

Kirstin Collins Hanley, *Mary Wollstonecraft, Pedagogy, and the Practice of Feminism*. New York and London: Routledge, 2013. Pp. 198. £80. ISBN 9780415893350.

Those walking by Newington Green Unitarian Church will notice a banner announcing its place as ‘The Birthplace of Feminism’ for its associations with Mary Wollstonecraft, who worshipped there during years that form a central part of Kirstin Collins Hanley’s study of the development of Wollstonecraft’s reading and writing pedagogies. Making a convincing case for the importance of this overlooked period, during which Wollstonecraft undertook undervalued employment as schoolteacher and governess, Hanley ably recovers a paradigm of feminist pedagogy first obscured first by Godwin and then by subsequent critics. Hanley builds upon the work of Mitzi Myers to re-assess the role of ‘mother-teacher’ as a model for social change with the persuasive thesis that Wollstonecraft’s pedagogical writings offer ‘an innovative educative force working within and alongside the powerful cultural imperative for the improvement of the self and others’ through a series of adaptations and revisions (5).

Following the introduction, the monograph offers five chapters and a conclusion, which trace examples of adaptation and revisions through a contextual analysis of debates initiated by Rousseau’s portrait of Sophie, conduct books by John Gregory and Hester Chapone, and works by Dissenting educators, among others. Wollstonecraft’s first writings, *Original Stories* and *Thoughts on the Education of Daughter* adapt conduct writings to encourage women to act as cultural critic and agent of social reform. *The Female Reader* participates in the elocutionary tradition of the Dissenting Academies and encourages critical reading by the juxtaposition of writings. In the third chapter Hanley explores didactic strategies in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. A revisioning of maternal agency and domestic space in her fragment *Letters on the Management of Infants and Lessons* is the subject of the fourth chapter while Chapter 5 considers *Mary, A Fiction* and *The Wrongs of Woman* as dramatizing feminist pedagogy. A final chapter considers how Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë offer a critique of irrational female behavior that is indebted to the female-centred pedagogies of *Original Stories*. ‘Conclusions’ employs *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* and the incident of Wollstonecraft rescuing her sister Eliza from an unhappy marriage as points of departure for a provocative reading of a contemporary Wollstonecraftian pedagogy with respect to authority in the classroom, notably in composition and introductory literature courses.

This well-researched and original reading of Wollstonecraft’s writings engages with a wide body of scholarship, including Barbara Taylor in *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (2003) and that of the collective contributors to Claudia Johnson’s *Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft* (2002). Its best chapters examine material receiving little critical attention, and the insightful analysis of how Wollstonecraft models a dialogue with her arrangement of readings in *The Female Reader* or the portrayal of Mrs. Mason and her conversational methods in *Original Stories* ask for further elaboration than the present relatively brief and readable chapters can offer. The readings of her unfinished *Letters on the Management of Infants* and her *Lessons* are likewise fascinating and illuminating, if also somewhat curtailed.

Some additional consideration of the value of dialogue about pedagogy offered by Hanley would be useful. With reference to Wollstonecraft’s contemporaries, the repetition of the derogatory phrase ‘Barbould Crew’ used by Charles Lamb in a letter to Coleridge to indict didactic literature seemingly neglects these origins (26, 58, 134). Barbould’s writings for children belong to the Dissenting tradition through which Wollstonecraft was connected with

Richard Price and his circle in Newington Green and with the publishing circle of Joseph Johnson. Further discussion of these influences would be welcome. Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children*, as well as her volumes of *Lessons*, are key texts for an engagement with Dissenting pedagogy, yet the *Hymns* are only accessed via a very brief selection in an anthology of children's literature, which seems a missed opportunity. Daniel White's *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent* might have come into play in this discussion. While the conclusion, which is both potentially the richest and most risk-taking chapter, opens up a larger debate about pedagogy 'at the level of individual consciousness in dialog with others' (152), its terms are ones that are particularly grounded in the contexts of the academy in the United States and therefore might seem a bit narrow in its particular focus if not its theoretical underpinnings. But these are responses intended to suggest the thought-provoking nature of *Mary Wollstonecraft, Pedagogy, and the Practice of Feminism* and its wide-ranging appeal to readers interested in Wollstonecraft, eighteenth-century instructional literature, early feminism, and reading and writing pedagogies.

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