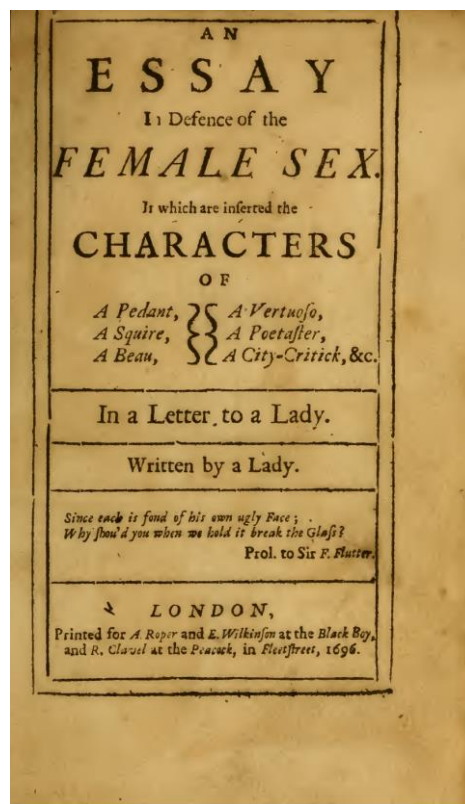




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**The Representation of Male Character in Judith Drake's *An Essay in  
Defence of the Female Sex* (1696): An Educational Proposal**



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## **Abstract**

Gender equality is an ongoing struggle that is currently gaining momentum. It is little known outside academic circles, though, that in the 17th century women were writing essays claiming gender equality, often as part of a larger debate about “the woman question” or *The Querelle des Femmes*. One of these women is the British Judith Drake (1670-1723). Although she is often included in anthologies of early modern women writings, her work has never been considered highly significant outside the debates about women’s education.

This TFG is focused on Judith Drake’s “*An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*” (1696) in which she contends that the intellectual capacity of women is equal to that of men. My analysis is focused on her particular defence of women through a creative exercise on men’s character, inspired both by the Cartesian idea that “the mind has no sex” and by John Locke’s rationalism. Through her observations on male’s character, Drake offers a full psychological portrait of men through ridiculous and satirical figures. The way she depicts the “follies” of male behaviour allows her to corroborate the faults of the opposite sex and, hence, describe her own proposal for a solution. On the other hand, she believes that a re-education of men is needed in order to change the balance of power, especially through a positive female influence. As a result of this analysis, the paper locates Drake’s *Essay* firmly in the tradition of late seventeenth-century women’s writings on education.

**Key words:** Judith Drake, women’s writing, gender, characterization, intellectual equality, education, non-fiction.

## 0. Introduction

In many different cultures throughout history, women have experienced different degrees and types of sexual bias as the result of the belief that female nature was inferior both physically and intellectually. Seventeenth-century England was not an exception in this regard, and following on the European tradition of the *Querelle des Femmes*, or debates about the nature and social role of women, many essays written by men and women about women's education and their intellectual capacity were printed. Bearing in mind that men enjoyed intellectual and political hegemony, it is always most interesting to delve into these texts by British women to learn about their concerns and original proposals to improve their lives, and in this case, their education.

Nowadays, feminism is a global movement affecting many areas of life, including literature and culture. Through the internet and digital technology, women from all over the world have the opportunity to express their concerns and denounce any unfair situation, that is why it is necessary to pay our respects to those early women who empowered themselves when no one would and started denouncing and demanding social and educational changes four centuries ago.

These early pro-woman texts can't be considered, in strict terms, as 'feminists' since "pro-woman texts were vehicles for contemporary religious and political anxieties rather than proto-feminism" (Smith, 2001: 729). In spite of this, they were really influential and marked the beginning of women's active presence in public life and the conquest of elementary rights, such as education and property rights –among other.

Judith Drake's *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1696) has often been overlooked in scholarly discussions of early modern women's defences even though it is a rare and unique essay. It is quite different from the essays written by Drake's contemporaries, in particular her well-known friend Mary Astell (1666-1731), for its

imaginative use of characterization and the originality of her educational proposal. In addition, her use of the first person makes her essay even more personal, she becomes extremely close to the reader, and we can connect directly with her opinions. For these reasons, an analysis of her ideas, methodology and literary devices must be carried out in order to understand Drake's criticism and educational reform.

To this purpose, first I will offer a contextual analysis placing Drake's work within its historical framework. Secondly, my analysis of Drake's essay will delve into her most original proposal: Drake's imaginative use of satirical characters to show the active engagement of women in the re-education of men in a society in which both sexes enjoy equality in their souls and minds.

## **1. Contextualization**

### **1.1. Historical Context**

Seventeenth-century Britain was a tumultuous time. When Elizabeth I died without descendants in 1603 she was succeeded by her cousin James VI of Scotland, I of England, the first Stuart King. Due to his succession, Ireland and Scotland were united to England. Meanwhile many English people crossed the Atlantic to colonize North America; the famous "Mayflower" sailed in 1620. Five years later James I died and was succeeded by his son Charles I. In 1629 Charles I abolished Parliament because it did not agree with his financial and religious ways and started what is known as his "Personal Rule". This government held for eleven years saw a war starting in Scotland -the Bishops' Wars. The King, therefore, inaugurated the "Short Parliament" in hopes to gain funds to gather an army against the scots but he did not get what he had asked for and closed the Parliament in less than a month. In 1640, however, King Charles I was forced to summon Parliament

