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“Dauntless Faith”: Contemplative Sublimity and Social Action in Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck’s Aesthetics

*For though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.*
Psalm 23. 4 (KJV)

Valour in women is so sublime.
Joanna Baillie, Preface to *Metrical Legends* (xxix)

In her *Theory on the Classification of Beauty and Deformity* (1815), nineteenth-century abolitionist and aesthetic theorist Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck draws on the texts of the women poets who preceded her in order to present dauntless social consciousness as sublime. Building on the earlier work of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century poets – such as Anna Barbauld, Helen Maria Williams, Joanna Baillie, and Felicia Hemans – Schimmelpenninck constructs her category of “the contemplative sublime” as a step in-between Edmund Burke’s mutually exclusive categories of sublime terror and beautiful love. Through the intermediary category of the contemplative sublime, Schimmelpenninck offers a corrective to Burkean dualism. Schimmelpenninck’s nuanced definition of sublimity, moving from a primary stage of bracing terror to a secondary stage of peaceful contemplation enables movement through terror into prayer and active love. This movement leads to her eventual definition of the courageous struggle for social justice as sublime, contrary to Edmund Burke’s focus on self-preservation. Expanding upon the conservative Anglicanism of the man she refers to as that “modern writer of eminence, Burke” (*Theory* 5), Schimmelpenninck, a Quaker turned Methodist turned Moravian, theorizes the generative dissenting sublimity first outlined by poets like Joanna Baillie. Baillie’s praise of a dissenting woman’s sublimely “dauntless faith” (“Lady Griseld Baillie” 847) is echoed by Schimmelpenninck’s admiration for Quaker prison

reformer Elizabeth Fry. Within Schimmelpenninck's aesthetics, as in Baillie's poetry, awed terror is only an initial stage *en route* to dauntless social action.

Schimmelpenninck's presentation of women's capacity for sublime fortitude and social action synthesizes the diverse depictions of communal consciousness arising out of terrifying situations found within dissenting women's poetry. In the "Introductory Address" to her *Theory*, Schimmelpenninck foregrounds the importance of her female literary predecessors. Proposing a pragmatic aesthetics, she claims that,

Whilst so many of her own sex are employing bright talents to the most exalted and noble purposes; whilst some, reverend in piety yet more than in years, still maintain with the pen that most holy cause they have exemplified in a long life, rich in good works ... whilst a tragic genius, such as but once before astonished England (and then, like *hers*, was long unappreciated), holds up a faithful mirror to the wayward heart of man, reflecting the progress of each incipient passion, the author of the following work is ashamed to mention the *utility* of a theory which, even if true, and if, as she believes, applicable to art, can yet serve no higher purpose than to furnish with innocent relaxation the very few hours which a conscientious Christian ought to afford to mere pursuits of taste. (v my italics)

Traces of Schimmelpenninck's strict Quaker upbringing cause her to worry over the potential self-indulgence of aesthetics, and she defers to models of art with a didactic purpose. The female "tragic genius" she admires remains unnamed, but she is clearly pointing to Joanna Baillie's 1798 *Plays on the Passions*, which "delineate the progress of the higher passions in the human breast, each play exhibiting a particular passion" (Baillie, "Introductory Discourse" 93). Baillie's texts had the pragmatic

purpose of teaching moral strength, not only by instructing readers to anticipate and check solipsistic passions but also by admonishing them to struggle for justice through the exertion of compassionate social virtues.

In recent years, critical attention has focused more intensely on Baillie, emphasizing her contribution to eighteenth-century drama over her sublime poetics, yet no critic has linked her writing to the aesthetic theory of Schimmelpenninck. In “Joanna Baillie: *A Series of Plays*” (1998) Janice Patten argues that Baillie “evokes the Burkean sublime” (172) in her drama but she does not refer to Baillie’s poetry, nor acknowledge the social commentary inherent in Baillie’s transformation of Burkean terror. Linda Brigham’s recently published “Aristocratic Monstrosity and Sublime Femininity” (2003) does connect the Bailliean sublime to social reform through a close reading of Baillie’s play *De Monfort*. Brigham argues that Baillie’s drama links the “sublime much more strongly to moral discipline than does Burke’s; Baillie’s sublime is an unctuous force rather than a terrible one” (714). This statement, though promising, ignores the centrality of terror to Bailliean sublimity. Baillie, like Schimmelpenninck, presents the Burkean terrible as a step towards compassionate social consciousness. In Baillie’s poem “Thunder” (1790), for example, experiences of terror trigger reverential prayer, increased spiritual discipline, and a heightened awareness of community. Reflecting her dissenting commitment to equity, Baillie’s sublime storm is an equalizing force that causes rich and poor, old and young, men and women to fall to their knees together. At the increasingly loud sounds of thunder:

Now upcast eyes to heav’n adore,
And knees that never bow’d before,
In stupid wonder stares the child;
The maiden turns her glances wild,
And lists to hear the coming roar:
The aged shake their locks so hoar:
And stoutest hearts begin to fail,

And many a manly cheek is pale; (81-88)¹

Baillie, like Schimmelpenninck, defines the sublime as a process unfolding in stages. Modern scholar Jacqueline Labbe notes that Schimmelpenninck divides “the sublime into ordered levels,” as “she privileges particular phases and stimuli that construct a sublime situated within plateaus of meaning” (50). Labbe limits Schimmelpenninck, however, by claiming that her construction of the contemplative sublime, “does not, in the end, prove an empowering experience” (51). Schimmelpenninck’s definition of the contemplative sublime in terms of dauntlessness does hold out the promise of empowerment through active engagement in spiritual community. For both Baillie and Schimmelpenninck, the sublime is first a terrible and *then* an unctuous or socially transformative and healing force.

The verse of Baillie, like the aesthetics of Schimmelpenninck, highlights what another dissenting woman poet, Helen Maria Williams, came to term the “sublime public virtues” (*Poems on Various Subjects* xix) of social action. Modern critic Anne Mellor reads women writers like Baillie and Williams as contesting “the assertions of Hobbes, Locke, Burke and a host of other philosophers . . . that human beings are primarily motivated by self-interest” (“Joanna Baillie and the Counter-Public Sphere” 561) through their construction of a “heightened sensibility not of anxiety, but of love” (*Romanticism and Gender* 97). In this reading, Mellor like Brigham effaces the role of terror altogether, turning from the bracing strength of the sublime *to* the comforting softness of the beautiful, which she then re-labels “the feminine sublime.” This mere reversal of Burke’s dichotomy does not work for Schimmelpenninck. Rather than stopping at Burke’s category of paralyzing fear or turning away from

¹ In her 1840 collection *Fugitive Verses* Baillie revised these lines to read:

Now eyes, to heaven up-cast, adore,
Knees bend that never bent before,
The stoutest hearts begin to fail,
And many a manly face is pale; (68-71)

terror altogether in search of a hypothetical love free of anxiety, Baillie and Schimmelpenninck both maintain awed terror as a stage *en route* towards the dauntless social action of contemplative sublimity.

