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AP/CCY 4999

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April 12th, 2021

**Lady Ellenor Fenn as Georgian England's *Mistress of Infantine Instruction*: Constructing
EllenorFenn's Bibliographic Legacy to Explore her Pioneering Contributions in the
Realms of Georgian Maternal Pedagogy, Child-Centered Teaching, and Domestic
Education**

Lady Ellenor Fenn (1743-1813), “Mrs. Lovechild”, or “Mrs. Teachwell” was a prolific, creative, and caring late-18th century author whose publications including: *Set of Toys* (ca. 1780), *The Art of Teaching in Sport* (ca. 1790-1799), *A Spelling Book* (1787), *Parsing Lessons for Young Children* (1798), *Cobwebs to Catch Flies [Volume 1]* (ca. 1807-1815), *The Child's Grammar* (1800), *The Mother's Grammar* (1800), and *Fables in Monosyllables* (1783/1970) served to provide the nursery book with a distinct identity, thus solidifying nursery literature as a sub-genre within England's market for children's literature circa 1780-1900 (Delaney 3). Fenn specifically designed her publications to be used in conjunction at home to facilitate a curriculum that teaches English grammar through experiential learning (Hoiem 23-24). To illustrate Fenn's popularity, *Cobwebs* was translated into French by Elizabeth Newbery in 1799 as *Toiles d'araignées pour attraper les mouches* to compete with John Marshall in the late-18th and 19th century market for nursery literature (Delaney 101-102). This market was dominated circa 1780 by female authors belonging to a proto-feminist branch of Rational Moralism identified as Georgian Maternal Pedagogy (Myers 31-33): “qualities culturally associated with women – nurturing, empathy, the habit of thinking in terms of human relationships – are vitally needed in

the larger community” (Myers 43). With this in mind, Fenn’s publications house paratext alongside an intertext that encourage mothers to engage their children in learning through child-directed conversation, play, and amusement using both books and toys, all the while demonstrating her popularity (see *Figure 2*). Fenn’s pedagogy includes a particular methodology for engaging nursery education (ages zero to eight) at home through amusement, guided by a caring mother in possession of a solid moral compass, who observes her child’s readiness for learning (Cajka 139-140; Immel 217-219); an early example of family literacy and experiential learning being put into practice. Additionally, Fenn’s pedagogy puts Locke’s Evangelical vision of children’s nature explored in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) alongside Rousseau’s Romanticized narrative of childhood development articulated in *Émile* (1762) into practice. In effect, Ellenor Fenn has rightfully earned the title: Georgian England’s *Mistress of Infantine Instruction*, and a spot in academia’s male-dominated pantheon of thinkers credited as pioneers for child-centered approaches to educating young children for meaningfully nuancing Rational Moralism pedagogy. This is because Fenn’s oeuvre served to carve out a distinct identity for the nursery book (Delaney 31). Also, her work amalgamates popular theories of education (the Evangelical and Romantic models of childhood) into practice by creating a child-directed *methodology* for Language Arts education that emphasizes the salience of experiential learning, family literacy, home-based education, cultivating children’s emergent literacy, and parent-engagement (Immel 217-219; Cajka 139-140; Hoiem 16-24).