again (“Long Parliament”) to ask for extra money, but its members not only refused but also complained about the King’s policies. Two years later, threatened by the power of Parliament leaders, the King tried to arrest them and failed. Shortly after this humiliation, the first English Civil War was declared. It was not until 1646 that the King surrendered, and reconciliation was considered an option as long as the King agreed to some constitutional reforms. Even though later he escaped, he was imprisoned again and forged a secret alliance with the scots in return of religious concessions. Due to this, the second Civil War began in 1648. Oliver Cromwell’s “New Model Army” defeated the Scottish troops and the King was found guilty of treason to his own country for causing the wars. The remainder of the legitimate Parliament, or “rump”, was the result of a purge of members of parliament in 1648 who had an affinity with the King, and assumed the legislative authority of England without holding elections. It tried Charles I for High Treason and the king was executed in 1649. When it was obvious that the Republican experiment did not work, Oliver Cromwell took charge of the government as the “Lord Protector of England”. In 1658 Cromwell died and was succeeded by his son Richard, although his rule was brief given that he did not have any military experience. In 1660 Charles II (Charles I’s son) was invited back to England to become the King and the Restoration period began under the constant threat of an alleged Catholic plot and the King’s sympathies with Catholics (Charles II’s mother was Catholic and he secretly supported Louis XIV). In 1681 the Parliament was worried that the king died without an heir, and passed the Exclusion Bill Act which forbade Charles II’s brother to inherit the crown because of his Catholic faith. The King, however, was outraged by this since he found it an insult to his family’s “divine right to rule” (Grant, Kay, Kerrigan, 2011: 108). In 1685 Charles II died and James II was proclaimed King. In 1687 James II issued the “Declaration of Indulgence” which granted religious freedom with the aim to foster

Catholicism. The fact that the King was now a Catholic and that his son was likely to ensure a Catholic dynasty in England fostered unrest among the population. Consequently, a letter was sent to William of Orange (the husband of James II's daughter Mary) to arm himself and take charge of the country. James II fled and Mary and William of Orange were crowned Queen and King (1689). After these events known as the Glorious Revolution the monarchs had to pass the Bill of Rights (1689) as a condition to the throne.

These historical developments are highly relevant in *An Essay In Defence of the Female Sex* because Drake demonstrates to be informed about current political events and her text is packed with allusions to the French and the Dutch, who were portrayed as the worst and the best possible examples of men.

## **1.2. Educationalists**

Before analysing the essay itself, it is essential to understand its context. The text was conceived as a purported letter to Princess Anne of Denmark, who apparently had requested a defence of her sex: "It was occasion'd by a private conversation, between some Gentlemen and Ladies, and written at the request, and for the diversion of one Lady" (Drake, 1696: 8). However, Drake could not possibly have known Anne of Denmark, as she died before Drake was born. The author explains in the preface that even though her work will be made public, she will remain anonymous.

In one of the copies of the third edition of the essay, which suggests it sold well, we find references of attribution to Judith Drake's name written on the essay. The copy is held in Merton College Library in Oxford, and it includes the pencil note "Mrs Drake" next to the printed denomination of "Written by a Lady". But in the same copy we find two handwritten



attributions in ink to “Mary Astell. See 420 page 71.d Brit Biog.”, suggesting that the *British Biography* from 1772 and probably earlier was attributed to her (Devereaux, 2008: 22). In her article, Devereaux tries to prove Judith Drake’s authorship through the examination of primary sources following a process of de-attribution of Astell. The reason why many scholars have attributed this work to Astell is because she was writing at the same time as Drake about the same topics and they both knew each other. They belonged to the same circle of friends together with the theologian and philosopher John Norris and other women writers, such as the poet Elizabeth Thomas and the poet and essayist Lady Mary Chudleigh, who wrote *The Ladies’ Defence* in 1701. Astell, Chudleigh and Drake share a particular concern for women’s education that constitutes, in their own particular ways, a “philosophy of education” (Broad and Detlefsen, 2017:16). According to Devereaux, Drake was trying to challenge the reader to look for her and find her real identity “inviting the reader to search her out”, even though she had many reasons to stay anonymous (Devereaux, 2008: 25).

Devereaux argues that Astell could not possibly be the author since “Astell, a follower of Norris and a defendant of Christian Platonism, argues against Lockean sensationalism and for the existence of innate ideas. This factor alone makes her an unlikely author of the essay” (Devereaux, 2008: 25). While both women were staunch defenders of the female gender, they had different intellectual inclinations and political ideologies that reveal a background in reading philosophy and theology in the contemporary “climate of knowledge” (Findlen 2002: 189). If *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* was to be compared with Astell’s works we would see that they are hugely different. Drake focuses on the education of men through women’s company, Astell is concerned with women’s education itself. Another proof of Drake’s authorship is that, at the beginning of the essay, she modestly admits that she can’t speak anything but English.

If we take a look at Astell's work, in contrast, we will realize that Astell was very proficient in her knowledge of the French language, and she even encouraged people to read the French originals of the works she quoted instead of translations. She was referring, mainly, to Descartes's works and to François Poullain de la Barre, who in 1674 had written *De l'Égalité des deux sexes* and was translated into English in 1677 with the title *The Woman as Good as the Man*. As an interpreter of Descartes work on this topic, Poullain popularized the Cartesian concept that "the mind has no sex" (Harth, 1992: 12). Both Astell and Drake are influenced by Cartesianism, and Drake's third edition even includes a printed marginal note clarifying, when Drake defends that women's souls are not defective, that there are "no distinction of sexes in souls" (Drake, 1696: 11).

Through written evidence, Devereaux is able to shed some light to Judith Drake's life, of which very little is known about. The first lead is James Drake, the author of the poem at the beginning of the essay. This name was rapidly attributed to her brother, but further research has shown that it might actually belong to her husband. James Drake was a physician who had turned to writing literature by the 1690s. Following his work, Devereaux determines that they began a textual collaboration apart from their married life: she helped her husband organize his publications, especially in the field of medicine. There is also some evidence pointing at the fact that Judith practiced medicine in the area of women's health, such as pregnancies and paediatrics (Smith, 2001). As a result, Judith had the opportunity to enrich herself intellectually. Devereaux claims that she might have even received inspiration from one of his translations, "Miscellany Essays by Monsieur de St. Evermont" (translated by James Drake in 1694), to write *An Essay in defence of the Female Sex* which is, so far, the only known work attributed to Judith Drake.