For Schimmelpenninck, the individualistic “lofty”² genius of the terrible is only a prelude to the communal consciousness of the contemplative that leads into social action. Schimmelpenninck draws an evaluative distinction between the sudden shifts of the terrible sublime and the smooth calm of the contemplative sublime, suggesting that the latter evolves out of the former and as a more sophisticated aesthetic stage. Following Burke to a degree, Schimmelpenninck highlights the angularity of terrible objects, where “right lines are suddenly interrupted by right angles” or a dark color is “suddenly contrasted with a bright one; as a flash of lightning illuminating a dark night” (256). Burke similarly claims that the suddenness “lightning is certainly productive of grandeur” (*Enquiry* 80). For Schimmelpenninck, however, the sudden intensity of such terrible sublimity is only a prelude to contemplative “continuity of intense color; as the religious gloom of an oaken grove, or of the aisles of a Gothic cathedral” (256). The contemplative sublime is characterized by a stability and continuity that point towards eternity. It is from the calm and faithful assurance of eternal truths that the potential for dauntless social action emerges.

Schimmelpenninck’s aesthetic theory builds upon the work of dissenting women writers like Anna Barbauld,³ and Mary Wollstonecraft, as well as Baillie and Williams, who modify Burke’s theology of shrinking fear by presenting women’s capacity for moral fortitude and social action as a more compelling response to terror. As Jonathan Lamb’s study *The Rhetoric of Suffering: Reading the Book of Job in the*

² Schimmelpenninck emphasizes the incomprehensibility of the divine when she states, “the sublime is that which from its loftiness is above our reach, and from its magnitude we cannot comprehend” (29).

³ We know from the *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck*, begun by Schimmelpenninck and completed by her niece Christiana Hankin, that Schimmelpenninck “read Mrs. Barbauld’s Prose Hymns” (Schimmelpenninck 4), and stayed with Barbauld for a month in 1798 (Hankin 296).

Eighteenth Century (1995) points out, for Burke “Unmodified power is God, and God is terrible” (191). In his biography *Edmund Burke* (1998) F. P. Lock agrees, claiming that Burke’s *Enquiry* is “at bottom a theological work” (98) where Burke’s God is “the terrible Jehovah of the Old Testament” (112). In his 1757 *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Burke defines a tiger as sublime and a dove as beautiful, thunder as sublime and a melody as beautiful. He then divides the virtues into these mutually exclusive categories, connecting the terrifying punishments of justice to the sublime (110) and the soothing ministries of compassion (111) to the beautiful. He projects only terrifying attributes onto God and, as a result, suffers from a paralyzing fear of unmediated wrath, shrinking “into the minuteness of [his] own nature” when faced with signs of “almighty power” (68). In Burke’s *Enquiry*, this unmixed terror takes away the courage required for social action.

In his section entitled “Power,” an addition to the second, 1759, edition of the *Enquiry*,⁴ Burke emphasizes the sublimity of physical might and provides exclusively male examples. Claiming, “wheresoever we find strength, and in what light soever we look upon power, we shall all along observe the sublime” (66), he quotes from the book of Job to illustrate indomitable physical force. Burke uses the image of the wild ass in Job 39.7, who “scorneth the multitude of the city” (qtd. in Burke 66), to discuss the willful independence of the sublime, which he opposes to the endearing sociability of the beautiful. He goes on to give two more biblical examples of untamable physiology, from Job 41.1 and 4, where God asks, “canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow?;” and “canst thou draw out Leviathan with a hook?” (qtd. in Burke 66). These animals anticipate Burke’s turn to the human body through the

⁴ Within this new section, Burke comments on his omission of “the idea of God” in his 1757 edition of the *Enquiry*, stating, “I purposely avoided, when I first considered this subject, to introduce the idea of that great and tremendous being, as an example in an argument light as this” (67-68).

phrase “*fearfully and wonderfully am I made!*” (68-69 Burke’s italics). Burke is here thinking of Psalm 139.13-14: “thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (KJV).⁵ He omits any reference to divine presence within the womb and focuses instead on “the economy of man” (*Enquiry* 68) evident in the male body. He discerns evidence of an “almighty power” (68) in the physical construction of His creatures but excludes any female examples of such manifest power.

Burke has quoted very selectively from the book of Job and has thus left out a compelling biblical example of female strength and social sublimity: the mother eagle of Job 39. In her recent work on “the gendered sublime,” Christine Battersby observes, “during the transitional phase of the Enlightenment, woman was increasingly deprived of sisterhood with the wild and threatening aspects of nature” (90). A close look at Burke’s omissions from the Book of Job confirms this. In Job 39.27-29, God asks, “Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she” (KJV). This figure of maternal strength troubles Burke’s dichotomy between terrifying, solitary, masculine sublimity and lovable, social, feminine beauty and so is simply left out of his *Enquiry*. Burke effaces any possible *female* expression of strength or power, despite the fact that the mother eagle in Job meets several of his criteria for sublimity. Her physiological power is clear in her ability to rise to craggy heights in answer to God’s

⁵ All subsequent biblical references in this article shall be to the King James Version of the Bible. Though Burke slightly misquotes Psalm 139, the quotes from Job are an exact match with the King James Version. As an Anglican, this is the version with which Burke would have been most familiar. A 1768 edition of the King James Version appears as lot 116 in the 1833 sale catalogue of Edmund Burke’s personal library. The only other edition referred to is an annotated Latin version (lot 192). The sale catalogue has been reprinted in *Sale Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons*, edited by Seamus Deane.

call. Like the wild ass, she exists away from crowds, in a decidedly sublime natural landscape. Why then would Burke exclude her from his list of animals manifesting sublime power? First of all, she is a *she* and so does not fit his gendering of the sublime as masculine. Secondly, she does not roam through the wilderness but settles into it and makes her “nest” there. Finally, she is not alone but surrounded by her babies. This female eagle conflates wild strength with familial care and thus troubles Burke’s dichotomy between sublime masculine strength and beautiful feminine sociability.

