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CONVENTION AND INNOVATION IN CHARLOTTE SMITH'S NOVELS

by

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## Preface

Undertaken as a critical study of Charlotte Smith's novels, this dissertation includes very little information about Smith's life. I refer those interested to F. M. A. Hilbish's Charlotte Smith: Poet and Novelist for an extensive biography, albeit one that too often uses episodes in the novels that seem autobiographical as if they were. Although access to Smith's novels is difficult, careful plot summaries of all the novels are to be found in the appendix to Carrol L. Fry's dissertation, "Charlotte Smith, Popular Novelist." I have not therefore duplicated his altogether commendable labor.

Two other remarks on sources and decorum are in order. First, observations about the art of fiction made during the eighteenth century are so difficult to locate, spread as they are throughout the novels as well as the literary criticism of the period, that I have found several recently-issued anthologies of excerpts and reprints an inestimable aid. What is more, collected and assembled, fragmentary comments begin to fit together into a pattern. Second, Smith's novels are familiar to so few readers I felt justified in sometimes quoting at length and sometimes providing rather lengthy explanatory footnotes.

The titles of Smith's novels have been abbreviated and appear in parentheses whenever cited. I offer here a chronological list of complete titles and of their abbreviated forms.

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 1788 | <u>Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle</u> (Em)     |
| 1789 | <u>Ethelinde, or the Recluse of the Lake</u> (Eth) |
| 1791 | <u>Celestina. A Novel</u> (C)                      |

- 1792 Desmond. A Novel (D)  
1793 The Old Manor House (OMH)  
1794 The Wanderings of Warwick (WW)  
The Banished Man (BM)  
1795 Montalbert (Mont)  
1796 Marchmond: a novel (March)  
1798 The Young Philosopher: a novel (YP)

Finally, my thanks to Robert A. Day, Wendell S. Johnson,  
Coleman O. Parsons, and Joan Nichols for their respective contributions  
to this study.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Chapter	
I. Charlotte Smith: Writing in and About Eighteenth-Century England . . . . .	13
II. Purpose and Means: Characterization, Style & Structure . . . . .	55
III. Eighteenth-Century Backgrounds . . . . .	98
IV. Characterization and Setting: Sensations and Emotions . . . . .	165
V. Characterization and Setting: Reason, Imagination and Point of View . . . . .	201
VI. Characterization and Stylistic Strategies: Feelings and Sentiments . . . . .	246
CONCLUSION . . . . .	289
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	300

## Introduction

Few good writers have been so misread, badly read, or perhaps scarcely read at all as Charlotte Smith has, and especially by those twentieth-century critics whose opinions are most influential in directing attention toward or away from eighteenth-century novelists. Adverse or condescending criticism of her novels falls into several distinctive categories: she is either tagged as a hurried and inattentive craftsman, a sentimentalist, or a writer of melodramatic adventures and badly-managed Radcliffian romances.

James R. Foster's dictum has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. A review of secondary sources of information about this novelist is likely to convince a curious reader that "her works are dead, and justly so."<sup>1</sup> Were it not for a few fascinating observations by J. M. S. Tompkins in The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 and by Philippe Séjourné in Aspects généraux du roman féminin en Angleterre de 1740 à 1800, there would be little indication that anything about her fiction merits attention. Only those who, like Allene Gregory in The French Revolution and the English Novel, are interested in her relationship to political radicals who wrote didactic fiction in the 1790's treat her work with something of the respect it deserves; it is unfortunate that the nature of this kind of reading is primarily extra-literary, because it might have influenced critical opinion in Smith's favor.

Certainly among the most prestigious sources of information about Smith's fiction is the volume by W. L. Renwick, English Literature, 1789-1815, in The Oxford History of English Literature. Renwick's

criticism is evidently affected by a notion of lady novelists<sup>2</sup> that has little to do with Smith. Concluding an otherwise caustic appraisal, Renwick distinguishes Smith's work from that of her female contemporaries by noticing in it a vitality and shrewdness which he seems to identify with a crude and perhaps vulgar virility. He observes that

though the suggestion would have horrified her, she, alone among these women novelists, reminds one of Smollett--many characters pursuing their own interests, an endless flow of incidents, much movement, and few illusions about human nature.<sup>3</sup>

Renwick speaks about what he finds admirable in Smith's novels as if it were an accusation of indelicacy to notice the scope, novelty, and pertinence of Smith's subject matter. The first two chapters of this dissertation offer evidence that the insights and opinions of an urbane adult inform her novels. Smith's experience and her convictions set her apart from the "lady novelists." She was neither ingenuous nor finicky enough to write as they did. She intended to write about meaty subjects precisely because she found the pap regularly fed to female readers, usually by female writers, objectionable.

