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# Mentors' Help and Learned Women

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> There never was perhaps an age wherein the fair sex made so conspicuous a figure with regard to literary accomplishments as in our own. ... Learning is now grown so fashionable amongst the ladies, that it becomes every gentleman to carry his Latin and Greek with him whenever he ventures into female company.[1]

Even with the remark that 'we hope our readers will not construe [this train of thought] into mis-timed ***raillery***', this proclaimed admirer of the trend of learning among women sounds more mocking and teasing than simply lauding, but these lines point to a certain aspect of the on-going trend. Although women's participation in the expansion of literary culture has been noted more in the genre of vernacular fiction, they also played an important part in the growth of such semi-learned genre as translation.[2] Pope gained so much profit from a new female readership of his translation that Samuel Johnson chides that: 'too many appeals are made to the ladies'.[3] Elizabeth Carter, happily acknowledging how many women have subscribed to her Epictetus, writes to Catherine Talbot: 'Epictetus must comfort himself ... by the civil treatment

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1. ***The Critical Review*** 13, 1762, quoted in ***Women in the Eighteenth Century: Construction of Femininity*** ed. Vivien Jones(London 1990), p. 175.
2. Lewis William Bruggemann provides an extensive list of translations in ***A View of the English Editions, Translations and Illustrations of the Ancient Greek and Latin Authors*** (Stettin, 1797); on readership of the classics, see Penelope Wilson, 'Classical poetry and the Eighteenth-Century Reader', in ***Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*** ed. Isabel Rivers (Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 79-82 ; Wilson also shows that the growth of translation was not uncontroversial (p. 81).
3. Carolyn D. Williams, ***Pope, Homer, and Manliness*** (London 1993), pp. 153-55; Samuel Johnson, ***Lives of the English Poets*** ed. George Birkbeck Hill, vol. III (Oxford 1905), p. 240.

he meets with among the ladies.' [4] In another translation project, Sarah Fielding's Xenophon, the subscribers include nearly three hundred women (and 333 men).[5] Since the qualities of the classics were conceived of as explicitly masculine, some argued that women should be excluded from knowledge of the classics. However, such exclusive masculinity seems to have been conveniently forgotten by the translators and the booksellers. Indeed, to read the classics in translation was recommended to women. In ***The Ladies Library*** published in 1714 the author writes: 'young Ladies should be encourag'd to read the ***Greek*** and ***Roman*** Histories in the best Translations.' [6]

Much more disturbing than women's participation as consumers of translation was their being scholars. In this paper I shall examine the difficulties female scholars faced when they ventured into publication, and how two of them tried to overcome those obstacles. In considering the issue of female learning, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's well-known cautionary attitude is suggestive. When she is discussing issues of gender, she also raises the question of the distinction between private and public. In her advice for the education of her granddaughter, what she regards as the 'most absolutely necessary' caution is: 'to conceal whatever Learning she attains, with as much solicitude as she would hide crookedness or lameness.' [7] Lady Mary takes it for granted that there is nothing wrong in her granddaughter's attaining learning, that is, privately, and what she pays attention to is its expected negative effect on her social life. Lady Mary's comments show that the questions of gender barriers and the distinction of private and public spheres often overlapped. However, women's displayed learning did not necessarily expose them to criticism. Putting translation from Greek in print, being the most obvious means of showing their learning to the public, did much to settle their identity as scholars, not as presumptuous wits. Here what mattered was

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4. Montagu Pennington, ***Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter,...*** 4th edn (London 1825), I, p. 211.

5. A List of Subscribers, Xenophon's ***Memoirs of Socrates, with Defence of Socrates Before his Judges: Translation from the Original Greek*** (Bath 1762).

6. ***The Ladies Library*** Written by a Lady, published by Mr. Steele (London 1714), I, p. 20.

7. ***The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*** ed. Robert Halsband (Oxford 1967), III, p. 22.

not keeping it private but how it was handled. Elizabeth Carter won the fame of an impeccable female scholar. Sarah Fielding not so marvellous a reputation. Although other various factors worked, their ways of handling their learning both in social scenes and in print were crucial in constructing their reputation.

Carter and Fielding were two of the very few female translators who rendered Greek into English in print. Both their own efforts and assistance from people around them helped them to overcome existing cultural barriers in the access to classical knowledge. Certainly there were warnings, satire, and criticism against the promotion of classical learning in women.[8] Thomas Edwards, a correspondent of Samuel Richardson's, points out a widely-held objection to classical learning in women, although he himself criticizes such prejudice:

> Till this world is mended, a Lady perhaps may be justified in fearing least she should be looked upon (as Har[riet] says) 'like an Owl among the birds,' and should lose more credit with the majority, than she can gain with the few. The prejudices against a learned wife (such I mean as are free from pedantry, and neglect not their proper duty to acquire their learning) are absurd, irrational, and often flow from envy; but they are strong, inveterate, and too general.[9]

Yet, as he himself testifies, there existed 'the few' who readily appreciated women's ability. Through personal negotiation with the appreciative few, the gender barrier could be overcome. There were those, like him, who were

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8. See for example, Alice Browne, ***The Eighteenth Century Feminist Mind*** (Brighton 1987), 102-21; Angela J. Smallwood provides a helpful list of publications discussing women between 1680-1760, including those dealing with women's education, conduct, and learning in ***Fielding and the Woman Question: The Novels of Henry Fielding and Feminist Debate 1700-1750*** (New York 1989), pp. 176-97; Sylvia Harcstark Myers, ***The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England*** (Oxford 1990), pp. 3-6; Felicity A. Nussbaum discusses mainly satire targeted at lust, infidelity, wantonness, and Amazonian boldness, but some parts of her account deal with female learning, see ***The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660-1750*** (Lexington, Kentucky 1984), pp. 126-29, 131, 148-49, 152-54.