In her “Thoughts on Devotional Taste” (1775) Anna Barbauld turns to the biblical Psalms as a means of bridging this Burkean divide.⁶ She questions the foundation of sublimity in logic alone, suggesting that the discoveries of astronomy, for example, can result in a greater alienation between the human subject and his or her creator, which causes “the idea of *communion* with our Maker” (216) to appear presumptuous. Barbauld argues that close, sympathetic bonds motivate “everything sublime” (219) in “generous action” (219). She turns to “poetry and music” as arts that “carry the mind out of itself, and powerfully refine the affections from everything gross, low and selfish” (222) towards the capacity for altruism. For Barbauld, poetry bridges the gap between the distant idea of what Burke calls “almighty power” and intimacy of social bonds. She explains:

It was impossible to treat of the devotional spirit, without calling to mind the Psalms of David. In these, the boldest figures of the high Eastern poetry are united with a simplicity which makes them intelligible to the common ear. The sublimest ideas are given of the Deity; he is spoken of with the deepest reverence, and yet with all the

⁶ Barbauld’s essay had a strong impact on late eighteenth-century dissenting culture. Modern critic Daniel White refers to it as Barbauld’s “widely read essay” (527)

warmth and pathos of personal gratitude and affection. Such pieces are certainly proper not only to be read as compositions, but to be used as acts of devotion, either in private, or in public and social worship.

(232)

In his *Enquiry* Burke uses a quotation from Psalm 139 to illustrate the sublimity of the individual male body, whereas Barbauld sees the Psalms of David, in their entirety, as key to bridging differences between bodies, hearts and minds in community. For Barbauld, poetry enables the inclusion of what she terms “generous action” in the sublime, whereas philosophical enquiry alone does not.

Within her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), *Vindication of the Rights Woman* (1792), and *Hints* (1798), Mary Wollstonecraft, like Barbauld, pictures the sublime in a divinity both admirable and lovable. This mixture of active love and terrified reverence pushes the experience of sublimity past frozen fear and individualism towards the capacity for loving outreach to God and to others. In *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (2002), Barbara Taylor points out that “Eighteenth and nineteenth-century western feminists were nearly all active Christians” (99) and looks closely at Wollstonecraft’s theological rhetoric. Taylor later notes that Wollstonecraft included passages from Barbauld’s “Thoughts on Devotional Taste” in her *Female Reader: or, Miscellaneous Pieces, in Prose and Verse; Selected From the Best Writers* (1789). Alluding to Plato, Wollstonecraft argues for a respectful love between men and women that can lead to a sublime love of God. In her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), she proposes that our love for one another must be mixed with a degree of sublime awe, “for the love of the Deity, which is mixed with the most profound reverence, must be love of perfection” (5: 46). Wollstonecraft reveals how a theology resting on unmixed terror of the masculine can

actually diminish our view of divinity by equating “feminine” love with weakness. Next, and perhaps more constructively, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) Wollstonecraft claims that women’s education can generate “sublime emotions” (5: 84) that, far from being solipsistic, actually draw the subject away from self-absorption toward contemplation of God and active love of others.

In her *Hints*, or notes towards a sequel to *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft, like Barbauld and John Dennis before her, points to poetry as an especially sublime genre. In *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701), John Dennis suggests that poetry can provide momentary access to an Edenic past when humanity “constantly contemplated God” (147). According to Dennis, Adam and Eve’s direct communication with God filled them with a “brightness of knowledge” (147), which sublime poetry still seeks to convey. In a recent article, Phillip Donnelly argues, “By insisting upon both the rational order and the emotional power of truly great poetry, Dennis attempts to show that the traditional antimony between reason and passion is properly addressed only through Christian revelation” (253-254). Similarly, Wollstonecraft locates sublimity in the “rude gothic grandeur” (*Hints* 5: 274) of a poetic mysticism complementary to reason. Referring to Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (1790), she writes, “Mr. Kant has observed, that the understanding is sublime, the imagination beautiful – yet it is evident, that poets, and men who undoubtedly possess the liveliest imaginations, are most touched by the sublime” (5: 275). This is a point of similarity between Wollstonecraft and Burke. Throughout his *Enquiry* Burke selects his examples of sublimity from poetic texts, like the Psalms or Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, rather than philosophical texts.

While defining the sublime in her *Theory*, Schimmelpenninck partly agrees with the precedence of poetry, beginning with references to British poets before expanding

her theory to include moral character and social action. She validates a taste for the “Gothic grandeur” (6) of eighteenth-century graveyard poets Edward Young and Thomas Gray, lauding the “powerful imagination” (9) of Young’s “Night Thoughts” and the “mournful stanza[s]” (10) of Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” She later privileges “Milton and Young” as “consecrated” (52) poets and labels Gray’s verse as “elegant” (54). All of these religious poets, with their meditative and humble reflections on topics of death and eternity, reflect Schimmelpenninck’s interest in spiritual contemplation. In the chart created to explain her aesthetic categories (fig. 1), she follows Kant to a degree by not placing poetic “elegant taste, imagination” in the category of either “the terrible” or “contemplative sublime,” but rather in “the sentimental.” Distinguishing “genius” and a Kantian sounding “judgment” from “imagination,” Schimmelpenninck places them under the terrible sublime and contemplative sublime, respectively. Here, the reader notes a limitation in the divisions of Schimmelpenninck’s chart, as surely “imagination” and “genius” may coexist. Regardless, Schimmelpenninck effects a subtle gender reversal by applying the terms of the softly beautiful sentimental, “imagination” and “elegance,” to Young and Gray respectively, while reserving the term for the terribly sublime, “genius,” for unnamed women writers.

CHART No. I.—BEAUTIES.