Renwick's opinion of Smith's technical competence is that she "wrote unhampered by any notions derived from drama or moral essay, or, for that matter, any theories about the nature and conduct of narrative."<sup>4</sup> Although Renwick asserts that there are "few criticisms from which she could be absolved," it seems to me that the charges lodged against her might as easily apply to any number of reputable eighteenth-century novelists. He claims that Smith's

narratives proceed without balance, proportion, or economy, perfunctory at real turns of action and at other times unnecessarily particular in details, full of elaborate but

obviously contrived coincidences, and sometimes impeded by interpolated histories which at best merely add to the general gloom and at worst are merely intrusive. . . . Character, where it exists, is black or white; and goodness is strictly rationed to one shingly virtuous character in a family, the rest being villainous or foolish or dissipated.<sup>5</sup>

It would seem that Renwick's impatience with any sprawling novel that is not primarily dramatic in structure prevents him from seeing what is artful in Smith's fiction.

Another critic of considerable stature, Alan McKillop, has found in Smith's novels too much "facile sentiment and extravagant romance."<sup>6</sup> McKillop himself subsequently published evidence that Smith served up sentiment and romance reluctantly. In a letter written in 1804, the allegedly sentimental and romantic novelist, at the age of fifty-five, tells of a novel she started, and then

I threw it by and said--it is time to have done--write lullabies for thy Grandchildren but dont twaddle about love with spectacles on thy nose. . . . However now that my lullabies are done, I took out again my old Novel, and really I dont think it very foolish, and it is as little loving as may be.<sup>7</sup>

"Facile sentiment and extravagant romance" were and still are the rule in popular fiction; sentiment and romance are common in good fiction. Precisely where one draws the line between sentiment and sentimentality cannot be decided without reference to the literary milieu within which any particular fiction appears.

In historical context Smith's novels are extraordinary for how little weeping and swooning appears in them. McKillop acknowledges that "Mrs. Smith's heroines show some discrimination and restraint";<sup>8</sup> however, the case in her defense should be argued more assertively. Her heroines are sometimes in such acute pain that they are incapable of crying:

e.g., Mrs. Glenmorriss (YP), forced to bury her dead infant in "something-like-a-coffin" placed in unconsecrated ground, "deposited him . . . without shedding a tear--[She] could not shed tears--" (YP, II, p. 124). The language is quite as dry as are Mrs. Glenmorriss' eyes. The reader is invited to feel her pain; he is not invited to weep. This is not to deny that there are sentimental, even maudlin, scenes in Smith's novels. They are there, but by eighteenth-century standards they are remarkably muted.

Another influential critic who has not been happy with Smith's novels is James R. Foster. In the History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England,<sup>9</sup> his purpose is to identify and locate specifically "pre-romantic" strands in novels that may or may not be romantic in quality or intent. Perhaps a certain amount of distortion is inevitable in surveying a large number of novels in order to illustrate a single fancied line of "development" within the genre, but Foster's treatment of Smith's novels is both unfair and unreliable. His plot summaries are misleading because, reporting only those parts of the novel that are "pre-romantic," they do not attempt to compensate for inevitable distortion by at least summarily describing the quality and effect of the work as a whole. They are unreliable because the facts about the plot (and even the names of characters: e.g., Fitzedward for Fitz-Edward, Adeline for Lady Adelina) are often wrong and because Foster's bias, the presupposition that the novels are on the whole fatuous, leads to reprehensible glibness.<sup>10</sup> Thus in Emmeline, according to Foster, "Delamere finds [Emmeline] and runs away with her. Soon, however, he is forced to free her because of her nervous condition."<sup>11</sup> This description

scarcely does justice to what the reader might not recognize as a forced abduction, a melodramatic commonplace that Smith ironically discredits in this novel, with both implicit and explicit reference to literary precedents.\*

