which valorises material rather than spiritual assets, and judges women on their ability to find a
husband. Ambivalence therefore surrounds Bray’s presentation of Bianca, who
alternates between the opposing positions of transgressor and victim, more a
woman to be pitied than condemned. Although Bianca is not offered any chance
of earthly happiness, thereby upholding Bray’s conservative agenda, beneath the
surface runs a consistent exploration of gender politics, a critique of the
commodification of women and a distinct call for social change. Although Bray’s
conservatism will not allow outright rebellion against established hierarchies, she
does advocate social change through the positive example of virtuous women, an
ideology which became even more influential during the Victorian period. Bray,
like many other women writers, shows how virtue is learned in the home.
Mothers and mothering are thus crucial elements in her work.

Lewis’s mother, Margaret d’ Artois, is the only woman with an historical
counterpart. Historically the countess is presented very differently from the scheming and
ruthless woman portrayed in White Hoods. Froissart describes her as compassionate, a
woman who ‘took great pains to put an end to ’(FC, ii, p.590) the hostilities instigated by
her son, which she felt were detrimental to the people. Moreover she showed great concern
for the ‘many valiant men, barons, knights, and squires […] shut up in the town of
Oudenarde and in imminent danger’ (FC, ii, p. 590), even pleading for their release. Yet
such altruism would not work for Bray, who uses Margaret as an example of poor
mothering, unable to provide her son with a sound moral education, and therefore
responsible for his autocratic rule. Margaret is thereby transformed into another of Bray’s
stereotypes, a scheming, ruthless woman who murders John Lyon to secure power over her
son. Like Bray’s previous stereotypes, Margaret serves a political agenda. She exemplifies
the influence of mothers and the domestic sphere on both social behaviour and national
politics. For Bray, good mothering provides the foundations for a virtuous society, and
Margaret is not only a bad mother, but she is also, like Shakespeare’s Queen Margaret and

Lady Macbeth, a negative example of female power. Bray complicates this portrayal, however, by comparing Margaret with Elizabeth I, one of history’s most powerful women, and a woman she admired, perhaps suggesting Bray’s complex and ambivalent attitude to female power: ‘[l]ike Elizabeth,[…Margaret] was passionate in temper, jealous of her authority, and possessed uncommon strength of character’ (p. 156). Yet despite their similarities, Bray vilifies Margaret by describing her in masculine terms. The ‘active and masculine character of her mind’ turns Flanders into the ‘scene of her ambition and her power’ (p. 156), whereas Elizabeth’s qualities are feminised because Bray shifts the focus of kingship from state politics to social welfare: ‘she had a virtuous pride in the welfare of her people’ (p.156), thus shifting the focus. Elizabeth is presented in the more feminine role of nurturer.

Ursula too, in her role as surrogate mother to Bianca, is an example of poor mothering. Like Margaret, she manipulates her charge to gain wealth and political power, but since she is a member of the lower classes, Bray is able to demonise Ursula explicitly. Shakespeare, like Bray, illustrates the ways in which society demonises women who do not fit the feminine ideals of passivity and compliance Ursula is socially defined as either a witch or wise woman, depending on the perspective of the speaker. Yet Bray’s description of the stereotypical trappings of witchcraft present in Ursula’s home highlights the former position and are reminiscent of Shakespeare’s depiction of the witches in *Macbeth*:

> By the side of the chimney hung a collection of bones, whilst a variety of skulls, an entire skeleton, with a string of human hearts completely withered, a hand and arm wrapped in cerecloths, with other strange preparations were hung around the apartment (p. 86).

Yet through Ursula Bray also reveals her debt to Scott. Like Meg Merrilies, Ursula is a dispossessed exile, but she does not share Merrilies’s complexity, neither does she function as a method of restoring legitimate rule, and thus re-establishing order. Bray provides a very different route to the restoration of legitimacy, using a virtuous female,
Anna, to reveal how virtue can be more influential than explicit political involvement.\textsuperscript{278} Ursula is, like many of Bray’s characters, a type, a representation of evil, but despite this stereotyping she still reveals the fate of the old and unmarried, who have no value as a commodity, thus suggesting that the destructive force of Ursula’s actions have their roots in a social system which represses women. It is only in her later works, Warleigh (1834) and Courtenay of Walreddon (1844), that Bray adds an element of complexity to her portraits of the dispossessed.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Bray’s first romances both look back to the ideological positions she established in her travel work and autobiographical writing, and forward to her later work which develops into a more political form of national tale. Although the English patriotism apparent in her travel works and emphasised in her local romances is not obvious in these early texts with their European settings, aspects of Bray’s conservatism and conformist agenda are developed here, despite Blain, Clements and Grundy’s claim that \textit{De Foix} is little more than a ‘fusty tale mugged up from Froissart’.\textsuperscript{279} From her reworking of Froissart it is possible to see how she will later appropriate history in more definite political ways, hiding her agenda behind the mask of fiction. It is perhaps surprising that a woman who is in constant denial of presenting any political agenda should select periods of political conflict for her romances, but rather than exploring the wider historical picture on a national level, the ramifications of English imperial expansion in France, Bray presents the personal quarrels of historical figures. In her later works, although Bray pursues similar methods, national history becomes increasingly evident. Furthermore, by privileging personal relationships and restricting military action, Bray is able to give centrality to women, thus allowing her to reclaim their stories, along with her own, from the margins of recorded history. In addition her obsessive reinvention of elements of her own history as romance characterises her work, and marks a distinct difference from Scott.

\textsuperscript{278} See pp. 157-58.
\textsuperscript{279} Blains, Clements and Grundy, p. 134.
Although Bray eschews any overt commentary on national politics in these novels, gender politics are explored. Bray reveals the tensions inherent in socially assigned gender roles, which caused anxieties in her own life, particularly when it came to balancing her desire for modesty with an equally strong desire for literary success. Throughout her work it is possible to see the tension arising when female autonomy is restricted by patriarchal control, for if women do eventually achieve autonomy in Bray’s work, they appear to do so only in the private sphere. Isabel de Greïlly, for example, attains parity with men in the private realm of her marriage and within a region controlled by her sensitive and tolerant husband, but ultimately she exists merely as a cipher, an image of religious piety, wifely devotion and motherhood in the annals of national history. Yet even Bray’s presentation of Isabel is open to alternative readings, one conservative, showing how women can only achieve autonomy in the private sphere and not in public roles, the other a more radical critique of social gender relations. This ambivalence marks all Bray’s work, where her professed beliefs and self-justifications are often contested through the voices, actions and interactions of her characters.

Finally these novels show Bray’s emergence as an antiquarian. Lexi Stuckley describes her as ‘one of the few female nineteenth-century antiquarians’, and the historical specificity of her work at times surpasses that found in Scott, and certainly any of her female contemporaries, Radcliffe, Reeve, Shelley or even Lady Morgan, whose work The Novice of St Dominick was described by Blain, Clements and Grundy as a ‘well researched historical novel’. Thus Bray appears as a woman whose work blends the antiquarian interests of Scott with the feminine focus of those women writers who were her contemporaries. Moreover, Bray inhabits an interesting position as a writer of historical fiction, for her work, like that of many of her female contemporaries has not received much critical attention for its contribution to the nineteenth-century historical romance.

280 Stuckey, (para. 6 of 7); Blains, Clements and Grundy, p. 762.
281 Miriam Burstein analyses The Protestant for its contribution to the anti-Catholic debate and Denis Low discusses Bray’s topographical work. Historical fiction has been generally
In the next chapter I examine how Bray took up Scott’s challenge - ‘I cannot but think it strange that no attempt has been made to excite an interest for the traditions and manners of Old England, similar to that which has been obtained in behalf of those of our poorer and less celebrated neighbours. (L, p. xx) - and began a series of novels which had a much more developed political agenda and which could be read as English national tales.

associated with male writers such as G.P.R. James, Lytton or Ainsworth and, of course, Scott.
Chapter Four: Domesticity and the National Tale

The National Tale and the Local Romance.

Moving on from my last chapter, I continue to explore how Bray manages to incorporate the traditionally male disciplines of political history and antiquarianism into a feminine framework of domestic life, but this time in relation to her local romances. When Bray moved from a consideration of continental history to a contemplation of rebellion within England, the political content of her work and its relevance to nineteenth-century politics became more obvious, epitomised by the adverse reaction she received from many of her contemporaries in relation to The Protestant.282 It is perhaps for that reason that when she again examines the relationship between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Courtenay of Walreddon she categorically denies any involvement in political history, explicitly relating her work to domestic experience: ‘[t]he great occurrences of the civil wars have become subjects for history, for history I leave them. […] It is a domestic tale that I propose to write’ (CW, p. 8).

Bray’s statement, however, is either very naïve or completely disingenuous, for she is unable to dissociate her historical material from political comment, as I demonstrate later. Yet her desire to claim for her work a domestic status has an even deeper significance if we consider that by 1827 Scott had acknowledged his authorship of the Waverley Novels and, as Kelly notes, had raised the status of romance to make it ‘worthy to enter the emergent institution of “national literature”’. 283 In this chapter I examine Bray’s contribution to the body of ‘national literature’, not literature which supports the union of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, but novels which celebrate the history and culture of England as a separate nation. Thus I consider Bray’s work as an example of an English national tale.

282 See Chapter 1, p. 44.
283 Kelly, Women, Writing, p. 177.
Finally I examine Bray’s contribution to the genre of historical romance after Scott. Although romance had been traditionally viewed as a female genre, Scott, as Kelly and Gamer note, had masculinised the form. Bray, I suggest, refocuses the romance on more feminine concerns despite her antiquarian and historical content. In fact she even claims that her style of amalgamating ‘real family history of an interesting nature [...] blended with] a description of local beauty and interesting objects from my own personal knowledge’ (A, p.207), made her work original, a claim which, Jane Millgate argues, even Scott avoided.²⁸⁴ I examine the development of Bray’s content and style from 1830 to the publication of her final romance in the 1845-6 collection, Courtenay of Walreddon.

On the 28th August 1828 Bray began the first of her five local romances published between 1830 and 1844. These texts were to form half of her collected novels and tales, a series of ten volumes which were revised for publication between 1845 and 1846. This set comprised the full body of her fictional output until 1848 when she added two more local tales, ‘A Father’s Curse’ and ‘A Daughter’s Sacrifice’, published together as Trials of Domestic Life, with a further two additions, Roseteague and Hartland Forest in the early 1870s. For the purpose of this study I am restricting my examination of Bray’s local romances to those published in the first collected edition of 1845-6 which was revised by Bray prior to republication; her involvement with the revisions of the 1884 collection is doubtful, despite her claims to have been working on this collection during the 1870s.²⁸⁵

These local romances begin with Fitz of Fitz-ford (1830), a work set during the Catholic plot to replace Elizabeth I with her cousin Mary Queen of Scots, although Bray makes little capital out of this rebellion, focussing more on the domestic content of her plot. She followed Fitz of Fitz-ford with Warleigh (1834), which more directly examines the effects of civil war on families in the south west of England, a theme she returns to in

²⁸⁴ Milligate, p. 19.
²⁸⁵ Bray’s claims are recorded on the end flyleaf of the final volume of her manuscript and reprinted in her Autobiography, p. 3. There is no evidence that the 1884 collection was edited by Bray; the 1845 preface is retained, and David Kempe asserts that John Arrow Kempe was ‘condemned to act as editor to this collection’ (AEB, p. 223).
Courtenay of Walreddon (1844). Trelawny of Trelawne (1837) is set in Cornwall, again exploring the effects of Monmouth’s uprising against James II. The Trelawny of the title is Bishop Trelawny who was arrested for his refusal to read the second Act of Indulgence to his congregation, an event immortalised in a popular ballad, ‘The Song of the Western Men’, by a Devonshire poet, R. S. Hawker (1803-1875). Henry de Pomeroy (1842), although still set in Devon and Cornwall, differs slightly from the previous texts, as Bray returns to the mediaeval period, this time to an England divided in its loyalty between Richard I, the legitimate king, and his brother, John.

Bray believed profoundly in hereditary right, whether that meant the right to rule a nation, or to inherit an estate, but the rights of England’s ruling classes were also, in her novels, intrinsically connected with the kind of virtuous behaviour epitomised in the knightly ideal and codes of chivalry. Thus her work illustrates how mediaeval society became idealised as a golden age, a concept which flourished throughout the nineteenth century. The structure of feudal society with its well defined hierarchies suited Bray’s conservative notions of conservation and loyalty to the Protestant church and state, but as Alice Chandler argues, this nostalgia for the Middle Ages had a party political bias: it was a ‘Tory regret for the rejected feudal past’. Bray confesses a support for Tory politics, but interprets her beliefs as patriotic rather than political:

I am, I hope, a sincerely loyal subject, and clearly love my country and the state under which I live, and the church into which I have been received as a member; but I never liked what is called a political lady; and never I trust, deserve a character so masculine or out of place (MS, ii, p106).

By inscribing her politics within a framework of virtue and patriotism Bray is exploiting a feminine discourse encouraged by both conservative and radical women writers. In Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, Hannah More prevails on women to

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287 See Alice Chandler’s introduction to a Dream of Order, pp. 1-3.

288 Chandler, p. 2.
‘exert themselves with a patriotism firm and feminine’. For More there is clearly a divide between patriotism, which is acceptable for women, and politics which is not, as she, like Bray, voices her disapproval of political ladies: ‘I am not sounding an alarm for female warriors, or exciting female politicians: I hardly know which of the two is the most disgusting and unnatural a character’. 289 Mary Wollstonecraft too argues that ‘[if] children are to be educated to understand the true principles of patriotism, their mother must be a patriot’. 290 Sydney Morgan even validates her own political involvement in O’Donnell by suggesting she is ‘rais[ing] the depressed tone of public morals’. 291 Yet despite the significant moral focus in Bray’s work she does appear disingenuous in her denial of political engagement: ‘my work had never been by me politically designed [...and s]hould any of my readers fancy because I wrote them I am a political lady, I beg to assure them, they are greatly mistaken’ (MS, ii, p. 104).

