

CATHERINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY GRAHAM (1731–1791)
LETTERS ON EDUCATION (1790)

Letter XXIII: No Characteristic Difference in Sex

The great difference that is observable in the characters of the sexes, Hortensia, as they display themselves in the scenes of social life, has given rise to much false speculation on the natural qualities of the female mind.

It is a long time before the crowd give up opinions they have been taught to look upon with respect It is from such causes that the notion of a sexual difference in the human character has, with a very few exceptions, universally prevailed from the earliest times, and the pride of one sex, and the ignorance and vanity of the other, have helped to support an opinion which a close observation of Nature, and a more accurate way of reasoning, would disprove.

It must be confessed, that the virtues of the males among the human species, though mixed and blended with a variety of vices and errors, have displayed a bolder and a more consistent picture of excellence than female nature has hitherto done. It is on these reasons that, when we compliment the appearance of a more than ordinary energy in the female mind, we call it masculine; and hence it is, that Pope has elegantly said *a perfect woman's but a softer man*. And if we take in the consideration, that there can be but one rule of moral excellence for beings made of the same materials, organized after the same manner, and subjected to similar laws of Nature, we must either agree with Mr. Pope, or we must reverse the proposition, and say, that *a perfect man is a woman formed after a coarser mold*.

Among the most strenuous asserters of a sexual difference in character, Rousseau is the most conspicuous, both on account of that warmth of sentiment which distinguishes all his writings, and the eloquence of his compositions: but never did enthusiasm and the love of paradox, those enemies to philosophical disquisition, appear in more strong opposition to plain sense than in Rousseau's definition of this difference. He sets out with a supposition, that Nature intended the subjection of the one sex to the other; that consequently there must be an inferiority of intellect in the subjected party; but as man is a very imperfect being, and apt to play the capricious tyrant, Nature, to bring things nearer to an equality, bestowed on the woman such attractive graces, and such an insinuating address, as to turn the balance on the other scale. Thus Nature, in a giddy mood, recedes from her purposes, and subjects prerogative to an influence which must produce confusion and disorder in the system of human affairs. Rousseau saw this objection; and in order to obviate it, he has made up a moral person of the union of the two sexes, which, for contradiction and absurdity, outdoes every metaphysical riddle that was ever formed in the schools. In short, it is not reason, it is not wit; it is pride and sensuality that speak in Rousseau, and, in this instance, has lowered the man of genius to the licentious pedant.

But whatever might be the wise purpose intended by Providence in such a disposition of things, certain it is, that some degree of inferiority, in point of corporal strength, seems always to have existed between the two sexes; and this advantage, in the barbarous ages of mankind, was abused to such a degree, as to destroy all the natural rights of the female species, and reduce them to a state of abject slavery. What accidents have contributed in Europe to better their condition, would not be to my purpose to relate; for I do not intend to give you a history of women; I mean only to trace the sources of their peculiar foibles and vices; and these I firmly believe to originate in situation and education only: for so little did a wise and just Providence intend to make the condition of slavery an unalterable law of female nature, that in the same proportion as the male sex have consulted the interest of their own happiness, they have relaxed in their tyranny over women; and such is their use in the system of mundane creation, and such their natural influence over the male mind, that were these advantages properly exerted, they might carry every point of any importance to their honour and happiness. However, till that period arrives in which women will act wisely, we will amuse ourselves in talking of their follies.

The situation and education of women, Hortensia, is precisely that which must necessarily tend to corrupt and debilitate both the powers of mind and body. From a false notion of beauty and delicacy, their system of nerves is depraved before they come out of their nursery; and this kind of depravity has more influence over the mind, and consequently over morals, than is commonly apprehended. But it would be well if such causes only acted towards the debasement of the sex; their moral education is, if possible, more absurd than their physical. The principles and nature of virtue, which is never properly explained to boys, is kept quite a mystery to girls. They are told indeed, that they must abstain from those vices which are contrary to their personal happiness, or they will be regarded as criminals, both by God and man; but all the higher parts of rectitude, every thing that ennobles our being, and that renders us both innoxious and useful, is either not taught, or is taught in such a manner as to leave no proper impression on the mind. This is so obvious a truth, that the defects of female education have ever been a fruitful topic of declamation for the moralist; but not one of this class of writers have laid down any judicious rules for amendment. Whilst we still retain the absurd notion of a sexual excellence, it will militate against the perfecting a plan of education for either sex. The judicious Addison animadverts on the absurdity of bringing a young lady up with no higher idea of the end of education than to make her agreeable to a husband, and confining the necessary excellence for this happy acquisition to the mere graces of person.

