

William McCarthy, "We hoped the Woman was Going to Appear": Repression, Desire, and Gender in Anna Laetitia Barbauld's Early Poems', *RWU* 113-37
 William Keach, 'A Regency Prophecy and the End of Anna Barbauld's Career', *JIR* 33 (1994) 569-77

Eighteen Hundred and Eleven, A Poem (composed by 1 December 1811; published February 1812)

Still the loud death drum, thundering from afar,
 O'er the vexed nations pours the storm of war;¹
 To the stern call still Britain bends her ear,
 Feeds the fierce strife, the alternate hope and fear –
 Bravely, though vainly, dares to strive with fate,
 And seeks by turns to prop each sinking state.²
 Colossal Power³ with overwhelming force
 Bears down each fort of Freedom in its course;
 Prostrate she lies beneath the despot's sway,
 While the hushed nations curse him – and obey.
 Bounteous in vain, with frantic man at strife,
 Glad nature pours the means – the joys of life;
 In vain with orange-blossoms scents the gale,
 The hills with olives clothes, with corn the vale;
 Man calls to Famine, nor invokes in vain,
 Disease and Rapine follow in her train;
 The tramp of marching hosts disturbs the plough,
 The sword, not sickle, reaps the harvest now,
 And where the soldier gleans the scant supply,
 The helpless peasant but retires to die.⁴
 No laws his hut from licensed outrage shield,
 And war's least horror is the ensanguined field.
 Fruitful in vain, the matron counts with pride
 The blooming youths that grace her honoured side;
 No son returns to press her widowed hand,
 Her fallen blossoms strew a foreign strand.
 Fruitful in vain, she boasts her virgin race,
 Whom cultured arts adorn and gentlest grace;
 Defrauded of its homage, Beauty mourns,⁵
 And the rose withers on its virgin thorns.
 Frequent, some stream obscure, some uncouth name
 By deeds of blood is lifted into fame;
 Oft o'er the daily page some soft one bends
 To learn the fate of husband, brothers, friends,

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND ELEVEN, A POEM

- ¹ Britain and France had been at war for seventeen of the previous nineteen years (see headnote).
² Britain had failed to prevent Russia (1807), Spain (1808) and Austria (1809) from surrendering to France.
³ *Colossal Power* Napoleon.
⁴ Famine was widespread throughout Europe thanks to the disruption of agriculture by armies (l. 17), and seizures of crops to feed them (l. 19).
⁵ No young men survive to pay homage to the beautiful young women who mourn their deaths.

Or the spread map with anxious eye explores
 Its dotted boundaries and pencilled shores,
 Asks *where* the spot that wrecked her bliss is found,
 And learns its name but to detest the sound.
 And think'st thou, Britain, still to sit at ease,
 An island queen amidst thy subject seas,
 While the vexed billows, in their distant roar,
 But soothe thy slumbers, and but kiss thy shore?
 To sport in wars, while danger keeps aloof,
 Thy grassy turf unbruised by hostile hoof?
 So sing thy flatterers – but, Britain, know,
 Thou who hast shared the guilt must share the woe.⁶
 Nor distant is the hour; low murmurs spread,
 And whispered fears, creating what they dread;
 Ruin, as with an earthquake shock, is here,
 There, the heart-witherings of unuttered fear,
 And that sad death, whence most affection bleeds,
 Which sickness, only of the soul, precedes.
 Thy baseless wealth dissolves in air away
 Like mists that melt before the morning ray:
 No more on crowded mart or busy street
 Friends, meeting friends, with cheerful hurry greet;
 Sad on the ground thy princely merchants bend
 Their altered looks, and evil days portend,
 And fold their arms, and watch with anxious breast
 The tempest blackening in the distant west.⁷
 Yes, thou must droop; thy Midas dream is o'er;
 The golden tide of commerce leaves thy shore,
 Leaves thee to prove the alternate ills that haunt
 Enfeebling Luxury and ghastly Want;
 Leaves thee, perhaps, to visit distant lands,
 And deal the gifts of Heaven with equal hands.
 Yet, oh my country – name beloved, revered,
 By every tie that binds the soul endeared,
 Whose image to my infant senses came
 Mixed with Religion's light and Freedom's holy flame!
 If prayers may not avert, if 'tis thy fate
 To rank amongst the names that once were great,
 Not like the dim, cold crescent shalt thou fade,
 Thy debt to Science and the Muse unpaid;
 Thine are the laws surrounding states reverse,
 Thine the full harvest of the mental year,
 Thine the bright stars in glory's sky that shine,