Yet her writing subverts this position. Prior to the passing of the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act she wrote two songs with political themes:

The first song alludes, in the last verse more especially, to the king’s veto, when it was supposed by many that he would, as a consequence of the Coronation oath, refuse his assent to the bill […] the second song salutes those who did not spare their blood in the cause of freedom or religion (MS, ii, p. 106).

Both were set to music by Sir Henry Bishop, thus suggesting the possibility of public performance, and they were also published in national newspapers: ‘The St James’ Chronicle, [...] The Star of Brunswick and numerous other papers in England, Ireland and Scotland’ (MS, ii, p. 104), though she omits to mention whether the publication was anonymous. She even admits to supporting party politics, although she inscribes that support within a domestic discourse, presenting herself as a loyal wife, daughter and sister, who was merely the mouthpiece of male opinion: ‘my own feelings and opinions […] were the same as my husband’s and brother’s’ (MS, ii, p. 104). In Maria Edgeworth’s 289 More, p. 6. 290 Wollstonecraft, p. 86. 291 Lady Morgan, O’Donnell, p. viii; and Chapter 3, p. 24.
Lady Davenant gives a succinct summation of women’s uneasy relationship with public affairs, asserting that as rational beings, women cannot ‘go through the world without forming an opinion on points of political importance’, but they must not only ‘keep the line between influence and interference’ but also ensure that this ‘influence should always be domestic’. Lady Davenant’s words could not better express Bray’s own views on the articulation of her political opinions, except that for her the issues were further complicated when she made her private opinions public through the publication of her writing.

One way in which she attempted to contain her works within a domestic framework is to set them outside the centres of power in the south west of England, an area which also happened to be her home, and a location ideally suited to her historical romances for a number of reasons. Not only was the landscape ‘delightful’ (W, p. 1), it was also rich in history and tradition which provided her with a wealth of material for her stories:

how much interest is conveyed to an ancient dwelling, a particular rock, or a lone valley, [...] by being able to say, “This is the scene,” or "this is the spot,” where such and such events are said to have occurred! Who, [...], can look upon the narrow rocky cavern, so long said to have sheltered the persecuted royalist, Elford, without dwelling with interest on the recollection of those times (W, pp. 1 and 2).

Bray could engage imaginatively with location, an ability which became apparent in her early travel work, but the South West’s remoteness from the centre of British politics also meant that it was late in becoming modernised, and therefore it was one of the last areas to lose its old English traditions and customs: 293

There is no county, perhaps, in England that abounds more in the traditions of old times and families than that of Devon. These, however, are fast falling into oblivion. The rising generation, who, commonly speaking, are eager to follow in the march of intellect, smile at the legends of their grandmothers; and the elders themselves, who are mostly the living depositories of this kind of lore, gradually sink into their graves; and, with them, too often dies a fund of information which has no written record (W, p. 1 and 2).

293 See Chapter 2, p. 119.
To present her texts as memorials to an English way of life rather than engagements with state politics and military conflicts is another way in which Bray tries to frame her work within an acceptable female discourse. Her problem was, however, that choosing an antiquarian agenda she was also writing in a traditionally male domain. Furthermore, by suggesting that the loss of English customs amounts to a loss of English regional and national identity, Bray is making a very clear political statement, and even her attempts to conceal the state politics of sixteenth and seventeenth century England behind the mask of domesticity, fail to obscure her conservative agenda. During the early nineteenth century, antiquarian studies, with their focus on regional and national customs and traditions as well as material culture, become closely linked with local and national identity. Bray’s regional romances which record the customs and material culture of Devon and Cornwall reflect this antiquarian tradition, but I also suggest that Bray viewed these local traditions as representative of those performed in England before the Interregnum, when ‘in this “outmost corner of the west,” […] all ancient ceremonies […] were duly and fully observed’ (FF, p. 33). Thus I argue that Bray’s regional romances can be read as examples of an English national tale.

Michael Gamer argues that Scott’s border ballads were ‘antiquarian attempts to reconstruct a local history of the Scottish Border’, a way of memorializing a region’s history before it became submersed in a larger, all encompassing identity, Great Britain. Yet these tales related national conflicts between the very nations which had just become united, a problem which Scott solved by consigning his narrative to the past. Edgeworth too wished to create a record of Irish national character before Ireland, like Scotland, became united with Great Britain in 1800, the year she published Castle Rackrent. Edgeworth notes how in this changing modern world ‘[n]ations as well as individuals, gradually lose attachment to their identity and the present generation is amused, rather than offended, by the ridicule that is thrown upon its ancestors’ (CR, p. vi). Progress,

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294 See p. 181.
295 Gamer, p. 180; also Millgate, p. 5.
modernisation and change are cultural conditions which both Edgeworth and Scott viewed as inevitable, although the desire to preserve a nation’s identity suggests a regret at the loss this union would ultimately bring. Bray too wished to commemorate her nation’s past, but unlike either Scott or Edgeworth she did not see England’s progress into the modern world as either positive or desirable:

Change seems to be the order of everything in this world. And, in spite of all the boasted refinements and improvements of the present age, it is much to be questioned if […] we have not considerably degenerated from our ancestors (FF, p. 32).

It was because of ‘change’ that Bray decided to document the English customs and traditions which, she notes in Fitz-ford, began to decline ‘within the walls and about the precincts of the great metropolis’ (FF, p. 67) as early as the reign of Elizabeth I, before sweeping ‘through all the counties of England’ (FF, p. 67). The ‘lasting sense of historical rupture caused by the political and religious developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’ was, Katie Trumpener argues, what prompted antiquarians in general to begin documenting aspects of English customs, material culture and landscape. Antiquarian research was still a male tradition since the Society of Antiquaries required records to be academic in their presentation, supported by ‘evidential proof. Proper referencing and citation of authorities was crucial’. For a woman who wished to stress her compliance with accepted conventions of female behaviour her venture into this masculine preserve is perhaps odd, yet Bray may have viewed antiquarianism as a family tradition; her brother

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296 Trumpener, p. 149. Sweet, p. 335. Studies include Robert Plot’s list of Quaer’s to be Propounded to the most Ingenious of each County in my Travels Through England (1670); John Aubrey, Wiltshire the Topographical Collections of John Aubrey…Corrected and Enlarged by John Edward Jackson (Devises and London: Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 1862); William Henry Bourne, Antiquitates Vulgares; or, the Antiquities of the Common People (1725); Francis Grose, The Antiquities of England and Wales, 2nd edn, 8 vols (London: S. Hooper, 1773); Joseph Strutt’s study of Horda Angels-Cynn: The Manners, Customs, Arms and Habits of English People from the Arrival of the Saxons until the Reign of William Henry the Eighth (London: Benjamin White, 1775-6); Joseph Hunter, Hallamshire. The History and Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York (London, 1819); Richard Fenton, A Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire (1810, 2nd ed. Brecon, 1903); and John Hodgson, A History of Northumberland in Three Parts (London and Newcastle, 1820-35).

297 Sweet, p. 13.
and both her husbands were actively involved in antiquarian research, and therefore she was merely accessing their knowledge rather than flaunting her own. Moreover there were aspects of this discipline which would allow opportunities for women to write and retain their image of modesty and compliance. Ina Ferris explains how antiquarians documented a very different kind of historical record: ‘unofficial historical memory, […] song, legend, joke, family tradition, […] letter, tracts, pamphlets and private memoirs’. Such material allowed for the construction of an alternative history, and it is the private face of public history that interests Bray.

Scott too, despite a gender difference, was not afraid to appropriate oral tradition as the source for many of his romances, although there is a different gender focus in his writing. He might declare that his intentions are to banish ‘political history from [...] the ending’ of Waverley, but he does not succeed. Scott’s history still runs along traditionally male lines. In both Waverley and Guy Mannering women are consigned to the margins of his narrative while battles and male adventures play a central role. Bray on the other hand gives centrality to women; even her token battle scene, a reported incident in Courtenay, includes a woman, Cinderella Small, who cross-dresses, becomes a page and follows her lover, James Chudleigh, to war. Ultimately she is seriously wounded protecting him from death, a reprocessing of Bray’s Blanca/Artaveld incident from White Hoods, but this time with a happier conclusion. Yet Bray is much more meticulous when referencing her sources than Scott, an educated male whose work is supported by male authority. She cites all her sources in footnotes and endnotes, signalling a desire for her work to be read as a serious antiquarian record which presents both the public and the private face of history. These notes also explain in detail how local traditions digress from documented history and where in the pursuit of her romance narrative she has made alterations to the source material. Thus, although Lexi Stuckley argues that Bray is ‘one of the few female

298 Ferris, p. 217.
299 See Chapter 3, pp. 131 and 135; also Burgess, p. 189.
nineteenth-century antiquarians’, throughout her works she tries hard to feminise that masculine image.  

Yet despite Bray’s attempts to restrict her antiquarian knowledge to that gleaned from friends or family, her brother’s close connections with *The Gentleman’s Magazine* opens up a different perspective on Bray’s writing. Michael Gamer notes that this publication highlighted connections between antiquarian traditions and national identity, convincing ‘readers that their own local ruins, traditions, and records could validate, revise, or disprove received notions of Britain’s origins and identity’. Bray’s work too is concerned with national identity, although I argue that it is English, not British, national identity and national concerns that she presents in her texts.

National identity was a complex notion during a period when individual nations wished to memorialise their historical identities before they became subsumed into a united nation, Britain. But Britain too wished to define itself as different from and superior to France. Krishan Kumar argues that ‘the nostalgic harking back to “Old England” and “the England of Elizabeth”’, the historical setting of Bray’s first local romance, belonged to the moralising literature of the eighteenth century, ‘an early revolt against modernity, associated with the new-fangled ways being imported from Paris [which…] express[ed] a deep seated anxiety about individual character and public morality’. Richardson too highlights this belief in the superior moral tone of Britain when he offers the French his own work as ‘English Bullion in exchange for its own Dross’. It is significant that Richardson uses the term English, not British, for when defining national identity it is crucial to be clear about the actual identity, customs and manners that are being delineated.

For Gerald Newman national character is English, not British and to be truly English was

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300 See Introduction, p.16.
301 Gamer, p. 176.
in Newman’s view to be sincere, a quality that comprised five specific virtues: innocence, honesty, originality, frankness, and moral self-reliance.\textsuperscript{304}

Yet Newman recognised that national character was a ‘manufactured national ideal’, perhaps illustrated by the fact that Claudia Johnson suggests how George Knightly can serve as a symbol of English national character as well as representing England’s King, its patron saint and the chivalric ideals of knightly behaviour espoused by Edmund Burke, whose philosophy influenced Bray’s writings.\textsuperscript{305} Bray too recognises the character traits of a true Englishmen when she describes Mr. Radcliffe, ‘the worthy proprietor of Warleigh’, as possessing ‘the plain, open sincerity of old English manners’ (p. 5), characteristics which she explains were ‘now alas! Getting too much out of fashion’ (p. 5).

While Bray’s conservatism is evident in her endorsement of old English values, it is also apparent in her response to the political issues of the period. Fitz-ford was published in 1830, the year that George IV died, the barricades were once more raised in Paris and the French king, Charles X, had been replaced by the Duc of Orleans, Louis Philippe. The novel is also set during a time of similar political turbulence, the Catholic plot against Elizabeth: a contentious subject for a work that Bray claims was merely ‘real family history […] blend[ed] with a description of local beauty’ (A, p. 207). Furthermore it is difficult for readers to avoid comparing the Catholic/Protestant tensions of Elizabethan England with those surrounding the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829.

By addressing national concerns Bray’s work touches on a subject that is apparent in the national tales of writers such as Maria Edgeworth, Sydney Morgan and Walter Scott, thus opening the possibility that Bray was writing an English national tale. To address this point it is necessary to see whether Bray’s local romances fit the criteria for a national tale as illustrated by Ina Ferris in \textit{The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland}. Ferris argues that national tales must not only address national matters, but also ‘articulate

\textsuperscript{304} Newman, pp. 129-131.
\textsuperscript{305} Newman, pp. 129, 133 and 127; Johnson, p. 199-201.
the grievances of a small people’. England, as a dominant power, fits uneasily into the category of ‘a small people’ when other nations were under English control, but as a region of the greater nation, Britain, Bray felt that England too might lose some of its cultural heritage, and therefore she saw it as vital that national and regional culture should be preserved.

In the works of Edgeworth and her compatriot Sydney Owenson, Irish concerns are highlighted as the smaller nation attempts to teach the dominant culture an understanding of cultural difference, by placing the English elite in the position of outsider. Thus Edgeworth and Owenson illustrate how the dominant discourse was completely unable to articulate Ireland. In *Ennui* (1809) Glenthorn’s attempts at cultural imperialism are constantly thwarted as his nurse, Ellinor, refuses to maintain the style of living which he views as appropriate, ultimately deeming her ‘a savage, an Irishwoman, and an ungrateful fool’, because she fails to conform to his ideal. Similarly Horatio, the son of an English aristocrat in Lady Morgan’s *Wild Irish Girl*, is completely confounded by his observations in Ireland. When he arrives within twenty miles of Bally his privileged position as an exclusive member of the English elite is suddenly reversed, and he begins to feel uneasy and excluded from understanding this country which he is at a loss to successfully define. Moreover Horatio is unsure of how to classify Glorvina, the wild Irish girl, whose ‘elegance of manner […] is at perpetual variance with her looks, which are so *naïf* - I had almost to say so wildly simple - that while she speaks in the language of the court, she looks like the artless inhabitant of a cottage’ (*WIG*, p. 69). Ultimately, as Ferris notes, the protagonist must learn a sympathetic understanding and acceptance of difference.

Scott too creates an English traveller to Scotland in both *Waverley* and *Guy Mannering*. Edward Waverley, as Jane Millgate notes, must return to Tully Veolan three times after his first visit in order to gain a ‘full understanding of himself and of the world.

