



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Research Programs application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/research/awards-faculty-hispanic-serving-institutions> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Research Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Charlotte Lennox: A Powerful Mind

Institution: California State University, Long Beach

Project Director: Susan Carlile

Grant Program: Awards for Faculty

Project Description-Charlotte Lennox: A Powerful Mind: It is only very recently that scholars have begun to understand that women writers in eighteenth-century England could be innovative. For the last two hundred years it has been thought that they were constrained by their time and place simply to reproduce what their male counterparts were already publishing successfully. Most scholars believe that this period in English history was very limiting for a woman's mind and that any form of intellectual expression primarily happened within the domestic sphere. More recent scholarship, especially Betty Schellenberg's *The Professionalization of the Woman Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2005), is beginning to question this assumption.

The eighteenth century is compelling today because its definition of Enlightenment informs current understandings of Western democracy, and, like today, feminist concerns in the eighteenth-century lagged behind other manifestations of "enlightened" progress. Women's writing thus was able to show that universalized claims were, in reality, simply masculine claims. The middle years of the British eighteenth-century were a time of shifting values and perspectives, and these new ideas and attitudes were represented most intimately in the literary marketplace. Literacy was expanding at a much greater rate, novels were beginning to be valued as a genre for respectable intellectuals, and mass-produced periodicals were exploding in production and popularity. Into this new world of nascent modernism, Charlotte Lennox (1729/30-1804), a Londoner hard on her luck, found an arena open in unprecedented ways to her seventeen publications. In six different genres, Lennox shunned convention and rendered familiar critical categories obsolete, becoming a pioneer in many of the genres that she undertook and being described by contemporaries as having a powerful mind.

This fellowship would allow me to complete the critical biography *Charlotte Lennox: A Powerful Mind*. This prolific London author worked at the cutting edge of debates about literature and gender during the Enlightenment. Her diverse background and independent spirit allowed her to launch a literary career that put her at the heart of many of the most important literary discussions: the development of the novel, the role of Shakespeare as a literary hero, the transnational exchange of literary works between England and the continent, women's access to playwriting careers, as well as the role of periodicals for an increasingly literate population. During Lennox's lifetime her novel *The Female Quixote* was an enormous success throughout Europe. Today it is still popular for its humor, unique perspective on women's power in the mid-eighteenth century, and sophisticated critique of the genre of the novel. In addition, she is the author of five other novels, five translations, three plays, a book of poems, one periodical, and a critical work on Shakespeare. Born in Gibraltar, Lennox led a transient and liminal childhood, accompanying her military father, her mother, and two siblings, and settling from the ages of eleven to thirteen in the colony of New York. At thirteen, she was sent back to England without her family and found herself without a reliable guardian. All of Lennox's novels present heroines with an unusual degree of self-sufficiency and self-respect, qualities that describe Lennox herself. Her accessibility as an author significantly expanded in 2008, when three of her novels—*Henrietta* (1758; University Press of Kentucky, 2008), *Sophia* (1761; Broadview, 2008), and *Euphemia* (1790; Broadview, 2008)—were published for the first time in modern editions. These novels join two others—*Harriot Stuart* (1750; Fairleigh Dickinson, 1995) and *The Female Quixote* (1752; Oxford, 1989)—already widely used in classrooms. Also, for the first time all of Lennox's extant correspondence will be published by Bucknell University Press this year. There is no doubt that Lennox's moment has arrived.