Taken from Catherine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham, *Letters on Education: With Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* (London: C. Dilly, 1790), 204–208

PEDRO DE LEÓN PORTOCARRERO

DESCRIPTION OF LIMA (early 17th century)

The eight most important streets of Lima converge in the city's plaza mayor [central square, or plaza de armas], with two entering at [and leaving from] each corner. First there is the Street of the Plaza Mayor next to the [viceregal] palace and between the arsenal and the houses of the municipal council.

Another street leaves from the palace and the houses of the archbishop and proceeds straight to the east, passing the College of Santo Toribio and the houses of the main postal office, and continuing to the square of the Inquisition, some three blocks east from the plaza mayor.

Another street leaves [the plaza mayor] by the Clothiers' Street. These shops [more than twenty, according to Salinas] stock clothing for Blacks. This street goes straight south and passes by the side of the Mercedarian friars' monastery and leads directly to the convent of the nuns of the Incarnation, the most renowned [religious] house in Lima, in which there are more than four hundred professed nuns. Many of the rich nobles' daughters come [to stay in this house] to learn good manners, and they leave it [ready] to marry. In this convent there are splendid and intelligent women, endowed with a thousand graces, and all of them, both nuns and [pious] lay women, have Black women slaves to serve them.

Another street leaves by the main one, [and] that is the Merchants' Street, along which there are always at least forty shops [but Salinas claimed more than twenty warehouses and at least two hundred shops] packed full of assorted merchandise, whatever the riches the world has to offer.

All merchants are exceedingly skilful in their buying. A merchant will collect all the manifests of shipments brought to the plaza for sale, and quickly refix their prices, and from there choose and buy whatever seems best to him. This gives an idea of the merchants of Lima. [Everyone] is involved, from the viceroy to the archbishop; all have dealings and everyone is a merchant, even if it is through a third party or on the sly.

From among the arcades [on the plaza mayor] where there are four streets and the Merchants' Street [already described], another street leaves, beginning with the Street of the Mantas [cloaks and coverings of coarse cotton cloth], which is also lined with merchants' shops. This street, like the Merchants' Street, takes up its own block. Along this entire street, proceeding directly west, there are many shops with different specialities: chandlers, confectioners, boilermakers who work with a lot of copper, blacksmiths, and other craftsmen. And it passes next to the Espíritu Santo hospital for sailors who are gathered there and cured when they are ill, [then] under the arch and on to the church of Monserrat.

On another street that runs behind the Jesuits' establishment is the College of San Martín, also belonging to the Society of Jesus; it has more than five hundred students, the sons of notables throughout the kingdom [of Peru] who send them there to study, and to pay the Jesuits an annual fee of 150 ordinary pesos for each one, from which sum the students are fed [as well as instructed]. The Jesuits offer a very elaborate course of studies incorporating many branches of learning.

Extending from east to west, another street passes close to the Jesuits' church and into the Street of the Silversmiths [with more than forty public shops, says Salinas, and

over two hundred people trained to work in silver and gold], which runs from the corner of the Street of the Mantas [with more than thirty shops selling clothing mostly to native Andeans] to the corner of the Merchants' Street. Off this Street of Silversmiths is the Hatters' Alley, [which] leads to the church of San Agustín. In this block there are a great number of apothecaries, and all of them are more than a block from the [central] plaza.

Taken from "Pedro de León Portocarrero's Description of Lima, Peru," in *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History*, eds. Kenneth Mills, William B. Taylor, and Sandra Lauderdale Graham (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 190–195.