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306 Ferris *The Romantic National Tale*, p. 50.
308 Ferris, p. 56.
outside himself - the movement from observation to insight’. 

Readers are first introduced to Guy Mannering as he attempts to find his way to Ellangowan as night falls. The darkness and difficulty of this journey through lowland Scotland also has a symbolic purpose, and Millgate notes how Mannering’s journey haunts the text which ‘is about the condition of strangeness, isolation and exile’. Bray does not use her traveller for any clear political purpose, for Levi the Jew in Fitz-ford merely functions as a passive observer, a more feminine position which might reflect his situation as a member of a marginalised race as I examine later. In Bray’s work, it is the narrator who describes what the traveller and the reader will see, for these descriptions are not to unsettle the traveller, or to help him understand his surroundings, they are to promote an appreciation and a memorialisation of Dartmoor and its environs. Thus Bray is providing a record of both her homeland and her home.

Although Bray is writing a domestic tale, in the sense that it is a story about families, and that she is restricting her descriptions to her home county, domestic is an ambiguous term for home can refer to both home and homeland. Ina Ferris notes how nineteenth-century English reviewers associated the Irish writers, Sydney Morgan and Maturin, ‘with foreign rather than domestic genres’. Thus the dual signification of the term ‘home’ as both a national and domestic space makes it easier to discuss national politics through a medium that appears to be dissociated from the public sphere. Yet despite Bray’s desire to be viewed as non-political, these local romances can be read as national tales because the subject matter is not restricted to regional matters. Through the microcosm of her own region, Bray presents the history and traditions of her nation, England, although as Raphael Samuel observes, England is less political a term than Britain:

309 Millgate, p. 40.
310 Millgate, pp. 68-9.
311 See Louise Duckling, ‘From Liberty to Lechery: Performance, Reputation and the “Marvellous Story” of Helen Maria Williams’ Women’s Writing, 17 (May 2010), 74-92, (pp. 79 and 81).
312 Ferris, The Romantic National Tale, p. 15.
313 Burgess, p. 153 and Claudia Johnson, pp. 191-203, assert that Austen’s novels were ‘directed from the private towards the national public sphere’.
England- [...] conjured up images of rusticity, chronicles of ancient sunlight. “English” is smaller and gentler than “British”, and it has the charm for the historian of the antiquated and the out of date. British was an altogether more uncomfortable term. [...] Its associations are diplomatic and military rather than literary, imperial rather than - or as well as - domestic.314

Domestic therefore becomes a significant term, for, as Katie Trumpener argues, ‘[f]rom Waverley onwards, the historical novel describes how war divides loyalties and rends domestic harmony’. In fact Trumpener’s words echo Bray’s sentiments in Courtenay where she explains how civil wars destroy ‘in their course all the comforts and enjoyments of home’ (p. 145).315 What is particularly significant is that Bray took the concept of local and domestic even further, not only focusing on her locality, as this would make her merely a follower of Scott and Edgeworth, but also on her own home and her own history.

The home in Bray’s local romances is intrinsically connected to the land, the inheritance of an estate, which is depicted on both a domestic and a national level, her local romances being set during a period when the monarch’s right to rule was contested. Furthermore, these connections between home and state echo Burke, who presented state politics in familial terms:

we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections, keeping inseparable, and cherishing with warmth [...] our state, our hearths, our sepulchres and our altars.316

Burke also legitimised the Hanoverian line through matrilineal inheritance: George 1’s mother, the Princess Sophia, was granddaughter to James 1, thereby a direct descendent of the Stuart kings. But even more significantly he presented the Princess Sophia as a symbol of Protestant liberty and feminine integrity, a woman whose ‘wifely virtue ensures the

315 Trumpener, p. 218. Veronica Ortenberg also notes how Scott used history ‘as something personal’, something in which major events were decided by individuals in relation to their own affairs and interests’, p. 46.
316 Burke, p. 34.
legitimacy of her offspring and her offspring’s power’. 317 Thus in 1820, the trial of George IV’s wife, Caroline, for adultery shook the foundations of the Hanoverian monarchy which depended for its legitimacy on the constructs of female chastity and motherhood. Gary Kelly argues that national identity and domestic affections are fundamental issues in the literature of the Romantic period; they are also central to Bray’s local romances published as the Romantic period drew to a close. 318

Bray’s own patriotism is made evident at the end of her travel writing where she declares a pride in her nationality which she states as English, not British. Linda Colley notes that an individual national consciousness, ‘Scotland, Wales and England remained more potent rallying calls than Great Britain’. 319 Bray was passionate about her own English identity and through her regional romances she shares this passion with her readers. In this chapter I examine how Bray manages her political material within a domestic framework, and how her methods are similar to or different from those of Edgeworth, Morgan and in particular Scott. I begin by comparing Bray’s use of local subjects, landscape and family histories in *Fitz-ford* and *Warleigh* with Scott’s *Guy Mannering* as it is important to see how gender inflects the presentation of historical and antiquarian subject matter. I also examine how these romances, like her earlier work, reveal a tension between modest behaviour and autonomous selfhood, which is fundamental to both Bray’s work and gender politics. In the concluding section I examine Bray’s last, and arguably her best local romance, *Courtenay of Walreddon*, where she returns to an extensive use of gothic motifs, making this work comparable with Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. 320 Yet even gothic motifs became contested during the late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries, for, as Miranda Burgess argues, gothic ruins

317 Burke, p. 18.
318 Kelly, *English Fiction*, p. 10. The dates for the beginning and ending of the Romantic period vary from as early as 1780 to as late as 1848.
320 ‘No work of mine altogether was [...] so generally favourably received in all quarters, where the work was noticed’, MS, iii, p. 230.
represented both a free liberal nation and the destruction of a true ‘English gothic style’. Bray’s work reflects both these positions as she bemoans the loss of an idealised mediaeval world which for her represented a nostalgic Englishness, while she simultaneously, like Radcliffe, celebrated the destruction of Roman Catholicism and the establishment of the Protestant faith. Thus, in this chapter I establish how Bray’s work reflects many of the literary and political concerns of her period.

The use of the local and the domestic in *Guy Mannering* and *Fitz of Fitz-ford*

While Scott’s collection of Border ballads was intended to ‘preserve some of the most valuable traditions of the south of Scotland’, an aim akin to Bray’s, he is less scrupulous about his topographical accuracy. Tully Veolan does not exist, although in a letter to the *Edinburgh Magazine* ‘one reader suggested it might be Murthly Castle in Perthshire; another suggested location was Tarquair House. Although these locations were imagined, they were realistic enough, Jane Millgate explains, to bring a ‘new precision about time and place’ to the eighteenth-century romance. Similarly *Guy Mannering*, though located in Galloway, South West Scotland, uses sites not to be found in that county. Ellengowan and Derncleuth, for example, are situated on the outskirts of Aberdeen. Along with these imagined places Scott adds place names specific to the Galloway area to add authenticity, Wigton Bay, for example, and Dumfries. As with *Waverley*, the plausibility of Scott’s descriptions in *Guy Mannering* led to a kind of literary detective work as readers speculated about exactly where the main events of these tales occurred. Scott explains how

> [m]any corresponding circumstances are detected by readers of which the author did not suspect the existence. […] It is therefore with pleasure he notices some pieces of local history and tradition which have been supposed to coincide with the fictitious persons, incidents, and scenery of *Guy Mannering* (p. xix).

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323 Millgate, p. 40.
Similarly Scott is not precise about his characters’ historical identities, thus leading to speculation about the prototype for Meg Merrilies. While he suggests Jean Graham as the inspiration for Meg, in Galloway it was considered that Meg ‘had her origins in the traditions concerning the celebrated Flora Marshal’ (p. xxiii). Scott therefore avers, ‘I am content that Meg should be considered as a representative of her sect and class’ (p. xxiii), since ‘in the progress of the work, the production ceased to bear any, even the most distant resemblance’ (p. v) to the source.

*Guy Mannering* is sourced from oral tradition, a tale ‘originally told me by an old servant of my father’s, an excellent old highlander’ (p. v), but Scott mentions no names in his summative account of the legend, thereby leaving himself the licence to invent those families he will use in his retelling of this tale. Jane Millgate describes *Guy Mannering* as ‘a tale of private life’ (p. 59) and therefore family is central to the narrative. The plot involves two families, one English, one Scottish, whose histories reflect both personal concerns and some of the major political issues of the era. Bray’s *Fitz-ford* is also a tale of private life, but her work reflects the life of real historical characters, four leading Devonshire families, the Glanvilles, the Slannings, the Howards and the Fitzs, whose lives and destinies interweave in a way that follows history in outline, while the gaps in historical record are filled with Bray’s imaginative interpretation of events. Although Bray, like Scott, uses family members to source her work, her husband and mother–in-law, she also uses official, documented history, in this case Prince’s *Worthies of Devon*.324

Fitz-ford house, for example, had been demolished long before Eliza Bray took up residence in Tavistock; only the original gatehouse remained as a constant reminder of England’s feudal past, and this monument becomes the trigger for Bray’s disquisition on the loss of England’s heritage. L. P. Hartley writes, ‘the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there’, but for Bray the past was neither foreign nor strange, and in many

324 John Prince, *Danmonii orientales illustres: or, the worthies of Devon*, a new edition (Plymouth: Longman, 1810).
ways was preferable to the present. While Scott wanted to make readers understand the past, Bray wanted to recreate it. She wished to see the culture of feudal England restored through paternal politics and a return to the codes of chivalry, just as she wished to preserve the monuments and customs of Devon, if not in their material form, then through her writings.

This antiquarian, conservationist agenda called for precision, for Bray is desirous that readers should recognise the areas she describes. Yet set against this desire for accuracy was a far more sentimentalised response to her surroundings. When walking near the site of Fitz-ford house she describes how: ‘such is the bewitching power of the locality, [that] all seemed to rush at once into my mind’ (FF, p. 411). By associating her work with feeling rather than reason Bray is creating a feminine mode of writing which links into her regional and domestic agenda. She is writing not just about her homeland or her home county, but her own area, her home. Thus Bray shows a proprietorial pride in the documentation of local traditions, a pride which manifests itself in her delight when her own work generated a legend.

A year or two after the publication of Fitz of Fitz-ford, The Virtuous Lady Mine, where George Standwich, Betsy Grimbal and their fellow Catholic conspirators concealed themselves, was reopened. Bray explains with wry humour how the miners of Tavistock actually believed the legend she relates in her romance and ‘named the peculiarly shaped mineral they found Betsy Grimbal’s Slipper’ (MS, ii, p. 13). She even records how on a visit to the mine she was taken to ‘an apartment […] and shewed with great zeal the cave or cell in the rock […] where Betsy Grimbal made her abode’ (MS, ii, p. 113). While this incident tells us much about Bray’s pride in the plausibility of her narrative, it also tells us something about readers’ engagement with a text. Scott relates a similar incident in his introduction to Guy Mannering:

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[s]trangers who visit this place, the scenery of which is highly romantic, are also shown, under the name of Gauger’s Loup, a tremendous precipice, being the same, it is asserted, from which Kennedy was precipitated (p. xxi).

Yet Scott’s use of the passive voice depersonalises the narrative, which is conveyed as hearsay rather than personal experience, whereas Bray uses direct address, as she does in her travel writing, to create a sense of first-hand experience, making her appear involved in the world she creates. This sense of involvement makes her writing appear very personal, thus feminising the objective and political voice of her historian/antiquarian narrator.

Both Scott’s Guy Mannering and Bray’s Fitz-ford begin with a male traveller who is not indigenous to the land he is visiting; he is therefore able, with a stranger’s eye, to observe and comment on the landscape and customs of the region. Ina Ferris notes this technique is adopted in the Irish national tale to create a sense of estrangement, a way of writing against the Irish Tour narratives where the traveller moved abroad, reporting his observations in the dominant discourse, thus ‘securing the journey by a reassuringly English enunciation’.326 In the Irish national tale the traveller is an English aristocrat, a superior observer, but one who finds the dominant discourse without terms to explain Ireland, thus destabilising the traveller and likewise the reader.327 Horatio M-, in Owenson’s The Wild Irish Girl, describes himself as a ‘tasteful spectator’, but finds Ireland disconcerting after being ‘dropt by the stage at the foot of a mountain […] fearing that I had lost my way’ (p. 19).

In Scott’s narrative, the Englishman, Guy Mannering travels through a country which appears untamed and potentially threatening:

a wild tract of black moss, extended for miles on each side and before him. Little eminences arose like islands on its surface, […] and sometimes a hut or a farm-house, […] which communicated with each other by winding passages through the moss (p. 1).

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326 Ferris, p. 51.
327 Ferris, p. 19.
Yet some degree of civilisation has been brought to this wild locality: ‘[...]he public road, however, was tolerably well made and safe (p. 1), thus suggesting that English and Scottish cultures can exist together. Unlike Scott, Bray’s descriptions serve no political purpose; they read more like a travel guide. She points out geographical features, landmarks and major towns, even providing some historical background on the area. Readers are informed of what the traveller will see before he is introduced, and the sense of performance is as clear in *Fitz-ford* as it is in Bray’s *Letters from Normandy*. Tavistock, we are told, is positioned ‘towards the western limits of the county of Devon’ (p. 9), and Bray follows this information with a brief history and geological description of the area, using a style which almost exactly reproduces that used when she takes her mother on a tour of Rouen.  

If he turns his eye inland, it ranges from height to height, from tor to tor, in unbroken succession. [...] If he looks towards the west, the conical eminence of Brent Tor, with its little church perched on the very summit, is seen rising above an extensive plain of high land, and forms a striking feature in the landscape. If he turns his eye towards the coast, far below his lofty stand appears a country, fertile, cultivated, and varied by hills, woods, rivers and hamlets that extend as far as the town of Plymouth (p. 10).