⁶ Nonetheless, Britain remained the only European country not to experience invasion.

⁷ Lines 47-66 refer to the 'ruin' that followed hard on the heels of the financial disasters of 1810. Bankers had committed suicide, and a ruined merchant was declared in June 1818.

And arts that make it life to live are thine.
 If westward streams the light that leaves thy shores,
 Still from thy lamp the streaming radiance pours.
 Wide spreads thy race from Ganges to the pole,
 O'er half the western world thy accents roll;
 Nations beyond the Appalachian hills
 Thy hand has planted and thy spirit fills;
 Soon as their gradual progress shall impart
 The finer sense of morals and of art,
 Thy stores of knowledge the new states shall know,
 And think thy thoughts, and with thy fancy glow;
 Thy Lockes, thy Paleys shall instruct their youth,
 Thy leading star direct their search for truth;
 Beneath the spreading Platan's tent-like shade,
 Or by Missouri's rushing waters laid,
 'Old father Thames' shall be the poet's theme,
 Of Hagley's woods⁸ the enamoured virgin dream,
 And Milton's tones the raptured ear enthral,
 Mixed with the roar of Niagara's fall;
 In Thomson's glass⁹ the ingenuous youth shall learn
 A fairer face of Nature to discern;
 Nor of the bards that swept the British lyre
 Shall fade one laurel, or one note expire.
 Then, loved Joanna,¹⁰ to admiring eyes
 Thy storied groups in scenic pomp shall rise;
 Their high-souled strains and Shakespeare's noble rage
 Shall with alternate passion shake the stage.
 Some youthful Basil from thy moral lay
 With stricter hand his fond desires shall sway;
 Some Ethwald, as the fleeting shadows pass,
 Start at his likeness in the mystic glass;
 The tragic Muse resume her just control,
 With pity and with terror purge the soul,
 While wide o'er transatlantic realms thy name
 Shall live in light, and gather *all* its fame.
 Where wanders Fancy down the lapse of years,
 Shedding o'er imaged woes untimely tears?
 Fond moody power! As hopes, as fears prevail,
 She longs, or dreads, to lift the awful veil;
 On visions of delight now loves to dwell,
 Now hears the shriek of woe or Freedom's knell.
 Perhaps, she says, long ages past away,

⁸ Hagley Park was the estate of George, Lord Lytelton (1709-73), in Worcestershire, near present-day Birmingham; it is praised by James Thomson in *Spring* (1728) 904ff. In the 1740s Lytelton turned it into one of the most admired, and renowned, landscape gardens of the eighteenth century.

⁹ Thomson's *glass* his poem, *The Seasons* (1730).

¹⁰ Joanna Baillie (1762-1851), whose *Plays on the Passions* (1798-1812) had met with considerable success (see pp. 226-7); Barbauld refers specifically to *Count Basil and Ethwald*.