With these publications it becomes even more apparent that there are significant gaps in our understanding of Lennox's literary career, and of her innovative contributions to a large number of genres. Previous biographical writing about Lennox appropriately documents the significance of the fact that she established a career as a writer in the early years of professional authorship, published the first narrative that challenged the masculine perspective of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and drew from her three years living in America for her first and last novels. Along with these accomplishments it is often asserted, for example in the main biographical works on Lennox—Miriam Small's *Charlotte Lennox* (Archon, 1935, Yale 1969), Gustavus Maynadier's *Charlotte Lennox, The First American Novelist* (Harvard, 1949), Phillip Séjourné's *The Mystery of Charlotte Lennox* (Faculté Provence, 1967)—that she was an interesting, yet minor player on the literary stage. These monographs, all over fifty years old, were

primarily interested in Lennox's identity: her gender, attempts to conceal her personal life, and her youth in the forts of Albany and Schenectady. They do not take Lennox's skill as a writer or as a marketer of her work as a primary consideration, nor do they show how and why her work was not only pervasive in London, but throughout Europe. Also, they did not have the benefit of a cache of forty-five letters published in 1970-1. Since then another twenty-seven letters, which I have access to, have been found.

Even today critical assessments of Lennox's literary output are predominantly interested in her most popular work *The Female Quixote*, and a few essays address *Shakespeare Illustrated*. However, no scholarship to date takes into account her wide-ranging and unique literary output. Her subtle ability to depict strong female heroines in her novels and her innovative approach in a variety of genres, including literary critique, dramatic writing, and early periodical writing/editing, are worthy of far more consideration. For example, Lennox's *Sophia* can be considered the first novel by a major English novelist written specifically for publication. This critical biography will also elucidate Lennox's impressive skill at adapting genres with a sharp eye for the literary marketplace and her nimbleness at working within the constraints put on women who dared to sell their writing. Instead of offering a study of Lennox's personality and motivation, *Charlotte Lennox: A Powerful Mind* focuses on this writer's pioneering publications and her unique perspective as an outsider. Not being a member of the Bluestockings allowed Lennox to develop another version of the female intellect. Studying Lennox through transatlantic and feminist interpretive frameworks brings to light Lennox's sharp intellect and offers illuminating details about her career; for example that her works were translated into eight different languages and published in ten countries in Europe and America by 1850 and the fact that she collaborated with Samuel Johnson in their research on Shakespeare, rather than simply worked as his assistant, as has been commonly asserted.

Six of the nine chapters of this critical biography are completed in first draft. These proceed chronologically and use Lennox's works, the genres in which she wrote, and especially her letters, which speak to each period of her literary career, as focal points. "Poet and Actress," details Lennox's early literary formation in poetry and drama and shows that her recent experience in the New World shaped her critical notions of the world of British literature. Then, "Harriot Stuart, as Herself" highlights the complex nature of Lennox's first novel, which suggests autobiographical elements reflecting Lennox's years in Albany and Schenectady. "A Treatise on Difference in *The Female Quixote*" argues that Lennox's Arabella is in fact a reflection of "the other," and thus the foreign, and criticizes strong imperialistic sentiments at mid-century. "From Page to Stage" addresses Lennox's original publication strategy of turning her own novel *Henrietta* (1758) into a play, *The Sister* (1769). Research for this chapter was completed thanks to a summer fellowship at Chawton House Library, Hampshire, England. A comparison of her novel and play reveals her unorthodox position on patriarchy when she writes for the stage. Next, "Cultivating the Female Mind" details how Lennox the journalist designed a magazine that sets aside fashion and marriage advice to create a curriculum that debates the methods for fostering female intelligence. This chapter was completed thanks to a one-month joint fellowship from the British Academy and the Huntington Library. "Euphemia: Transatlantic Reflections," chapter eight, analyzes Lennox's thoughts at the age of sixty about the characteristics of a life well-lived. In the novel *Euphemia* the vexations and moralizing effects of poverty and the intimacies and disappointments of motherhood become catalysts for social commentary.

Plans and Goals: Against the backdrop of my twenty-year history researching and writing about Lennox, which includes establishing Lennox's birthdate, bringing *Henrietta* to contemporary light, and proving that women novelists played a significant role in the novel's development at mid-century, this year-long fellowship will allow me to complete three main tasks: finish two chapters, write the last one, and polish the entire manuscript. I have collected all the primary material I need for this research in libraries in England and the US; including The Bodleian, Cambridge University Library, the British Library, the Public Records Office, the Greater Metropolitan Archives, the Sheffield Library, the Beinecke, the Huntington, and the Clark. The remaining work can be done with the material that I have

ready access to, either in photocopy form (such as Lennox's correspondence), or at the Huntington Library and the Clark Library, both of which are near my home in California and where I am a reader.