Exact locational deixis is used to create a feeling of involvement, for the reader is put in the position of a traveller who is directed by the author as if he were an actor on a stage. Thus Bray creates a sense of unity between narrator, traveller and reader which is very different from Scott’s detached description of Mannering’s journey to Kippletringan:

Furthermore Bray is very precise about the name and exact location of important historical sites. Fitz-ford gate-house is all that remains of the mediaeval manor, and is now, as it was in Bray’s day, a landmark of some interest to visitors. In her romance, Bray provides a clear and detailed description of the castellated manor house, giving the precise orientation of the mansion’s aspect- the front faced south and on the eastern side there was a chapel- and its exact distance from the river: ‘two hundred yards from [...]Fitz-ford] house flowed the river Tavy, [...] a bridge, still remaining, of three beautifully turned

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arches, [...] crossed the river in that part called Fitz-ford’ (pp. 40-41). Bray’s lengthy descriptions of the house and its history, accompanied by additional notes on local beauty spots and other places of historical significance in Tavistock, which she explains is ‘situated about three miles from Dartmoor’ (p. 33), reads like a tourist guide. It is the consistent inclusion of locational deixis that makes Bray’s work very different from Scott’s or other women writers who make a feature of location, such as Ann Radcliffe or Annabelle Plumptre.

Although Radcliffe used scenes from her travel journals to supply some of the descriptive passages in her Gothic romances, these descriptions were designed to support the evocation of either beauty or terror, not to provide topographical information on individual locations. Annabelle Plumptre, in fact, explicitly detaches herself from the travel genre, asserting that ‘the descriptive part of this tour through a country, of which a description has been already many times published, [will not] be here presented to the reader’. Like Scott, Plumptre is specific in naming some of her locations, for example the inn at ‘Rhaader’ and the descent of Plinlimmon, but location is incidental to character and events; any secluded rural setting would have sufficed. Bray’s work is different not only because of her precise descriptions, but also because of the explicit connections between herself and the landscape she describes. She visited all the sites and, as she states in her introductions, was personally acquainted with the Radcliffes and the Trelawnes, two of the families who still inhabited the estates about which she writes. Thus her works were inscribed even more securely into the private sphere as her details were authenticated by personal experience and family connections.

Bray also assiduously records the physical changes to the landscape wrought by modernisation, changes which she charts by juxtaposing descriptions of the past with the

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present; a technique she adopts in her travel writing.\textsuperscript{330} She relates how nothing now remains of the Fitz-ford estate

\begin{quote}
but the ivy–grown gateway; nor is it the building alone that has experienced those changes so common to the revolutions of time. Of the noble park that once surrounded the house not a vestige exists; and the gentle eminence on which [Fitz-ford house] stood, […] is now divided by hedge-rows into a monotonous scene of meadow-lands, resembling even in its utmost diversity no other than the variations of a chess-board (p. 39).\textsuperscript{331}
\end{quote}

For Bray the destruction of Fitz-ford house signals the death of something quintessentially English, a point supported by her use of the adjectives ‘noble’ and ‘gentle’ to describe aspects of England’s feudal past.\textsuperscript{332} John Brewer explains that ‘although the story of how societies changed was broadly accepted, not everyone viewed it as an unmitigated good or a simple story of improvement’.\textsuperscript{333} Yet there is nostalgia in Bray’s depiction of a tranquil country idyll destroyed by modernisation, symbolised by the ‘whirring wheels’ of the stagecoach which she felt was not only destroying the past, but also in doing so, was substituting uniformity for local interest and variety. Many English customs had been abolished during the Interregnum and Bray expresses her concern at the cultural indifference of ‘[t]he rising generation, who, […] smile at the legends of their grandmothers’ (\textit{W}, p. 1). She fears that the customs, traditions and legends of England will disappear through neglect, in the wake of empiricism. There is, however, a significant gender point to be made here, as Bray is suggesting that a feminine oral tradition is being replaced by a masculine tradition of logic, empiricism and reason.

The West Country, because of its distance from the metropolis, was still, in Bray’s view, rich in these dying traditions. In her descriptions of Fitz-ford house, with its avenue of stately oaks and elms housing colonies of rooks, she unites aspects of landscape and tradition by explaining how these birds were culled in early spring to ‘supply the tables of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Bray’s recreation of the siege of Hennebon, (\textit{LN}, p. 231).
\item Bray is here referring to the enclosures, see Brewer, p. 626.
\item Bray would have been privy to accurate descriptions of the place as Edward Bray senior used to kennel his dogs there.
\item Brewer, p. xxi.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the great hall with a rarity of Devon, a rook pie, sauced with the rich scald cream of the county’ (p. 40). But while these descriptions and traditions are specific to the family and its domestic practices they have a political subtext which critiques the destruction of English hierarchies and traditions. The demolition of Fitz-ford house and its estate, for example, meant that these colonies of rooks no longer had a habitat, and thus the tradition of making rook pie, ‘to supply the tables of the great hall’, declined. Similarly, her portrayal of an Elizabethan May procession, though restricted to the locality of Tavistock and its leading families, has a wider political resonance. The procession is described through the voice of an antiquarian commentator who disrupts the main narrative with historical details. Readers are informed that the procession, even during Elizabeth’s reign, was extinct except in Devon, thus confining these traditions to Bray’s home county, the last bastion of Englishness. The narrator explains the religious significance of the ceremony which combines paganism, Christianity and folklore, the latter being represented by the national folk hero, Robin Hood, and his band who follow the May queen and her women. These major players are in turn followed by the fool, the dragon and the hobby horse. Later church choristers meet the procession, singing songs which resonate with references to the Celtic festival of Beltane: ‘an old English chorus, “We have brought the summer home”’ (p. 84), and thus provide a visual representation of the amalgamation of faith and legend.

Although Bray explains that such festivals were enjoyed by everyone, therefore creating a degree of social levelling, her focus is on the ‘peasantry’, who only feature because of their integral part in keeping customs and superstitions alive. Bray proceeds to catalogue these customs, which range from hanging ashen boughs over the doors of dairies to ensure a plentiful milk production, to scrambling for wedding rings in a milk pail, a custom similar to catching a bride’s bouquet. In addition, by slipping from past to present she is able to chart the changes which have taken place from the festivals of Elizabethan England to their early nineteenth-century counterparts, and her disapproval of these changes is suggested through her very Blakean descriptions. Robin and Marion have been
replaced by milkmaids and chimney sweeps: ‘black votaries of foul chimneys; [...]'
triumph[ing] in faded flowers and paper crowns’ (p. 32). But Bray is not, like Blake,
displaying anger at human exploitation; she is mourning the loss of a sentimentalised rural
idyll. Her work echoes Rousseau’s in its romanticised image of rural simplicity and urban
corruption, a picture of England which, Jeremy Burchardt argues, was popularised by
Wordsworth and only existed in literature.\(^{334}\)

Bray is disparaging of city life, where the rich left printed cards ‘at the doors of
some fifty or sixty of one’s particular friends before three or four [...] in the afternoon’ (p.
66), a social critique which could be extended to the negative effects of urbanisation on
both the people and the cities themselves. But her use of adjectives such as ‘foul’ and
‘faded’ also suggest her anger and disgust at the way these ancient traditions have been
either eroded, or transformed into a pale imitation of the original, the loss of which she
mourns. Katie Trumpener attributes this nostalgic longing for a lost age to ‘the literature of
nationalism’.\(^{335}\) There is certainly an argument to promote Bray’s work as a national tale:
an attempt to define England and Englishness against the new British nation state. She
believed that English traditions dating from the Middle Ages were passing away, and with
them ‘the good taste and wisdom of those ages, which in the present day we are too fond of
ranking under the clause of general barbarianism’ (\(FF\), p. 33). Rosemary Sweet argues that
during the eighteenth century the idealised view of the past bred from a fear of
‘innovation’ was in tension with the enlightenment perception of the past as a ‘period of
backward belief and religious oppression’.\(^{336}\)

Moreover Bray’s sense of national identity is reflected in her use of standard English
dialect. The language of the ruling classes dominates her romances, for despite their
regionalism, to represent the dialect of a remote region of England would detract from their
depiction of Englishness. Scott, on the other hand, captures the accent and dialect of the

\(^{334}\) Jeremy Burchardt, \textit{Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change Since 1800} (London:

\(^{335}\) Trumpener, p. 13.

\(^{336}\) Sweet, p. 338. See also Miranda Burgess p. 159.
local Scottish people, representing it as different from the standard English of the ruling classes to focus his work on something intrinsically Scottish. He even presents local customs and traditions directly through the mouths of the lower classes in *Guy Mannering* to establish their roles as the repositories of Scottish lore. Mannering, for example, is informed of the traditions of Kippletringan through his interaction with the local inhabitants of ‘that class of society who are last to feel the influence of that general polish which assimilates […] the manners of different nations’. The locals direct him to the popular tourist spots, also informing him of their interesting features: ‘mony English gentlemen visit the auld abbey o’ Halycross’ (p. 2) and that ‘[t]here’s a hantle bogles about’ (p. 5) the old castle of Ellangowan. By channelling this information through the mouths of his characters rather than a narrator, Scott also makes his work appear less like a travel guide.

Bray’s low life characters generally have a different role; she uses them as political commentators in a similar way to those in Shakespeare. Captain Noseworthy is reminiscent of Bardolph in *Henry IV*, not only for his nose, ‘worthy of the pottle-pot which has helped to make it’ (p. 156), but also for his exaggeration: ‘[r]ebellious! […] who dares call me rebellious? Say such a word again and my weapon shall try conclusions with thy skull’ (p. 156). He is also a Catholic, and through him readers are made aware of the position of all Roman Catholics during the reign of Elizabeth I: disenfranchised and often driven into hiding,

we of the Romish church, make all things convenient; for when times grow desperate, we sea rovers save ourselves in the best way we can; and when we can, we grow honest fellows again. And who shall deny us absolution for the sins of necessity (p. 161).

Noseworthy’s speech could, however, be interpreted as a condemnation of casuistry, an accusation often levelled at the Catholic religion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, although Bray makes this possible criticism of Catholicism appear ambivalent. It

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is unclear whether the dishonesty applies to Catholics, sea rovers, those experiencing
hardship or just Noseworthy himself. Such ambiguity allows Bray to escape any potential
criticism for involving herself in religious politics.

In fact despite its setting amidst the religious conflict of Elizabethan England,
religious politics have little bearing on the main plot except to heighten the dramatic
tension of the writing through the use of secrecy and concealment. When John Fitz is sent
to fight abroad and imprisoned there, his removal is depicted as a private scheme
orchestrated by a father to thwart his daughter’s marriage plans; national issues are not
mentioned. It is personal revenge and patriarchal power within a domestic setting that drive
this plot to its tragic denouement. Possibly Bray downplayed this aspect of her work
specifically because of the negative reaction to The Protestant, the romance which
immediately preceded Fitz-ford.\footnote{See Chapter 1, p.44.}

\textit{Fitz-ford}, like \textit{De Foix}, becomes a means through which Bray can present an
exemplum on the merits of gentlemanly conduct and female virtue. As in \textit{De Foix}, she uses
the motif of paired heroines, but this time set in binary opposition, one angelic, the other
demonised for her reckless and selfish pursuit of personal desire. Margaret Chamernoun
is one of Bray’s invented characters. She is Judge Glanville’s granddaughter and represents
a culturally acceptable portrait of femininity: ‘[i]f virtue, beauty, and gentleness of spirit,
be merits in a woman, I never yet saw one that was her equal’ (p. 137). Like Jane in \textit{De
Foix}, Margaret functions as a stereotype, an exemplum of female virtue who, as a reward
for her virtuous conduct, would be expected to marry the equally worthy knight. Yet again
Bray complicates her model, for despite Margaret’s compliance, selflessness and virtue,
her reward is not to be found on earth, a point which perhaps signals the ineffectual
position of women in a patriarchal society. Margaret might be virtuous but she is a passive
victim, the pawn of her father, grandparents and Lady Ellen Howard, who tricks her into
believing John Fitz is dead in order to marry him herself, illustrating how women are not averse to victimising their own sex.

On the other hand Bray may be presenting Margaret as a victim in biblical terms, a woman punished for the sins of her parents. Her mother, Judge Glanville’s daughter, was not allowed to marry Stanwich, the man of her choice, because of his social status. Instead Judge Glanville forced his daughter to marry a rich old merchant, Page, thus precipitating her adultery with Stanwich, the birth of an illegitimate child and Page’s murder, for which the Judge’s daughter was condemned to death. Patriarchal power in the form of bestowing a woman’s hand in marriage and filial duty are themes which Bray repeats throughout her work. The transgression of a child in disobeying her parents had a personal resonance for Bray, who had defied her own parents and married Stothard, a transgression for which she too may have felt she had been punished.\(^{339}\) As I examine in Chapter One, Bray makes no secret of the fact that autobiographical elements are found throughout her work, a strategy that draws attention to her own history while simultaneously concealing it behind the mask of fiction. Through Margaret, who had no historical destiny, Bray could more freely examine aspects of her own life.

Ellen Howard, on the other hand, is a real historical figure, a rich landowner, four times married, who in local legend is cursed to ‘run in the shape of a hound from the gateway of Fitz-ford to Okehampton Park, between the hours of midnight and cockcrowning, and to return with a blade of grass in her mouth’ (\textit{FF}, p. 410). Commensurate with her desire to be taken seriously as a historian, Bray is not tempted to subscribe to these stories as historical truth; all she will be drawn to say is that Lady Howard ‘bore the reputation of being hard hearted in her lifetime’ (\textit{FF}, p. 410). Such a reputation, though probably subjective, provides tremendous scope for use in romance writing. Supported by the knowledge of her wealth, Ellen Howard becomes a symbol of how marriage functions as a dynastic contract to promote family power. She assumes that wealth, beauty and

\(^{339}\) Bray lost her husband in 1821 and her child in 1822.
parental approval will be enough to secure her the husband of her choice, John Fitz, but she is proved wrong. Despite their high value in the marriage market, Bray does not present wealth and beauty as the key to love or happiness; instead they often lead to selfish vanity and an intellect channelled into self-seeking and dangerous scheming, negative qualities which, in Bray’s romance, cause Ellen Howard to remain unmarried and alone. Moreover, through Ellen Howard, Bray critiques any society, including her own, for the pursuit of false values:

Ellen Howard, though extremely beautiful, was something shrewish, had a good share of what was termed talent, and a still greater share of what is called vanity, though in her days it was often, as it is in our own, considered by its possessor merely as a becoming self-confidence inseparable to merit (p. 99).