As Devereaux further shows, in the Preface we can see that the author has her reasons to remain anonymous. The first one would be humility. Drake shows considerable

humbleness from the start of the essay, “This indeed is one Reason, because I am sensible it might have been much better defended by abler Pens” (Drake: 8).

The second reason for her anonymity is the critical response the essay would generate: “The knowledge of this, with the consideration of the tenderness of Reputation in our Sex, [...] made me very cautious, how I expos’d mine to such poisonous Vapours” (Drake: 8). Here, with the excuse of being the “weaker sex” (tenderness associated with female character), Drake justifies her cautiousness in fear of the critical response by male readers. However, she challenges whoever dares finding her, she even compares men’s attitude to children’s: “[...] let ’em catch me (if they can) as Children at Blindmans Buff do one another, Hoodwinkt; and I am of Opinion I have room enough to put ‘em out of Breath before they come near me” (Drake: 9). As a final and third reason, Devereaux proposes the idea that Drake is “teasingly, at times mockingly, playing the character of the anonymous female author” (Devereaux, 2008: 25). This was not uncommon at that time, especially if women belong to the same intellectual circles.

An overview of Drake’s contemporaries must be carried out in order to understand the social and literary trends that influenced pro-women texts in the latter half of the seventeenth century. In the British case, Hannah Smith divides this typology of essays into two broad categories that share a concern with women’s education but also one major difference in terms of what kind of education they support. This difference has to do with how their educational plans also supported the particular religious and political background of their writers. One of these trends would be a pedagogical scheme close to Anglican principles, applied both to girls and boys, albeit girls’ education and learning was extensive but restricted to community life. The provision of “Anglican colleges” to “improve Maids in such qualities as best become their Sex” was the rationale of the well-known tract by Clement Barksdale *A letter touching a colledge of maids* (1675), which promoted these

values to counteract any moves towards establishing another educational model closer to dissenter values. Judith Drake appears to be closer to defending a moral but not moralistic) role for women, but she does not support a separate “college” or institution for female instruction –which her friend Mary Astell did in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1701). For Drake education means study but also a practical usage that comes from rationality and socialization between the sexes. In this, Drake departs from Cartesianism to embrace a direct influence from John Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), which Hannah Smith defines as an unusual influence in the cadre of pro-women writings of the late seventeenth century. “The greatest difficulty we struggled with was the Want of a good Art of Reasoning” Drake wrote, “until that Defect was supply’d by the greatest Master of that Art, Mr Locke” (1696: 48).

Bathsua Makin and Mary Astell with their works *An essay to revive the antient education of gentlewomen* (1673) and *A serious proposal to the ladies* (1694) respectively, share similar concerns on female education and have been hailed as “first feminists” as early as 1982 (Hilda Smith 1982:5). Even though both their approaches appeared to be similar to that of the Anglican educationalists, their work suggested that women’s education should have an intellectual foundation. In contrast, Drake breaks from the Anglican educational tradition and proposes the study of modern sciences through rationalism. She was highly influenced by her husband’s works (a Dr. James Drake) which she edited, and Locke’s *An essay concerning human understanding* (1689). Hannah Smith considers that another issue that makes Drake’s essay different from the others is that “she condemned the cult of dead languages as senseless” (Smith, 2001: 241). In spite of this, most of her ideas were profoundly tory since she gave importance to the education of “politeness”. Yet, a decade later the Whigs would start defending these same ideas.

## 2. Delving into Drake's work and Characters

### 2.1. Drake's basic notions

*An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* begins with a letter to Princess Anne. As mentioned before, this essay was designed as a conversation between Drake and Princess Anne. Drake's inclination toward aristocracy is so evident that the reader learns that Judith had sent her son to enter Princess Anne's service in the first page: "I have endeavour'd to advance my first Born, by entering it very early into your Highnesses Service" (Drake: 5). Even though Drake professes to defend intellectual equality, her devotion to Princess Anne is so strong that she considers her to be the greatest example of female superiority: "But your Highness by Illustrious Example daily convinces the World of our Superiority" (Drake: 5). Drake even attempted to illustrate the character of an exemplar woman but found herself unable to pay her justice: "The lustre of your Royal Vertues, Madam, like the Sun, gives us warmth and light [...] which the most exquisite Artist can never express" (Drake: 5). In addition, she professes her respects for her and apologizes in advance in case her work does not live up to the occasion. To close the letter, Drake uses various adjectives of inferiority that describe her position in relation to Princess Anne: "Madam, Your Royal Highness's most Humble, most Obedient, and most Devoted Servant" (Drake: 6).

She opens the essay apologizing again for any faults or defects which she may unveil when proceeding with this essay. Even though she realises her task is a difficult one, because it would mean to go against the interest of the entire male sex, she undertakes it. Drake uses the terms "Usurpation of Men" and "Tyranny of custom" to describe the hegemony of power that the patriarchy has constructed over history. The term usurpation, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is "the act of taking control of something without having the right to, especially of a position of power" (CD online: 2020), therefore, Drake

acknowledges that men's control of power is undeserved. "Tyranny of custom" makes reference to all the untrue notions, beliefs and practices that result from men's usurpation of power.

In order to demonstrate equality, Drake starts from a metaphysical point of view. According to "some learned Men" (Drake: 17) –notice the irony in using men's argument to overthrow them– all souls are equal, so the distinction between female and male is only a physical one. She, then, adds that innate ideas do not exist, therefore, knowledge is acquired through our external senses and our experience of the world. Regarding the physical body, all the parts that influence intellectual capacity are "organised" the same way in both sexes, therefore, there is no natural obstacle for the female sex to use all the natural faculties (as men do).