Foster's attitude toward Smith herself is patronizing. After reporting that "the bleeding Swan of Bignor Park" carried "the burden of bringing up her dozen children under the untoward conditions caused by their father's proclivities for squandering his money, getting into debtor's prison, or flying to France to escape prosecution," he adds that "the melancholy sonneteer who wondered if the beauty of the South Downs could bring peace to her tortured breast" in fact struck a "romantic pose [that] was fashionable at the time among her poetizing sisters, and she found it quite flattering."<sup>12</sup> Then, presumably giving Smith her due, he offers these observations as a corrective:

Yet she was not by any means all pose. She was really intelligent and talented. In her youth she must have been very attractive. She was a blonde, had a pretty retroussé nose of patrician mold, and her eyes, although near-sighted, were large and blue. Later in life she had to restrain a double chin and general plumpness.<sup>15</sup>

Observations like these scarcely seem relevant. One wonders what kinds of curious turns critical appraisal of George Eliot's fiction might have taken had she been pretty and a blonde.

Although some appreciation of Smith's accomplishments as a writer crops up as Foster reviews her work, the tenor of his piece on Charlotte Smith sustains the impression created by its biographical

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\*See Chapter VI, pp. 253-58.

introduction. The image of Smith that emerges is of a shrewish blue-stocking whose political radicalism was frequently merely a way of justifying tasteless carping. According to Foster, her novels are too often vehicles for "advertising her personal grievances"<sup>14</sup> against her husband in particular and lawyers in general (although Foster does not explain her hostility toward the legal profession<sup>15</sup>), and for representing herself as habitually enduring anguish like that of her distressed heroines, and just as elegantly.

As for the quality of the novels, Foster grants that they stand midway between novels in the sentimental tradition and substantial works of social criticism like Bage's (although "lacking the wit and humor one finds in Bage"). But, observing that her "chief subjects are romantic loves and female distresses," he seems to suggest that the "romance" in her novels is more often than not both conventional and exploitative.<sup>16</sup>

Just as damaging to Smith's literary reputation as the three studies already mentioned, the obligatory bow Smith gets in all studies of the Gothic novel (and consequently in all studies of Austen's Northanger Abbey) is usually so condescending that it deadens curiosity about her novels themselves. First it is necessary to say, as Anne Henry Ehrenpreis does, that those "literary historians who try to 'place' Charlotte Smith as a Gothic novelist do so only by ignoring three-quarters of her work."<sup>17</sup> Radcliffe drew on certain of Smith's contrivances (e.g., smugglers taken to be ghosts) and certain of her technical innovations (e.g., the use of landscape to create mood). But the gestation process that led to the romantic Gothic novel was idiosyncratic

to Ann Radcliffe.

Grim terror has a very real place in Smith's novels, but murky horror appears infrequently. The most Gothic of Smith's novels is Montalbert, which opens as social satire in style, tone, and subject matter. The reason the novel changes direction, first in an inserted narrative and then in the main plot, and veers toward romance is explained by Smith as a way of diffusing the pain she felt watching her favorite daughter die.<sup>18</sup> That may well be true.

It is also true that the Mysteries of Udolpho appeared a year before Montalbert. The inserted narrative at the beginning of Montalbert is Radcliffian. It is perhaps imitative, certainly undistinguished. The misery and horror in the main story is, however, of a different order. The plot is extraordinarily macabre and quite improbable. Having secretly married Montalbert, Rosalie inadvertently makes herself the object of an intrigue of the kind Italian Catholics presumably employ--witness, Jacobean tragedy up through Otway--to abrogate indissoluble marriages. Rosalie survives incarceration and calculated torment. However unrealistic the circumstances, the horror and obdurate determination to survive are grimly and chillingly realistic.

Rosalie's enemies are ruthless. Because they want to dispose of her as effectively as possible short of murder, the treatment she receives is evil at its most frigid. She must will her own survival or succumb to the debilitating effects of terror and despair. Rosalie's capacity for endurance is at the center of the Gothic apparatus. Even if Smith's daughter could not will her own survival, Smith transferred the gruelling and unsentimental struggle to her heroine, who wards off--

albeit within a Gothic fortress--physical and psychological disintegration.

