
Helena Bergmann

Translation as De-Radicalization: On the Transforming of Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* into French

Abstract

The semi-autobiographical confessional and feminist tract, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), by the British radical writer Mary Hays (1759–1843), was translated into French by Pauline de Meulan (1773–1827) in 1799, as *La Chapelle D'Ayton, ou Emma Courtney*. As opposed to its English model, which was given a mixed reception due to its emotional and compromising authentic background, the translated version became immensely popular in France. One reason for this was the major extension made to the action through the adding of plots and characters from several other British works. The article focusses on the various measures taken by the translator to purge the parts of the original work she chose to maintain from their reliance on feminism and contemporary radical philosophies. This was carried out through a process of exclusion, character modification and alteration of genre. The methods for deepening the characterisation and improving the work stylistically are also analysed.

Keywords

Godwin, De Meulan, Imitation, Textual colonisation, Female emancipation

In 1796, the British author Mary Hays (1759–1843), who was a member of the radical dissenting Church of the Unitarians, published a semi-autobiographical novel entitled *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*.¹ Equipped with several references to the philosophies of William Godwin (1756–1836) and Claude-Adrien Helvétius (1715–1771), her work illustrated the contemporaneous preoccupation with maintaining an equilibrium between reason and feeling. The main message of the *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* was the need to improve the position of women in society, a concern which Hays shared with her friend the radical proponent of

1 The first Unitarian Church in England was founded in London in 1774. It is a movement characterized by its denial of the 39 articles of the Church of England. At a social level, the movement showed deep involvement with the issue of general education, specifically related to the rights of young women, and worked strongly towards the abolition of slavery. See Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism, Socinianism and its Antecedents* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1945).

women's rights, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797). Because Hays's work was known to have an authentic background relating to her acquaintance with the Unitarian preacher and Cambridge lecturer William Frend, (1757–1841), the author was harassed for displaying her emotions publicly.² Although there were readers who commended the originality and fearlessness of her work, its message was generally misunderstood. It was not until the 1970s that the novel's merits were recognised within the developing movement of feminist criticism.³

Despite the mixed reception of the novel at home, like many other British works at the end of the eighteenth century, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* was translated into French. Representing the stability of a society where class distinctions remained unshaken and could be treated in a light-hearted way, English novels were welcomed in the aftermath of the French Revolution. This popularity by no means ensured accurate translations, however. For, though laws had been passed to protect the integrity of native authors through the French Literary and Artistic Property Act of 1793, the same legislation did not apply to works from abroad. Consequently, it was no surprise that the *Emma Courtney*, which appeared in Paris in 1799, published by Claude-François Maradan (1762–1823), who specialised in turning out translations of British and German works, had undergone a major remodelling process.⁴ The translator was Elizabeth Charlotte Pauline de Meulan (1773–1827), a young woman, from an aristocratic military family in Paris, who had started working as a writer to help support her family after the death of their father and who became an established contributor to the cultural journal *Le Publiciste*.⁵ In 1812, de Meulan married the French liberal politician and historian François Pierre Guillaume Guizot (1787–1874), together with whom she published several pedagogical and didactic works.⁶

2 William Frend was a Cambridge tutor in linguistics and mathematics who proclaimed himself in favour of the French Republic and proposed reforms of many British Laws. Having published and distributed a pamphlet in support of the Unitarian Church, he was banned from Cambridge University in 1793. See William Frend, *An Account of the Proceedings in the University of Cambridge, against William Frend M. A. fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, for publishing a pamphlet, entitled "Peace and Union" &c.* (Cambridge: B. Flower, 1793).

3 A pioneer work of this period was Gina Luria Walker's unpublished doctoral thesis: *Mary Hays: A Critical Biography* (PhD diss., New York University, 1972).

4 The references in this article will be made to the second, slightly emended edition of the translation, published by Maradan in 1810.

5 Pauline de Meulan contributed to the journal by writing on literature, the theatre, and society. Her editor was Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard (1732–1817), a renowned essayist and member of the French Academy. See Nadine Bérenguier, *Conduct Books for Girls in Enlightenment France* (London: Ashgate, 2011), 198.

6 François Guizot was Minister of Education 1832–1837, Foreign Minister 1840–1847, and Prime Minister of France from 19 September 1847 to 23 February 1848.