Lady Howard too is stereotyped, demonised for ‘her own unnatural feelings’ (p. 401), and her transgression is ultimately punished: ‘[d]eath and misery had crowned the work of her revenge [...] the insatiable desires of malice and pride’ (p. 401). In this romance no one achieves happiness, for even Lady Howard, with her wealth and beauty, is the victim of her wickedness.

In _Guy Mannering_, while Lucy Bertram fits the passive/virtuous stereotype, Julia Mannering is described by Andrew Lang in his introduction to the American edition as ‘a masterly picture of a girl of that age - a girl with some silliness and more gaiety, with wit, love of banter, and, in the last resort, sense and good feeling’. While Scott confers marital happiness on both his heroines Bray does not provide the opportunity for her passive heroines to achieve marital happiness; only those women who are intelligent, independent, rational and virtuous, although the latter quality has sometimes to be learned, succeed as her romance heroines. As a woman, Bray possibly saw the entrapment inherent in passive roles, thereby making her work a little less conservative than it might at first

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appear. But if in *Fitz-ford* Bray manages completely to avoid engagement with national political history, she is less successful in her next romance, *Warleigh*.

*Warleigh*: a national history or a domestic tale?

*Warleigh* reverses Scott’s method of working from domestic to national politics and examines the effects of national conflict on the home and family. Bray believed that ‘private happiness cannot hope for security, during public dissensions and calamity’ (*W*, p. 7) and *Warleigh* explores how key national events, this time the Civil War, intrude on private happiness in very significant and disturbing ways. Both Charles I and his subject, Amias Radcliffe, are engaged in an attempt to regain their hereditary right, their land, which is in the hands of a usurper. Bray reflects the problematic nature of ownership in her title as here she does not associate the protagonist with his family seat.

Like *Fitz-ford*, much of *Warleigh* is sourced from Bray’s personal experience. Warleigh house was situated on the outskirts of Tamerton, just south of Tavistock, and belonged to personal friends of the Brays, William Radcliffe and his wife. Moreover the Brays visited the estate during the summer of 1830 when Eliza was able to make detailed observations on the house and grounds. During their visit she also researched the family history from private documents kept by William Radcliffe’s uncle, who was ‘somewhat of an antiquary […] a careful preserver of all the old family deeds, leases, letters, records, etc.’ (p. 6). Although some of these letters may have been of a private nature, the list which Bray provides suggests legal documents, a more public face of history. Bray, however, blends these public documents with a personal story pieced together from personal letters, journals and ‘traditionary lore’ (p. 7), providing an alternative, and more feminine history. On page one of *Warleigh* Bray champions the importance of oral tradition in regional, and by association, national history, a position which was commensurate with what John Brewer notes was the rising importance of folk history during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, of which Scott’s border ballads are a prime example.\(^{341}\)

\(^{341}\) Brewer, p. xxi.
Yet despite her desire to record folk history, Bray’s position on the veracity of oral tradition as an historical record is ambivalent, as she appears uncomfortable when referring to material outside documented history. She claims that oral tradition, ‘[b]e it false or true, […] is sufficient for my purpose’ (p. 7), but is unclear about the nature of that purpose. To align her purpose with romance would mean a reduction in her work’s status as a serious historical or antiquarian record; alternatively, to stress the veracity of oral tradition might expose her to adverse criticism not only from those who required a more empirical approach to history, but also from those who might have considered her role as a serious antiquarian immodest for a woman. Bray admits to being ‘sensitive in the extreme degree in whatever concerned my labours’ (MS, ii, p. 67), and therefore by making her purpose ambiguous Bray could avoid potential criticism; but as a strategy, ambivalence has its drawbacks. It creates an impression of intellectual weakness because her arguments often lack definition, and are sometimes contradictory. In the introduction to Warleigh she declines to ‘argue the point of its [traditionary lore’s] truth with any critic who may be disposed to be sceptical on the subject’ (p. 7), although by this time she has already provided her own reasons for having ‘strong presumptive evidence’ (p. 1) for the truth of these tales. The very fact that she anticipated criticism, probably because she was a woman, and felt the need to enter into this complex process of self-justification illustrates how constrictive the nature of gender construction could be. Bray found it particularly difficult to maintain a position of female conformity and modesty, crucial to her role as the wife of an Anglican clergyman, while still convincing her readers that she was a serious writer and recorder of local history, custom and tradition.

Although Bray professes to eschew politics, Warleigh addresses both the domestic and the political ramifications of civil war. Through the letters of two friends Bray examines the effects of state politics on private lives, creating divisions which ‘were not alone confined to public men: towns, villages, families and nearest friends, were at variance, […] a spirit of national discontent fostered that of private discord’ (p. 304). She
even uses the specific terms public and private to differentiate between state politics and family concerns. However, despite her apparent belief in separate spheres, Bray’s text presents them as completely interrelated. In fact it is their interconnectedness that allows her to address political issues under the guise of a domestic tale. But what makes Bray’s work very different from Scott’s is the style she adopts to convey her historical information.

In Warleigh Bray steps outside her own narrative to address the reader directly using the subject pronoun ‘we’ and passive voice, mirroring the style of a lecture, a technique emphasised by her direct authorial address:

Before we state the particular circumstance that will form the subject of this chapter, it becomes necessary we should say a word or two respecting the state of religious parties in England, and more especially in the West, [...these remarks will be found not misplaced; as without them the reader [...] could scarcely comprehend the motives and the causes that led to such scenes as we shall hereafter detail (pp. 201, 203).

As an external, authoritative narrator she is assured of maintaining a superior position of knowledge and authority. This technique, however, has a negative effect on the progression of her plot as the constant breaks for historical commentary disrupt the narrative flow. Scott conveys information to better effect in The Antiquary and The Monastery. In the Antiquary Jonathan Oldbuck advises the less experienced Lovel on how to read historical evidence: ‘from the rest of the fortification, we may suppose Agricola to have looked forth on the immense army of Caledonians’ (A, p. 40). He uses the first person plural, ‘we’, but this time to address an internal audience as well as the reader, showing how deductions can be made from observations and evidence. Although Oldbruck includes himself when suggesting that antiquarians make suppositions about their observations, he later cleverly excludes himself by using the same plural pronoun: ‘how blind we professed antiquaries sometimes are!’ (p. 38), because here he is speaking on behalf of his fellow antiquarians, those who had overlooked the one important piece of evidence that he, Oldbruck, had managed to explain, thereby highlighting his confident superiority. By
filtering the information through his characters, Scott maintains the unity of the romance narrative. This scene, however, also reveals how antiquarian studies was a male dominated field, possibly explaining why Bray, who chooses to use the voice of the narrator/historian to convey her information, was so eager to give authority to her comments by referencing all her sources.

Occasionally Bray manages to convey both historical information and her political opinions in a less intrusive way by connecting them with family matters or emotional response. One example is her criticism of Sir Marmaduke Elford for his lack of compassion towards his fellow countrymen, misguided as their Parliamentary support might be:

He felt not so much for his misguided opponents as might have been desired; since misguided as they were they were still his countrymen. Those of his own party were considered by him as brothers, and the king as a common father to them all (p. 145).

Bray’s historical commentary is most successfully conveyed, however, when she copies Scott and inserts her information into a dialogue delivered by the characters themselves. When Sir Piers Edgcumbe, a supporter of the king, debates the politics of war with the Parliamentarian, Amias Radcliffe, the heir to Warleigh, their dialogue comes closest to reaching the ‘impartiality’ (MS, i, p. 3) she believed was required of successful histories. Yet even here Bray’s conservative ideology is apparent as she presents the royalist view in familial terms, likening the destruction of established hierarchies to the rending of marriage vows and stressing the domestic, nurturing qualities of hereditary rule, a view that echoes that of Burke: ³⁴²

³⁴² See Bray’s comments on Elizabeth I in Chapter 3, p. 46.
The Parliamentarian, Radcliffe, on the other hand, expounds his argument against King Charles in more public language, alluding to the military, religious and economic aspects of government.

The king and his evil counsellors […] lost Rochelle, and betrayed the Huguenots – a cause he ought to have espoused; but he betrayed it by leaning to Popery. He was eager after monopolies and ship-money, whilst he left the high seas so ill guarded, that the merchant vessels became a prey to Turkish pirates (p. 77).

Although these opposing viewpoints are presented through the voice of her characters, Bray’s sympathy for hereditary rule becomes clear through the violence of the language she uses to portray its destruction. Similarly the lack of emotional responses used in Radcliffe’s argument suggests a criticism of any government which only considers legal, military or commercial matters.

Yet the Civil War was in some respects a problematic period for any writer with a conservative agenda, not only because the legitimate king was espousing Roman Catholicism, a religion which ran counter to the state religion, Anglicanism, but also because many aristocrats who had legitimate claims on private estates were fighting for Parliament. For Bray to display wholesale criticism of these people would be to challenge her belief both in established hierarchies and in the worth of loyalty and sincerity, characteristics Newman describes as comprising the English national character. Bray was not adept at dealing with these problematic areas; thus she again resorts to her strategies of long explanations, justifications and backtracking which create many of the apparent contradictions occurring within the works themselves, and between the text and her authorial comments.

In many respects Warleigh has much in common with Scott’s Guy Mannering because of its major focus on the question of hereditary right. Warleigh gives centrality to the issue of legitimacy as Amias Radcliffe, the rightful heir of Warleigh, returns from Jamaica to claim his inheritance, an estate which had been mortgaged to a family friend.

343 See p. 9.
Sir John Copplestone, by Radcliffe’s father. Copplestone’s ownership of Warleigh is won through deceit and murder as Walter Radcliffe is forced to sign away the right to his property before being brutally attacked. On his death, the rightful heir, Walter’s son Amias, is left under Copplestone’s guardianship. Through her presentation of the two contenders for the right to inherit Warleigh, Bray again shows her commitment to legitimate rule, as legitimate heirs always display proper, gentlemanly behaviour. Copplestone, the usurper, is depicted as a man bent on aggrandisement, as when ‘levying fines on the Cavaliers, […] his purpose had been no other than private pillage, under the name of public forfeiture’ (p. 263); a similar criticism is levelled at Cromwell through the voices of Sir Hugh Piper and Sir Piers Edgcumbe.344

Again Bray emphasises the interrelatedness of national politics and the private sphere.345 The rightful heir to the estate is, on the other hand, portrayed as a worthy young man ‘of generous and honourable disposition’ (p. 325), despite his affiliation to the Parliamentarian cause, a problem which Bray negotiates by attributing the reason for his misguided allegiance to a private, not a public cause, the errors of youth: ‘like many other young men of spirit in those unhappy times, […Radcliffe] had been misled by fanatical ideas of liberty and patriotism’ (p. 325). Moreover echoes of the French Revolution also reverberate through the text as Bray explains how the English rebellion destroys the past. When the Parliamentarians attack Tamerton, Bray explains how ‘with one hurl of the ponderous stone […] Captain Doll] smashed in a whole row of Gothic saints that had, […] for centuries stood quietly decorating the great east window of Tamerton church’, along with a ‘costly’ window which could never be replaced (p. 231).

In Warleigh, and later in Courtenay, Bray reveals a deeper criticism of fanaticism than is presented in Fitz-ford. She was fervently against fanaticism of any kind, her ideology belonging to what Mary Peace terms ‘the easy-going Anglicanism of the

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344 Warleigh, pp. 24-25.
345 Warleigh, pp. 17 and 181.
eighteenth century”. Her critique of Catholicism for its bigotry and manipulation of the people through superstition and fear is here matched by an equally disparaging critique of Presbyterians, Independents and other Calvinists for their desire to ‘check […] all toleration that was, as they deemed it, contrary to the word of God, or rather what they chose to call such’ (pp. 202-3). Hezekiah, the newly appointed clergyman in Warleigh, illustrates the problematic nature of tolerance in a society fractured by political and religious conflict.

Although a Puritan, Hezekiah is a moderate, treated by the Puritans ‘with all the indignation due to a lukewarm middle-man […] the Cavaliers, on the other hand, greeted him as a hypocrite, a psalm-singing knave, a rebel’ (pp. 232-33). But to win Bray’s approval, even tolerant individuals must possess superiority of manners and be untainted by any foreign traits, which Bray associated with ‘the plague-spot of revolution or republicanism’ (TH, p. 436), thus defining England, whose republicanism is confined to the past, as superior to France. Although Bray supported the king’s party, as a moderate she esteemed anyone who displayed gentlemanly behaviour, qualities commensurate with the mediaeval, chivalrous knight and English national character. Thus national issues become intrinsically linked with the private individual through codes of social behaviour. Public conduct is throughout Bray’s work reflected in private relationships with family, and in particular with women. For Bray, as for ‘most thinkers touched by the Enlightenment’, the treatment of women was seen as a measure of civilised behaviour.

