"In this moment of alarm and peril": Female Education, Religion and Politics In the Late Eighteenth Century, With special reference to Catharine Macaulay and Hannah More

Abstract
Catharine Macaulay and Hannah More are conventionally represented as ideological opposites. Through an analysis which centres on their writings, this thesis critically examines that representation, and more broadly explores contemporary perceptions of the roles of women of the middling sort in the late eighteenth century. It argues that revolution, particularly the French Revolution, created a climate wherein the duties of women became the subject of increasing debate. The discussion challenges and builds upon recent work on women's writing and history, by examining how and why the role of women changed at this time. This work is concerned with contemporary representations of women, and concentrates on analysis of primary texts and archival material over a wide range of genres, including educational treatises, plays, popular tracts, political pamphlets, historical writing and newspapers - the latter proving a major resource. Following a critical introduction, the thesis falls into four chapters. Chapter one discusses the reputation, critical reception and public fame of Macaulay and More, thereby providing insights into contemporary sexual and social politics. Women were considered arbiters of morals and manners - believed to play a vital role in ensuring social stability - and the second chapter examines how the threat of revolution led to increasing anxiety and debate about the nature of female education. The third and fourth chapters discuss religion and politics respectively, and argue that beliefs about the interdependency of Church and State, together with the feminization of religion, legitimized women's involvement in politics and enlarged their sphere of influence. The conclusion argues that the political and religious climate provided opportunities for women to reassess and redefine their roles; while often remaining within parameters defined by commonly held perceptions of femininity, they politicized the domestic, extended female agency, and elevated the status of women.
The 18th century was a wealth of knowledge, exploration and rapidly growing technology and expanding record-keeping made possible by advances in the printing press. In its determination to preserve the century of revolution, Gale initiated a revolution of its own: digitization of epic proportions to preserve these invaluable works in the largest archive of its kind. Now f

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During the long eighteenth century, ideas of society and of social progress were first fully investigated. These investigations took place in the contexts of economic, theological, historical and literary writings which paid unprecedented attention to the place of women. Combining intellectual history with literary criticism, Karen O'Brien examines the central importance to the British Enlightenment both of women writers and of women as a subject of enquiry. She examines the work of a range of writers, including John Locke, Mary Astell, David Hume, Adam Smith, Edward Gibbon, T. R. Malthus

Politics and religion. The Civil Wars and the Restoration of the monarchy, the Enlightenment or ‘Age of Reason’, and British colonialism: investigate the political and religious contexts of Restoration and 18th-century literature. The turbulent 17th century: Civil War, regicide, the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution. Article by: Matthew White. The 17th century was a time of great political and social turmoil in England, marked by civil war and regicide. The Enlightenment's emphasis on reason shaped philosophical, political and scientific discourse from the late 17th to the early 19th century. Matthew White traces the Enlightenment back to its roots in the aftermath of the Civil War, and forward to its effects on the present day. Read more. An introduction to Gulliver's Travels.