The Gothic mode in Smith's novels has a broader range both of styles and of applications than it does in Radcliffe's. In Montalbert and in The Young Philosopher\* the gothic castle has symbolic reverberations. At the other extreme, the interpolated narrative at the end of Celestina (1791) is a swift, blunt account of villainy and intrigue, remarkable solely for its astonishing plot. It is supposed to have influenced the Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), but it has closer affinities with Matthew G. Lewis' The Monk (1795). A set piece almost arbitrarily attached to the novel, it is about a father's sinfully intemperate pride and abuse of power, Jesuits and their machinations, women imprisoned in convents, and so forth (except of course that Smith does not treat sexuality in the way Lewis does). The gothic castle is variously the source of comedy in Emmeline, the last vestige of feudalism in The Banished Man, a sign of former grandeur now ruined in Marchmont, and in Emmeline and Desmond an anachronistic but romantic setting. To suggest that Smith's importance is as Radcliffe's immediate source is both to say too little and to imply too much about her relationship to the Gothic school.

It is necessary to deal at length with the notion that Smith is a Gothic novelist because a curious series of borrowings among literary critics is responsible for perpetuating this misconception. Since Mary Lascelles<sup>19</sup> pointed out that a heroine like Catherine Morland (Northanger Abbey) might have been conceived of as an ironic inversion of heroines

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\*See Chapter VI, pp. 235-38.

like *Emmeline*, there has been a tendency in subsequent studies toward asserting that Austen, in parodying the Gothic novel, is also parodying one of Smith's Gothic novels, *Emmeline*. Lascelles in fact never said that Smith was a Gothic novelist, nor that *Emmeline* is a Gothic novel. It is only by means of invalid inferences that Smith becomes a Gothic novelist for critics who read Lascelles and subsequently for all those who read Austen criticism. Because many more students and scholars read about Austen than read about Smith, there is a general feeling among those who know her as a novelist that Smith was a kind of second-string Radcliffe.

Typical is Frank W. Bradbrook's *Jane Austen and her Predecessors*,<sup>20</sup> in which four pages are devoted to links between Austen and Smith. Bradbrook does not point out that Austen admired Smith's novels, and he makes no mention of the possibility that Austen learned something about the craft of fiction from Smith. Most of his assertions are wrong because he presupposes that Austen satirized anything she might have got from Smith.<sup>21</sup> Bradbrook claims that "Charlotte Smith's main contribution to fiction was to the Gothic Romance," bolstering his case by quoting J. M. S. Tompkins but again inferring a good deal more than is legitimate from Tompkins' observation that the first heroine to run through the halls of a Gothic castle is *Emmeline*. He concludes that

Charlotte Smith's fiction was only of use to Jane Austen in providing burlesque material for *Northanger Abbey*. The relationship with Ann Radcliffe was the more complicated, including a much greater degree of sympathy and identification.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, the reverse is more likely to be the case. A careful study of the literary relationship between Austen and Smith might indeed be a

significant contribution to Austen studies.<sup>23</sup>

The most recent study of Smith's novels<sup>24</sup> is Carrol L. Fry's "Charlotte Smith, Popular Novelist." Fry offers a fairly comprehensive review of twentieth-century critical opinions of Smith's fiction, from which it is evident that she usually gets little more than mention in standard literary histories although "many of those who have written about her novels have briefly noted that she was an influence on one or more phases of the fiction of her day."<sup>25</sup>

Fry's interest lies in what is representative of the period in her novels; he discusses her treatment of sensibility, of the sublime and the picturesque, of the gothic mode, and her social criticism. He perceives her novels as incorporating elements, either for the first time or earlier than most other writers, that are common to the English novel during the 1790's. He recognizes and documents specific innovations, e.g., the use of landscape, that subsequently became normative. His is an interesting and instructive study of Smith's relationship to the esthetic and social ideas of her society insofar as they appear in her fiction.

Fry's is a fair treatment of her novels, based on a fair reading. His final observation is that "the best reason for reading a Charlotte Smith novel is that she is the best novelist of the period between the death of Smollett and the publication of Waverley."<sup>26</sup> It is a claim I too believe should be made for her.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>James R. Foster, "Charlotte Smith, Pre-Romantic Novelist," PMLA 43 (1928), 475.