After addressing this matter, Drake focuses on the behaviour of animals to justify our learning through experience, given that animal conduct can be considered a simpler representation of human behaviour uninfluenced by custom or laws. Yet there are many differences between animals (i.e., the dog is more docile than an ox), it is observable that both males and females behave the same way: "But a She Ape is as full of, and as ready at Imitation as a He; a Bitch will learn as many Tricks in as short a time as a Dog, a Female Fox has as many Wiles as a Male" (Drake: 17). Therefore, Drake concludes that, regarding the level of intelligence ("sagacity") there is no difference between the sexes in "Brutes".

Drake next focuses on the observation of Country people. Her aristocratic ideology is made clear in this passage where she refers to them as "the inferiour sort". She claims that it is precisely that position of inferiority (lack of education) that allows us to see the difference between the sexes more balanced than in Gentlemen or city People. This view is extremely classist; however, taking into account the difference in opportunity, it is understandable. Drake here complains that women are kept too ignorant when they could

be useful for the Nation if taught “Arithmetic and other Arts”. Drake takes the matter even further and claims that, since women’s bodies are weaker in physical strength they are “chiefly intended for Thought and the Exercise of the Mind” (Drake: 19). In spite of this, her discourse follows the paternalistic notion that men need to provide (through their physical abilities) and women need stay home and care for the family. Drake accuses “the opposers” (men) of having a better education, therefore, they have an excuse to think they are superior to women, when the truth is that the only difference there is, is in tools and opportunities.

Drake uses the metaphor of the conqueror to illustrate the “usurpation of men”. Firstly, he rips the courage and wit off his victims so, in time, their right to freedom is lost: “[...] consequently make them tamely give up their Liberty, and abjectly submit their Necks to a lavish Yoke” (Drake: 20). From Drake’s opinion, time increases and sharpens cruelty so she appeals to all the women who are treated like slaves all around the world (note that she comments on the “Negroes” of the plantations without discussing their situation).

Drake, even though she tends towards defending the monarchy, criticises Salic Law which prevented women from inheriting the throne (and other kind of property). According to Drake’s proposal, the reason behind this measure was for men to avoid having a female ruler who would favour women and restore equality between the sexes. However, Drake is unable to provide evidence since all the historical records were made by men.

## **2.2. Characters and faults**

In her essay, Drake chooses to portray different characters in order to exemplify the faults and vices in the male nature that were usually associated with women since medieval times, a long tradition sanctioned by Biblical references to women’s first Fall and her sinful

nature and which debates around *The Querelle* espoused. By opting for a satirical tone, Drake shows an awareness and a departure from this tradition, and is able to highlight the most ridiculous and worst conduct possible. Among the characters featured we find the pedant, the country squire, the bully, the beau, the scowrer, the fop poet, the coffee-house politician, the city militia, the virtuoso and the city critic. Apart from criticising their behaviour, Drake also emphasises the commonest faults among men: vanity, impertinence, dissimulation when criminal, false love, enviousness, levity and inconstancy.

The first two characters that appear in *An Essay*, the pedant and the country squire, seem to be opposites, but their “sottishness” (as Drake calls it) is easy to notice in both of them. The pedant is presented as an elite scholar centered in the study of the classics (Latin and Greek culture) who usually lead an inactive life. By comparing him with animated Egyptian mummies, ghosts and children, Drake depicts him as highly incapable of judgement as well as deeply unadapted to his own Time: “[...] they are such strangers to, and to ignorant of the domestick affairs and manners of their own country and times, that they appear like the ghosts of Old Romans rais’d by Magick” (Drake: 22). With this, Drake is criticising the belief that to be a fully realized intellectual there must be a command of the Latin and Greek classics.

In the case of the Country Squire, we encounter a much more active person but not as bright. After the primal education and the typical Latin and Greek tour, he would consider himself learned enough to start living life his way. He would replace his old companions for animals, “horses, dogs and hawks”, and his amusement would become “drudgery”. He would only find satisfaction through a day of fatigue with constant visits to the tavern and clubs every night (with an obvious drunken outcome). His utmost interest is centered in horse races and hunting matches, which irrevocably makes him look simple and unintellectual. Drake concludes that “he shews his Wisdom best by his Silence, and serves



his Country most in his absence” (Drake: 24). The way Drake describes this character makes the reader immediately attribute negative connotations to this character’s actions, thoughts and way of life. This character’s main traits and that of the pedant are mutually enhanced since they represent opposite ideas: one is condemned because of his obsession with ancient study, useless for Drake, and the other is condemned because of his ignorance and debauchery. According to D’Amore and Lardy, Drake used these characters to “express her (mild) criticism against some of the members of the upper classes, their cultural interests and way of life” (D’Amore & Lardy, 2012: 155). However, while nowadays this kind of criticism would be considered mild, it was especially harsh back in the seventeenth century, both because of the satire and ridicule attached to these male’s descriptions and, even more importantly, because of the fact that it came from a woman.

It is necessary for Drake to specifically describe “Vanity” in order to refute the notion that associates this fault to the female character. For women, vanity was associated with physical beauty which was thought to be the highest consideration women could aspire to have. However, for men, vanity represented something entirely different. From Drake’s opinion, vanity is acceptable as long as their “fancy” (the quality enhanced by vanity) is real (even though modesty was highly appreciated), but it is not admissible when it is “extravagant, misplac’d, or groundless” (Drake: 32). Hence, in the second case, men would be exposing their weaknesses, ruining their reputation in the attempt, instead of enriching their qualities: “Cowards to pretend to Courage, and provoke Beatings, Blockheads to set up for Wit, and make themselves ridiculous in Print [...]” (Drake: 32). Not only does Drake state that vanity is bad, but she also proves that it is worse in men than in women.