9. FM [Forster Collection, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum] XII 48 E 6, ff. 108-9.

ready to articulate an encouraging attitude in spite of the general opposition.[10] Women could develop their intellectual pursuits within protective networks of sympathetic friends, cocooned away from critics of female learning. Fine scholarship of Carter and Fielding persuaded learned people around them to encourage their highly intellectual pursuit. Furthermore, their sheer scholarship attracted mentors to give them generous help in their translation projects. Both their own efforts and assistance from people around them helped them to overcome existing cultural barriers.

If they were faced with a gender barrier, it was not criticism against learned women but the absence of codes for female scholars who publish. In contrast with well-educated men who were brought up imbibing the notion of classical learning as a social requirement, they had to make their ways off the beaten track, searching for their own styles and goals in that discipline. They tended to overlook the fact that displaying classical learning needed more than linguistic knowledge and accuracy; it had a social function and one needed skill to make public a representation of one's own learning. When they ventured into the world of publication, leaving their protective networks, they adopted different stances. The difference between their managements of and solutions to the difficulties they faced in entering the public sphere is the focus in this paper. There was a significant difference in their approaches which brought about the production of different kinds of translation. I would argue that they made different social use of their literature and learning. As the comparison between their performances reveals, for these women, what mattered was the way they managed their production of a marketable artifact

10. Jean E. Hunter points out a considerable sympathetic awareness of women's problems in the ***Gentleman's Magazine*** in 'The 18th-Century Englishwoman: According to the Gentleman's Magazine', in ***Woman in the 18th Century and Other Essays*** ed. Paul Fritz and Richard Morton (Toronto 1976) 73-88; see also Miriam J. Benkovitz, 'Some Observations on Woman's Concept of Self in the 18th Century', ***Woman in the 18th Century and Other Essays***, 37-54; Charmaine Wellington, 'Dr Johnson's Attitude Towards the Education of Women', ***New Rambler*** (1977), 49-58; Isobel Grundy, 'Samuel Johnson as Patron of Women', ***The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual*** 1, ed. Paul J. Korshin (New York 1987), 59-77; James G. Basker, 'Dancing Dogs, Women Preachers and the Myth of Johnson's Misogyny', ***The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual*** 3, ed. Paul J. Korshin (New York 1990), 63-90; Annette Wheeler Cafarelli, 'Johnson and Women: Demasculinizing Literary History', ***The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual*** 5, ed. Paul J. Korshin (New York 1992), 61-114.

of an intellectually high standard. They needed to develop strategies to successfully transform the knowledge they enjoyed in their closed studies into the socially acceptable form of print.

Elizabeth Carter's entrance into publication was untroubled.[11] Yet when she undertook translation, there was a problem, which she could not foresee by herself. She at first applied herself eagerly to the translation's linguistic element and concentrated on rendering the text into elegant English. When the translation began to become a publication project, she had Catherine Talbot and Thomas Secker as advisers, who sent her detailed opinions and requests from the standpoint of both general and learned readers.[12] By them she was given advice both on matters of literary style and theological debate, including the issue of presenting stoic philosophy within a Christian culture. In other words, she was given advice on how to make her scholarship appeal to the reading public.

Sarah Fielding's management of her learning was less successful. The publication of a translation of Xenophon was a potentially rewarding attempt to introduce her private exercise of learning into the public sphere. She was equipped with an ability to make it happen; the quality of the translation itself or as a philological achievement was praised by her contemporaries and the fact that her translation was printed even in the twentieth century testifies to its accuracy.[13] However, she could not achieve the reputation and financial reward enjoyed by successful translators. While Carter's life was made very comfortable by the profit of her translation, Fielding suffered from financial difficulties toward the end of her life. I regard Sarah Fielding's undertaking of translation as an awkward process of transforming a learned woman's inclination toward a private scholarly exercise into a published public text.

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11. Myers, ***The Bluestocking Circle***, pp. 46-7.

12. Using the term suggested by Ruth Perry, Kowaleski-Wallace recognizes Talbot's role as mothering Carter's mind, taking care of her emotional uneasiness and supporting intellectual development. See Beth Kowalwski-Wallace, 'Two Anomalous Women: Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot', in ***Eighteenth-Century Women and The Arts*** ed. Frederick M. Keener and Susan E. Lorsch (New York 1988), 19-27.

13. ***Socratic Discourses by Plato and Xenophon*** (London 1910), 'Apology, or the Defence of Socrates', trans. by Sarah Fielding, 152-61.

In terms of fiction writing, she was always attentive to the demands of the literary market. However, in translation she lost her awareness of the demands. The direction Sarah Fielding headed for was not well suited for public favour. In the end she achieved inward scholarly satisfaction, but not the widespread reputation of a respected scholar nor the financial reward which she sought.