A Motley Creation

De Meulan's French translation of *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* became immensely popular, more successful by far than de Meulan's own novel, *Les Contradictions ou Ce qui peut en arriver*, which had been published the same year.⁷ The fact that Hays's work had mainly been met with disapproval at home was of no consequence, since de Meulan was free to elaborate and to personalise her versions, which she did with fervour. Her undertaking was exceptional; the narrative she offered her readers was extended by 800 pages, published in five volumes instead of two. An alteration of this magnitude would have required an extraordinary portion of creativity from the translator, had it not been for her use of existing material. Antoinette Sol affirms that, soon enough, the 'reader comes to understand that the French woman has written a translation, an imitation, an adaptation and an amplification of more than just Hays's novel'.⁸ In her article 'Quest-ce qu'un roman anglais?', Shelley Charles identifies the 'polyphonic' presence of a whole group of contemporary English novelists, most notably Samuel Richardson and Frances Burney.⁹ As observed by Nanette Le Coat, the stylistic imprints were numerous, too: 'Meulan's narrative ... progressively adopts diverse subgenres of the eighteenth-century fictional repertoire – the memoir, the epistolary novel, the novel of manners, and the gothic romance'.¹⁰ Lengthening the story so drastically and reproducing a tapestry of existing works was as much proof of de Meulan's predilection for English fiction, as it was an expression of her trust in the remunerative value of English works in translation on the literary market.

While much of the research on de Meulan's translation has been focussed on the finalised French version, I investigate the procedures adopted by the translator when modifying the parts of the source text, which she chose to maintain. A first example is her paratextual alteration of the title: *La Chapelle d'Ayton, ou Emma Courtney*. Deleting the term 'Memoirs' and adding a place name referring

7 Pauline de Meulan, *Les Contradictions ou Ce qui peut en arriver* [Contradictions and what they may cause] (Paris: Maradan, 1799).

8 Antoinette Sol, 'A French Reading and Critical Rewriting of Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*', *EMF: Strategic Rewriting*, vol. 8 (2002): 240.

9 Shelley Charles, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un roman anglais? D'Emma Courtney à La Chapelle D'Ayton' [What is an English Novel? From Emma Courtney to La Chapelle D'Ayton], *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, vol. 15, no. 2:1 (2002): 287–292, doi: 10.1353/ecf.2003.0024. See in particular the references to Frances Burney, *Cecilia, Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782) and *Camilla or the Picture of Youth* (1796), and Samuel Richardson *Clarissa: or, the History of a Young Lady* (1747–1748) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753).

10 Nanette Le Coat, 'Two Novels Worth Knowing: Pauline Guizot's *Les Contradictions* (1799) and *La Chapelle d'Ayton* (1800)', accessed 16 March 2010, <https://whatyoumustknowaboutthefrenchrevolutionli.wordpress.com>.

to a church ruin was, to all intents and purposes, meant to underscore the work's innate Englishness, and to evoke the popular genre of the Gothic via the association with a chapel.¹¹ Since the book was published one hundred years before the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886), nobody questioned the changes made. On the contrary, French reviewers, who were familiar with the authentic background of the work, commended de Meulan's version for its 'remarkable' absence of 'complacent systematics of passion', or 'theories of sentimentality'.¹² Criticised in England 'as a scandalous disrobing in public', the French narrative had clearly been draped in different apparel.¹³ A reviewer's entry in *La France Littéraire ou Dictionnaire Bibliographique des Savants* (1829) provides a fair representation of the general perception of the work:

L'ouvrage est tellement différent de l'original, qu'il est une imitation et non une traduction. Frappée de la médiocrité du modèle, et de l'interêt de quelques situations, Madame Guizot refit l'ouvrage au lieu de le traduire, et sur un fond presque entièrement neuf, le sema d'une foule d'observations fines et des traits touchantes.

[The novel is so different from the original that it must be termed an imitation and not a translation. Struck by the mediocrity of the model, yet attracted by certain features of it, Madame Guizot altered the work instead of translating it, and, providing it with an almost entirely new background, she equipped it with a set of fine and moving observations.]¹⁴

The Pragmatics of Translating

Hans J. Vermeer's 'skopos theory' suggests that any form of translating will be based on a freedom of choice of interpretation that may 'change the meaning ... and even transform it into its opposite'.¹⁵ De Meulan, saw no need to reflect on whether 'in subtle ways, the function of the text is shifted to accommodate an-

11 See Shelley Charles, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un roman anglais?', 290.

12 Charles de Rémusat, 'Notice sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de Madame Guizot' [Notes on the life and work of Madame Guizot], in Pauline Guizot, *Conseils de Morale, ou Essais sur l'Homme, Les Moeurs, Les Caractères, le Monde, les Femmes, l'Education etc.* [A study of morals or essays on man, customs, characters, the world, women and education etc.] (Paris: Pichon et Didier, 1828), xxij.

13 Tilottama Rajan, 'Autonarration and Genotext in Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 32:2 (1993): 149, doi: 10.2307/25601004.