<sup>2</sup>As sketched by Allene Gregory, the typical lady novelist "worships the proprieties. Whoso offends against decorum comes straightway to an evil end. Even heroines languishing under a false accusation get small sympathy from the author. They should have been more cautious in avoiding the very appearance of indiscretion. And yet the Lady Novelist has a Christian charity for a handsome, rakish heroes if they promise to reform in the last chapter.

Her favourite virtues are the domestic ones: filial and parental affection, wifely submission and fidelity, patience, good nature, economy, charity to the poor, devoutness in religious observance. These she thoroughly understands and never tires of illustrating" (The French Revolution and the English Novel [1915; rpt. Kennikat Press, 1965], pp. 191-92).

<sup>3</sup>Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>6</sup>"Allusions to Prose Fiction in Jane Austen's 'Volume the Third,'" N & Q, 196(1951), 429.

<sup>7</sup>"Charlotte Smith's Letters," HLQ, 15 (1952), 246.

<sup>8</sup>"Allusions," p. 429.

<sup>9</sup>1949; rpt. New York: Kraus Reprint Corp! for MLA, 1966.

<sup>10</sup>For reliable plot summaries, see Carrol Lee Fry, "Charlotte Smith, Popular Novelist," Diss. University of Nebraska 1970, pp. 207-232.

<sup>11</sup>Foster, History, p. 243.

<sup>12</sup>Foster, History, p. 239.

<sup>13</sup>Foster, History, p. 240.

<sup>14</sup>Foster, History, p. 239.

<sup>15</sup>F.M.A. Hilbish's published dissertation, Charlotte Smith: Poet and Novelist (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941), includes an extensive biography, documenting a legal battle to claim

Smith's father-in-law's estate that ran from 1777-1807 and was finally settled six months after her death. She died at 56, forty years after her marriage, and "after twenty years of single-handed support of her ten children with the later addition of at least three grandchildren; and after over ten years of a most tedious and painful illness" (p. 215).

<sup>16</sup>Foster, History, p. 240.

<sup>17</sup>Introd., Charlotte Smith, The Old Manor House (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), xi.

<sup>18</sup>See Hilbish, pp. 177-82.

<sup>19</sup>Jane Austen and Her Art (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 59-60.

<sup>20</sup>Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.

<sup>21</sup>For example Bradbrook says that "Emmeline and Delamere discuss 'the Sorrows of Werther,'" and suggests that the conversation in some way shows Smith's sympathy for Werther-like sensibility (p. 105). Austen in fact would not have had reason to quibble with Smith's attitude toward Wertherian despair. The relevant part of the conversation begins when Delamere warns Emmeline that, if she knows Werther's story, she knows "the danger of trifling with violent and incurable passions. Tell me--could you ever be reconciled to yourself if you should be the cause of a catastrophe equally fatal?" Emmeline "answered gaily--'O, I fancy there is very little danger of that--you know the value of your existence too well to throw it inconsiderately away.'" (Em, II, p. 171). Sentimental heroines do not twit supplicating lovers in this way.

<sup>22</sup>Bradbrook, p. 105.

<sup>23</sup>See for example the interesting possibility suggested by Richard Gill (Happy Rural Seat: The English Country House and the Literary Imagination [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972], p. 245) that, "perhaps taking a cue from Charlotte Smith's Old Manor House, Jane Austen . . . brings to perfection the contrapuntal device of employing houses as morally symbolic foils" in Mansfield Park.

<sup>24</sup>Hilbish's is the most comprehensive.

<sup>25</sup>Fry, p. 27; see pp. 21-27.

<sup>26</sup>Fry, p. 204.

## CHAPTER I

### Charlotte Smith: Writing In and About Eighteenth-Century England

Most late-eighteenth-century novels have been all but ignored by twentieth-century scholars and critics. Although antiquarian interest has led some literary historians to read and report on some of them, such studies tend to confirm disparaging opinions expressed during the nineteenth century. Insofar as the kinds of novels written at the end of the eighteenth century are not quite like the kinds written during the nineteenth, they have all too often received cavalier and condescending treatment. Those whose tastes in fiction have been formed by Austen, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and Eliot are highly critical of what is either too sweet, too dry, or too bitter in novels of this period.