GENERA.	GENUS I. SUBLIME.		GENUS II. SENTIMENTAL.	GENUS III. SPRIGHTLY.
	SPECIES I. ACTIVE <i>Or Terrible Sublime.</i>	SPECIES II. PASSIVE <i>Or Contemplative Sublime</i>		
THEIR CONSTITUENT PRINCIPLES, AND CORRESPONDING MORAL AND MENTAL QUALITIES.	SELF-SUBSISTENCE.		DEPENDENCE.	VERSATILITY.
	Force.	Firmness.	Yielding, weakness, depression.	Spirit but gentleness, elasticity.
OVERWHELMING IMPETUOSITY.	Overwhelming impetuosity.	Calm, but inextricable power.	Flexibility and languor.	Unwearied vivacity.
	Boldness.	Dauntlessness.	Tumidity.	Liveliness, cheerfulness.
VIGOR AND ENERGY.	POWER.		COMPLIANCE.	ELASTICITY.
	Vigor and energy.	Strength and permanence.	Gentleness & acquiescence.	Readiness, cleverness, acuteness.
LOFTY PRIDE.	Lofty pride.	Conscious dignity.	Humility, affection, sensibility.	Playful good humor.
	Genius.	Judgment.	Elegant taste, imagination.	Brilliant wit, smartness.
OFTEN CONTRASTED.	PARTS FEW AND VAST.		Parts imperceptibly combined.	Parts numerous, petty, contrasted.
	Often contrasted.	Always continuous.	Sweetness destitute of strength.	Activity destitute of grandeur.
OVERWHELMS BY RESISTLESS VIOLENCE.	Overwhelms by resistless violence.	Resists by unshaken stability.	N. B. The sentimental consists in an aptitude of assimilation. It possesses gentleness without force, sweetness without variety. It wins by its softness, without commanding respect.	N. B. The sprightly differs from the sentimental by its activity, and from the sublime by its want of strength, and by its consisting of a number of petty excitements instead of one great one.
	N. B. The sublime, as the term implies, consists in what is above us, and which the mind cannot grasp. It therefore consists of one impression; for the human mind can never take in two impressions, but when one is not adequate to fill it.			
GENERIC CHARACTERISTICS IN MANNER AND STYLE OF BEAUTY.	FIRM.		Soft, affectionate, tender, sympathizing.	Gay, playful and vivacious.
	Fiery, lofty & energetic. Calm, Placid, unshaken.	DECISIVE.	Submissive loveliness.	Amusing and engaging versatility.
BURSTS OF HEROISM.	Bursts of heroism.	Exalted and noble constancy.	Elegance, politeness, grace.	Brilliance, agility.
	MAJESTIC.		Tenderness.	Quickness.
CHIVALRIC NOBILITY.	Chivalric Nobility.	Lofty courtesy, serenity.	Beautiful.	Pretty.
	MAGNANIMITY.		The graceful style.	The florid or decorated style.
GENERIC STYLE OF INFLUENCE AND UTILITY.	HANDSOMENESS.		Beautiful.	Pretty.
	Heroic beauty.	Saintly beauty.	The graceful style.	The florid or decorated style.
AWE.	ADMIRATION.		LOVE.	ENTERTAINMENT.
	Awe.	Veneration.	Interests and attaches.	Stimulates and amuses.
CHIEFTAIN.	INFLUENCES.		Wins and persuades.	Agreeable companion.
	GOVERNS.		Affectionate friend.	Agreeable companion.
PATRON.	Chieftain.	Pontiff.	Affectionate friend.	Agreeable companion.

Fig. One. Chart No. I – Beauties, by Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, *Theory on the Classification of Beauty and Deformity*. (London: John and Arthur Arch, 1815) 46.

After applying the phrase “tragic genius” to Joanna Baillie in the “Introductory Discourse” to her *Theory*, Schimmelpenninck later highlights the presence of collective female intellectual activity in late eighteenth-century Britain. In a chapter on “Variations of Taste,” Schimmelpenninck looks back with critical approval, and

some nostalgia, to the connection between spiritual revelations of truth and the enabling of justice within late eighteenth-century women's poetry. She first notes that "but a short period comparatively has elapsed, since the supernatural discovery of a murder was recorded amongst the judicial proceedings of our courts" (67) and then claims that "twenty years ago" such supernatural occurrences "formed the groundwork of a variety of works of the imagination, and we can scarcely avoid regretting that the taste should be so completely obliterated, to which we are indebted for some productions which deserve a place among the classical works of British and female genius" (67). Here Schimmelpenninck does blend "imagination" with "genius" as she admires late eighteenth century literary texts written by women. Situating these texts "twenty years" before the publication of her own *Theory*, Schimmelpenninck places them in the 1790s. She does not follow her tantalizing statement with any specific examples, but a list could easily be provided from the texts of Helen Maria Williams and Joanna Baillie.⁷ As with her earlier comment on an unnamed woman writer of tragic genius, Schimmelpenninck merely assumes that her reader will know the works of female genius to which she refers. This assumption in itself testifies to the proliferation and influence of women's ideas about the sublime at the end of the eighteenth century.

As we have seen, Schimmelpenninck openly praises writers like Anna Barbauld and Joanna Baillie. She also comments explicitly on female public figures as diverse as poet and letter writer Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,⁸ political elegist Anna

⁷ Williams's *Poems* (1786) contains "Part of an Irregular Fragment Found in a Dark Passage of the Tower" whose speaker witnesses the ghosts of those who died in the Tower of London testifying to their unjust executions. Williams uses the same structure again in "The Bastille: A Vision" (1790), where an "awful form" come to the speaker to testify to the past injustices of the Bastille. Modern critic Deborah Kennedy compares Williams's "Irregular Fragment" to Joanna Baillie's "Night Scenes of Other Times" (1790) within which "a murderer is haunted by the ghost of the person he had murdered" in her "'Storms of Sorrow': The Poetry of Helen Maria Williams" (83).

⁸ Montagu is mentioned in a brief discussion of the sentimental in *British Orientalism* (32). Schimmelpenninck links Montagu more closely to the beautiful than the sublime.

Seward,⁹ actress Sarah Siddons,¹⁰ and French critic Madame de Staël.¹¹ What these women have in common is their engagement in intellectual, social, and at times political, action. Schimmelpenninck also claims that “several of our writers on beauty have fallen into the mistake, not of confounding beauty with deformity; but of having substituted one species of the beautiful for the whole of beauty itself. Amongst these are Burke [and] Hogarth” (6). Perhaps due to her awareness of the diversity within women’s depictions of sublimity, Schimmelpenninck reveals that it is impossible to be “a consistent follower of Mr. Burke” (7), since many landscapes fall “neither under his definition of the beautiful or the sublime” (7). She then addresses yet another category, the picturesque, by referring to William Gilpin’s *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty* (1792). She claims that the “picturesque,” as defined by “Mr. Gilpin” (7) is also too exclusive. She acknowledges her debts to Edmund Burke and William Gilpin, but points out that there are many objects, landscapes, and perhaps most importantly, people, that cannot be restricted to either the Burkean sublime or beautiful, or the Gilpean picturesque. She argues that the forcing of any object into a pre-established system, to whose standards it does not correspond, actually *creates* deformity, asserting “nothing more surely produces deformity than the application of the rules of any one species of beauty to objects which do not come within its province” (7).

⁹ Schimmelpenninck alludes to Seward’s “Monody on Major André” when she praises Seward for writing “the memorials of those she shortly followed to the tomb” (132).

¹⁰ Schimmelpenninck admires Sarah Siddons’s powers of elocution, writing, “it is not the mere caprice of the nineteenth century that gives to the readings of Sarah Siddons the palm over the grotesque amusements of the great but barbarous Peter the First” (64). In praising Siddons, Schimmelpenninck follows Helen Maria Williams’s “Sonnet: To Mrs. Siddons” (*Poems* 2: 179-180). Baillie too will write a poetic tribute to Siddons: “To Mrs. Siddons” (*Fugitive Verses* 350).