Elizabeth Carter, though her shyness in gatherings was well-known, could express her brilliance in personal letters; they were her channel to impress people of the depth of her scholarship as well as her hidden sociable personality.[14] Consequently, she gained an impeccable reputation as a scholar in her life time and it was embellished afterwards by Montagu Pennington's *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter.*[15] Of course her sheer scholarship was the cause of her reputation, but there was more within her and around her to support such excellence with. Her early nineteenth-century biographer confirmed the image of Carter 'as a deep and elegant scholar', with admirable Christian and feminine virtues.[16]

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14. In spite of his remark that 'A man is generally better pleased when he has a good dinner on his table than when his wife talks Greek', Johnson's admiration of Elizabeth Carter is well known: she 'could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus, and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem.' She was fortunate to be protected by Johnson's remarks. Lady Hertford wrote of Carter that 'I am well informed that she is an admirable Greek and Latin scholar; and writes both these languages, as well as French and Italian, with great elegance. But, what adds to the wonder she excites is, that all this learning has not made her the less reasonable woman, the less dutiful daughter, or the less agreeable and faithful friend' (*Correspondence Between Frances, Countess of Hertford, and Henrietta Louisa, Countess of Pomfret, Between the Years 1738 and 1741* ed. William Bingley [London 1805] , I, 96-7). Claudia Thomas emphasises Carter's active role in creating the image of a moral professional literary woman in '"Th'Instructive Moral, and Important Thought": Elizabeth Carter Reads Pope, Johnson, and Epictetus', *The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual* 4, ed. Paul J. Korshin (New York 1991), 137-69.

15. On Carter's publication of translation of Epictetus, the *Monthly Review* honoured her: 'Many Ladies have been very witty; some few have been very learned; but we have never, till now, seen these accomplishments united with an acute understanding and solid judgment, sufficient to unravel the intricacies of Philosophy.' *Monthly Review*, 18, 1758, quoted in Jones, *Women in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 175.

16. *Sketch of the Character of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter* (Kelso 1806), pp. 13-4. Christine Mary Salmon points out that this short book established the respectable image of Elizabeth Carter in part through omitting to mention her comic spirit and subversiveness, leading in turn to a twentieth-century estimation of her as dull. See 'Representations of the Female Self in Familiar Letters 1650-1780' (University of London, dissertation, 1991), p. 60, n.27.

Although she refers to the importance of conversation in her works, Sarah Fielding was not a very sociable person. Rather, she experienced some difficulty in this kind of activity. It is true that people acquainted with her appreciated her goodness: she was a 'good sort of Woman', 'a virtuous maiden', and 'a Lady who has a good Heart as well as Head'.[17] However, she was not congenial enough to make cordial relationships in society, and still less was she to become outstanding in social activities. Joseph Warton records that he enjoyed cheerful conversation with Fielding, but Sarah retired very early.[18] Elizabeth Montagu did not think of her as an entertaining companion for her sister.[19] Richardson wished she had been sociable enough to open conversation with Lady Bradshaigh.[20] Overall, she did not invest much effort to make herself socially attractive. In addition, she did not use epistles to impress her addressees with her letter-writing skills: her extant letters show that she did not conceive of letters as vehicles for literary self-projection. So, she did little to carve out a profile either in the interpersonal society or in her correspondence. This was detrimental to the making of her reputation and the fact that she was reputedly learned worked to her disadvantage.

Lady Bradshaigh expressed her antagonism against 'masculine' women: 'I own I do not approve of great learning in women... I hate to hear latin out of a woman's mouth. There is something in it, to me masculine. I would fancy such a one weary of the petticoat, and talking over a bottle'.[21] Hester Thrale, too, drew an unfavourable picture of a learned woman. Her criticism fell onto Sarah Fielding, in particular. She reports a libellous rumour about Fielding in line with Lady Bradshaigh's image of a learned woman talking over a bottle. She provides the material for drawing a definitely negative picture: 'but Sally was the Scholar; I have since heard from Mr Johnson that She was accused

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17. MO [Montagu Collection, The Huntington Library] 5766, Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott; MO 5766; FM XI, 48 E 5, f. 82, Richardson to Lady Bradshaigh; Catherine Talbot wrote to Carter about Sarah Fielding's character: 'there is a goodness of heart and a delicacy of sentiment that makes me think you happy in her acquaintance' (*A Series of Letters*, II, p. 131).

18. Martin C. Battestin and Ruthe R. Battestin, ***Henry Fielding: A Life*** (London 1989), p. 413.

19. MO 5766.

20. ***Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*** ed. Anna Laetitia Barbauld (London 1804), II, p. 101.