The next character Drake puts her focus on is the bully. It might be said that this character is a depiction of stereotypical masculinity. The bully is depicted as a very passionate character who is extremely inclined toward fighting. This kind of men will

always be ready for an affront without excuse, so he will always end up in trouble. In contrast with the first two characters, this one is extremely active and, at times, threatening: “He draws first, and runs first, and if ever he makes another Man run, it is after him” (Drake: 33). Even though violent tendencies can be observed in him, fear will remain a constant. Due to his insolence, he is likely to vaunt about his past battles humiliating himself: “No Man shews or boasts more of his Scars with less reason” (Drake: 33). The character of the bully, therefore, indeed represents the stereotypical masculinity, however, in this case, it has gone wrong. This depiction leaves the reader with the feeling that this character is trying too hard to fit in and failing in the attempt, so we are left with a ridiculous “knight in shining armour” “wannabe” character.

Similar to this character we have the “Scowrer”. According to Collins Dictionary it is the archaic form for “hooligan” which is defined like this: “a rough lawless young person” (CD online: 2020). Drake describes him as “Mad, Foolish, and Vain” (Drake: 33). These types of men are depicted as harshly violent, who love to fight only for the sake of it and are so vain that they feel free to judge other people about their failings (physical and mental) but are unable to see their own. Drake argues that, in this case, men’s tempers could be classified into two different categories coinciding on the origin of their sentiment but diverging in methodology: “The common Motive to both is Vanity, and they jointly concur in this Opinion, that Valour is the most estimable, and most honourable Quality, that Man is capable of; they agree in the desire to be honour’d and fear’d” (Drake: 33). Here, we encounter two opposite qualities, one positive and the other negative. As we have previously seen, vanity is the commonest instigator of action among men which often leads them to wrong assumptions about themselves. Their vanity forces them to boast and brag about their honour (even if they do not have any) and instigates the need to be feared in order to be respected. On the one hand, there is the genuine man who is “naturally active,

bold and daring” (Drake: 33), who improves through real suffering whose desire (and vanity) pushes him to the limit and, on the other hand, there is the other type of men who “is mean Spirited and fearful, and seeks by false Fire to Counterfeit a heat that may pass for genuine to conceal the Frost in his Blood, and like and ill Actor, over-does his Part for want of understanding it, which ‘tis impossible he shou’d” (Drake: 34). The second type of men not only are a fraud to the world but also to themselves. Consequently, these two kinds of conduct result in the first one being extremely “dangerous” (Drake: 34) and the second one absolutely “ridiculous” (Drake: 34).

The next character Drake depicts is the Beau. The word “beau” was a French borrowing that means beautiful or good looking in its origins and it is used by Drake to represent “a man who is greatly concerned with his clothes and appearance” (CD online: 2020). Drake mentions his drive to travel to learn the latest European fashions, usually associated with the French, and his necessity to fit into the aristocracy. His knowledge of manners and language serve him only to show off his lineage and talk about his embellishments, so it is not in his nature to be inclined to intellectual knowledge for the sake of it. The main fault associated to this character would be narcissism: “he studies nothing but himself [...] His looks and gestures are his constant Lesson, and his Glass is the Oracle that resolves all his mighty doubts and scruples” (Drake: 35). After his ostentatious routine to ready himself is described (“his Motions all prepar’d according to Art, his Wig and his Coat abundantly Powder’d, his Gloves Essence’d, and his Handkercher perfum’d” (Drake: 35)) and he has “made his Cringes round” (Drake: 35) his conversation of appearances begin. During a social event his conduct is critical, even judicious, which makes him gossip about everyone’s appearance and find faults everywhere but in himself with airs of superiority: “he looks down with contempt upon the Pit” (Drake: 35). His smile is fake and he prefers to feed his vanity instead of his stomach through a mean diet. All his

efforts are focused on the enhancement of his egocentrism, when he is done, though, he gives in to the vices of drinking and smoking and finally retires in contemplation. In this character vanity is also a very influential trait since “Vanity is only an Ambition of being taken notice of” (Drake: 36). In this passage, the combination of vanity and egocentrism create the basic traits of the Beau philosopher.

Drake also states that vanity “is the Blessing of Fools and the Folly of Ingenious Men [...] for those who have least Wit, ought to have the greatest Opinion of it” (Drake: 36,37). Drake uses the image of infectious animals to refer to these kind of men since they are the ones who spread this “vanity plague” around the world: “These are the most Vexatious Animals in the World, that think they have the Priviledge to torment and plague every Body” (Drake: 37).

One example of a fool would be the Poetaster or Fop Poet. This man dedicates himself to literature and poetry yet he is not educated enough, he is a “smuggler of Wit” (Drake: 38). Using a hint of irony, Drake expresses his lack of creative intelligence by saying that his fingers work harder than his brain when writing and that he spends more time reading his own works than actually writing them down. For fear of getting his pride wounded he tends to express his own opinion on his work before letting anyone else do it which confirms his own vanity. Even though he often speaks of “Jack Dryden and Will” and others (assuming that Will refers to William Shakespeare), highly influential authors of that time, he dares compare himself to them and “forbears ‘em meerly out of Gratitude, and Compassion” (Drake: 38). The sole fact that he equalizes himself to them is a sign of vanity, especially when his supposedly talent is wrongly perceived by him. He represents an “Oracle for those that want Wit, and the Plague of those that have it” (Drake: 38). Drake, here, uses once again the metaphor of the plague when it comes to vain men who think themselves witty. Her description of his poetry is very harsh: “His Pocket is an

unexhaustible Magazine of Rhime, and Nonsense, and his Tongue like a repeating Clock with Chimes, is ready upon every touch to sound to ‘em” (Drake: 38). This description attacks the most important aspects of poetry: the rhyme, the content and the way to deliver it. Drake keeps accusing him of being a bad influence for the world: “He is the Bane of Society, a Friend to the Stationers, the Plague of the Press, and the Ruine of his Bookseller” (Drake: 38). This character is highly criticised by Drake as his foolishness serves as a perfect example of false intellectual pretensions.