And set in western waves our closing day,
 Night, Gothic night, again may shade the plains
 Where Power is seated and where Science reigns;
 England, the seat of arts, be only known
 By the grey ruin and the mouldering stone,
 That Time may tear the garland from her brow,
 And Europe sit in dust, as Asia now.
 Yet then the ingenuous youth whom Fancy fires
 With pictured glories of illustrious sires,
 With dutious zeal their pilgrimage shall take
 From the Blue Mountains or Ontario's lake,
 With fond adoring steps to press the sod
 By statesmen, sages, poets, heroes trod;
 On Isis¹¹ banks to draw inspiring air,
 From Runnymede¹² to send the patriot's prayer;
 In pensive thought, where Cam's slow waters wind,¹³
 To meet those shades that ruled the realms of mind;
 In silent halls to sculptured marbles bow
 And hang fresh wreaths round Newton's awful brow.¹⁴
 Oft shall they seek some peasant's homely shed
 Who toils unconscious of the mighty dead,
 To ask where Avon's winding waters stray¹⁵
 And thence a knot of wildflowers bear away;
 Anxious enquire where Clarkson,¹⁶ friend of man,
 Or all-accomplished Jones¹⁷ his race began;
 If of the modest mansion aught remains
 Where Heaven and nature prompted Cowper's strains,¹⁸
 Where Roscoe,¹⁹ to whose patriot breast belong
 The Roman virtue and the Tuscan song,
 Led Ceres to the black and barren moor
 Where Ceres never gained a wreath before²⁰ —

¹¹ *Isis* poetical name for the River Thames in Oxford.

¹² Runnymede King John signed the Magna Carta in Runnymede.

¹³ The Cam rises in Hertfordshire, flows by Cambridge into the Isle of Ely, and there joins the Ouse.

¹⁴ *Newton's awful brow* Sir Isaac Newton was a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Lucasian Professor of Mathematics. He is commemorated by a statue in the antechapel of Trinity, mentioned by Wordsworth, *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, iii, 58-9.

¹⁵ Stratford, birthplace of Shakespeare, through which flows the River Avon.

¹⁶ Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846), prominent campaigner for abolition of the slave trade.

¹⁷ Sir William Jones (1746-94), linguist and orientalist.

¹⁸ William Cowper (1731-1800), poet.

¹⁹ William Roscoe (1753-1831), scholar, poet, and agriculturalist, author of *The Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth* (1805).

²⁰ The Historian of the age of Leo has brought into cultivation the extensive tract of Chatmoss' (Barbauld's note). A reference to Roscoe's experiments at Chat Moss in Lancashire in which he reclaimed moorland for the cultivation of high-quality crops. Croker in the *Quarterly* was particularly scathing about this; quoting lines 147-50, he comments: 'Or, in other words (as the note kindly informs us), to Mr Roscoe's farm in Derbyshire, where, less we apprehend, by the Roman virtue and the Tuscan song, than by the homely process of drainage and manuring, he has brought some hundred acres of Chatmoss into cultivation. O the unequal dispensations of this poetical providence! Chatham and Nelson empty names! Oxford and Cambridge in ruins! London a desert, and the Thames a sedge brook! while Mr Roscoe's barns and piggeries are in excellent repair, and objects not only of curiosity but even of reverence and enthusiasm' (*Quarterly Review* 7 (1812) 311-12).

With curious search their pilgrim steps shall rove
 By many a ruined tower and proud alcove,
 Shall listen for those strains that soothed of yore
 Thy rock, stern Skiddaw, and thy fall, Lodore,²¹
 Feast with Dun Edin's²² classic brow their sight,
 And 'visit Melross by the pale moonlight'.²³
 But who their mingled feelings shall pursue
 When London's faded glories rise to view?
 The mighty city, which by every road,
 In floods of people poured itself abroad;
 Ungirt by walls, irregularly great,
 No jealous drawbridge, and no closing gate;
 Whose merchants (such the state which commerce brings)
 Sent forth their mandates to dependent kings;
 Streets, where the turbaned Moslem, bearded Jew,
 And woolly Afric, met the brown Hindu;
 Where through each vein spontaneous plenty flowed,
 Where Wealth enjoyed, and Charity bestowed.
 Pensive and thoughtful shall the wanderers greet
 Each splendid square, and still, untrodden street,
 Or of some crumbling turret, mined by time,
 The broken stair with perilous step shall climb,
 Thence stretch their view the wide horizon round,
 By scattered hamlets trace its ancient bound,
 And, choked no more with fleets, fair Thames survey —
 Through reeds and sedge pursue his idle way.
 With throbbing bosoms shall the wanderers tread
 The hallowed mansions of the silent dead,
 Shall enter the long aisle and vaulted dome²⁴
 Where Genius and where Valour find a home;
 Awestruck, midst chill sepulchral marbles breathe,
 Where all above is still as all beneath;
 Bend at each antique shrine, and frequent turn
 To clasp with fond delight some sculptured urn,
 The ponderous mass of Johnson's form to greet,
 Or breathe the prayer at Howard's sainted feet.²⁵
 Perhaps some Briton, in whose musing mind
 Those ages live which Time has cast behind,
 To every spot shall lead his wondering guests
 On whose known site the beam of glory rests:
 Here Chatham's²⁶ eloquence in thunder broke,