Nevertheless a substantial number of often remarkable novels appeared just before the turn of the century and just after one of the most significant temporal boundaries in modern history: the period of the French Revolution. These novels are coeval with the fervor of the revolutionary period and with the ferment out of which Romanticism developed. Inasmuch as any writer belongs to and reflects the ideas and opinions of his time, novelists publishing during the 1790's belong to a time during which ideas and opinions, as well as individuals and nations, were extraordinarily active and protean. These qualities are reflected in the energy and variety of their novels. It was a discomposing, dislocating, belligerent, and anxious time. Complacency

such as the nineteenth century too often cultivated was virtually impossible for a literate and intelligent individual. At a time when little was certain or secure, the endeavor to reach for even the most tentative of notions about the relationship between the way things are and the way they ought to be was unnerving and seldom wholly gratifying. It was a period of idealism and disappointment, of anxiety and alienation like that in our own century. Conventional political and religious beliefs, values and institutions seemed unstable and/or questionable, as did customary social and economic roles, relationships, and structures. Ideological commitment was suddenly possible, and almost as suddenly suspect. The need to grasp what change meant as quickly as change happened, the need for new footholds as the old ones collapsed, was so pressing that the word "original" came to mean something newly fashioned as well as something rooted in the past. Because it became necessary to replace so much that was so steadily being lost, creativity, an inexhaustible source of meaning and value, began to seem as important as precedence and orthodoxy. As of 1792, something "original" might be produced "by or proceeding from some thing or person directly; not derived or dependent."<sup>1</sup> During this period, the notion of genesis always in the present and hence always in process became a bulwark against disillusion and despair.

Many serious and "original" novels were produced during the 1790's. Originality and novelty became in fact a serious matter in prose fiction at that time. The word "novelty" is often used in criticism during this period to designate an amusing and frivolous, but unprecedented or unexpected, literary ploy. Yet even when the word

is used in this way, the context within which it appears is revealing. To recommend originality that is solely playful is to take a position toward what else is a commendable function of novelty--of, in fact, immediacy and relevance--in prose fiction. Among serious writers the most important and obvious function of originality is to capture, interpret, and present some aspect of human life that is new in the world, new to the reader, or new to the novel.

If among the many who published during the last years of the eighteenth century Charlotte Smith was one of the most prominent, her status was conferred in large part because she was "original" in precisely the ways that mattered most during the 1790's. She was a consistently innovative writer. For Sir Walter Scott, it is "her invention, that highest property of genius,"<sup>2</sup> that first and foremost merits praise. Although she wrote within the tradition as she received it, she modified conventions she took from sentimental fiction and the novel of manners, often in ways that are quite as significant as her true innovations. She introduced new and reintroduced old methods and materials. Cumulatively her modifications and innovations are what earned her the recognition she immediately received. During the period between 1788 and 1798, she had ten more or less successful novels on the market.<sup>3</sup> Yet so much about Smith's novels is dated that the modern reader must be prepared to cross formidable barriers in order to gain access to what is valuable in them.

In part because Smith was so very good at pleasing the tastes of her contemporaries, her novels did not always please those of

nineteenth-century readers.\* For one thing, the same convergence of literary and colloquial language that Smith, among others in the 90's, first essayed continued so successfully that very early in the next century her syntax and diction began to seem more ponderous than elegant. What there is about her style that dates her novels is not, however, as important as the change in taste that was in progress at the turn of the century. For the generation of readers who grew up conservative during the Napoleonic wars, her novels are too eclectic, too dense, too ambiguous, too depressing, and too suggestive. Increasingly rigid notions of social and literary decorum characterized the next generation of fiction-readers, precluding widespread appreciation of novels as disturbing as most of hers are. The demand during the first decades of the next century was for an exciting, interesting, amusing, but comfortable form of fiction: Maria Edgeworth's and Sir Walter Scott's. Even the distressed heroine was for a space spared the worst of agonies so that the reader would be spared the pain of sharing them. The historical romance and a reinvigorated novel of manners (proper and moral manners this time) made for good and pleasant reading. Their popularity pushed even the best fiction of the 1790's so far into the shadows that generations of twentieth-century students have been certain that it was a decade when nothing happened in fiction more serious or significant than the maturation of Gothic romance.