21. Barbauld, VI, p. 52.

of drinking'.[22]

Still more, she describes a report allegedly told by Dr Collier, that Henry Fielding was jealous of Sarah's abilities in the classics. Thrale writes down a stereotypical critical portrait of a learned woman for Sarah Fielding, who invited jealousy of her brother and made herself disagreeable. In a letter to Leonard Chappelow she writes about the worsening of relations between the brother and sister brought about by her learning:

> Miss Fielding was wholly unassisted by her Brother whatever She Wrote; for I know Dr. Collier has often told me that though they lived upon the tenderest Terms *before*, yet after She had by their common Friend's assistance made herself a competent Scholar, so as to construe the sixth Book of Virgil with Ease -- the Author of Tom Jones began to teize and *taunt* her with being a literary Lady &c. till at last she resolved to make her whole pleasure out of Study, and becoming justly eminent for her Taste and Knowledge of the Greek Language, her Brother never more could perswade himself to endure her Company with Civility -- This Anecdote I do not recollect to have read in Mr. Murphy's Account of him, though curious enough; and most undoubtedly true.[23]

These remarks show on the one hand that Thrale is critical of Henry's hostility toward a learned woman and sounds even sympathetic toward the isolated struggle of Sarah Fielding for intellectual independence. On the other hand, however, she suggests Sarah Fielding's obstinacy and unsociable behaviour due to her scholarly pride. Reinforcing the idea that classical languages belonged to a special and privileged province of learning, Thrale highlights the Sarah Fielding who adamantly chooses to be a scholar and refuses to deal

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22. *Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale 1776-1809* ed. Katharine C Balderston (Oxford 1942), pp. 78-9.

23. Quoted in Battestin, *Henry Fielding: a Life*, p. 381. Arthur Murphy describes Sarah Fielding in his 'An Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding. Esq.' as a person of 'a lively and penetrating genius in many elegant performances, particularly DAVID SIMPLE, and the letters'(I, p. 7), not mentioning her learning or her translation of Xenophon, see *The Works of Henry Fielding, Esq; with The Life of the Author* (London 1762), I, pp. 5-49. See also *Thraliana*, p. 79.

reasonably even with her own brother. Whether they are true or not, what is important here is that a stereotypical image of an over-learned woman is projected on Sarah Fielding.

As if confirming Thrale's account, biographers of Henry Fielding have drawn a critical portrait of Sarah Fielding. The image of an unsociable, vain, learned woman was convenient for exonerating Henry Fielding's severe attitude toward learned women. [24] In his biographical sketch in 1810 William Mudford suggests a connection between Henry Fielding's unkind treatment of women and his feelings about his sister:

> Whether Fielding saw in [Sarah] some of those pernicious consequences which are commonly supposed to result from female learning; or whether he drew from general observation, cannot now, perhaps, be ascertained: but in all his works, whenever he wishes to represent a woman disadvantageously, he generally makes her erudite.[25]

W.L. Cross is more confident in tracing the connection. Cross's imagination invented a rather vivid depiction of an ill-managed home:

> [Mudford's] surmise was that [Henry] Fielding had perhaps observed 'the pernicious consequences' of 'female learning' in his sister Sarah, who, I suppose, let his stockings undarned or his dinner uncooked in order to finish her book.[26]

Smallwood maintains that Cross was responsible for disseminating a masculine image of Henry Fielding.[27] This masculinity involves good-natured magnanimity; his narrow-mindedness about women must therefore be ascribed to a particular cause.[28] The reputation of Sarah Fielding is thus sacrificed

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24. Carolyn D. Williams argues that Henry Fielding's attitude to learned women is more favourable than is generally thought: see 'Fielding and Half-learned Ladies', ***Essays in Criticism*** 38(1988): 23-34.
25. ***The British Novelists*** (London 1810), IV, p. 3.
26. Wilbur L. Cross, ***The History of Henry Fielding*** (New Haven 1918), III, p. 202.
27. Smallwood, ***Fielding and the Woman Question***, pp. 15-27.
28. ***The History of Henry Fielding***, III, pp. 200-2.

in order to excuse Henry's attitude toward learned women, as if to think of his sister's neglect of the feminine duties made his disparaging attitude understandable. The unfavourable picture of Sarah Fielding as a learned woman seems to owe less to the impressions of her contemporaries than to later constructions. In her works she combines social, sociable and intellectual merits in her heroines, but she made no comparable effort to project an image of herself as a learned woman who was praiseworthy for her sociability or to create a reputation as a socially active and attractive person, through conversation and correspondence, which were eagerly pursued activities in polite eighteenth century society.

J.M. Levine traces the dispute between advocates of the ancients and the moderns, characterizing them through their different views of history. The former, whom he summarizes as gentlemanly, emphasised the importance of rhetoric learned from the ancient writers, and were concerned with writing well and persuasively, while the latter, committed to antiquarian and philological analysis, pursued historical veracity and accuracy.[29] Whatever happened within the learned world, if we look at translation, the ancients carried the day. Madame Dacier's successful translation of Homer published in the middle of the ***Querelle*** was a product of the side of the ancients.[30] Levine describes the characteristics of her translation in terms of a clear contrast between the ancients and the moderns:

> Madame Dacier had no intention of distracting her readers with either philology or antiquities; ... She offered few citations and little obvious erudition, although she knew most of what had been done. Instead, she concentrated on the defense of her poet, the vindication of Homer against his critics past and present. ... In meticulous detail and point by point she could now elaborate the arguments of her preface: the perfection of the *Iliad* in form and style, the wisdom of Homer in all matters, the usefulness of the poem as a guide to life, its consistency with holy

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29. Joseph M. Levine, ***The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age*** (Ithaca 1991).

30. Levine, ***The Battle of the Books***, pp. 133-47.

Scripture.[31]

Although neither Sarah Fielding nor Elizabeth Carter, active at mid-century, joined either side, they produced their translations in the wake of this battle. Carter's translation, in line with Dacier's, was a remarkable success, while the erudite philological superiority of Fielding won the admiration of fewer readers.