14 Joseph-Marie Quérard, Entry on 'La Chapelle d'Ayton ou Emma Courtney, (imité de l'anglais de Mary Hays)', Paris: Maradan, (5 vols. in 1799 and 4 vols. in 1810)', in *La France Littéraire ou Dictionnaire Bibliographique des Savants* (Paris: Chez Firmin Dot Frères, 1829), 550.

15 Hans J. Vermeer, *A Skopos Theory of Translation: (Some Arguments for and Against)* (Heidelberg: TEXTconTEXT Verlag, 1996), 106.

other function'.¹⁶ Her objective seems rather to have been to liberate it from its ideological ballast and to adjust it to her own 'target literary field'.¹⁷ Conscious that the philosophical reiterations in Hays's novel would not be appreciated by a readership looking to be diverted, it must have seemed prudent to her to tone down the Radical connotations. Hence, the novel's prevailing Godwinian notions, such as 'necessitarianism' and 'perfectibility', and attacks on slavery in the colonies, were systematically removed.¹⁸

Despite the fundamental alterations made to the source text, *La Chapelle d'Ayton, ou Emma Courtney* was termed an 'imitation', an epithet used alternately with 'adaptation', to denote translations of British novels at the time. In view of the many liberties taken by de Meulan, these appellations are somewhat forgiving. It has been argued that if translations have merely been 'inspired' by previous works, they ought more fittingly to be termed 'transformations'.¹⁹ This is in fact the term used by Shelley Charles when defining the French version as 'a text dominated by philosophy and autobiography' having been 'transformed into a text dominated by narrativity and fictionality'.²⁰

Attempts have been made to mitigate the effects of de Meulan's alterations by assuming that she was, in fact, 'attracted by the philosophical ideas of revolutionary feminism expressed in the Englishwoman's work, but had no illusion as to its future practice', and that it is 'disillusionment' that 'forces the changes in the French rewriting of the English text'.²¹ There are, however, no indications that the values and patterns of Mary Hays's work have been allowed even faintly to survive, since 'the intended target receiver' was not anticipated to be interested in English Radical politics.²² While Mary Hays had questioned and challenged the limitations of women's roles in her novel, the French translator was anxious to neutralise the unruly English Emma for her own 'pragmatic' purposes.²³ A fundamental consequence of her stance was the suppression of the main plot: a young woman's defiance of decorum when refusing to accept a man's rejection

16 Basil Hatim, *Communication Across Cultures: Translation Theory and Constructive Text Linguistics* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 42.

17 Jean-Marc Gouanvic, 'A Bourdieusian Theory of Translation, or the Coincidence of Practical Instances: Field, "Habitus", Capital and Practical and "Illusio"', trans. J. Moore, *The Translator*, 11: 2 (2005): 147–166, doi: 10.1080/13556509.2005.10799196.

18 William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793), vols. 1 and 2, Book I, chapter VI, (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1793), 43, Book IV, chapter V, 283–304 and chapter IV, 305–317.

19 Phyllis Frus and Christy Williams, *Beyond Adaptation: Essays on Radical Transformations of Original Works* (Jefferson North Carolina, and London, 2013), 5.

20 Shelley Charles, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un roman anglais?', 285.

21 Sol, 'A French Reading', 321.

22 Christiane Nord, *Translation as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Manchester UK: Saint Jerome Publishing, 1997), 22.

23 *Ibid.*, 123.

of her, and demanding of him an intellectually valid response. Far from trying to maintain exactness and respect for subtleties, de Meulan saw the English text as a source of raw materials from which she was free to eke out the useful elements and refine them for her own ends. In a sense, her procedure could be likened to that of a ‘colonizer’ rather than a straightforward asset stripper.

In her Preface, de Meulan signals her awareness of the duality of her role by referring to herself as the ‘author or imitator’. Her logic was that the more she had reworked her acquired ground, the more she was entitled to call it her own. Usurping the epithet of ‘author’ was a means of denying the supremacy of the textual soil taken under possession; her alterations are in fact commended as tokens of the tenacity of a translator faced with a next to impossible task:

Je voulais traduire un livre anglais; le hasard me fit tomber sur un roman en deux volumes nommé Emma Courtney. En lisant, je crus voir qu’il ne réussirait pas, mais il m’offrait quelques idées qui me semblaient heureuses. Je jugeai qu’il serait possible de les employer, d’arranger le roman.