¹¹ Madame Germaine de Staël’s name appears in a list of revolutionary thinkers notable for their “strength and talents” (65). This list also includes Madame Marie-Jeanne “Roland” (65), a friend of Helen Maria Williams, who Schimmelpenninck earlier refers to, along with Jean Jacques Rousseau, as an “individual of genius” (55). By pairing Roland with Rousseau and referring to her “genius” Schimmelpenninck associates her with the terrible sublime.

This is why Schimmelpenninck includes two types of sublimity – the terrible and the contemplative sublime – as well as two other categories, the sentimental and the sprightly – in her innovative system and presents the “boldness,” “energy” and “pride” of the terrible as merely preceding the “dauntlessness,” “strength” and “dignity” found in the contemplative (see fig. 1). At the bottom of her chart, she claims that the terrible sublime appears in the chieftain, or military leader, and the contemplative sublime in the pontiff, or spiritual leader. In her later writing, she will follow Joanna Baillie by presenting a dissenting *female* example of such spiritual leadership in Elizabeth Fry, a figure known for her active social reforms.

Schimmelpenninck’s removal of “horror,” as distinct from “terror,” from her definition of sublimity creates even greater potential for social action and forms a tie with another of her female contemporaries: gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe. Though the narratives of Radcliffe’s gothic novels often provide rational explanations for their seemingly supernatural events, they also maintain the possibility of sublime spiritual revelation, thus reflecting what Schimmelpenninck terms “female genius.” In her novel *Romance of the Forest* (1791), for example, Radcliffe uses a prophetic dream as a plot device to aid in the exposure and trial of a murder within the Parisian courts. Both Radcliffe and Schimmelpenninck draw a clear distinction between the reverence of awed terror and the deformity of grotesque horror. In the second chart within her *Theory*, “Chart No II – Deformities,” Schimmelpenninck creates a moral distinction between the grotesque, “deformed” passions of what she refers to as “the horrible” and the still, awed emotions of “the terrible,” which lead into the spiritual veneration and dauntlessness of “the contemplative sublime.” She draws this distinction in

accordance with Radcliffe and contrary to Burke's conflation of terror and horror.¹² In Schimmelpenninck's system, the "tyrannic gloom," "phrenetic self-will" (47) and domineering rage of the horrible are completely distinct from the awe, "bursts of heroism" (46) and genius of the terrible. In drawing this distinction, she anticipates Radcliffe's "Essay on the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826).

Radcliffe's "Essay" distinguishes clearly between the frozen paralysis of horror and the enlivening potential of sublime terror. She claims that terror "expands the soul and *awakens* the faculties to a high degree of *life*" (149 my italics), whereas horror "freezes" and "nearly annihilates" (149) them. Modern critic Sue Chaplin reads this distinction through the work of French feminist Luce Irigaray, writing, "through its graphic portrayal of 'positive horror,' horror writing 'freezes' the faculties of the reader as, for Irigaray, patriarchal discourses freeze and immobilize the female subject" (133). Chaplin emphasizes how Radcliffian terror invigorates the subject, "freeing the imagination to contemplate alternatives to the certainty of suffering posited by the horror text" (133). Though Chaplin focuses on Radcliffe's novel *The Italian* (1797), her reading also works with Schimmelpenninck's *Theory*. Whereas Burke's spectator remains fixed in a dynamic of terror undifferentiated from horror, Schimmelpenninck's subject experiences an awed terror that triggers an expansion of consciousness, which in turn leads to dauntless social action.

Schimmelpenninck integrates her sincere and earnest attraction to the possibilities of constructing a female aesthetic with her dissenting theological commitment to the

¹² Very early in his argument, Burke argues that after the cessation of pleasure we "fall into a soft tranquility, which is tinged with the agreeable colour of the former sensation" (34). He then opposes this state to the delight of the sublime, claiming that after "escaping some imminent danger" (34) our minds are "in a state of much sobriety, impressed with a sense of awe, in a sort of tranquility shadowed with horror" (34). Later in his *Enquiry*, Burke refers to "a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror; which as it belongs to self-preservation is one of the strongest of all passions. Its object is the sublime" (136). It is very difficult to separate horror from terror in Burke's vocabulary.

useful or pragmatic by including references to church community within her *Theory*. Though she states that the “conscientious Christian” should set aside only “a very few hours” to the mere pursuit of taste, she must have set aside many, many hours in order to compose her over 400 page long *Theory*. She hopes her aesthetic rules may find “useful application, not only in PAINTING, SCULPTURE, ARCHITECTURE, LANDSCAPE GARDENING, POETRY, and other branches of the fine arts and of elegant literature, but [also] in all those minor departments of good taste, which constitute the agreeable scenery of everyday life” (iv). For Schimmelpenninck, contemplative sublimity moves away from grotesque horror and through awed terror by incorporating the presence of others in social consciousness and everyday community. From the beginning, Schimmelpenninck, like Barbauld, includes social ties of affection and associative, subjective memories of community in her definition of the sublime. She thus questions Burke’s focus on solitude and his claim to universal, empirical objectivity. Schimmelpenninck believes that the source of sublimity lies in moral, subjective characteristics, whether displayed by the actions of human beings or symbolized in the physical qualities of God’s creation.

She uses the Swiss Alps, a recognizable emblem of the Romantic sublime, to illustrate this point, presenting them as a symbol of divine shelter and care. She imagines a Swiss man being asked why he admires the “bleak and barren” (12) alpine landscape of his home and then speculates,

He will probably answer, that it is because these rugged rocks remind him of the great and good Being, who has planted this impregnable fortress around them, as though they were objects of his peculiar care; and that they bring to his mind the recollection of the valor of a brave

and free, but pastoral and unambitious ancestry. He will dwell with enthusiasm on his humble cot, his sheep, his goats, and his herds. (12)

Whereas in Burke's system the mountains are sublime because their steep cliffs and mighty avalanches hold the threat of death, in Schimmelpenninck's system, the mountains are sublime because of their ability to protect and sustain communal life. She validates the aesthetic perspective of an agricultural labourer as she imagines him associating the Alps not exclusively with terrified awe but also with security, courage, freedom and humility.