Impertinence keeps appearing in Drake’s work which needs to be briefly considered. Drake describes it as so: “Impertinence is a humour of busying our selves about things tribal” (Drake: 39). According to her, this fault has been always associated with the female gender but she refuses to accept the defeat: “Here our Adversaries insult over us, as if they had gain’d an intire Victory, and the Field were indisputable; but they shall have no cause for Triumph, this is no Post of such mighty advantage as they fondly persuade themselves” (Drake: 39,40). Notice the belic vocabulary and imagery in this section. It makes the reader link this debate with a war that has to be won between the genders. This fault was connected to women because matters associated with the household and family were thought to be “trifles below their care or notice” (Drake: 40). She would consider men Brutes (animals) if they did not have women to care for the “unimportant” stuff. While some can find this concept not very empowering, Drake makes men look stupid and dependent on women.

The next character Drake describes is the Coffee-House politician. She depicts him as if he had fire inside him, he is passionate and noisy and usually annoying for the people around him. His bad qualities, “Doubts, Fears and Jealousies”, tend to make him assume the worst (“he apprehends some sudden Revolution in the State” (Drake: 40)). Even though a great supporter of the King and the Government, he constantly finds everything to be his

foe. Regarding the Church, he is sympathetic to it but complains both about the Act of Uniformity (1558) and the Toleration Act (1688). His home is merely a shelter to him as he spends most of his time in the coffee-house. There, he is so busy conversing about the affairs of the Nation that he forgets about his obligations to his family. Due to this it is very likely that he should lose his fortune, shop and goods. Drake detests this kind of impertinence. She uses once more the image of the illness to portray it: “the very Streets and Bulks are infected and pester’d with Politicks and News” (Drake: 41). His execution is motive of celebration and people agreed that “they should see him amongst the rest of the Beasts at Bartholomew Fair for Two Pence” (Drake: 41). Wiser men would have never concerned themselves with affairs which they have no control over. Drake, then, expresses her discomfort on post offices and coffee-houses and the businesses run there. It is a place described as rushy and gossipy where everyone seems to be impatient to hear the latest news and be the first one to do it. The ridicule is evident: “walk’d uneasily with a Foolish Impertinence to and from the Door, or Window, as if their looking out so often wou’d fetch ‘em the sooner” (Drake: 41, 42). Drake, in order to illustrate men like the coffee-house politician, compares him with the Beau’s diet, at first there is enthusiasm about it, but later it is despised and neglected. Every time a rumour of an attack is passed around, there is a “War Council” in every Coffee-house and a resolution is debated. This is, however, talk only, so “Our greatest Actions must be Buffoon’d in Show” (Drake: 42). This vision of the Coffee-house politician is criticising the nasty side of gossip and its uselessness. While it is true that it is important to be up to date in external affairs, it is unacceptable when this is brought to the extreme like in the case of the coffee-house politician.

Believing they represent the honour of London there is the city militia. They march with the typical uniforms with feather caps, buffs and bandoliers and often practice their fighting skills in the Artillery ground. They are “terrible Mimicks of Mars” (Drake: 42), the

Roman god of war. They are portrayed as the brute force who prefers to hit rather than ask questions: “For they come to Handy-Blows immediately, and now is the real cutting and slashing” (Drake: 42). For Drake, this kind of impertinence is the commonest and more primitive among men, she even adds that they resemble monkeys in their temper: “A Monkey is not liker a Man in his Figure, then in his humour” (Drake: 42). Finally, they are seen as an unwanted authority that mingle in alien affairs without any good intention: “They are very much mistaken, that think this forwardness to thrust themselves into other’s affairs, springs from any Principle of Charity or Tenderness for ‘em, or the least Regard to the Welfare of their Neighbours” (Drake: 43).

Another type of impertinence that Drake sees in men is the officious one. From the conceit that men are intellectually superior, they assume that their help is constantly needed and that they ought to pass judgement on everything, even if their knowledge or skill is not enough. Drake compares this attitude to that of buzzing insects, “troublesome Muskettoes” (Drake: 43). They seem to be busy all the time but they do not pay any meaningful service to anyone.

Opposite to this kind of impertinence is the one presented by the Virtuoso. Instead of minding other people’s business, he is inclined to useless things, below everyone’s regard. He is capable to give up everything, sell his land and reject any relation to society, to fulfill his vanity. Like Noah with his ark, he gathers a study of all the creatures in the universe. When he travels, he does it to study and admire the landscapes rather than its people. He has connections all over the world, but his commodities have no purpose (shells, stones, wasps, spiders etc.). He takes care and gives notice to things that others would destroy (“He preserves carefully those Creatures, which other Men industriously destroy, and cultivates sedulously those Plants, which others root up as Weeds” (Drake: 44)). He treats dead animals, “vermin”, better than Egyptian Kings and his rare inventory is worth