[I wanted to translate an English novel. Purely by chance I came across a novel in two volumes called Emma Courtney. On reading it, I realised I would not be successful in the undertaking, but it did give me a couple of ideas that looked promising. I estimated that it would be possible to make use of these and to organise the novel].²⁴

Genre Alterations

A consequence of deleting the original label of ‘*Memoirs*’ was that it released the work from the genre of confessional, i. e. the fundamental precarious starting-point of Mary Hays’s literary undertaking. Converting a work founded on certain philosophical pretexts into a novel of romance and adventure also required relinquishing its didactic features. Neither was there cause to retain Mary Hays’s extensive use of the epistolary mode. Hence, the introductory apostrophe aimed at Emma’s foster-son, young Augustus, Hays’s subliminally poised extra-diegetic narratee, was suppressed. In her letter to this young man, Emma discloses the consequences of her luckless passion for his father as a warning example: ‘The victim of my own ardent passions, and the errors of one whose memory will ever be dear to me, I prepare to withdraw a veil – a veil spread by an importunate, but I fear mistaken tenderness’.²⁵ The trope of unveiling was an enacting of Mary Hays’s trust in the power of candid frankness, a pertinent influence from the

24 From de Meulan’s Preface to the first edition of *La Chapelle d’Ayton, ou Emma Courtney* (1799).

25 Mary Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview Press, 2000), 43.

philosophy of Helvétius.²⁶ Such ideological slants did not attract a translator who aimed to steer the narrative in a completely different direction. A fundamental move was to free the novel from its first-person subjectivity, allowing it instead to evolve under the guidance of a neutral third-person narrator. The epistolary mode, so dominant in the source text, was maintained only by proxy, through references to missives often being ‘lost, misplaced and circulated among strangers’.²⁷

The shift from the genre of a subjective, largely epistolary, memoir to a heterodiegetic description had an impact on several layers of the narration. For one thing, it entailed the embracing of a wider set of circumstances and a broadening of the narrative scope. It also granted the translator a stimulating opportunity to develop the novel stylistically in her own taste. Culling only the parts of the source text that were to her liking and inserting them as components within a new, extended whole was a measure taken to raise the text to a higher level of sophistication. As mentioned, the diegesis of Hays’s story was vitally extended through the addition of a multiplicity of plots mostly borrowed from existing literary works. Yet, the work had not only undergone a procedure of ‘extension’, but also of ‘expansion’.²⁸ A significant method of amplification was the development of the original characters. For, with genre-related adjustments and suppressions made, characterisation was the narrative element that provided de Meulan with her most stimulating challenge. Here, she was free to choose whether to preserve identities or to modify them, and whether to increase or limit their scopes of action. By altering Hays’s minor characters and turning them from ‘flat’ to ‘round’, and sometimes varying their roles entirely, de Meulan increased their ‘intensity’.²⁹ An important contribution to this expansion of character was her insertion of dialogue. Making Hays’s characters more articulate had a significant impact on the dynamics of the text, offering the possibility of exploring previously unaddressed motivations.

26 Claude-Adrien Helvétius (1715–1771) was the author of *A Treatise on Man* (1777), a philosophical work often referred to by Mary Hays in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*.

27 Sol, ‘A French Reading’, 235.

28 Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 364.

29 Eugene A. Nida, *Contexts in Translating* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001), 74.

Repetition with Modification

The amplifications and alterations of character in *La Chapelle d'Ayton, ou Emma Courtney* can only be studied in the first volume, since this is the sole part in which the rudiments of the original storyline have been preserved. Mary Hays's original plot is here adhered to: Emma loses her mother at birth, is raised by relatives and, as a young woman, falls in love with her neighbour's son – the unattainable, intellectual Augustus Harley. Although the opening passages of de Meulan's translation offer the same basic facts about Emma's coming into the world, the exposition scenes are significantly different. As an Enlightenment writer, Mary Hays had striven to situate her heroine's birth and the development of her personality within the defined parameters of milieu and genealogy: 'I know not how far to go back, nor where to begin; for in many cases, it may be in all, a foundation is laid for the operation of our minds, years – nay, ages – previous to our birth'.³⁰ In addition to this, Emma is introduced as a sample of a species: 'an infant' who was 'willingly consigned ... to the guardianship of its maternal aunt', a woman who 'had an important share in forming the mind of her charge'.³¹ The French version, by contrast, opens with a curt and vital announcement that a little girl has been born: 'Emma vient de naître' [Emma is the one after], which is followed by an immediate patriarchal establishing of the *nom de père*; Emma is the daughter of 'le riche et brillant Monsieur Courtney' [the rich and brilliant Mr Courtney].³² Thus, in the opening lines of de Meulan's narrative, it is not Emma, but her father, who is the centre of attention: 'Un moment il a regardé sa fille comme le reste chéri d'une épouse dont il aurait dû mieux récompenser l'amour et les douces vertus' [He observed his daughter momentarily as a cherished remnant of his wife, whom he had never duly compensated for her devotion].³³ Unlike Hays, de Meulan allows us to enter Mr Courtney's thoughts, revealing his feelings of personal inadequacy: 'Madame Courtney était sa femme, la maîtresse de sa maison, la mère de sa fille mais il n'en avait point fait la campagne de sa vie' [Mrs Courtney was his wife, the mistress of the house, the mother of his daughter, but he had never really allowed her to become his life companion].³⁴