Anticipating objections that this populated mountain landscape, with its associative memories and everyday social details, is really closer to the Gilpean picturesque than the Burkean sublime, Schimmelpenninck defines her idea of social sublimity more carefully. First, she agrees with Burke's statement that "we are more struck by looking down from a precipice than, at looking up at an object of equal height" (Burke, *Enquiry* 72), writing, "looking down an abyss is more sublime than looking up at a mountain above" (Schimmelpenninck, *Theory* 28). Then she claims that this is because in the case of an abyss "we can less measure its distance" (28), and then moves on to state, "a great crowd, for the same reason, [and] a full organ which is composed of a thousand indefinite and consentient harmonies, are SUBLIME" (28). Schimmelpenninck's definition of a diverse multiplicity as sublime seems to contradict Burke, and so she provides a footnote, writing,

Solitude is generally considered as an integral part of the sublime. That it is not essentially connected with it will appear from the following reason. It does not always produce that effect, but only under certain circumstances. Were we transported to Cheddar Cliffs, or any other sublime prospect, with all the company of a race-ball, for example, the

sublime would be destroyed; but were a first-rate man-of-war which was sinking, and the whole crew prostrate in prayer, whilst destruction was engulfing them; or had we seen the venerable assembly of Conscript fathers waiting their death by Gaul, the very circumstance of the multitude would have added to the sublime. (28-29)

Reflecting her involvement with socially conscious and anti-slavery religious fellowships, Schimmelpenninck draws two examples of communal sublimity from an egalitarian spiritual community, spontaneously formed under duress, and from the history of republican politics.

Schimmelpenninck's imagined scene of communal prayer during a storm at sea recalls John Wesley's first encounter with Moravian Brethren while traveling aboard a ship bound for Georgia. Schimmelpenninck grew up in the Quaker family of Samuel and Lucy Galton but was baptized in the Wesleyan Methodist church in 1808 (Hankin 343), and would likely have known the story of Wesley's formative experience with the Moravians. Moravian historian J. E. Hutton notes that when the ship carrying Wesley and the Moravians was swamped by a tempest, "The main sail was torn to tatters. The English passengers screamed with terror. The Brethren calmly sang a hymn" (286). John Wesley was deeply moved by the Moravians' serenity amidst such life-threatening circumstances. His observation of the Moravians' unshaken dauntlessness was a spiritual turning point that would lead towards the eventual formation of the Methodist church. Schimmelpenninck does not see Wesley in terms of the contemplative, however, but rather the terrible sublime. Towards the end of her *Theory*, she mentions Wesley as an example of the "boldness and activity of character" (438) that typify the terrible sublime. Wesley could admire contemplative

sublimity in the calmness of the Moravian Brethren, but, according to Schimmelpenninck, his independent and fiery spirit adheres to the terrible sublime.

For Schimmelpenninck, the corporate prayer of a ship's crew and the communal dauntlessness of the Roman senate together illustrate the conception of a contemplative sublime based not in individual autonomy but in a paradoxical strength in shared vulnerability. Whereas the Burkean spectator of the sublime remains fixed in immobilized, individualistic fear, Schimmelpenninck describes dynamic community arising out of terrible contexts. In doing so, she draws the potential for social action into the category of the sublime.

Social memorializing is gracious for Schimmelpenninck because it is associated with affective bonds and thus prevents the sublime from lapsing into solipsism. She claims that a "cheerful landscape" (132) will shift from the sprightly, or picturesque, to the contemplative when associated with communities of the past. She focuses on the "plains of Lichfield," for example, imagining a traveler resting beneath "the picturesque bole of an aged willow" (132) being informed that

The very willow under which he sits was planted by the hand of Johnson, and that in that very place had often stood Darwin, of sagacious eye, [...] Garrick like his own Shakespeare, crowned both by the comic and the tragic Muse; Knowles, like David, with a simple pebble from the living brook, successfully defending her Israel against the railings of the opposing Goliath, and like Minerva, skilled at the needle and equally in the arts; Saville, celebrated for song, and Seward, for the memorials of those she shortly followed to the tomb: immediately the whole scene will change its character, and that which in its inherent association was sprightly, will to him, by means of this

new casual association, assume that of the contemplative sublime as he revolves in his mind the talents, the labors, the fates and fortunes of so many individuals, eminently endowed with powers to enlighten and adorn society, and to add to the happiness of their fellow creatures: --
(132-133)

When associated with the late essayist, novelist and poet Samuel Johnson and with the community of intellectuals he drew around him, a picturesque scene can inspire reverence. The wonder of Schimmelpenninck's traveler arises out of respectful reflection on the lives and deaths of Samuel Johnson, scientist Erasmus Darwin, actor David Garrick, Quaker and feminist Mary Knowles and poet Anna Seward.

Schimmelpenninck's inclusion of politically informed and opinionated women in what she refers to as a "bright constellation" (133) of intellectuals modifies the Wordsworthian construction of the singular, sublime, and masculine genius rising above his society. Her image of multiple stars existing in relation to one another pluralizes Wordsworth's comparison of John Milton's soul to "a star" that "dwelt apart" ("London, 1802" 9). When Schimmelpenninck celebrates a constellation of intellectual culture, she is perhaps alluding to Daniel 12.3, which states, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

Schimmelpenninck's dissenting focus on the importance of spiritual community becomes even clearer in her second example of a shift from the picturesque to the contemplative. Recalling her earlier reference to a pastoral and Alpine landscape near the very beginning of her argument, Schimmelpenninck writes,

The young nobleman, who passes through the fertile and richly variegated country of Dauphiné and Piedmont, whose fancy is

delighted with the endless succession of magnificent mountains, capt [sic] with snow, sloping hills, gay with vineyards, glassy lakes, mountain streams, and sheltered fertile vallies [sic], experiences very different feelings from his clerical tutor, who passes with religious veneration over the spot, consecrated by the piety and the sufferings of the Waldenses. (136)

The Waldenses were Christians who in the Twelfth Century renounced wealth in order to live the nomadic lives of itinerant preachers in France and Italy. In the Seventeenth Century they were targeted through a series of French military campaigns, inspiring John Milton's 1655 sonnet "On the Late Massacre at Piedmont."

Schimmelpenninck imagines her tutor walking through the Alpine setting of the Waldenses' persecution and experiencing a form of contemplative sublimity:

In the valley, he seems yet to behold their turfed-roof villages, their pastoral cots surrounded by herds and flocks, their grey-headed elders uncultured in human lore, but rich in the possession of that pearl of inestimable price, the gift of God, which consists in love to God, and through Him to man; and he can yet fancy he sees their shepherd boys now tuning the praises of God on oaten pipe, and now, though unlearned, teaching divine truth and heavenly wisdom to their persecutors. He looks with awful reverence on those eternal mountains, within whose capacious and caverned sides the flock of the faithful found asylum from the storm of persecution. (136-137)

Schimmelpenninck's tutor moves through terrible memories to prayer, integrating past pain and loss into contemplative awe. Though Schimmelpenninck follows Burke by maintaining a distinction between the fear of the terrible and the love of the

sentimental, she places spiritual “veneration” (30) in between these two categories.

