

Chapter 4: “‘My sister, my friend, my ever beloved’: Queer Friendship and Asexuality in *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*”

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Abstract: Frances Sheridan’s *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* is a stark examination of the trauma caused by compulsory sexuality: the novel’s heroine repeatedly attempts to find happiness in marriage, yet these efforts continually lead to misery and disaster. Throughout the novel, Sidney expresses discomfort regarding any romantic feelings she experiences and allows her family to guide nearly all the decisions she makes. Though she consents to marriage, she prefers to live a life free from its pressures, constantly longing to return to the joyful youth spent with her best friend Cecilia – a relationship that centers upon foreclosed queer potential. Reading the novel with attention to asexual impulses and critiques of compulsory sexuality emphasizes the asexual potential that Sidney expresses in her letters, embodied in both their content and form.