²¹ Skiddaw mountain and the Lodore falls in the Lake District were frequently mentioned by picturesque poets and prose writers of the day.

²² *Dun Edin* poetical name for Edinburgh.

²³ An allusion to Scott's popular poem, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1807), ll. 1-2: 'If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aught, / Go visit it by the pale moon-

light'. Melrose Abbey was then, as now, popular with tourists.

²⁴ i.e. of St Paul's cathedral.

²⁵ Statues of Samuel Johnson and John Howard (prison reformer) stand in the nave of St Paul's.

²⁶ *Chatham* William Pitt the elder, first Earl of Chatham (1708-78).

Here Fox persuaded, or here Garrick spoke;²⁷
 Shall boast how Nelson, fame and death in view,
 To wonted victory led his ardent crew,
 In England's name enforced, with loftiest tone,²⁸
 Their duty — and too well fulfilled his own;
 How gallant Moore,²⁹ as ebbing life dissolved,
 But hoped his country had his fame absolved;
 Or call up sages whose capacious mind
 Left in its course a track of light behind;
 Point where mute crowds on Davy's lips reposed,
 And Nature's coyest secrets were disclosed,³⁰
 Join with their Franklin, Priestley's injured name,³¹
 Whom, then, each continent shall proudly claim.
 Oft shall the strangers turn their eager feet
 The rich remains of ancient art to greet,
 The pictured walls with critic eye explore,
 And Reynolds be what Raphael was before.³²
 On spoils from every clime their eyes shall gaze,
 Egyptian granites and the Etruscan vase;
 And when amidst fallen London, they survey
 The stone where Alexander's ashes lay,³³
 Shall own with humbled pride the lesson just
 By Time's slow finger written in the dust.
 There walks a spirit³⁴ o'er the peopled earth —
 Secret his progress is, unknown his birth;
 Moody and viewless as the changing wind,

²⁷ Charles James Fox (1749-1806), Whig leader, and a focus for liberal opinion, particularly during the Tory ministries of Pitt the younger (1783-1801, 1804-6); David Garrick (1717-79), actor-manager.

²⁸ 'Every reader will recollect the sublime telegraphic dispatch, "England expects every man to do his duty"' (Barbauld's note). Admiral Nelson issued this order prior to the Battle of Trafalgar (21 October 1805), in which he was killed, despite a British victory.

²⁹ 'I hope England will be satisfied', were the last words of General Moore' (Barbauld's note). General Sir John Moore led the army that failed to prevent Napoleon from taking Madrid. He evacuated his troops at the Battle of Corunna, but at the expense of his own life.

³⁰ Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829) lectured on chemistry and physics at the Royal Institution.

³¹ Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Priestley: both carried out experiments with electricity in the 1790s. They were also political radicals, and Priestley was hounded out of England by a mob drummed up by Tory opponents, on account of his sympathies with the French Revolution. He emigrated to America in 1794.

³² Sir Joshua Reynolds was the most distinguished and successful portrait painter of his day, and had been,

from 1768 to 1792, President of the Royal Academy. He published his *Dissourses* from 1769 to 1791, and, in 1784, was made Painter-in-Ordinary to the King — an honour which, as he pointed out, brought him a stipend less than that of the King's rat-catcher.

³³ Barbauld has in mind the granite sarcophagus on display at the British Museum from 1802 onwards, believed to be that of Alexander the Great.