Schimmelpenninck’s “veneration” includes meditation on “the nature and Goodness of God” (267), which arguably involves a mixture of fear and love.

After publishing her *Theory*, Schimmelpenninck turned increasingly to theological subjects and in 1818 officially joined the Moravian Brethren Church, as she was attracted to their strong focus on international outreach and social reform. The Moravians, along with the Methodists, spearheaded early nineteenth-century efforts to aid West Indian slaves. From the early 1730s, the Moravians were “founders of Christian work among the slaves. For fifty years the Moravian Brethren laboured in the West Indies without any aid from any other denomination. They established churches in St. Thomas, in St. Croix, in St. John’s, in Jamaica, in Antigua, in Barbados, and in St. Kitts” (Hutton 239). In her recent introduction to *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*, Sara Salih notes the Moravian ability “to foster a feeling of international community” (xxi). The Moravian community spread to Schimmelpenninck’s birthplace, the Midlands of England, in the late 1730s¹³ and counted William Blake’s mother, Catherine, among its eighteenth-century members.¹⁴

After officially joining the Moravians in 1818, Schimmelpenninck went on to publish *Biblical Fragments* (1821), and *An Essay on the Psalms, and their Spiritual Application* (1825). These texts were written as Schimmelpenninck’s involvement with the abolitionist cause increased, and they reflect her continued interest in constructing a dissenting Christian sublime of spiritual *and* social redemption. Just as Barbauld argues that “the sublimest” ideas of divinity are united with “warmth” in the Psalms, especially when they are shared in “public assemblies,” Schimmelpenninck claims in *Biblical Fragments*: “The Psalms are, in their literal sense, at once a

¹³ See Hutton’s chapter “Moravians and Methodists: 1735-1742” (283-303).

¹⁴ For more on William Blake’s Moravian background see Keri Davies and Marsha Schuchard’s article “Recovering the Lost Moravian History of William Blake’s Family.”

compendium of the historic part of Scripture, a body of perceptive rules, a most touching picture of the human affections, and a collection of the most sublime poetry” (78). When Schimmelpenninck argues that “the sublime interior history of our Lord” (81) is illustrated within the Psalms, she assents to Anna Barbauld’s depiction of Christ’s sublimity in her *Hymns in Prose for Children*. Both Barbauld and Schimmelpenninck supported the abolition of slavery as a just social cause and both looked to the “sublime poetry” of the Psalms for models of how to carry out such reform with active Christian love. In 1825, Schimmelpenninck spent time in London, where she helped establish an organization called “The Female Society for the Relief of British Negro Slaves.” According to her niece Christiana Hankin, Schimmelpenninck was working for the abolitionist cause from 1813 onwards. Hankin notes, “By unwearied counsel and sympathy, and by the use of her ready pen, she gave the most efficient support and help to the abolitionists of Bristol” (365).

As we have seen, in her *Theory*, Schimmelpenninck associates the contemplative sublime with active leadership in spiritual community. In her *Principles of Beauty* Schimmelpenninck refines her own aesthetic system further by first reviewing the terrible and contemplative and then examining the terrible and contemplative in Christianity, specifically. Already, in her *Theory*, Schimmelpenninck used a chief, or military leader, to embody the terrible sublime and a pontiff, or spiritual leader, to embody the contemplative sublime. In *Principles*, reflecting her growing participation in Moravian community and outreach, she draws an even firmer connection between faith and service, writing, “love is a living, active flame. Who can love God and not wish to go forth and serve him?” (34). She then divides the varieties of Christian service into her aesthetic types, with historical examples, using prison reformer Elizabeth Fry as a vivid example of dauntless social action.

In using this example, Schimmelpenninck may again be drawing on the poetry of Joanna Baillie, whose 1821 narrative poem “Lady Griseld Baillie” lauds the “dauntless faith” of a female character who finds her faith community under attack. Griseld Baillie belonged to one of the dissenting Scottish families who resisted what they perceived as English tyranny in the 1680s. By the late nineteenth-century, her name had become synonymous “with courage, prudence, and sublime endurance” (John Vietch 436), largely due to Joanna Baillie’s poem. In “Lady Griseld Baillie,” Joanna Baillie presents Griseld as both a twelve-year-old girl who acts as a spy for the late-seventeenth-century Scottish Covenanters, and as a young woman who helps her father evade execution and rescues her younger sister. “Lady Griseld Baillie” is the one poem mentioned in a recent collection of essays entitled *Joanna Baillie: Romantic Dramatist* (2004), the first collection of criticism to be devoted entirely to Baillie. In this collection Dorothy McMillan and Greg Kucich present contrasting views of “Lady Griseld Baillie.” McMillan critiques Baillie for writing about a woman whose “heroism and its appropriateness to gender” (79) is too conventional. Arguably, Griseld’s spying activities for the seventeenth-century Scottish Covenanters, sneaking into prison cells guarded by the English with secret letters from her father Patrick Hume, and her act of traveling alone, across national borders to rescue her sister do challenge gender norms. Kucich presents a more constructive reading of Griseld, arguing that Joanna Baillie’s recuperation of her as a political figure supports “a revisionary historicism that promotes women’s concerns” (109). Baillie’s work, for Kucich, is part of a movement towards valuing social affection over military conquest in British historiography. Kucich places Joanna Baillie amongst her female contemporaries, pointing to women’s sensibility-infused histories, such as Helen Maria Williams’s *Peru* (1784) and Anna Jameson’s *Characteristics of*

Women: Moral, Political, and Historical (1832). In her recent critical biography of Joanna Baillie, Judith Slagle goes even further, arguing that Baillie's "remembrance of this heroine clearly furthered her feminist agenda" (159).

Griseld Baillie, like Elizabeth Fry, certainly displayed a sublime female fortitude for which there is no room within Burke's gendered dichotomy. When Griseld's family flees from religious persecution to the Calvinist Netherlands, she returns alone to Scotland for her youngest sister. Baillie explains how the Hume family took refuge in the Netherlands, "Like sea-fowl clust'ring in the rock / To shun some rising tempest's shock" (389-390). She then notes that Griseld's sister Julian, "the youngest child, confin'd / With fell disease, was left behind" (393-394), and imagines the family wondering who will risk crossing the now politically hostile Scottish "shore" (399):

And who did for affection's sake
This task of peril undertake?
O! who but she, whose bosom swell'd
With feelings high, whose self-devotion
Follow'd each gen'rous, strong emotion,
The young, the sweet, the good, the brave Griseld.

Yes; she again cross'd o'er the main,
And things of moment left undone,
Tho' o'er her head had scarcely run
Her nineteenth year, no whit deluded
By wily fraud, she there concluded,
And bore the youngling to its own again.