Warleigh can be categorised as a domestic tale because it examines the impact of public events on private matters, particularly on family life. But for Bray the term private is more than a generic reference to the domestic sphere; it refers specifically to her own home and family. As I examine in Chapter Three, Bray’s fiction allowed her to explore aspects of her own past, and here, as in her mediaeval romances, there are many

347 See Chapter 2, pp. 85-6 and 105.
348 Colley, p. 253; Keane, p. 113.
autobiographical references. Agnes Piper, like Bray, can trace her ancestry to the Courtenay’s, the Earls of Devon. Similarly Elford, who eventually becomes Agnes’s husband, is portrayed as having characteristics in common with Charles Stothard. Through Elford Bray explores a side to Stothard’s character that is not revealed in her previous portrayals. He is less idealised than Walter D’Anghein and Eustace de Bearn, having more in common with Edmund in ‘A Daughter’s Sacrifice’, also set during the Civil War.\(^{349}\)

Elford depicts the problematic relationship between passion and control, where emotional outburst is ‘often found united with what is great in heart, tender in disposition, and generous in action (W, p. 139). He is valued because he is sincere, honest and loyal, both to his father and his lover, characteristics which fulfil Newman’s criteria for national character, and so Elford becomes a representation of true Englishness as well as a representation of Charles Stothard, a device through which Bray can again examine the difficulties arising from their courtship and engagement. Moreover Elford, like Stothard, is subject to the frustrations which arise when the public sphere puts what appear to be insurmountable constraints upon the private individual. In both cases these constraints were primarily economic. Stothard’s prosperity was dependant on his commercial viability as a monumental artist; Elford’s fortune was depleted by war. Bray is not only illustrating how the affairs of state are intrinsically linked with domestic happiness, she is also depicting how financial security was intrinsically linked with a man’s eligibility as a marriage partner.

Agnes’s discussions with her father, Sir Hugh Piper, about Elford’s eligibility, however, raise yet another significant point in the debate about the interlinking of public and private spheres. Piper is resistant to his daughter’s choice of Elford as a husband because he believes that virtue should not depend on circumstances: ‘I like not such private virtues […] as take no hold on man’s public conduct’ (p. 253). Agnes on the other hand argues for a separation between the public and private man who, ‘though unhappily misled

\(^{349}\) For a discussion on Edmund and Stothard see Chapter 1, pp. 60-61.
in public opinions, had still many private virtues’ (p. 253), thereby illustrating the complex
nature of virtue, honour and duty. Through the dialogue between Agnes and her father
Bray reveals the conflicting pressures exerted on individuals when private concerns are at
odds with public duty, which in itself can be complex and at times contradictory. Elford’s
honour, for example, is ‘not his alone – since it belongs to his father, to his country; never
to be betrayed but with life’ (p. 64); but he also has a loyalty to the woman he loves which
is at odds with the loyalty to his parent and his king. Thus Bray shows how personal
loyalties and inclinations may conflict with the demands of religion, social conventions or
legal obligations.

The relationship between Elford and Agnes therefore becomes an exploration of the
conflict between duty and personal happiness which Bray considered to be central to her
own life. The circumstances surrounding Agnes’s secret engagement to Reginald Elford
mirror those of Bray’s relationship with Stothard, although Bray’s characters must face the
disapproval of both their fathers. Sir Hugh’s disapproval of Elford is, like John Kempe’s,
on economic grounds, for Reginald has no prospects, his property having been confiscated
by the Parliamentarians. Sir Marmaduke Elford, however, objects to Agnes on the grounds
of her social status, a situation not commensurate with Bray’s. Moreover through the
intense and overcharged language which Janet Todd associates with the novel of
sentiment, Bray returns to an exploration of lovers’ feelings when they understand that
they will be parted for ever. Once the circumstances of Bray’s life are known it is difficult
not to read Agnes Piper’s fervent exclamations to Elford autobiographically: ‘[d]anger or
death I care not; both would be welcome, so we may not for ever part-and to part thus’, as
similar words are recorded by Bray in Stothard’s Memoirs: ‘In this world we could never
meet again. But to part from him thus’ (p. 475).

While Agnes responds with passion to the trials of her courtship, her counterpart,
Gertrude Copplestone, depicts a very different kind of response, that of control. Gertrude
combines many of the qualities Bray appears to admire: independence, intelligence,
modesty and good sense, qualities that give Gertrude enough confidence to speak and act without the self-justification constantly resorted to by Bray. Gertrude displays a verbal virtuosity that allows her to challenge patriarchal control of the feminine ideal and in the process reveal a crucial aspect of gender politics. In a logically constructed dialogue with Reginald Elford, Gertrude appropriates the language used to present socially constructed models of feminine behaviour to critique not only men’s irrational and manipulative use of these constructs, but also the constructs themselves:

we are angels – so long as we are wooed and do not offend you: but we are little better than spirits of evil on the first slight cause of suspicion.

[...W]hen […] I was silent - which most men hold to be a virtue in woman - you deemed me sullen; and now when I talk you […] think it idle babble (pp. 237-8).

Gertrude has the facility for both emotional control and logical thought, out-playing Elford in verbal duelling, which Bray describes using the semantic field of fencing, a male pursuit. Yet despite Gertrude’s worth, her qualities of composed intelligence could devalue her in the marriage market, as ‘men […] generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts and a cultivated understanding’.

In Warleigh, however, Bray not only exposes both the advantages and disadvantages of educating women, but she also complicates the idea presented in De Foix that those protagonists with shared childhoods will achieve marital equality, for Gertrude’s relationship with Amias Radcliffe is loving, but passionless: ‘the calm and steady affection a worthy brother feels for a deserving sister […] which] gives birth to tranquil regard, but not […] passion’ (p. 188). Through these two novels, De Foix and Warleigh, Bray examines a concept that was crucial to her own relationship with Stothard: how her affection for a brother figure could transform into the passion needed for marriage.

Gertrude Copplestone, therefore, becomes a means through which Bray is able to explore some of her own anxieties about marriage, female autonomy and women’s

350 Gregory, p. 15.
351 See Chapter 1, p. 58.
education. So much does Gertrude become a projection of Bray’s own personality that when she rides out to warn Elford of her father’s deceit in betraying the royalist cause she wears a ‘mantle and black mask over her face’ (p.211). Although Bray informs her readers that this was ‘the common riding dress of the period’ (p. 211), her disguise could be read allegorically, as a symbol of how women hide their public persona behind a mask. By projecting herself onto her characters Bray is breaking links with Scott, who, while admitting that ‘I never expected or hoped to disguise my connection with these Novels’ (Wly, p. xix), never obviously explores aspects of his private life in fiction. However these autobiographical links may not have been quite so explicit until the publication of her Autobiography in 1884, the year after her death.

In her presentation of Gertrude, Bray is similar to Lady Morgan, who also identified herself with her fictional heroine, Glorvina, although as Ina Ferris notes, Lady Morgan ‘actively courted publicity’. Both Gertrude and Glorvina have a role to play in national politics, as do their creators, and significantly Gertrude’s behaviour exactly replicates Bray’s. Behind the guise of piety and family loyalty - ‘what was due to God and man’ (p. 306) - she rides out alone to save the king’s supporters from a Roundhead plot, hatched by her father, an ‘act of treachery which would ruin him in body and soul’ (p. 306). Despite the religious and domestic motivation of Gertrude’s act, her intervention is political, and far more overtly so than Glorvina’s subtle, though effective, challenges to the English elite’s perceptions of Ireland. This lack of subtlety may be because Bray is less adept as a writer than Morgan, but, I suggest, it is more likely to be because here, as in her earlier fiction, she strove to exploit the visual and dramatic potential of her narrative. As the Parliamentarian troops storm Warleigh, the male protagonist is rescued from death at the final second, a scene which also re-visions Bray’s own experiences of loss. This focus on personal, family concerns- her father’s soul and her lover’s safety- as well as the

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352 MS, ii, p. 221 and iii, p.231.
353 Ferris, Romantic National Tale, p. 67.
354 See Chapter 3, p. 156.
emphasis on Gertrude’s piety, inscribe both the character and the writer, into a feminine model of behaviour which masks a political reading of Gertrude’s actions. Moreover, in Warleigh, the portrait which hangs in Warleigh house does not memorialise rebellion, it celebrates domestic happiness and ‘true heroism [as...] the portrait of Gertrude Copplestone may yet be seen, with that of her husband’ (p. 436). Thus Bray does banish national issues from the ending, which is very different from either Scott or Lady Morgan. In fact Lady Morgan actually highlight the national concerns in her work by using the adjective ‘national’ three times in the final paragraph of her concluding chapter.  

**National History and the Radcliffian Gothic in Courtenay of Walreddon.**

In **Courtenay of Walreddon,** the last romance in this collection, Bray returns to Tavistock and the Civil War, but this time with less description of the locality and more focus on the narrative, giving **Courtenay** a better plot development, which might explain its popularity. Unlike **Fitz-ford** and **Henry de Pomeroy,** Courtenay’s narrative is not divided by antiquarian comment which has only tenuous links with the main plot. History and local legend unite in **Courtenay** as Bray blends the history of Tavistock during the Civil War with the legend of Lady Howard, and, as in her other works, aspects of her own history, thus personalising the narrative. Bray also returns to a more overt and extended use of gothic motifs, using scenes reminiscent of Radcliffe’s **Udolpho,** thus linking the last romance in this collection, with the first, **De Foix,** which also drew heavily on motifs from Radcliffe and made detailed explorations of Bray’s personal experiences. One significant difference between **Courtenay** and either Radcliffe’s work or **De Foix** is that the gothic narrative is set in England. This is a significant point as it was much later, during

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356 MS, iii, p. 230.
357 In **Fitz-ford** the protagonists people the May procession, while in **Henry de Pomeroy** the antiquarian descriptions of Tavistock Abbey are linked to the main narrative by the Abbot, the cellarer and his assistant.
358 Gothic motifs include a ghostly friar appearing to Eustace in a chapel where he hints at the boy’s true identity, **De Foix,** pp. 110-12; the incarceration of Eustace and the Lady Matilda, who is revealed as his mother, pp. 314-26; and the descriptions of La Garde, p. 306.
the 1860s, that the domestication of gothic narrative was popularised by writers such as Mary Braddon and Wilkie Collins.

Gothic narrative was important for, as Miranda Burgess argues, ‘[a]s a historical theory and national style […] it formed an important strand in conservative as well as in radical politics’. Bray like Radcliffe wrote from a Protestant, conservative standpoint, and she used gothic motifs to express her abhorrence of repressive authority, and in particular the Roman Catholic Church. On his arrival at Walreddon Courtenay sees a ruined chapel with ‘dark, narrow, and circuitous passage, […] bare stone walls […] and] a Gothic confessional, […] ruinous, and covered with green mould from the damps of these subterranean regions’ (pp. 265-66); but Bray has a more complex relationship with ruined architecture than Radcliffe, for although ruined abbeys and churches might suggest Protestant freedoms, they also meant for Bray the destruction of a nation’s past, which she deeply regrets.

Moreover, it was not just the Catholic religion that Bray censured, but fanaticism of any denomination and she filters this viewpoint through the mouth of her male narrator, William Courtenay. Courtenay claims that he is ‘no bigot to any faith; though a sincere member of the Church of England’ (p. 306), he even denounces the ‘violent, cruel, and unreasonable hatred afloat against the Church of Rome’ (p. 273), for which he blames Parliament, sentiments which have a resonance for the politics of Bray’s own age, in which the enfranchisement of Catholics was debated. This may also be a way for Bray to repair her own damaged reputation following the publication of The Protestant. In Courtenay Bray even presents a union between the Protestant William Henry Courtenay, who inherits Walreddon, and the Catholic Emily, the true heir to the estate, which marking a departure from Radcliffe’s work. Like Scott, Bray transcribes this union into national terms, but she

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359 Burgess, p. 162.
360 See Chapter 2, p. 105.
does not show how two nations can be joined, but how the Protestant religion can maintain its dominance within an idealised world of religious tolerance.\textsuperscript{361}

Bray’s views on Roman Catholicism and its priests can be split into two oppositional positions. While she denounces the sinister and manipulative fashion in which Lady Howard’s priest, Antonio Miotte, ‘in their secret hours of conversation together, […] worked on her mind’ (p. 274), when she separates the man from his public office, a very different view is presented. Miotte shows great compassion towards Cinderella Small by attempting to save her from execution at the hands of the Parliamentarians. While his religion is condemned, the man is redeemed through his chivalric act of protecting the weak and innocent, and more importantly a woman. Moreover Bray praises the old priests of Brittany mentioned in \textit{Trials of the Heart}, for their dedication and compassion.\textsuperscript{362}

\textit{Courtenay} is more nuanced than many of Bray’s other romances, and more complex in its narrative structure. Its style is reminiscent of Shelley’s \textit{Frankenstein}, not only in its use of framed narratives, but also in its appropriation of an editor who collates and presents the material: letters in \textit{Frankenstein}, and journals in \textit{Courtenay}. One major difference between these two texts, however, is that in \textit{Courtenay} both the writer and editor are male. William Courtenay is a nineteenth–century gentleman who is editing his grandfather’s journals, but despite the fact that Bray uses a male editor/historian it is possible to make connections between herself and her character. It is perhaps no coincidence that Bray chose this style of construction for a novel published just before she started editing her own journals in preparation for her \textit{Autobiography}. The introductory chapter of \textit{Courtenay} is set out exactly like one of Bray’s own prefaces, with an explanation and occasionally a justification of the authorial process, concluding with a name, address and date. The only difference is that Bray signs her name in full, whereas William Courtenay provides only his initials, W. C., and his credentials; ‘Cornet of Horse in the Service of His Majesty King George the Second’, which establishes his conservative

\textsuperscript{361} Burke, \textit{RR}, p. 35.\textsuperscript{362} Bray, \textit{Trials of the Heart}, p. 442.
ideology and royalist sympathies. Through Courtenay Bray also illustrates her own loyalty to the crown, although by championing the Stuart cause she perhaps complicates her support for the Hanoverian monarchy. Miranda Burgess argues that Tory writers, including Jane Austen and Scott, were frequently charged with having Jacobite sympathies.\textsuperscript{363}

At the outset William Courtenay clarifies his own position, and by association Bray’s, by asserting that he ‘had the honour to carry a pair of colours […] under the Dynasty of the house of Brunswick’ and therefore was ‘no Jacobite’ (p. 1). As the Kempe family was also descended from the Courtenays even closer connections are drawn between narrator and author, particularly as Bray begins her novel as she begins her own autobiography, ‘in a regular form; beginning as usual with all the memoirs of great personages, with the history of the family from the time of the Conquest’ (p. 3), which significantly links her private history with that of the nation. Even Bray’s sources matched those of her fictional narrator, who applied to the ‘immediate descendants of certain Royalists and other families in the county [...] who submitted to his hands many of their family papers. Old letters, diaries etc.’ (p. 3).