Catherine Talbot and Thomas Secker, then Bishop of Oxford and later Archbishop of Canterbury, were the crucial figures in the making of her translation of Epictetus.[32] By them she was given advice both on matters of literary style and theological debates. In other words, she was given advice on how to make her scholarship appeal to the educated reading public. Consequently, her performance in translation contributed toward making her reputation as an excellent scholar and virtuous woman. Carter's ***All the Works of Epictetus*** was published with an impressive list of socially and culturally eminent subscribers.[33]

Talbot and her mother asked Carter to translate Epictetus for them.[34] Talbot was an eager reader of translations and knew what she was supposed to appreciate in reading them: the value of translation as literature in itself. She tries to persuade Carter to realize it:

> I will assume a more serious language to reprove you for all the wicked things you say about Homer. I cannot possibly agree in your sentiments of the Odyssey, for it has been always a very favourite poem of mine. See the benefit of ignorance! perhaps you too, if you had never read any Odyssey but Mr. Pope's, would be fond of it. I read it last year in very agreeable society, and very great amusement it gave us.[35]

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31. Levine, *The Battle of the Books*, p. 139.

32. See Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle*, pp. 161-69; Thomas Secker, *The Autobiography of Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury* ed. John S. Macauley and R.W. Greaves (Lawrence 1988), p. 36.

33. *All the Works of Epictetus, Which are Now Extant; Consisting of His Discourses, preserved by Arrian, In Four Books, The Enchiridion, and Fragments* (London 1758).

34. *A Series of Letters*, II, p. 138.

35. *A Series of Letters*, I, p. 171.

To this accusation Carter replies: 'I am heartily ashamed of the abuse I have thrown upon the Odyssey. My only excuse is that I have never seen Mr. Pope's.' [36] In the case of the Odyssey, Talbot turns the inconvenience of her inability to read in the original into an advantage of being able to enjoy translation itself as literature. As for Epictetus, she turns it into an opportunity for Carter to translate for her, encouraging its publication and subsequently helping to establish Carter's scholarly reputation. Talbot, as a committed promoter of this project, was attentive to the demands of general readers. It proved to be Carter's strength to have an opinionated person who could place herself on the side of the purchaser of literary products, and regular translation-reader, as her adviser.

Talbot also acted as an organiser and planner of the project. As a committed promoter of this project, her suggestions included such matters as the book's contents and appearance. Representing the needs of 'uninformed readers', she asks for a substantial explanatory appendage to the text:

> When this main matter is done, it will perhaps be time enough to think of some kind of prefatory discourse, for the information of us uninformed readers, giving such accounts as can be best collected of the life and character of Epictetus, and the plan of the stoick philosophy, in doing which, or in your notes, you will have good opportunities to mark out those points in which it is false, wild, and defective, and to draw comparisons between that and, the only true philosophy, the Christian.[37]

Carter tries to avoid the task: 'Whoever that somebody or other is who is to write the Life of Epictetus, seeing I have a dozen shirts to make, I do opine, dear Miss Talbot, it cannot be I.' [38] She refuses to write biographical sketches, not simply because shirt-making occupied her mind, but because writerly consideration of the scantiness of materials led her to such a conclusion.[39] For

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36. *A Series of Letters*, I, p. 180.
37. *A Series of Letters*, II, pp. 138-39.
38. *A Series of Letters*, II, p. 202.
39. *A Series of Letters*, II, p. 202.

all this reluctance, she in the end complied with the request.[40]

Secker joined her as another adviser. Talbot representing well-educated readers of translations and Secker as a learned and religious authority counselled Carter as a joint force. Secker was not without worldly-wisdom; he made sure that there would be no rival translation coming to the market.[41] Towards its completion the translation was assiduously examined by Secker.[42] His help at the latter stage was thus valuable, but his advice at the outset was equally important. It was he who set out guidelines for the style of translation and set the tone of the text. He thought that the style of Carter's first pieces was too elaborate.[43] Secker attempted to persuade her not to be so ornamental in style nor so faithful as to interfere with the readability and the flow of the argument. The scope of his advice includes technical matters, too:

> Where the terms of his philosophy are now become obscure, or the manners of his age and country unsuitable to ours, I allow the one to be cleared up, and the other softened, to a requisite degree, in the Translation itself, and still more in a short note. Nay, some parts, those for instance where he digresses into logical niceties, provided a general notice be given of what nature they are, I think they may be passed over.[44]

His priority is to make the philosopher 'rightly understood', for which purpose he recommends that the reader should not be led into too scholarly concerns.[45] He wants the translation to consist of readable narratives rather than an erudite

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40. Secker writes in his autobiography: 'I ... wrote a considerable Part of the Preface' (Secker, *The Autobiography*, p. 36).

41. *A Series of Letters* II, pp. 31, 35. Carter had heard of another project proceeding in Edinburgh and asked for an enquiry in the previous letter(II, p. 30).

42. *A Series of Letters*, II, p. 210; Secker, *The Autobiography*, p. 36.

43. *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter,* I, pp. 165,166; in his autobiography he describes her style in a different and more critical way: 'I put her at first into a right manner of translating, which else would have been loose & spiritless' (Secker, *The Autobiography*, p. 36).