But when she reach'd the Belgian strand,
Hard was her lot. Fast fell the rain,
And there lay many miles of land,
A stranger's land, ere she might gain
The nearest town. With hardship crost,
The wayward child its shoes had lost;
Their coin was spent, their garments light,
And dark and dreary was the night.
Then like some gypsie girl on desert moor,
Her helpless charge upon her back she bore. (403-424)

Here, Griseld's active love leads her to sublime altruism. Her crossing of the sea to Scotland, to retrieve her sister Julian, involves the "dauntlessness" of Schimmelpenninck's contemplative sublime. Just as Griseld was made "bold with affection" (36) when she snuck into prison cells, she now sneaks back across the border of Scotland "for affection's sake" (403), motivated by "gen'rous, strong emotion" (407) to "brave" (408) action on behalf of her sister. Griseld presses on in her paradoxically grand and humble task of carrying her sister on her back, "like some gypsie" (423), despite the terrible context of a "dark and dreary" (422) night. Griseld's sublime fortitude and "gifted dauntless faith" (847) allow her to travel directly into spaces of Burkean terror, and transform them from the inside out, in the name of love.

Schimmelpenninck's use of an exclamation mark to underline the sublimity of Elizabeth Fry's dauntlessness parallels Baillie's lauding of "the brave Griseld" (408). Schimmelpenninck admires the "enduring strength" (*Principles* 253) of the contemplative sublime in Christianity, found in "wise legislators" (254), "nursing fathers and nursing mothers" (254), and "pastors of churches" (254), and then exclaims: "Of such was Elizabeth Fry!" (254). Schimmelpenninck first illustrates the terrible sublime in Christianity – through reference to ecclesiastical reformer Martin Luther, Saint Thomas of Becket, and Scottish Calvinist John Knox – and then turns to the contemplative sublime in Christianity, writing: "Next come the august in true nobility of heart" who are "intense in that steadfast love which no waters can quench; fortified on that rock which no convulsions can move" (253). In this image, Schimmelpenninck builds on her earlier reference, in *Biblical Fragments*, to "Christ the rock of ages" as a "living and eternal reality" (48). She also continues her portrayal of *agape* as a "living, active flame" by claiming that the steadfast love of

individuals like Elizabeth Fry, who typify the contemplative sublime of Christianity, cannot be quenched, or put out, by any earthly tribulation. Schimmelpenninck's folding of active love into the contemplative sublime of Christianity results in a highly gender-inclusive category.

Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck and Elizabeth Fry were first cousins and, before they married, Mary Ann Galton visited Elizabeth Gurney and her sisters, later writing a series of letters to the eldest, Catherine Gurney. Schimmelpenninck's niece Christiana Hankin notes, "When Mary Anne was about eighteen, she paid her first visit to her cousins, the Gurneys of Earlham" (Hankin 294). Elizabeth and Catherine later credited Mary Anne with sustaining their faith after the death of their mother. In a letter, Catherine later told Mary Anne, "I never had a friend more influential and valuable than your self. You were one of the principal instruments in bringing me to a knowledge of the Gospel" (qtd. in Hankin 295). Partly due to the early influence of Mary Anne, Elizabeth went on to actively promote social justice in the world around her: from Britain to the Netherlands. In a forthcoming article, Lissa Wray Beal remarks on Mary Anne's commitments to both "contemplative spirituality" and "thoroughly evangelical social action" (1).¹⁵ These commitments had a contagious effect on the Gurney sisters. Elizabeth Fry's name has been recorded in history primarily because of her work within the women's section of Newgate prison, where she saw that female guards were instituted and raised the living standards and literacy levels of the inmates.¹⁶ According to social historians Annemieke van Drenth and

¹⁵ Lissa Wray Beal's article will appear in a forthcoming anthology, *Recovering 19th Century Women Interpreters of the Bible*, accepted by the Society for Biblical Literature Symposium Series.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Fry was the first to suggest that female prisoner's needs differed from those of male prisoners (Eunice Smillie 16). Fry initially saw the horrific conditions at Newgate in 1812 (Smillie 13) and then advocated for prison reform from 1816-1841 (66). She married a man, Joseph Fry, who supported her in this public vocation. Fry biographer June Rose records that "from 1810 onwards, as her religious duties took her further a field, it was her husband who stayed home to watch over the household" (63).

Francisca de Haan, Fry's hope was that by ministering to "fellow human beings, especially those treated cruelly and suffering deprivation, with kindness, and telling them of Jesus Christ, their souls would be open to God" (67). It was with this hope that Fry created her first "Ladies' Association for the Reformation of the Female Prisoners of Newgate" in 1817.

Schimmelpenninck's use of Fry's leadership to typify the contemplative or "passive sublime" of Christianity implies a calm but very active benevolence. In her interchanging of "passive sublime" with "contemplative sublime," Schimmelpenninck does not connote apathy or inactivity, but rather steadfast endurance. Elizabeth Fry's direct movement into the darkness and suffering of Newgate, an action which friends and family warned her against, fits into neither the Burkean sublime of terrified self-preservation nor the Burkean beautiful of domestic affection. It was Fry's religious conviction that propelled her out of the domestic sphere, into the unstable and socially marginalized space of Newgate. For Schimmelpenninck, the undertaking of such dauntless social action by a woman must be classified within the contemplative sublime of Christianity. Modern critic Harriet Guest suggests that Christianity made "available to women a sense of social duty" (146), thus enabling them to enter the political sphere. This statement is highly appropriate for women like Fry and Schimmelpenninck who both actively participated in dissenting religious communities and both founded women's organizations dedicated to Christian outreach *and* social reform. Schimmelpenninck's addition to Edmund Burke's system, through the contemplative sublime of Christianity, allowed her not only to recognize women's social action but also to laud it as sublime.

Socially conscious dissenting women writers like Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck and Joanna Baillie were quick to correct Burke's exclusion of active benevolence

from the sublime. Their most important amendment was their argument that terrifying adversity does not necessarily result in horrified cringing before hierarchical power but can rather generate the steadfast brotherly and sisterly love inherent to social action. In his nineteenth-century preface to Schimmelpenninck's *Sacred Musings on Manifestations of God to the Soul of Man* (1860), Rev. Joseph Baylee writes, "The works of Schimmelpenninck are well calculated to stimulate devout study, and to point the way to many a profitable path. She had varied gifts and intellectual powers which are seldom allotted to woman. What she had she laid at the foot of the Cross ... Reader, follow her as she followed Christ" (xxviii). As Schimmelpenninck's theory and practice illustrate, such discipleship involves both contemplative study and dauntless social action in the world.

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