Only very recently has Charlotte Smith begun to receive the kind of recognition she deserves. Critics have usually been less than kind to her although some, J. M. S. Tompkins among them, have suggested

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\*See Chapter VII, pp. 289-94.

that her work is of fairly high quality. The most sensitive of recent readers, Philippe Séjourné, has come closer than any other historian of the novel to recognizing the distinctive quality and the merits of her work. He points out that, because of her serious concern for social issues,

elle passe du monde de Fanny Burney et de Cecilia à celui de Mary Hays et de Mary Wollstonecraft. Mais il faut lui reconnaître un tout autre mérite qu'à ces deux femmes: celui, malgré la violence de ses jugements, d'avoir cherché à faire oeuvre d'art, d'avoir su associer dans ses romans la peinture de la nature, l'intérêt de l'intrigue, celui du mystère et du gothique, celui enfin de la vérité sociale.<sup>4</sup>

There is in Smith's novels, as Séjourné notes, a gathering in and regeneration of old conventions and a constant generation of new ones that make her work uniquely and significantly of its time and an important station in the history and development of the novel in England.

Charlotte Smith's novels preserve and transmit a quality in prose fiction, what Séjourné calls "la vérité sociale," that is very like the quality Smollett captures, and one that was not much valued immediately after the turn of the century. It is this quality that makes Smith's work so distinctive, and so unlike what one expects in novels of this period.

Smith worked with and through conventions common in eighteenth-century sentimental fiction. The central plot of Desmond, for example, might well be what George Eliot is describing in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" when she says that the typical heroine

as often as not marries the wrong person to begin with, and she suffers terribly from the plots and intrigues of the vicious baronet; but even death has a soft place in his heart for such a paragon, and remedies all mistakes for her just at the right moment. The vicious baronet is sure to be killed in a duel,

and the tedious husband dies in his bed requesting his wife, as a particular favour to him, to marry the man she loves best, and having already dispatched a note to the lover informing him of the comfortable arrangement.<sup>5</sup>

Only two features of Geraldine Verney's situation in Desmond differ from the other salient features Eliot mentions as requisites of the typical silly plot. The novel begins, not when Geraldine enters society, but when she is already married, a phenomenon rare enough to have been considered a novelty of its plot even though originated by Henry Fielding in Amelia. Secondly, Geraldine is never seen to sparkle as the reigning beauty and wit of her social set, nor is she ever seen so comfortable provided for that "we have the satisfaction of knowing that her sorrows are wept into embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs" and "th . t her fainting form reclines on the very best upholstery."<sup>6</sup> The Verneys' financial straits keep Geraldine at home; opulence is far beyond them.

For all that threatens to become maudlin in a plot otherwise quite close to Eliot's summary, the tendency of the novel is nevertheless away from excessive sentimentality. Eliciting pity is in this novel a means rather than an end. The reader's pity for Geraldine is not supposed to become awe at virtue's transcendent capacity for self-immolation--the intent of the Griselda motif. Rather it is supposed to become indignation on her behalf and on behalf of all victims of institutionally authorized oppression. And these emotions are supposed to motivate critical insight into wrongful and inhumane presuppositions that are used to rationalize servility on the one hand and to justify privilege on the other.<sup>7</sup>

Geraldine Verney's story is played off against the French Revolution. The domestic tyranny of which she is the victim is treated as analogous to political tyranny in France. Hence the reader is forced to consider, insofar as he is sympathetic to her sorrows and distress, whether she should be submissive or rebellious.\* The subplot of the novel suggests an alternative to submission. It centers on a woman whose situation parallels Geraldine's, but who refuses to accept the terms of her marriage with Geraldine's docility.

Josephine de Boisbelle leaves her husband (as Smith herself did) and, while under the protection of her brother, Montfleuri, enjoys a brief affair with Desmond. Her virtue is not, like Geraldine's, inviolable. For Josephine, honor and integrity demand an assertion of one's worth and independence. Her audacity and ardor cast a none-too-flattering shadow over Geraldine's diffidence and chastity. Geraldine is scarcely willing to admit to herself that she resents her husband's treatment of her, let alone risk the consequences of resistance. And, although she cannot bring herself to acknowledge the nature of her feelings for Desmond, Smith makes it quite clear that her friendship with him is not entirely disinterested. Compared to Josephine's resolution, Geraldine's resignation begins to seem suspiciously masochistic.