³⁴ *spirit* perhaps that of civilization, or at least the spirit that makes civilization possible. It has been observed that in this account of the rise and fall of civilizations Barbauld is probably inspired by Comte de Volney's *The Ruins, or A Survey of the Revolutions of Empire* (1792), which enjoyed considerable popularity in England at this period, being read by Shelley, among others. As might be expected, Croker in the *Quarterly Review* (Quoting lines 215-18, he commented: 'This extraordinary personage is prodigiously wise and potent, but withal a little fickle, and somewhat, we think, for so wise a being, unjust and partial. He has hitherto resided in this country, and chiefly in London; Mrs Barbauld, however, foresees that he is beginning to be tired of us, and is preparing to go out of town' (*Quarterly Review* 7 (1812) 312).

No force arrests his foot, no chains can bind;
 Where'er he turns, the human brute awakes,
 And, roused to better life, his sordid hut forsakes;
 He thinks, he reasons, glows with purer fires,
 Feels finer wants, and burns with new desires.
 Obedient Nature follows where he leads —
 The steaming marsh is changed to fruitful meads;
 The beasts retire from man's asserted reign,
 And prove his kingdom was not given in vain.
 Then from its bed is drawn the pontiferous ore,
 Then Commerce pours her gifts on every shore,
 Then Babel's towers and terraced gardens rise,
 And pointed obelisks invade the skies;
 The prince commands, in Tyrian purple³⁵ dressed,
 And Egypt's virgins weave the linen vest.
 Then spans the graceful arch the roaring tide,
 And stricter bounds the cultured fields divide.
 Then kindles Fancy, then expands the heart,
 Then blow the flowers of Genius and of Art;
 Saints, heroes, sages, who the land adorn,
 Seem rather to descend than to be born;
 Whilst History, midst the rolls consigned to fame,
 With pen of adamant inscribes their name.
 The genius now forsakes the favoured shore,
 And hates, capricious, what he loved before;
 Then empires fall to dust, then arts decay,
 And wasted realms enfeebled despots sway;
 Even Nature's changed; without his fostering smile
 Ophir³⁶ no gold, no plenty yields the Nile;
 The thirsty sand absorbs the useless rill,
 And spotted plagues from putrid fens distil.
 In desert solitudes then Tadmor³⁷ sleeps,
 Stern Marius then o'er fallen Carthage weeps;³⁸
 Then with enthusiast love the pilgrim roves
 To seek his footsteps in forsaken groves,
 Explores the fractured arch, the ruined tower,
 Those limbs disjointed of gigantic power;
 Still at each step he dreads the adder's sting,
 The Arab's javelin, or the iger's spring;
 With doubtful caution treads the echoing ground,
 And asks where Troy or Babylon is found.

³⁵ *Tyrian purple* in ancient times, a purple or crimson dye was made at Tyre from molluscs.

³⁶ Ophir was the land from which in biblical times Solomon's navy fetched gold; see I Kings 9:26-8

³⁷ *Tadmor* a biblical name for the oasis of Palmyra between Syria and Babylon.

³⁸ Plutarch relates that, on being denied entry to Carthage by its Roman governor, Sexilius, Caius Marius remarked: 'Tell him, then, that thou hast seen Caius Marius a fugitive, seated amid the ruins of Carthage.'