more to him than gold or diamonds. He considers himself a philosopher of Universal Nature and despises everyone incapable to see the value in his topic of study. He deems it important to write an essay supporting his Flood hypothesis even with the stupidest of his arguments. He is keen on exploration and extremely passionate about his work to the point of losing his temper at the slightest objection. Drake assures the reader that only through faith can he be believed. Drake reflects on the possible purpose of this attitude: “I know that the desire of knowledge, and the discovery of things yet unknown is the Pretence; But what Knowledge is it? What discoveries do we owe to their Labours? It is only the Discovery of some few unheeded Varieties of Plants, Shells, or Insects, unheeded only because useless” (Drake: 45). These discoveries by the virtuoso mean nothing and regards are replaced by laughter. They are depicted as “the reverse of a Rattle Snake, and carry in their Heads, what he does in his Tail” (Drake: 45). Even though Drake respects and supports her society she criticises the new “Faithless, Incredulous Generation of Men” which make it impossible to accept any hypothesis and quickly topple the credit of the author. These kinds of men, though, are willing to earn a reputation based on these trivial matters and are likely to end up offended by affronts and ill talk. After writing his book (“the Impertinent Scriblers of the Age”), if he is demanded answers and proofs, he loses his temper and deems the world unworthy of him. Despite the negative aspects previously depicted, Drake thinks they “deserve Compassion and Advice rather than Derision” (Drake: 47). Considering the length Drake grants to this character and her hard opinions on him, she concludes that the virtuoso is indeed the worst example of this kind of impertinence “For our Follies are not measur’d by the degree of Ignorance, that appears in ‘em, but by the Study, Labour and Expence they cost us to finish and compleat ‘em” (Drake: 47). Their impertinence is even bigger as they are able to lure other Men into their beliefs “throwing away both Time and Money” (Drake: 47).



Dissimulation is presented as a quality when used by women but criminal when used by men. Drake thinks it is necessary in order to be prudent, she describes it as the “hiding or disguising our secret thoughts, or Inclinations under another appearance” (Drake: 48). From the notion that the world is an evil place full of mischief it is important to use this quality in order to protect one’s innocence. The knowing of inner thoughts and weaknesses might leave us exposed to men’s tricks. Women, however, are more drawn to expressing their feelings, therefore, more vulnerable. Here we encounter yet another advantage men have over women. In spite of this, dissimulation can also be used for wrong purposes, and become deceit. It is usually employed by men in courts and it always comes from bad intentions; the level of hypocrisy is so high that enemies come together faking their actions and words to make a profit: “You may see Enemies hugging and caressing one another with all outward Expressions of Tenderness and Friendship imaginable, while they are secretly contriving each others’ ruin” (Drake: 49).

According to Drake, false love is a constant fault of character in men. In contrast, it is the least relevant among women. The fake lover usually targets an innocent credulous woman and violently promises that his love is real only to dishonour, later, her proclaiming his conquest and ruining her good name: “he thinks her ruine a step to Reputation, and founds his own Honour upon her Infamy” (Drake: 49). Drake, here, also expresses her concern for “Women so foolish and forward” (Drake: 49).

The next fault of character is enviousness. Drake poses a linked hierarchy between the faults that influence enviousness. Jealousy is the origin of enviousness and its result is calumny. This fault is particularly toxic since the men who experience it are constantly tormented by their own thoughts. Consequently, the envious person is bound to jeopardize his own happiness to wickedly ruin another's. Yet this fault is seen in both genders, Drake claims that men are more inclined to enviousness because their sense of ambition is higher

than in females and, therefore, they will be rapidly consumed by jealousy and hate: “No sooner is a Man rais’d to any Eminence in the World, but half the Sex at least join in Confederacy to raise a Battery of Scandal against him, to bring him down again” (Drake: 50). Women, on the other hand, are less likely to feel threatened by another’s accomplishment since they could not even grasp at aiming that high. The inequality is evident here as it clearly limits the feelings and emotions a woman could feel because of the lack of opportunities.

Last but not least we have the city critic. He is a character full of ambition, (which he mistakes by wit), arrogance, vanity, malice, enviousness and judgement. He considers himself a satirist but he only defames other people in his writings. His muse is malice which makes his works full of envy and vanity. Drake, then, takes the liberty of mentioning Boileau, a French poet who wrote satirical works criticising other authors and women. She is outraged by this since he ridicules men which ought to be highly respected: “Nothing but Envy and a Vain Conceit of himself cou’d move him to attack the Reputation of Men, whose Verse will always command Admiration, while his own raise nothing but Scorn and Indignation” (Drake: 52). Drake criticises him since he is another example of hypocrisy and extreme vanity which proofs the ill nature of these types of men.

Levity and inconsistency are the last faults that men usually associate to women. These two are failings that are closely related to each other. Drake describes levity as a tendency towards desire and appetite. Both genders experience this impulse during infancy because the most rational part has not been developed yet. As soon as we grow old, however, the sense of judgement balances our desires. Comparing women and men, women mature faster, therefore, the level of levity females experience is lower. Men often develop charming techniques to pursue their objective, which might often be seen acceptable or even enjoyable from a distance but with a closer look it is likely to discover an atmosphere

of roughness and obnoxiousness. It could be said that their levity is probably occasioned by their great ambition (which is not bad per se), so they replace one for the other: “bartering a small Diamond for a large Glass Bubble” (Drake: 53). Inconsistency, on the other hand, is occasioned by levity. Levity makes us choose unwisely which, consequently, makes us “change of Affections in regard to Persons, and so is chiefly concern’d in Love and Friendship” (Drake: 53). These kinds of inconsistency are more common in love because it is “more suddenly reweiv’d, and the Effects of it more violent” (Drake: 53).

Drake justifies the degradation of love through the high level of levity in men. When beauty is the only cause of love, its effect fades as it is entangled to its cause (which also fades in time). Unlike men, females value other qualities beyond the physical and find it impossible to express their feelings beyond their rules of decency. Women’s temper, however, also played an important role, since the calm and tender nature prevented females from expressing their inner passions out of fear. This resulted in the assumption that men are the ones to choose and women the ones to wait. For women to be bold and active in love was a reason for scandal.

Regarding friendship, women are also better at it. Since women have less worldly interests and are rarely in situations of danger, Drake assures that their friendship might be truer and last longer than that of men.