From these private documents Courtenay, like Bray, chooses to write an alternative, feminised history, with ‘the power to look into the heart’ (p. 3).\textsuperscript{364} He even appropriates similar vocabulary to Bray when explaining his preference for histories which show ‘a gradual unfolding of character and events. [...] Minute details and minor traits that show the heart with more fidelity than the most laboured accounts of great passions and affairs’ (p. 5). Thus through her fictional narrator Bray is able to explore not only the content, but also the methodology involved in biographical and autobiographical writing, at a time when she was contemplating the commencement of her own autobiographical work.

Courtenay’s humility in pointing out the difficulties of this kind of ‘literary composition’, and the acknowledgment of his limited skills in the field, also mirror Bray’s excuses and self–justification. Possibly she did not believe modesty to be a gendered

\textsuperscript{363} Burgess, p. 154.
\textsuperscript{364} See p. 182.
phenomenon, though more probably she was using Courtenay as her alter ego, a vehicle for expressing her own anxieties about exposing personal details for public consumption. In his address to the reader Courtenay refers explicitly to the private nature of his material, personal diaries containing ‘records of the most hidden feelings, the most secret thoughts and actions of the writers […] never intended for any other purpose than the silent contemplation of their own minds’ (p. 3). Like Bray, he is filling the gaps in public history with a private version of events which includes the history of women, a feminising device which links Bray’s work with the Gothic romances of Radcliffe.

It is perhaps no coincidence, therefore, that Bray’s heroine, like Radcliffe’s is named Emily, and through their descriptions of these young women, the authors reveal much about their own primary concerns. In both romances Emily is renowned for her beauty and compassion, although Radcliffe focuses more than Bray on matrilineal inheritance, passing down through the female line all the feminine qualities that would make Emily St. Aubert valuable in the marriage market. Emily resembled her mother; having the same elegant symmetry of form, the same delicacy of features, and the same blue eyes, full of tender sweetness. But, lovely as was her person, it was the varied expression of her countenance, as conversation awakened the nicer emotions of her mind, that threw such a captivating grace around her (p. 5).

Yet Radcliffe also presents the possibility for an alternative reading of Emily’s character which reveals the constructed nature of femininity. High merit and an ‘expressive countenance’ could indicate an intellectual capacity that may not suggest submissive passivity. Similarly ‘captivating grace’ could denote both virtue and sexual attraction.

In contrast, Bray’s portrait of Emily Grenville is lengthier and more clichéd than Radcliffe’s, depending heavily on descriptions of physical characteristics rather than personal qualities. The term portrait becomes an apt description of Bray’s methods as she appears to be almost literally painting a picture using exaggerated adjectives, comparisons, exclamations and questions and focussing her facial descriptions mainly on shape, colour and texture:
she was slender, graceful in her movements, rather above the middle height, though not sufficiently so to be called tall. Her face oval; the features small, but finely formed; the mouth remarkably delicate; the lips exquisitely rounded, and of such a red, that no flower, to my mind, could vie with the peculiar richness of their hue. The forehead high, smooth, of an ivory whiteness, with eyebrows dark, arched; and such eyes! but how can they be described? it is impossible. Such [...] large, dark, soul -speaking eyes, brilliant in their lustre, but soft and feminine in their expression, were beyond all compare. And then the head was so noble. There was so much sense in that beautiful face, with not the slightest approach to the insipidity which sometimes accompanies fair beauties like herself (p. 34-5).

Bray even makes explicit the connection between writing and art, although she suggests the limitations of literature over art when it comes to visual representation, claiming that ‘[w]ords are poor portrait painters’ (p. 34). As a keen artist herself, Bray might have believed in the inadequacy of verbal portraits, but such comments may just constitute another strategy to uphold her image of modesty without denigrating her ability as a writer, as the medium, not the executor, is at fault.365

Both Bray and Radcliffe subject their heroines to an extreme trial during the course of the narrative: the latter to the violent advances of Count Morano, while the former is held prisoner by a fanatical branch of the Parliamentarian forces. When subjected to Morano’s verbal tirade, Radcliffe’s heroine is reduced to the position of ‘speechless affright’ (p. 261) typical in gothic narrative:

her trembling frame refused to support her, and she resumed her seat: -the words died on her lips, [...] terror had so entirely disordered her thoughts, that she knew not how to plead to Morano, but sat, mute and trembling, in her chair (p. 265).

Here, using the eighteenth-century principles of control and reason, Radcliffe cleverly turns the tables on the gender stereotypes as Emily recovers her equanimity and rationally argues her case to the passionate Morano: ‘calm, I entreat you, these transports, and listen to reason, if you will not to pity’ (p. 264). Moreover Radcliffe suggests that female weakness is purely a physical phenomenon, as it is only under the threat of physical violence that women are silenced.

365 See MS. i, p. 19; and Kempe, pp. 33 and 51.
Emily Grenville, like her counterpart in *Udolphe*, displays some of the characteristics of a Gothic heroine, but fear makes her turn to passion, not reason, when her lover is threatened with death:

[Forgetful of everything but my danger, she wrung her hands, fell on her knees, and in accents that displayed the most fearful agitation, implored Captain Smith not to injure me (p. 186).

Some degree of restraint, however, is accomplished through the retrospective nature of the narrative and the fact that it is filtered through two male narrators: initially William Henry Courtenay’s eyewitness account and later that of his grandson, the editor. Moreover Emily’s reaction, despite its forcefulness, is commensurate with proper feminine behaviour:

[In the civil wars, it was common to see women who gave way [...] to the greatest timidity, where their fears were called up only for themselves or their friends, on the sudden to become collected, firm, and fearless of all danger, if their duty to the king was in question: so great does a true feeling of loyalty render the mind which it inhabits (p. 188).

Despite Emily’s central role in the narrative, she does not speak directly to the audience, a position commensurate with Bray’s own as a woman writing national, and therefore political, history. Like Radcliffe, Bray is highlighting gender issues, but there are significant differences. One is Bray’s more specific concern with historical detail. Another is the way in which Bray connects public history, not just with private events and local families, but with her own life.

Bray also uses location very differently to Radcliffe because of her antiquarian agenda. After 1830 Bray ceased to set her romances in Europe, turning her attention to the south west of England, her own locality, although, like Radcliffe, she still appropriates language associated with the sublime and the picturesque to create atmosphere.

Walreddon house is set in a wild and beautiful country, not far from the river Tavy, which winds through a charming valley of the domain. The house stands on the side of an eminence, well sheltered from the winds by a girdle of hills, and an abundance of the finest woods of oak, beech and elm (p. 25).
But this idyll is marred by gothic images of repression: ‘[a] high and massive wall surrounds the extensive courts, the offices and the mansion (p. 25), although Bray’s gothic symbolism differs slightly from Radcliffe’s, for here, Bray’s representation of autocratic power is female, Lady Howard. This portrayal suggests that Bray believed repression was not necessarily gendered, but often attended power itself, particularly if those wielding power had received poor moral education.

Ellen Howard is an interesting and complex subject in *Courtenay*. As a young woman she was the victim of her father’s autocratic power, and readers have some sympathy with her position. The unhappiness cause by her father’s refusal to allow a marriage between herself and her lover, Raleigh, is presented through the gothic motif of a concealed portrait, one also used by Radcliffe in *Udolpho*. Lady Howard hides the portrait of her lost lover, Raleigh in an ‘obscure and retired part of this rambling old mansion’ (p. 57), and like Radcliffe, Bray uses passionate language and mysterious allusions to hint at, but never reveal the identity of the subject, or Ellen Howard’s involvement in the young man’s history. When Courtenay witnesses her suffering he muses that ‘there have been feelings here […] that have been dreadfully tried, cruelly warn, exasperated almost into madness’ (p. 259). The reader is drawn to empathise with the woman’s position and condemn the repressive power that caused such torment. In fact lady Howard herself becomes the image of ruined architecture which is integral to gothic texts, with the ‘narrow passages and intricate turnings and windings’ of Walredon (p. 57) symbolising the darkness and misery of her own mind.

This darkness, however, craves revenge, and breeds the hatred that she shows towards the offspring of her loveless marriage, a daughter whom she plots to murder. While Bray condemns the social structure which allows women to be so victimised, and illustrates the terrible damage it can cause to human lives, she never allows her character to be redeemed, since Lady Howard makes no attempt to atone for the attempted murder of
her daughter. Possibly this is because Bray could not allow herself to contravene the legend, or because she could not forgive a mother for attempting to murder her own child, especially as Bray mourned the loss of her own daughter. Often Bray’s work carries a personal significance, and in *Courtenay* the story of Lady Howard’s lost love matches that of Bray’s close friend Edmund Wodehouse. Wodehouse, like Raleigh, was captured by pirates and held for some time in Algiers, dying on the journey back to England after his release. Wodehouse’s history and Bray’s lamentations on his loss form a long narrative section in her autobiographical manuscript, a section which suggests Bray had strong feelings for the young man.\(^{366}\) Thus, although Bray uses gothic motifs to reveal the repressive nature of patriarchal systems, military power, the law and the church, she also uses them to depict imprisonment on a more personal level.

Portraits are also used in Bray’s framed narrative concerning the tragic history of Sir Richard De Mewey and his lady, narrated by Lady Howard, which mirrors Lady Howard’s own life story, that of her lost lover and subsequent marital unhappiness. Ultimately Bray’s fiction turns Lady Howard’s tragedy into a romance ending through the marriage of her daughter, Emily, to William Henry Courtenay. Thus Bray demonstrates how art can produce the happy ending denied by history, a point represented symbolically through the portraits of Sir Richard and his lady. During the day these portraits ‘seem to mourn their own decay’ (p. 26), but at night, with the help of the imagination, they ‘step from their frames to lead up the revels as in days of yore, before war and rebellion were rife in the land’ (p. 26). Radcliffe uses portraits, as in the case of Signora Laurentini, to connect the present with the past, but Bray uses art more like Scott, to celebrate and memorialise the past. In *Waverley*, the portrait of Prince Charles Edward Stuart and his followers hanging in Tully Veolan recalls, memorialises and celebrates Scottish history and identity, and suggests possible Jacobite sympathies. Bray’s celebration of the past is less overtly political. Her portraits are not of key national figures, but her comments on happiness and

\(^{366}\) See Wodehouse’s history (MS, i, pp. 141-96).
rebellion have a clear political edge, as she suggests that the past was happier, and therefore perhaps preferable to the present. Moreover these portraits have a personal resonance for Bray, whose own life with Stothard is represented in art, her fiction, but brought to life by the power of the imagination.

Although Bray’s links with Radcliffean gothic are clear through her use of mysterious portraits, mirroring, framed narratives, haunted lives, concealed identities, lost children and lost inheritances, her debt to Scott remains, and is clear in her portrayal of dispossessed women. One such figure is Constance Behenna, nursemaid to Lady Howard’s daughter Emily and a woman who is complicit in the child’s disappearance. Despite her similarities to Meg Merrilies - her height and ‘the singularity of her habits, [which] had helped to procure for her the suspicion of witchcraft’ (p. 62) - she is far less autonomous. Her decision to act on behalf of Lady Howard and arrange for her child’s removal to a foreign convent was done not from spite, but from duty. Furthermore it is the aristocrat, Lady Isabella Grenville, not Behenna, who ultimately restores the child to her rightful place. Bray’s second representative of the dispossessed female, the gypsy Radigund, is, however, more interesting. Bray explains in her footnotes that the woman was descended from ‘a far better set of vagabonds than the common gypsies. […] A remain of the ancient Scaldi, or poets’ (p. 90), and as Katie Trumpener argues, ‘the bard is the mouthpiece for a whole society, articulating its values, chronicling its history, and mourning […] its collapse’. Radigund’s role is therefore similar to Bray’s, a recorder of her history and tradition. She explains how ‘thirteen gypsies […] had been hanged […] under the law made in Queen Elizabeth’s time, for no other crime than being gypsies, who had stayed more than a month in the kingdom’ (p. 91), and, like Bray, she tells a feminised, oral history that bridges the divide between the public and private face of historical narrative. Furthermore, as the nurturer and moral guide of Sir Hugh Pollard’s children she, like Bray,

367 Trumpener, p. 6.
is instructing the future representatives of the English aristocracy to set a moral example to society based on the chivalric codes which Bray herself valued.

The overt historical content of Bray’s work also makes it more like Scott’s than Radcliffe’s, for although Radcliffe specifies that *Udolpho* is set in 1584 at the outset of the wars of religion in France, these events have little significance to a romance which is involved more specifically, as Terry Castle notes, with the ‘personal and the private’. Castle argues that Radcliffe’s references to historical events are ‘sparse and frequently anachronistic because she was more interested in atmosphere than in authenticity’. Bray on the other hand must address national issues because she craves authenticity. In *Courtenay* and *Warleigh* she not only stipulates the year in which her works were set, 1642, but also explains, through the mouth of her narrator, how the South West was divided, the north loyal to Parliament and the south supporting Charles, and how the events of war affected Tavistock, its environs and its inhabitants. Bray’s main focus, however, is the private side of public events, which she relates through the private correspondence of two aristocrats from different political persuasions: Sir William Henry Courtenay and Sir James Chudleigh, equals in every way except in their allegiances. Thus, as in *Warleigh*, Bray is able to comment on key political issues by filtering them through her characters.