And now the vagrant Power no more detains
 The Vale of Tempe, or Ausonian plains;³⁹
 Northward he throws the animating ray,
 O'er Celtic nations bursts the mental day —
 And, as some playful child the mirror turns,
 Now here, now there, the moving lustre burns;
 Now o'er his changeful fancy more prevail
 Batavia's⁴⁰ dykes than Arno's purple vale,
 And stinted suns, and rivers bound with frost,
 Than Enna's plains or Baiæ's viny coast;⁴¹
 Venice the Adriatic weds in vain,
 And Death sits brooding o'er Campania's plain;
 O'er Baltic shores and through Hercynian groves,⁴²
 Stirring the soul, the mighty impulse moves;
 Art plies his tools, and Commerce spreads her sail,
 And wealth is wafted in each shifting gale.
 The sons of Odin⁴³ tread on Persian looms,
 And Odin's daughters breathe the distilled perfumes;
 Loud minstrel bards, in Gothic halls, rehearse
 The Runic rhyme, and 'build the lofty verse';⁴⁴
 The Muse, whose liquid notes were wont to swell
 To the soft breathings of the Aeolian shell,
 Submits, reluctant, to the harsher tone,
 And scarce believes the altered voice her own.
 And now, where Caesar saw with proud disdain
 The wartled hut and skin of azure stain,⁴⁵
 Corinthian columns rear their graceful forms,
 And light verandas brave the wintry storms,
 While British tongues the fading fame prolong
 Of Tully's eloquence and Maro's song.⁴⁶
 Where once Bonduca whirled the scythed car,⁴⁷
 And the fierce matrons raised the shriek of war,
 Light forms beneath transparent muslins float,
 And tutored voices swell the artful note.
 Light-leaved acacias and the shady plane
 And spreading cedar grace the woodland reign;
 While crystal walls⁴⁸ the tenderer plants confine,
 The fragrant orange and the nectared pine;⁴⁹

³⁹ Tempe was a valley in Thessaly celebrated as a rural paradise. *Ausonian* Italian.

⁴⁰ *Batavia* Holland.

⁴¹ *Enna's plains* Enna was a town in the middle of Sicily surrounded by a plain renowned as an earthly paradise. *Baiæ* Roman resort on the Bay of Naples famed for its hot springs.

⁴² *Hercynian groves* the Black Forest in Germany.

⁴³ *sons of Odin* Vikings.

⁴⁴ *build the lofty verse* an allusion to Milton's *Lycidas*: 'Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew / Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme' (ll. 10-11).

⁴⁵ *azure stain* Julius Caesar described how the Scots painted themselves with blue warpaint in his *Gullie Wars*.

⁴⁶ *Tully* Marcus Tullius Cicero; *Maro* Virgilius Maro.

⁴⁷ *scythed car* the Saxon queen, Boadicea, fixed knives to the axles of her chariot.

⁴⁸ *crystal walls* greenhouses.

⁴⁹ *pine* pineapple.

The Syrian grape there hangs her rich festoons,
 Nor asks for purer air, or brighter noons;
 Science and Art urge on the useful toil,
 New mould a climate and create the soil,
 Subdue the rigour of the northern bear,⁵⁰
 O'er polar climes shed aromatic air,
 On yielding Nature urge their new demands,
 And ask not gifts but tribute at her hands.
 London exults - on London Art bestows
 Her summer ices and her winter roses,
 Gems of the east her mural crown adorn,
 And Plenty at her feet pours forth her horn;
 While even the exiles her just laws disclaim,
 People a continent, and build a name.⁵¹
 August she sits, and with extended hands
 Holds forth the Book of Life to distant lands.⁵²
 But fairest flowers expand but to decay;
 The worm is in thy core, thy glories pass away;
 Arts, arms and wealth destroy the fruits they bring;
 Commerce, like beauty, knows no second spring.
 Crime walks thy streets, Fraud earns her unblessed bread,
 O'er want and woe thy gorgeous robe is spread,
 And angel charities in vain oppose:
 With grandeur's growth the mass of misery grows.
 For see, to other climes the genius soars,
 He turns from Europe's desolated shores;
 And lo! even now, midst mountains wrapped in storm,
 On Andes' heights he shrouds his awful form;
 On Chimborazo's⁵³ summits treads sublime,
 Measuring in lofty thought the march of Time;
 Sudden he calls, 'Tis now the hour!' he cries,
 Spreads his broad hand, and bids the nations rise.
 La Plata⁵⁴ hears amidst her torrents' roar,
 Potosi⁵⁵ hears it, as she digs the ore:
 Ardent, the genius fans the noble strife,
 And pours through feeble souls a higher life,
 Shouts to the mingled tribes from sea to sea,
 And swears thy world, Columbus, shall be free.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ the northern bear the constellation of the Bear, which contains the North Star.

