

Eng 149 (Fall 2005)
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Masculine vs. Feminine

In the 1825 *Literary Souvenir*, Hemans delivers a poetic representation of a mother's dedication to her child in "The Mother and Child":

Where art thou, Boy?– Heaven, heaven! the babe is playing
Even on the margin of the dizzy steep!
Haste–hush! a breath, my agony betraying,
And he is gone!– beneath him rolls the deep!
Could I but keep the bursting cry suppress'd,
And win him back in silence to my breast!

Thou 'rt safe!– Thou com'st, with smiles my fond arms meeting
Blest, fearless child!– I, *I* have tasted death!
Nearer! that I may *feel* thy warm heart beating!
And see thy bright hair floating in my breath!
Nearer! to still my bosom's yearning pain, –
I clasp thee now, mine own! Thou 'rt here again! (64)



Richard Polwhele's contribution, "To a Young Lady Playing at Chess," to the 1834 *Forget Me Not* (325) equates the strategies of an intellectual game with the strategies of becoming the proper married woman. In the title, the young lady does not even engage in chess but plays "at" it, as if a child's game. The final stanza declares:

And now, in stale-mate or in scholars,
Whether you play for love or dollars,
The game may terminate:
And, though your labour thus you lose,
You get your head from out the noose:
But marriage is – *check-mate!* (326)