While Hays sparingly introduces a set of figures within a social framework anticipated to have a predictable effect on motherless Emma's future development, de Meulan carves out a set of personalities with whom her readers can familiarise themselves. Such elaborative efforts contribute to the 'gradation', or

³⁰ Hays, *Memoirs*, 44.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Pauline de Meulan, *La Chapelle d'Ayton ou Emma Courtney* (Paris: Maradan, 1810), 1.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

intensification, of their personas.³⁵ An early example is found in de Meulan's rendering of the anxiety of Emma's uncle about having to inform his enfeebled wife that her sister (Emma's mother) has passed away. These thoughts are conveyed through free indirect discourse, a conspicuous literary device frequently applied by the translator: 'Comment, au milieu des angoisses d'une perte récente, lui faire supporter un nouveau malheur? Comment lui annoncer que sa soeur n'était plus' [How could he make her bear a new sorrow, when in such anguish over a recent loss? How could he break the news to her that her sister had passed away?].³⁶ This sensitive description of an inner conflict stands in stark contrast to the laconic rendering of the same tragedy by Hays's: 'A few days before my birth, my aunt had lost (as already related) a lovely female infant, about four months old, and she received me, from the dying hands of my mother, as a substitute'.³⁷ De Meulan was not inclined to pass over the pathos of a child left motherless at birth. On the contrary, she chose to elaborate on the complex and mixed emotions of the couple, who, having lost their own child, receive its cousin as an unforeseen blessing:

A demi-couchée sur une sofa, la tête appuyée sur sa main, elle se rappelait avec amertume ses plans de félicité, tant de fois repassés dans son esprit, depuis qu'elle avait espéré que son existence s'embellirait du titre de mère. Elle voit entrer son mari, suivi d'une femme portant une enfant. Elle tressaille, change de couleur, se lève avec précipitation, et courant vers lui: "Quel est cet enfant?" dit-elle d'une voix altérée.

[Half-reclining on the sofa, resting her head on her hand, she recalled with bitterness the scenes of joy, which had so often passed through her mind invested with the hope of becoming a mother. She sees her husband entering, followed by a woman carrying an infant. Trembling and blushing she quickly rises and runs to meet him: "What child is this?" she asks, with a sudden change in her voice].³⁸

Equipping the text with elements of melodrama and passages of emotionally charged conversation was a way of adhering to a sentimental literary style; furthermore, it made it possible to give a more nuanced voice to Hays's.³⁹ As visible in the passage just quoted, de Meulan's, technique did not involve merely the refining of existing materials. Working determinedly and in accordance with a principle of complementation, de Meulan sought the lacunae in Hays's characterisations and filled them with her own imaginings.

35 Cf. Eugene A. Nida, *Contexts*, 74.

36 De Meulan, *La Chapelle*, 3.

37 Hays, *Memoirs*, 47.

38 De Meulan, *La Chapelle*, 4.

39 See Suzanne Dezan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press 2004), 67–85, for a description of the image of marriage as a socially useful site of true affection between husband and wife promoted in the late Old Régime and later developed in the post-revolutionary period.

The French rendering of Emma's childhood is recognisably a case of 'repetition with a difference'. This is partly because de Meulan omits the numerous quotations from Helvétius *Treatise on Man* extolling the importance of education.⁴⁰ Both versions of Emma, however, are shown to grow up harmoniously in the households of foster-parents and display a prodigious ability to learn. But whereas Mary Hays's Emma is conspicuously empowered by her learning, de Meulan prevents her version of the character from excelling, and even takes a stand against Hays's intentions by reassuring her readers, that her heroine's precociousness will not result in any form of transgression: 'Qu'on n'aille pas, d'après cela, s'imaginer cependant que jamais Emma se fût mis dans l'esprit qu'elle pourrait bien un jour devenir une Bradamante'⁴¹ [There is no reason for anyone to imagine that Emma should have her mind set on becoming anything like a Bradamante].⁴² While Hays's Emma appropriates the male *logos* during her weekly sessions in her father's library and later applies her skills when writing to her lover demanding clarification of his silence, the French Emma does neither.