44. Levine, *The Battle of the Books*, p. 139; John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century. consisting of Authentic Memoirs and Original Letters of Eminent Persons ...* (London 1817), III, p. 486.

45. Nichols, *Illustrations*, III, p. 486.

analysis of the text. Carter amended her pieces shortly afterwards.

Carter was not aware of an unexplored market of the classical author and did not have a spontaneous intention to prepare her book for it. Originally Carter intended to offer 'some little external helps', but the advisers urged an alternative way of conducting the readers. They perceived that classical authors needed some commentary from a Christian standpoint, thus appealing to a broader readership which included those who were not familiar with 'pagan' philosophy. In particular, Talbot requested that the 'prefatory discourse' should warn the readers against that philosophy.[46] Carter at first felt no need for such precautions, for she thought the book would be read 'by none but very good Christians'.[47] Talbot and Secker were not persuaded. Carter came to believe that if Epictetus was in need of such warnings, he should not be translated at all. She also suspected the usefulness of translation ***per se*** :

> Epictetus, however well guarded in the translation, will, I fear, do but very little good to the unhappy people your Lordship mentions; and is it not therefore better that he should remain buried in Greek, where we may be pretty well assured he will do them but mighty little harm? Indeed I was always of opinion that the book would be of no use, but to those who the least need its assistance; but it never entered into my imagination that it would do any body any hurt. God forbid it should! [48]

Carter did not immediately withdraw her objections but at the end of her reply the persistence of her advisers began to make her falter: 'At present I know not what to think. The Bishop of Oxford and you, I hope, will think for me'.[49] She then gives way to doubt and reconsiders her own attitude: 'It is a secret to myself if I have by a long intimacy with Epictetus contracted any such fondness for him as to give me any unreasonable prejudice in his favour.'[50] She misplaces the question; rather than recognizing the opportunities presented

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46. *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs.* ***Elizabeth*** *Carter*, I, p. 187.
47. *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs.* ***Elizabeth*** *Carter*, I, p. 188.
48. *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs.* ***Elizabeth*** *Carter*, I, pp. 189-190.
49. *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs.* ***Elizabeth*** *Carter*, I, p. 200.
50. *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs.* ***Elizabeth*** *Carter*, I, p. 202.

by an expanding readership, she is hesitant about the project, distrusting the propriety of Epictetus's philosophy and her own role in translating it. After presenting all the arguments she could muster, Carter lost confidence in her own views and decided to follow her advisers' opinion.

Talbot was confident about what the book should be; she wanted it to be a new Epictetus different from the bare original on the basis of the idea that a translation was a different work of literature: 'With the cautions at which I have hinted, the English Epictetus will be a most excellent book, whatever objections I have made to the Greek one.' [51] Talbot and Secker recommended the translator to step forward to serve as a readers' guide. Nearly losing confidence in her own belief, Carter ultimately conformed to their requests. What their advice had in common with Madame Dacier's successful example was their intention to fabricate a new version of the classics based not only on solid scholarship but also on a certain grasp of the needs of the contemporary reader. Dacier is quite explicit in her manifestation of her aim in the translation. She is aware that she presents her own version of Homer.[52] She admits that 'it is not ***Homer*** alive and animated', but asserts that 'still it is ***Homer*** ; ...he will still retain lively colours enough to make it doubtful for a Moment, whether there are not yet some Remains of Life in him'.[53] Her preface runs to an impressive sixty pages, followed by 'The Life of Homer'.[54] A substantial scholarly and clear-sighted introductory essay contributed to the translation's successful formula.

In the long introduction to her book, Carter gives an interpretation of Stoic philosophy and an estimation of Epictetus. As she wrote to Talbot, the introduction depends much on the comments of Talbot and Secker: 'I am extremely obliged to the Bishop of Oxford and you for the admirable remarks you have been so good as to send me, and which, if the book is ever published, will make the most valuable part of it.' [55] The introduction points out the

51. *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter*, I, p. 196.

52. *The Iliad of Homer with Notes To Which are Prefix'd A Large Preface, and the Life of Homer by Madam Dacier* (London 1712) ii.

53. *The Iliad*, xxxi.

54. See also Levine, ***The Battle of the Books***, pp. 133-47.

55. *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter*, I, p. 203.

differences between Stoicism and Christianity in their ideas of suicide, the nature of the human soul, and so on, and subsequently sums up the defects of Stoicism.[56] She invites the reader to assume the standpoint of an eighteenth-century Christian in reading an ancient moral author. In so doing, she introduces an explanation of only one term, avoiding leading the reader into technical complexities. What the finished product attempts is not to show her erudition and philological minuteness, but to invite the reader to discern the merits and demerits of the Stoic philosophy.

The translation finally appeared in 1758 with the support of more than one thousand subscriptions. The introduction Talbot eagerly asked for was welcomed. Lord Lyttelton wrote:

> I have lately read over again our friend Miss Carter's preface (meaning the introduction, for preface there is none) to Epictetus, and admire it more and more. I am also much struck with the poem prefixed to it by another female hand (Mrs. Chapone). The English ladies will appear as much superior to the French in wit and in learning, as the men in arms.[the additions in the brackets by Pennington][57]

Edward Young extols the frame of thought she gives in the introduction for the reader of her Epictetus: 'Miss Carter has my high esteem for showing us in so masterly a manner that Christianity has a foil in one of the brightest jewels of Pagan Wisdom, a jewel which you will allow she has set in gold.'[58] In short the responses indicate that Carter wisely made her private knowledge public with the assistance of members of her circle.