In January and February I will revise the chapter "Challenging the Sacred Canon," which continues my study of the plays that Lennox annotated in *Shakespeare Illustrated* (1753-54) compared to the same ones that Samuel Johnson annotated in 1765. In my preliminary study of three of the plays, I found that Johnson, often referred to as "the father of English literature," borrowed significantly from Lennox's assertions for his own edition. This finding does not conform to the current critical consensus that Lennox was encouraged to compile her commentary as an aid to Johnson. Because there is significant disagreement between Lennox and Johnson, the current critical consensus no longer seems likely. The degree to which Lennox disagrees with Johnson's edition makes this possibility unlikely. Instead, Johnson and Lennox through their respective works carry on a dynamic literary dialogue concerning the great poet. This debate influenced both of them to reconsider Shakespeare's importance for their society and for future generations. In many ways they are at odds with one another concerning the merit of Shakespeare's works. Now I need to study the other seventeen plays that Lennox and Johnson wrote about. From my preliminary comparisons, their dialogue addresses three significant aspects of Shakespeare's writing: invention, probability and characterization, which produces a merging of some of their thoughts and a nuancing of their differences. My new research will either confirm this fact and/or help me to make more subtle distinctions in my argument.

In order to complete "Working the Marketplace," I will study Lennox's translations: *The Memoirs of the Duke of Sully* (1756), *The Memoirs of the Countess of Berci* (1756), *Memoirs for the History of Madame de Maintenon* (1757), *The Greek Theater of Father Brumoy* (1760), and *Meditations and Penitential Prayers* (1774) in March and April. As scholars recognize more fully the larger cultural forces at work in the act of interpreting a text for a different language group, translation studies has become a growing field. Andre LeFevre demonstrates the crucial work of translators, who bring to light prevailing attitudes about otherness. Sherry Simon notes that translators are particularly important because they open up new avenues of communication that contribute to their communities' intellectual and political climates and that the eighteenth century was unique in its high esteem for the creative effort of translators. Not only did Lennox work to bridge cultures through her translations, but she was in fact able to market herself better by producing these works, which often included her name on the title page. I will read these translations next to their originals with French eighteenth-century translation scholar Gillian Dow, who has already agreed to work with me at the Chawton Library, Hampshire, England, where she is a permanent fellow. I already have an established relationship with this research library after a fellowship in 2008. This research will help explain Lennox's priorities in these texts and how she nuanced issues of female intelligence in these popular texts. These results will allow me to complete the seventh chapter, "Working the Marketplace."

In May and June I will analyze a work by Lennox that has been entirely ignored in scholarship, *Old City Manners* (1775), and complete "Fame Rediscovered," the final chapter of this critical biography. This play is an adaptation of Ben Jonson's *Eastward Ho* (1605) and was considered a resounding success, as it appeared on stage eight times and was thoroughly lauded by the reviewers. Lennox's ability to understand the intellectual climate may have been responsible for this success. This adaptation of a successful seventeenth-century play for an eighteenth-century audience sharpens the focus on a number of timely themes that her audience would have been particularly attuned to: religious freedom, human rights, a woman's place in society, human agency, and capitalism. I will analyze these works side-by-side to put Lennox's adaptation work into the context of the eighteenth-century stage and to determine how she understood her audience and why this play, unlike her other two, put her back into the literary spotlight. Finally, in July, August, and September I will polish all of the chapters. In October I will revise my already existing introduction and write the Epilogue. And in November and December I will send out proposals to publishers. Oxford, Cambridge, Johns Hopkins, Ashgate, and Palgrave Macmillan have all expressed interest in this biography.

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