Diverging Paths

The parallel developments of the two heroines reach a significant point of diversion, as they reach an age when they can be taken into consideration for matrimony. In both plot developments, the 'coming out' takes place at social gatherings arranged by Mr Courtney. Here, Hays's Jacobin heroine is shown eagerly to participate in male political discussions on the issues of slavery, which causes embarrassment and confusion among conservative guests and leads to a warning to her father that excessive knowledge 'will spoil all her feminine graces'.⁴³ De Meulan's Emma is not involved in any dialogue of this kind. Risking no *faux pas*, she is busy being agreeable and preparing herself for courtship: 'Faite pour plaire, elle ne craignait point de se montrer. Encore plus faite pour aimer. ... Elle semblait attendre un événement, et le plus léger changement de situation produisait sur elle, sans qu'elle s'en aperçut, l'effet d'une espérance' [Ready to please, she did not worry about being noticed; More than anything, she was ready for love. ... She seemed to be expecting something to happen, and without being aware of it herself, the slightest stirring around her had the effect of

40 Claude Adrien Hévetius, *A Treatise on Man his Intellectual Faculties and his Education*. Translated by W. Hooper, vol 2. (London: B. Law & G. Robinson, 1777), 395.

41 *Ibid.*, 12.

42 Bradamante, a legendary female knight, was a main character in *Orlando Innamorato* (1482) by Matteo Maria Boiardo and in *Orlando Furioso* (1516) by Ludovico Ariosto.

43 Hays, *Memoirs*, 57.

raising her hopes].⁴⁴ Equipped now with a becoming, recurrent blush on her cheek, conscientiously transformed for the sake of functionality, Hays's advocate of female independence can be seen dancing her way at the ball, her pathos redefined by the number of her suitors.

The dancing scene is a decisive point in the narrative in that it challenges the 'pragmatic intent' of the source text. Like de Meulan, Mary Hays also contributed articles to periodicals, but with a major difference. Her writing often evidences a strong dedication to the promotion of women's rights, as this extract from 'On the Influence of Authority and Custom', published in *The Monthly Magazine* in 1793, reveals:

Of all bondage, mental bondage is surely the most fatal; the absurd despotism which has hitherto, with more than gothic barbarity, enslaved the female mind, the enervating and degrading system of manners, by which the understandings of women have been chained down to frivolity and trifles, have increased the general tide of effeminacy and corruption.⁴⁵

The discourse apparent in these lines is very close to the message in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), yet Hays's handling of the question of woman's position in society was not quite so forceful or antagonistic. Her conviction was that inequalities and misperceptions ought to be overcome through argumentative reasoning, and not by violent contestation. Society needed to grasp the advantages of egalitarianism and companionship instead of recoiling from it. Ideas such as these were forwarded by Hays anonymously in *An Appeal to the Men of Britain in Behalf of Women* (1798).⁴⁶ Her article in the *Monthly Magazine*, 'Improvements suggested in Female Education' (1797), had already made it clear that she was well ahead of her time, when suggesting that the 'burden of providing for a family' could be shared, if women were only permitted to attain 'some ingenious or useful trade', instead of wasting time on 'the acquisition of useless and frivolous accomplishments'.⁴⁷

Mary Hays presents her Emma as the victim of a system that denies women independence, and compels them to form unsuitable alliances to secure their position in society. When prevented by the force of circumstance from being united to Augustus Harley, a man to whom she looks up, and with whom she

44 De Meulan, *La Chapelle*, 167.

45 Hays, 'On the Influence of Authority and Custom on the Female Mind and Manners', in *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous* (London: T Knott, 1793), 20–22.

46 Hays, *An Appeal to the Men of Britain in Behalf of Women* (London: J. Johnson, 1798). Because of its recognizable content and discourse, the work was attributed to Hays by her close circle (Godwin, Wollstonecraft et al.). See Gina Luria Walker, *Mary Hays (1759–1843): The Growth of a Woman's Mind* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 195–197.

47 Hays, 'Improvements suggested in Female Education', *The Monthly Magazine and British Register for 1797* (London: J. Johnson, 1797), 195.

believes she can find intellectual fulfilment, the English Emma has no way out but to marry a morally flawed suitor, Dr Montague. For the heroine of *La Chapelle d'Ayton*, parameters are different. Created to fulfil the role of an admired heroine, she is the antithesis of an impatient young woman obsessed with an unreachable man of knowledge. On the contrary, the French Emma has too many men about her (selected from a variety of literary sources). Her main concern is to learn how to navigate between them.