Sarah Fielding decided to try her pen in this growing and promising field of translation. Her awareness of market demand was sufficiently acute to take on a project of translation, and her choice of Xenophon was sensible. Indeed, by her choice of translating Xenophon, Fielding made herself more respected, as is evident in Elizabeth Montagu's changing attitude to her. When

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56. *All the Works of Epictetus*, xxv.

57. *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter*, I, pp. 212-13.

58. *The Correspondence of Edward Young 1683-1765* ed. Henry Pettit (Oxford 1971), p. 526.

Montagu, who did not appreciate her fictions very much, tried to collect in advance subscription for her translation, she was ironical about the modish project.[59] However, her attitude changed when she saw Fielding's expertise in translation. After she read the translation, more forthright praise took place of the teasing tone and she wished that her competence would be used in serious genres:

> I desire my particular compliments to Mrs Fielding on her excellent book. I know nothing of the heathen greek, but Socrates in her translation speaks in character.... The peculiar simplicity, brevity, & point of his style she has express'd, other translations did but stammer at it. May the work get her all the solid pudding & the empty praise an author much more avaricious & vain could desire. Let the encouragement this work has met with animate her Muse. Her genius points to the Portico & Academick groves, never let it saunter in the tuilleries translating les amours & amourettes of Mr Le Marquis de ---- or les Memoires d'un homme de qualite retire du monde.[60]

Thus, Sarah Fielding advanced moderately in Montagu's esteem. Yet still her ironic tone remained and Fielding could not gain solid credentials and respect by her performance.

Sarah Fielding did not attach her moral opinions or commentary on Socrates or Xenophon to the translation. She might have thought that Socrates was too well-known to need such an introduction. The nature of the text as memoirs was likely to prevent her from following the typically successful format of translation which was preceded by the translator's original introductory comments and essays or biographical sketches. Another possible reason is that she could not spare time to do anything further; when she finished the text, she was well behind the schedule because of her illness.

Yet she did at least feel the need to ask Harris if she should expand her explanatory comments about Socrates. She apparently made an enquiry to

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59. MO 5281.
60. MO 5787.

him about the preface. Having been given his answer, she writes to him: 'I am very glad of having your Opinion that the simplest account of the Genius of Socrates is the best, as I believe is the case wherever there is long and intricate debates on any subject.' [61] Accordingly, in the preface she mentions the merits of the material briefly, only by claiming 'that the Memoirs of SOCRATES, with Regard to the greatest Part, are held in the highest Estimation, is most certain'. She does not offer explanation or instruction of her own. Paraphrasing Samuel Johnson, she takes it for granted that the reader shares her appreciation of the classics.[62] Her preface is very brusque, while the examples of Dacier and Carter displayed authority, offering unyielding directions for reading the text in their introductions. As for notes, she depends on Harris's etymology, Carter's Epictetus, and Potter's, and there are few of her own. So, she does not step forward as an interpreter and guide to the reader; she keeps herself as silent as possible.

The chief, or probably sole, mentor in Fielding's translation was James Harris, an authority on philology. As Probyn puts it, 'Harris is always the sympathetic mentor keen to enlarge his reader's awareness by sharing his own discoveries'.[63] His scholarly assistance and his kindness were precious to her; his answers to her questions are detailed and seem to have been very helpful.[64] Harris also guided her in punctuation and arrangement of the sentences.[65] She expresses whole-hearted gratitude for his scholarly help.[66]

Harris was a reliable and helpful mentor on questions of meticulous scholarly expertise. However, he was not such a committed adviser as Secker and Talbot in the project of publishing a translation. Around the time Sarah Fielding asked his help he was extremely busy with preparations for a parliamentary election. He managed to spare sufficient time to offer advice

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61. Battestin and Probyn, p. 160.

62. *Memoirs of Socrates*, iv-v; *The Adventurer* no. 58, *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson* vol. II (New Haven 1963), pp. 371-72.

63. Clive T. Probyn *A Sociable Humanist: The Life and Works of James Harris, 1709-1780* (Oxford 1991), p. 87.

64. Battestin and Probyn, pp. 162-72.

65. Battestin and Probyn, p. 160.

66. Battestin and Probyn, p. 170.

in his strongest fields, etymological and philological concerns, but otherwise did not influence her performance. Before she received his opinion, she had already published an advertisement soliciting subscriptions. The urgent situation in which Fielding asked him to help her -- in contrast with Carter's nearly ten years' preparation -- might have prevented him from becoming deeply involved. But in any case he was not the sort of the person to help to produce a translation which would have a wide-ranging appeal and consequently produce financial gains. He was a very wealthy gentleman, above speculating in publication, who was qualified to claim in the preface of his ***Hermes*** that 'as his studies were never prosecuted with the least regard to lucre, so they are no way calculated for any lucrative End.' [67]

In contrast with Sarah Fielding's overall gratitude, Elizabeth Carter, whom Harris also offered his assistance, expresses unease with Harris's guidance. She is of course grateful for Harris's help, but his attention to 'logical niceties', which according to Secker's advice 'may be passed over', baffles her:

> I find, to my sorrow, that Mr. Harris insists on the translation of that wicked logical chapter from which my Lord had in great clemency absolved me. To be sure it would be an excellent piece of revenge to prevail on him to do it himself; but I really know not how to make him such a request ; so I must even attempt to do it as well as I can. It is but leaving it just as unintelligible as I find it. I am greatly obliged to Mr. Harris; and I hope my Lord will be so good, when he has an opportunity, as to mention my grateful acknowledgments of the favour he has done me.[68]

Harris's method of learning and writing was 'that of a scientifically rigorous examination of sources and an unswerving devotion to logical rigour'.[69] His priority in etymological concerns, which Sarah Fielding records in her notes, acknowledging his contribution, was not really compatible with the principles

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67. *Hermes: or a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar* (London 1751), vi.