⁵¹ Those exiled and disowned by Britain's (un)just and oppressive laws leave for other countries - Australia or America.

⁵² A reference to the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society (founded 1804), which distributed bibles at home and abroad.

⁵³ Chimborazo is the highest peak in the Andes, in present-day Ecuador. The first recorded climb was in June 1797.

⁵⁴ La Plata is a large river in South America, formed by the union of the great rivers Parana and Uruguay.

⁵⁵ St Luis de Potosi is a city in Mexico situated in the midst of rich gold mines.

⁵⁶ Barbauld's optimism about South America stems from news of independence movements among the Spanish colonies there.

Hannah More (1745-1833)

Nearly all the contemporaries of Hannah More are forgotten', S. C. Hall wrote in 1871, 'her reputation was for a day; hers has stood the test of time'.¹ For Dr Johnson, she was 'the most powerful versificatrix in the English language'.² In purely financial terms, Hannah More was one of the most successful writers of her day, having made £30,000 from her publications by 1825.

She was born at Fishponds in the parish of Stapleton, near Bristol, 2 February 1745, the fourth of five daughters of Mary Grace and Jacob More (d. 1783), a teacher at the Free School, who was determined to ensure that his five daughters should be capable of making a useful independent living in the same profession. By the age of four Hannah had learnt to read so well as to astonish the local clergyman with her recital of the catechism. Her father was apparently 'frightened by his own success' at teaching her Latin and mathematics, but the entreaties of his family encouraged him to continue. Her eldest sister set up her own school in Bristol in 1757, and Hannah studied a wide range of subjects there, including Italian, Spanish and Latin.

An encounter with the poet John Langhorne in 1773 led her to publish *The Scorb After Happiness* later that year. This pastoral play, which celebrates women writers, won plaudits from him in the *Monthly Review*: 'The ingenious author of the poem before us in every respect merits our protection. Whether we consider the harmony of her verse, or the happiness of her sentiments, her strength of thought, or her purity of expression, it equally excites our admiration: for this pastoral drama was written at the age of EIGHTEEN!'³ Her tragedy *The Inflexible Captive* was performed at Bristol the following year, with a prologue by Langhorne and an epilogue by Garrick. The meeting with Garrick in 1774 was another stroke of good fortune. He gave her enormous encouragement, and introduced her to some of the greatest minds of the day, including Burke, Johnson, Reynolds and, crucially, Elizabeth Montagu, queen of the bluestockings, who, with Mrs Vesey, was already bringing together the various participants of that important salon. Like many literary coteries, the bluestockings were never as close-knit and exclusive as they are assumed to have been. At various times they included Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Elizabeth Carter, Mrs Boscawen, the Duchess of Beaufort, Mrs Leveson, Mrs Walsingham, the Duchess of Portland, and occasionally entertained visits from Reynolds, Johnson, Walpole, and Lord Lyttelton. In a letter to her sister of 1781, Hannah described a typical bluestocking gathering: 'I never knew a great party turn out so pleasantly as the other night at the Pepys's. There was all the pride of London - every wit, and every wit-ness; though these, when they get into a cluster, I have sometimes found to be as dull as other people; but the spirit of the evening was kept up on the strength of a little lemonade, till past eleven, without cards, scandal, or politics'.⁴ The bluestockings regarded cards, scandal and politics as improper.

On visits to London Hannah often stayed out of town with Garrick and his wife Eva Marie at their luxurious riverside villa in Hampton. It was on one of these visits that he encouraged her to work on a new tragedy, *Perry*, about a model heroine misjudged

¹ *A Book of Memories of Great Men and Women of the Age, from Personal Acquaintance* (1871), p. 72.

² Sir William Forbes, *An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie, J.L.D.* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1806), ii 1835, i 208.

147.

³ *Monthly Review* 49 (1773) 202-4, p. 202.

⁴ William Roberts, *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More* (3rd edn, 4 vols, London, 1835), i 208.