In her attempt to vindicate the female gender, Drake surpasses the expectations and draws to the conclusion that since women are less faulty than men, males could certainly benefit themselves of female company: “There remains nothing more, but to shew that there are some necessary Qualifications to be acquir’d, some good Improvements to be made by Ingenious Gentlemen in the Company of our Sex” (Drake: 56).

### **3. Drake's solution: Education through the conversation with women**

According to Drake, there are many advantages that can come out from the company of women: complacency, gallantry, good humour, invention and the art of insinuation. Men indeed have their own intrinsic value, like rough diamonds, which need honesty, courage and wit to be polished and refined, and to be able to value these qualities.

The most important quality among these would be complacency which is the "Desire to oblige People, by complying with their Humours" (Drake: 57). Drake assures that without it "no Man is fitted for Society" (Drake: 56). Coming from the notion that men have a stronger temper when it comes to serious matters, their estate, their business, Drake finds it improper for men to show their feelings of true concern. In spite of this, men rarely share their troubles with women since "They look upon us as Things design'd only for their Pleasure" (Drake: 57). Drake understands the objectification of women and denounces it as she has proven that we are intellectually levelled which leaves no need for discrimination. Among the society of women, good manners and good humour were the principles of behaviour, therefore, men ought to maintain their temper with good humour and caution: "For with us Men shew in a manner, the Reverse of what they are to one another: They let their thoughts play at Liberty, and are very careful of the Expression, that nothing harsh, or obscene escape 'em, that may shock a tender Mind, or offend a modest Ear" (Drake: 57). The adjectives that differentiate the "weaker sex" from the "stronger sex" are very clear here ("tender", "modest"), so we can notice how Drake was still influenced by these stereotypes commonly forwarded by the patriarchy. Parting from the base that females need a higher level of tenderness and care, Drake considers necessary that men adapt their conduct to it. Drake considered that, like any other habit, complacency can be practiced until perfection through feminine company. A lack of it could be easily recognized (in inns

of court, for instance) where men either stayed silent and risk to be perceived as dull, or “unseasonably Frolicksom and Free” at the risk of sounding ridiculous.

Another quality that men could gain is gallantry. Drake describes it as the “perfection of Civility”, a way to show kindness and good will. For her, the manners with which something is handled are certainly more important than the actual matter. Yet many educated men would be able to recognize these qualities, the majority of them deem it rather unnaturally forced: “Modesty fits like Constraint upon ‘em” (Drake: 58). Drake assures that once this easiness is mastered by them, their ambition will challenge them to reproachfully oblige even to their foes.

These two qualities, however, need to be practiced together since they cannot be used separately:

“A Man may be Complacent without Gallantry, but he can’t be Gallant without Complacence. For ‘tis possible to please and be agreable, without shewing our own Humours to Others; but ‘tis impossible without some regard to theirs: yet this Pleasure will be but faint and languid, without a Mixture of both” (Drake: 58).

For Drake, when both qualities are met successfully the outcome is love and admiration.

According to her, these qualities are observable in other species, and, appealing to a natural defence (again, we see the theory of the weaker and stronger sex), she considers the female mind and body more delicate and soft which, therefore, demands a need for care and affections from the “more rugged sex” (Drake: 59).

As a result of having mastered the previously mentioned qualities, men are forced to reinvent themselves and always bring something new to the table. Invention is necessary to entertain the ladies, and it also provides benefits to perfect a discourse:

“For by forcing ‘em out of the common Road, they are necessitated to invent new Arguments, and seek new ways to divert and please us, and by restraining the large Liberty they take one with another, they are compell’d to polish their Wit, and File off the Roughness of it” (Drake: 59).

In addition, it is especially specified that these qualities are only to be improved by men, as in women these are in our innermost nature: “‘Tis true these Improvements are to be made only by Men, that have by Nature an improvable Stock of Wit and good Sense” (Drake: 59).

Concluding her essay, Drake is very clear about her aversion to fools: “none but Ingenious Men are duely qualified to converse with us” (Drake: 60). She also adds that with her essay “I pretend no Obligation upon our Sex for this Attempt in their Defence” (Drake: 60). At the end of the essay, Drake can be perceived as very reliable and truthful because she herself embodies the qualities she preaches and gives her opinion in spite of the overall misogynistic culture of her time.

#### **4. Conclusions and Further Research**

As we have seen, Drake was a courageous woman, not only for expressing her opinions freely but also for making a strong criticism towards male behaviour which she identifies as wrong. Sarah Apetrei summarizes the tenor and personality of Drake’s proposal in a way that reflects my previous analysis of her male characters: she returned the long-standing insults against women with her psychological portrait of men’s follies, but at the same time, there might be “something pleasingly petulant about this response, and it also points to the importance of exposing male vice and the sexual double standard in feminist defences of this period” (Apetrei 2010: 66). If the use of satire in poetry and non-fiction meant for women of the period an assumption of a position of social criticism (Backscheider, 2015: 82), in the case of Drake this is even more so. The psychological detail of her characterization shows an almost scientific eye for human nature, which she then subjects to broader commentary about the relationship between the sexes. Her approach is original

in combining an almost theophrastian approach to characters' vices (even though Theophrastus is not mentioned in her essay) while conceiving the whole piece as an essay coming as a result of a dialectical exchange with friends –however absent they are in the text. While there is no conclusive evidence of Drake's authorship, her voice is distinct in the tradition of late seventeenth-century women defences of education in her intelligent deconstruction of misogynistic discourses based on 'women's defects' and 'inferiority'. Instead of proposing a full programme for educating women, Drake's approach tends towards the re-education of men and the 'de-programming' of women into assuming their inferiority in the world. What this suggests, according to Sutherland, is "a healthy measure of independent thinking" (2005: 160) on the part of Drake beyond any circle of friendship or sociability, which in the case of Drake was probably occasional but intense. But above all, Drake's case also illuminates our still precarious study of the relationship between gender in knowledge in the seventeenth century.

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