68. *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter*, I, p. 181.

69. Probyn, *The Sociable Humanist*, p. 86.

of translation adopted by Carter's team. They did not ignore scholarly concerns, but they were more interested in producing a book which provides the reader with intellectual yet comfortable reading.

Harris's habits of advice matched Sarah Fielding's inclination towards focussed scholarship. When he sent her a copy of a French translation of Xenophon, she thanked him for his kindness, but set aside the French version. The reasons she mentions are revealing her priorities:

> because I have a double view in this Translation the Improvement of the Greek as well as the ***Substantial*** Utility which my Situation makes Needful, and if I had the French before me it might encline me not so thoroughly to search the Greek Lexicon, for to spare pains, and more especially at my time of Life, is natural.[70]

The two purposes she expresses here are both worth consideration. First, she aims at the improvement of her Greek. Of course she intended to prepare a good translation as a product, but her primary intention is to exercise and improve her proficiency in Greek. Her aim is to polish and perfect her intellectual abilities, by applying herself to the labour of scholarship, so as to achieve intellectual self-contentment.

Translation provided the potential of achieving a literary reputation and financial rewards. Sarah Fielding was not being fanciful in opting for translation for the purpose of 'the ***Substantial*** Utility'. However, her intention to earn by translation put her under pressure; she was pressed to meet deadlines and did not devote enough time to preparing the translation. As Harris had not replied to her enquiries for a considerable time, taking his silence for his politeness of suppressing severe words, she wrote that she was ashamed of 'a Translation, or rather a Schoolboy's Exercise'.[71] Nevertheless she felt unable to abandon the project as she desperately justified her persistence by emphasising her improvement.[72] Her scholarly motivation was forced to

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70. Battestin and Probyn, p. 153.
71. Battestin and Probyn, p. 151.
72. Battestin and Probyn, p. 151.

struggle with the situation of a needy writer who had already issued an advertisement calling for subscriptions. Indeed, in the postscript to the same letter, she is far from withdrawing the project but asks for Harris's assistance in calling for subscriptions.[73]

The book was published at the beginning of 1762. In March Sarah Fielding expresses to Harris the feelings of a translator about its reception. She satisfies herself with appreciation by the acquainted few:

> I am really and honestly rejoyced at the Approbation you express of Xenophon &, for tho when I put myself on the public I would wish not to be over anxious for fame, yet ye favourable Opinion of ye few, & more particularly of those friends whose Judgments are estimable, certainly gives great pleasure... .[74]

She expresses the satisfaction of a scholar who has devoted herself conscientiously to accuracy. But this contentment is tinged with the resignation of someone defeated in the market place. Even if she 'would wish not to be over anxious for fame', she did wish for a commercial success. This thankfulness towards the few is a consolation for her failure to appeal to a larger public. The successful translators such as Madame Dacier, Pope, and Carter, made their own books from the classics, with detailed introduction and interpretation, making their learning accessible to the public. By stepping forward and inviting the readers to share their knowledge, they transformed their private expertise into a public project.

Sarah Fielding was less skilful in taking advantage of her own learning and making it public, being more occupied with the translation as a private exercise for scholarly accuracy. She was endowed with remarkable attentiveness to linguistic concerns which she could communicate to her learned mentor. She was well-read in philosophy and could have exhibited her knowledge. However, in publishing a translation she made less adept use

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73. Harris's family (as many as seven members) and his relatives appear in the subscription list (Battestin and Probyn, pp. 155-56, n. 7).

74. Battestin and Probyn, p. 174.

of her knowledge. Her sense of the need to negotiate with the reader is suspended in her project of translation. After all, classical knowledge to her was primarily a private engagement conducted behind closed doors. She did not recognize, or attempted to ignore, the contradiction between the private exercise and public appeal in this project.

As Sarah Fielding did not invest much in building a self-image as a virtuous learned woman, so she did little to expand the potential use of her learning. Fundamentally learning was to her an inward-looking pursuit for self-discipline and satisfaction. Practical profits apart, this withdrawal was a kind of what learning should be to her. As in Lady Mary's advice for her granddaughter, female learning was not too problematic as long as it was confined to the study. Importantly, however, Sarah Fielding made public the products of her scholarly self-discipline. She carried the attitude in the study to the world of print; this contradiction might explain the ill luck of her work and reputation. However, from another viewpoint, she thus put herself in the place where she could be inattentive to the decorum and codes required of a female writer. By concentrating her attention to her academic pursuits she liberated herself from the prevalent disapproval and criticism against female learning. Paradoxically, she was able to achieve the unfettering within the seemingly most gendered sphere of learning.