Chudleigh speaks for Parliament and, as in *Warleigh*, the argument is presented in legal and economic terms:

The royal prerogative stretched to the utmost limits of arbitrary power, is, and must be wholly incompatible with the privileges of parliament and the freedom of the subject. Whilst ship-money, loans, monopolies, imprisonment of members on the mere suggestion of the sovereign’s will, with bishops and convocations asserting an authority above all law; these are no small evils, and cry aloud for redress (p. 121).

Courtenay, on the other hand, argues as a royalist, and presents his views in personal terms, depicting the King as a victim ‘driven to such straits by the parliamentary

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faction [...] to be pitied [...] by all who have the honour of gentlemen and the feelings of men within their breast’ (p. 23). Bray’s argument is presented through the language of sentiment with its emphasis on pity. By linking Courtenay’s feelings for King Charles with the codes of gentlemanly behaviour, she is evoking Burkean ideals, the chivalric codes which not only provide positive models of masculine behaviour, but also exemplify what Newman believed to be the English national character.

Ultimately, despite its involvement with national issues, this is a domestic tale because it examines how friendship, loyalty, love and personal happiness can exist in art, though they may not have been possible historically. When Emily Howard and Cinderella Small risk their lives in a national, but also in a very personal cause, to save the men they love, they are both rewarded with domestic happiness because Bray is able to control the outcomes of this conflict through her fiction. Chudleigh, the staunch Parliamentarian, is led back to espouse the royalist cause, not through national politics, but through sentiment, the love he bears his friend, Courtenay, and Cinderella Small, herself the daughter of a royalist, Sir Hugh Pollard. Thus legitimate heirs are returned to their respective estates and the established order maintained in a way commensurate with Bray’s conservative principles, a point emphasised by the fact that everything has been subjected to the editorial process of Bray’s self-confessed royalist narrator, William Courtenay.

When Courtenay and his wife, Emily, return from exile, the future Bray depicts is Burma, for Walreddon is rebuilt on its old foundations; only ‘the antiquated parts of the mansion’ are pulled down, leaving the house without ‘its warlike and imposing aspect’ (p. 381). The gothic chapel and its adjacent tower, however, the symbols of England’s Catholic past, remain as ruins, showing that Bray, like Radcliffe, believes in a Protestant liberty that will prevent Catholicism ever being re-established as a national religion.

Conclusion.

Despite her constant denial of political involvement, gender politics and conservatism lie at the heart of Bray’s writing, not least because her desire to access the
male traditions of antiquarianism, national history and politics conflicted with her anxiety to be viewed as a conventional rather than a transgressive woman. Politics, she avers, should be eschewed by respectable women such as herself, for ‘I never liked what is called a political lady […] a character so masculine or out of place’ (MS, ii, p. 106). Yet ironically, her choice of subject matter, periods of national conflict, makes national politics difficult to avoid. Moreover she held strong opinions which emerge throughout her work, despite her efforts to conceal them behind a mask of family relations in her domestic tales.

It is, however, her constant focus on family and personal relationships that makes women central to her narrative, for unlike Scott, Bray’s female characters are present throughout the work; they even appear on the few occasions that the narrative ventures, albeit briefly, onto the battlefield from which women are usually debarred. In fact she eschews any engagement with exclusively male pursuits, except, of course, her own appropriation of antiquarian subject matter. Furthermore by giving centrality to women and female concerns she complements the history of key national events, a traditionally male narrative, with an alternative, private history, comprising private journals, letters, diaries, and oral tradition, the stories of women and their lives lifted from the margins of male discourse.

Finally Bray moves her historical narrative into an even more private sphere by relating and exploring aspects of her own history, as a way of reconstructing and controlling the past, and thereby creating the positive outcomes which were denied by history itself. Writing was for Bray a form of therapy, a way through which she could examine aspects of her own past which were either too painful, or perhaps too uncomfortable for her to examine directly through autobiography. In these local tales Bray continues to examine the themes which haunted her early work, and which appear to have troubled her own conscience: her relationship with Stothard, her disregard for filial duty in respect of her marriage to Stothard, her loss of both husband and child within a year of each other and finally, her second marriage to Edward Bray in 1822.
These regional romances are particularly significant, however, because they can be read as examples of an English national tale. Bray was staunch in her commitment to preservation, she was passionate about her subject matter, and Scott had observed a lack of tales ‘to excite an interest for the traditions and manners of Old England’ (I, p. xx). It would therefore be plausible to suggest that she took advantage of an opening in the market. But she also believed that even though England was the dominant culture in the newly united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, aspects of English culture and identity were being eroded by modernisation and a new British national identity.

Bray does not admit to writing an English national tale, a term too political to suit her idea of what was proper in a woman writer, but she did admit to writing a regional romance which was original, blending aspects of ‘real family history’, local landscape, and tradition (A, p. 207). Certainly no other novelist before her had written a series of works on an English region which incorporated the full breadth of information that Bray includes in her romances. Some English novelists, Jane Austen for example, set their work in a specific region, but these works do not incorporate the antiquarian and historical details that Bray’s do. To find any similar celebrations of the English regions it is necessary to look to poetry, the Lake Poets for example, or John Clare’s celebration of Northamptonshire. Yet Bray is not even remembered for her contribution to the regional romance, and it was not until later, with works such as Kingsley, Westward Ho! (1855), Rosa Mackenzie Kettle, The Wreckers (1857) and R. D. Blackmore, Lorna Doone (1869) that the landscape and people of Devon were memorialised in literature, but in single novels, not a series of works as Bray produced. It is the Brontes, Mrs. Gaskell and Thomas Hardy famous for his Wessex novels, who are remembered as English regional novelists, writers whose first novels were published during Bray’s lifetime, although long after she had produced the main body of her work. Whether any of these writers were influenced by Bray is debatable, and could be a topic for further research.
Bray’s Literary Legacy.

As I have demonstrated throughout this study, one of Bray’s primary reasons for writing was to memorialise her life, her county and country, and therefore in this closing chapter it is perhaps apt to analyse her legacy. In her locality at least, her name is still remembered, not for her romances, but for *The Border of the Tamar and the Tavy*, a topographical work on Dartmoor which was compiled from her letters to Robert Southey. Throughout the twentieth century various magazines based in the South West have published articles celebrating their local nineteenth-century writer. One series in the *Dartmoor Magazine* amounted to thirty-six parts, each recounting a different aspect of Bray’s *Borders*; the series ran for seven years.369 This is certainly a memorial she would have wished for. Her name has been kept alive, in Devon at least, because of her writings about the local area; she is also of interest to some scholars because of her associations with Southey. Denis Low’s recent critical study was initially to include Bray, and would also have concentrated on her relationship with Southey, which did not begin until 1830. By that time she had already published one travel work, a memoir and four historical romances.

Perhaps Bray achieved her aim, to be remembered in relation to the celebrated men in her life: her first husband, Charles Stothard, her father-in-law, Thomas Stothard, whose biography she published in 1851, and her friend Robert Southey; but what of the woman herself? Throughout her career there have been opposing elements in Bray’s life: a leaning towards public performance, which drew her to the theatre, and what she describes as a ‘nervous disposition’, which made her reticent about courting public notice.370 Thus Bray resolutely constructed for herself a public face of modest conformity; she was determined to be viewed as what Mary Poovey deemed a ‘proper lady’, and to achieve that end she presented herself as a passive subject who could only act when encouraged or supported by

369 See Introduction, p. 11.
370 Chapter 1, p. 31.
men, and who could only present, rather than re-present male scholarship. Yet her writing subverts that image. Bray did re-present some aspects of male scholarship, reclaiming women from the margins of historical narrative, giving them a voice and empowering them to act because she frames them in a domestic discourse. Moreover she was neither passive nor incapable of acting on her own behalf, or that of others. 371 Although she admits to being ambitious about her work, she had a self-belief in her writing that sits uncomfortably with the modest image she attempted to present: ‘I felt somewhat hurt when I saw that by the puffing and pushing system very inferior works were brought into public notice whilst mine was overlooked’ (MS, ii, 70). I suggest that this image of modest compliance that Bray constructed ironically empowered her to act, and to publish her works, for she had no real need to do so.

Her marriage to Edward Bray in 1822 meant that she was no longer dependent on her parents; neither did she have a daughter to support; Blanche Stothard died that January; Edward Bray was a clergyman and a landowner; she had no need to write for money. 372 Bray herself explains that she wrote ‘because I loved writing’, but she does not explain why she published and why she was so incensed if she was unable to strike a suitable deal with publishers, or if she felt her sales were disappointing (MS, ii, pp. 78-80). Writing gave Bray independence and fame, which I suggest she enjoyed; her writing allowed her to go to London regularly for the publication of her works, where she could engage in a degree of social networking.

Thus she was far more independent and autonomous than she would lead us to believe. Not only did she choose to pursue her own career in writing, she even elected to write in a genre that she admits was losing its popularity, the historical romance, because she loved history, and she continued to publish in this genre until 1848. 373 Whatever

371 Chapter 1, p. 47.
372 Edward Bray inherited owned Cuddlipton Manor and lands in North Devon from his father.
373 She claims that the novels which ‘sold the best were laid in modern times’ (MS, ii, p. 70).
excuses she made concerning her lack of success, Bray’s romances enjoyed enough popularity to be reprinted: *De Foix*, her first, and arguably not her best romance, was republished in England in 1833 and 1845; some of her works were published in America, and some were also translated into German.\(^{374}\) Altogether she made enough money to finance her nephews’ Oxford careers and leave over £15,000 on her death, no mean feat for an anxious, retiring woman.

Bray’s romances, unlike *The Borders*, did not survive into the twentieth century, which is the next point I wish to address. Her writing was similar to Scott’s but it was also very different. She admits herself that when writing the local romances she was producing an original work: ‘striking a new path in the field of romance’ by blending aspects of ‘real family history’, local landscape, and tradition (*A*, p. 207). Ostensibly she was right; even Scott did not strive to include such accurate recordings of local history, landscape and legend as Bray. Perhaps she tried too hard: at times the antiquarian/historian gains prominence at the expense of the plot, but it is nonetheless significant that she was bold enough to admit such a project was original when even Scott was loath to admit to ‘original’ writing.\(^{375}\)

In this study I have taken the concept of originality even further, suggesting that Bray was writing an English national tale, and by doing so she was again writing against the trend. Ian Duncan states ‘[t]he idea of national literature was one of the fruits of the romance revival’, but after the Act of Union English concerns had been displaced by those of the new nation, Great Britain. Perhaps it is the fact that her romances might be considered backward looking that has caused them to be overlooked by the twentieth century. But Bray’s works, positioned between the two examples of national literature cited by Duncan, Scott and Dickens, show how easily Englishness has been transposed into Britishness, a point which is highlighted by the fact that the national tales of Scotland and

\(^{374}\) *Introduction*, p. 10.  
\(^{375}\) See Chapter 4, p. 176 and Chapter 3, p. 131.
Ireland have not only been recognised, but have also been given critical attention by academics such as Ina Ferris and Katie Trumpener.  

Bray, like other writers of the Romantic period, responds to two particular political moments, the French Revolution and the Act of Union. These events were far reaching: the former shook the long established structures of European society, destroying much of the past in its wake; the other threatened, certainly in Bray’s view, to destroy Englishness. Responses to the revolution were polarised: Bray’s opinions were deeply conservative, focussing on conserving all aspects of the past, its hierarchies, material culture, customs, and in particular the English national culture and identity. She resolutely believed in the superiority of the English nation and its religion, an opinion that she shared with many other eighteenth and early nineteenth-century travellers abroad. Her conservatism is also reflected in her appropriation of mediaevalism, with its feudal structures and chivalric ideals, to provide an exemplum for a better future built on paternalism and gentlemanly behaviour and Tory principles. She was very politically driven for a woman who denies any political involvement in her writing. Moreover her constant denials of this political agenda do little more than draw attention to her political intent. It is ironic that Miriam Burstein, writing a short critical analysis of Bray’s *Protestant*, reads the work as a strong anti-Catholic novel, exactly as it was received, much to Bray’s horror, in 1829. It would be ironic if this were to be Bray’s legacy, to be remembered as a political lady, a title she so fervently wished to eschew.

This point brings me back to another political issue also explored in Bray’s writing, gender politics. Throughout Bray’s work we are shown how women can become autonomous independent subjects, but within the framework of conventionality. In her autobiographical writing she stresses equality in marriage, within a domestic framework; Bray writes, publishes and presents her political opinions within that same domestic

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framework. It is certainly not liberation, and at times Bray was possibly uncomfortable with what she did, hence her regular bouts of illness, but Bray does have an independent voice which at times, as in her early travel writing, can be quite enthusiastic and engaged.

It is easy to be negative about Bray’s work, criticising her stylistically for her inability to balance her antiquarian agenda with her romance narrative, perhaps one reason why her work has received little critical attention. Yet Mary Shelley, Lady Morgan and Ann Radcliffe all published historical romances during the early nineteenth century which do not have Bray’s prominent antiquarian agenda. All have received far more attention than Bray, and not just in recent years. The reason for this lack of academic interest may, therefore, lie beyond Bray’s lack of finesse in blending antiquarianism with romance narrative. One possibility is the centrality given to women, a feature which might detract from the works’ fitness to be viewed as national literature, for significantly Bray’s work voices the concerns of those who, as Brewer notes, did not see modernisation as ‘an unmitigated good or simple story of improvement’. Perhaps the reason lies with the formation of an English tradition of novel writing which, Ian Duncan argues, purged the canon of ‘all of Scott and most of Dickens […] until about 1970’, because their work lacked ‘high seriousness’. If so, Bray is significant for her exclusion, as her works try to refocus the romance on female concerns and speak for a preservation of Englishness against the popular trend to produce British national literature.

With the dawn of digitised texts works such as Bray’s are being made available for students at prices that are not prohibitive. This process will certainly facilitate the study of lesser known women writers like Bray, and possibly our understanding of the Romantic period and its literature will have to be reviewed.

378 Brewer, p. xxi.
379 Duncan, p. 3.
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