Adjustments of Manhood

It is a case in point that most of the male characters from the source text were preserved in de Meulan's version, apart from one telling exception, as we shall see. Since de Meulan was writing in accordance with a literary tradition that endorsed an ideal of female gracefulness and passivity, it is not surprising that the translator chose to remould Mary Hays's male characters accordingly. Superficially, the romantic theme is initiated in a similar fashion: just as in the original story, the enigmatic and elusive Augustus Harley is introduced, through a technique of *prolepsis*, i.e. he is much spoken about before actually entering the scene. Like Hays, (although dwelling on everything in much more in detail) de Meulan describes the deep friendship that develops between Emma and Harley's mother, and the suspense built up during their communal anticipation of his upcoming visit. Both the English and the French Emma fall in love with the portrait of Augustus on his mother's wall long before they actually meet him. Once Augustus has arrived and becomes more firmly integrated into the action of de Meulan's version, his role is seriously demoted, and the balance of power shifted. Quite contrary to the autobiographical anchoring of the original (in which Hays's had included some of her own desperate letters to William Friend), de Meulan offers her Emma the upper hand, by displacing Augustus and situating him instead as one of her score of admirers. Securing her central character's position as an object of male desire was a pragmatic move to distance her Emma from the 'crazed' persona of Hays's emancipated heroine.⁴⁸

Because de Meulan continued to downplay the radical inflections of her source text, the most noteworthy form of ideological censorship she effectuated was the exclusion of a fundamental male character: Emma's philosophical mentor, Mr Francis, recognisably based on William Godwin. Mary Hays had been deeply inspired by Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793) and had enjoyed many rewarding philosophical discussions with him, before venturing to write her

48 Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 189.

novel.⁴⁹ In *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, the author dwells on Emma's empowering, intellectual conversations, and walks, with Mr Francis. This was a way for Hays to present William Godwin's philosophy of 'reason' and to counterbalance her reliance on Helvétius's belief in the benefits of 'passion'.⁵⁰ The couple's spiritual exchange is, however, poignantly misconstrued and requires Emma to clarify that Mr Francis is to be regarded 'as a *philosopher* and not as a *lover*'.⁵¹ De Meulan appears to have had no wish to reproduce Hays's ideal of intellectual comradeship between the sexes. However, the inclusion of a kind and consoling, slightly older, man did have its appeal. Consequently, the role of being forty-something, with a keen and observing (Godwinian) eye, was transferred to another of the original characters. Ironically, the figure that inherits this role and, one must add, whose personality needed to be reconstructed in the process, is Dr Montague. He is a man with a violent streak, whom Hays's Emma marries with a disastrous outcome. Under de Meulan's command, however, Montague re-emerges as a dependable and supportive figure with whom her Emma can form a happy union after 1,000 pages of borrowed plots and intricacies.

To compensate for the exclusion of Mr Francis, and to maintain the balance of numbers in the original Emma Courtney's close circle, the translator filled up the void by appropriating a mildly ridiculous side character, the timid and ultra-conservative Mr Pemberton, turning him into a loyal and concerned admirer with a major role in the story. Through the alterations made to the male characters just mentioned, we can observe how, with the obliteration of a Godwinian figure, Radical thinking was completely suppressed in de Meulan's text.⁵² Furthermore, through the transformation of the remaining two men, we can witness the application of a policy of forbearance, whereby Montague's viciousness is turned into goodness, and Pemberton's lack of confidence is remoulded into dependability. It is significant, that despite the many male characters de Meulan had at her disposal from her immense supply of literary sources, she chose to preserve Augustus Harley, Doctor Montague and Mr Pemberton – as though, as an author, she wanted to underscore her power to transform them and to render the characters more functional within her own de-radicalised framework.⁵³

49 *The Correspondence (1779–1844) of Mary Hays, British Novelists*, ed. M. L. Brooks (Leicester–Queenston–Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 363–469.

50 Cf. Helvétius, *A Treatise on Man*, vol. 2, 396.

51 Hays, *Memoirs*, 78.

52 Shelley Charles has pointed out the resemblance between Tyrrel, the villain from Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams* (1794), and the French Emma's persecutor, M. Harriot. See Shelley Charles, 'Quest-ce qu'un roman anglais', 292–295.

53 Shelley Charles has also identified male characters from novels by Frances Burney, Henry Fielding, Ann Radcliffe, and Samuel Richardson. See Charles, 285–287.

Doubtless, to readers familiar with Mary Hays's original novel and supportive of her commitment to the promotion of women's rights, a translation that emerges as an abnegation of its forerunner presents itself as a form of 'cultural imperialism'.⁵⁴ To de Meulan's own readers, *La Chapelle d'Ayton, ou Emma Courtney* was just an exciting and lengthy description of an imagined English community. It was an undertaking pervaded with playfulness and creativity. Keeping together and integrating a large set of stories from various sources and fitting them into one communal diegesis was an impressive achievement. Thematically reversing the plot, her focus had been to deepen and to vivify Hays's characterizations. Promoting a perception of a literary work of art as a composite world, reliant upon extra-diegetic narration and character transparency, de Meulan had also endeavoured to create a form of fiction that was entertaining rather than distressing. In consequence, she provided a happy ending for her French heroine, through the marriage to Montague. Even though, by this time, Augustus has vanished from her story (murdered by a villain), de Meulan returns to him on the last page, as though wanting to acknowledge her debt to the original story:

Auguste n'est point oublié, son nom fait naître toujours une faible rougeur sur le visage d'Emma; mais il n'est pas mort pour elle: un sentiment plus fort que sa raison le lui représente comme veillant autour d'elle, et témoin invisible de tous ses movemens [sic]; cette idée entretient en elle une douce sérénité. Si quelquefois la mélancolie venait s'emparer de son cœur, Emma connaît les moyens de se distraire; elle a le courage de les employer: elle redouble d'activité pour le bonheur de ce qui l'environne; le nuage se dissipe, Emma peut dire encore : je suis heureuse.

[Augustus has not been forgotten, his name still makes a faint blush appear on Emma's cheek; yet, he did not die because of her: taken over by an emotion more powerful than reason she imagines him watching over her, an invisible witness to her every movement; a notion filling her with mild serenity. If ever her heart is taken over by melancholy, Emma knows how to divert herself and has the power to do so: she is filled with energy to make others happy; the clouds disappear and once again Emma can say: I am happy].⁵⁵

De Meulan's ending establishes her central character's well-being and moral peace. In the original, Mary Hays's Augustus also dies at the end of the novel, after consigning his son, young Augustus, into Emma's care. Although Mary Hays's ending appears sad, as a visionary of future improvement, she shifts the interest of the action from the private to the public sphere. For, when it comes to achieving equality between the sexes, Hays sets her hopes on the doings of young Augustus, and, by extension, of the young men of generations to come:

54 Eva Hemmungs Wirtén, *Trespassing: Authorship, Intellectual Property Rights and the Boundaries of Globalization* (London: Toronto University Press, 2004), 40.

55 De Meulan, *La Chapelle*, 267.

But men begin to think and reason; reformation dawns, though the advance is tardy. Moral martyrdom may possibly be the fate of those who press forward, yet, their generous efforts will not be lost. – Posterity will plant the olive and the laurel, and consecrate their mingled branches to the memory of such, who daring to trace to their spring's errors the most hoary and prejudices the most venerated, emancipate the human mind from the trammels of superstition and teach it *that its true dignity and virtue, consist in being free*.⁵⁶

In *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, the heroine desperately tries to reach dialogue on equal terms with men. This is a scenario actually founded on the author's own experience from an infatuation engendered by a letter she received from William Frend on 16 April 1792.⁵⁷ In this letter, Frend praises Hays's competent handling of theological issues and invites her (something unusual for a woman) to participate in the debate on the forms of worship of the Unitarian Church together with its leading members.⁵⁸

Memoirs of Emma Courtney was born out of Mary Hays's vision of a world without slavery, of female emancipation, and of education available to girls as well as boys. Despite the ideological differences between the original author and her translator, there was one concern that united them and that was the fate of generations to come. They both continued their careers by writing educational stories for the young, de Meulan under her married name of Guizot.⁵⁹ Several of the latter's works, some intended for both parents and children, have remained popular and are still in print, for example *Nouvelles et Contes pour La Jeunesse* [Short stories and fairy-tales for the young] (1827), which reappeared as recently as 2016.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the scholarly editing and republication (2013–2014) of Mary Hays's six-volume *Female Biography* from 1803 (an encyclopedia of women from the antiquity to her own time) is proof of how extraordinarily alive the works of both these writers remain in their respective countries today.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Hays, *Memoirs*, 221.

⁵⁷ Frend was impressed by Hays's *Cursory Remarks on an Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship: Inscribed to Gilbert Wakefield, as Eusebia* (London: Thomas Knott, 1791).

⁵⁸ William Frend, 'To Eusebia' (16.04.1792) in *The Correspondence (1779–1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist*, ed. by Marilyn L. Brooks (Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 269–271.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Mary Hays, *Harry Clinton or a Tale of Youth* (London: Johnson, 1804) and *Historical Dialogues for Young Persons* (London: Johnson, 1806); Pauline Guizot, *L'Ecolier, ou Raoul et Victor* [The Young Student or Ralph and Victor] (Paris: Chez Ladvoctat Libraire, 1821) and *L'Education domestiques ou Lettres de Famille* (Paris: A. Leroux et Constant-Chantpie, 1826).

⁶⁰ Pauline Guizot, *Nouvelles et Contes pour la Jeunesse* (Miami: Hardpress Series, 2016).

⁶¹ Mary Hays, *Female Biography* (1803) (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013–2014) is an encyclopedia of women through history from all over the world, famous or unknown, often talented within the area of the humanities.