The final effect of Desmond derives from its ironic structure. Since a happy ending for Geraldine is achieved at Josephine's expense, Josephine's bitter lot is a nagging reminder that all such stories need not end as the conventions of sentimental fiction dictate. Although

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\*See Chapter VI, pp. 276-79.

Geraldine is a "distressed heroine" and suffers as nobly as any of her breed, the reader is finally not altogether certain that abjection is an heroic posture. The disposition of subject matter--the contiguity of two such similar stories--raises questions about the relationship between resignation and integrity in a morally responsible individual, even when that individual is a woman. And the political arguments that weave through the plot force the reader to consider the conventions of sentimental fiction as an extension of the same questionable tenets that make for injustice in the government of families and nations. Were parts of this novel taken out of context, they would certainly seem to typify eighteenth-century sentimentality. In context, familiar formulas are surrounded by topical issues; the unexpected juxtaposition invites novel, illuminating insights into old conventions and, in this instance, a critical reassessment of them.\*

Just as Charlotte Smith uses sentimentality in her novels, she also uses melodramatic and Gothic effects. Suspense and the exquisite, melodramatic misery that Gothic heroines endure were the vogue during the 1790's, and it can be said in her justification only that when Smith did a description or episode designed to be sensational it usually served some purpose over and above granting the reader the joys of terror.\*\* There is about her novels something like the kind of pleasure in the grotesque that one finds in Dickens' novels. As in them, it mitigates what is purely atmospheric horror for most of the Gothic school. What

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\* See Chapter III, pp. 125-26.

\*\*See Chapter V, pp. 206-10.

is a rarefied sublimity in Radcliffe's novels is in Smith's a more substantial, more tactile, order of Gothic environment.

Also as in Dickens' fiction, Smith's pleasure in the grotesque leads to a particularly mordant kind of satiric caricature, which she too uses as a peculiarly charged method of characterization. Smith introduced a grasping lawyer, Mr. Roker, as an ideal model, should a painter require one, for

the most detestable character in Pandaemonium, where, on the brow, villainy sits enjoying the misery it occasions--where every rascal vice, concealed by cowardice and cunning, are mingled with arrogance, malice and cruelty--where a nose, the rival of Bardolph's, depends over a mouth "grinning horribly a ghastly smile,"--and scornful eyes, askance, seemed to be watching, with inverted looks, the birth of chicanery in the brain--this fiend-like wretch would have been a fine study. His shambling figure appeared to have been repaired with straw and rags, since it had suffered the depredations of the gibbet (OMH, IV, 441).<sup>8</sup>

Roker is one of the very few truly evil men in Smith's novels. He is also a very minor character. Smith rapidly sketches a "vice" figure, using his grotesque appearance to express what is perversely vicious in him. Minor characters like this lawyer are, treated in a grotesquely Gothic manner, immediately substantial and animated, just as Gothic episodes in Smith's novels are the more substantial and less ethereal for being somewhat grotesque.

Insofar as Charlotte Smith's novels are in various ways voguish for the 1790's, they are dated: most especially by their sentimentality and Gothicism. She could and did cater to the current taste for suspense and terror, for sentiment and fantasy, but not always out of choice. Smith herself anticipates part of the modern reader's sense that something is fatuous about the novels of her time. She complains, in the

"Avis Au Lecteur" to The Banished Man (1794), that in novel writing "as in every other species of composition, there is a sort of fashion of the day. Le vrai . . . or even le vrai semblance, seems not to be the present fashion" (I, xi). Had fashions been otherwise, her novels might have been more "realistic" and her achievements more readily recognized. Realism was not, however, what her readers wanted.

Smith preferred to write about the world she knew and, when she did not know enough about, for example, the geography of the American colonies, she did research on the subject.<sup>9</sup> It was the knowledge she brought to her novels that accounts for what is one of the most impressive and distinctive of their qualities. The novels offer a picture of the world she lived in, both as she saw it and as she knew others saw it. She presents precisely the kind of picture of her society that John Moore, in A View of the Commencement and Progress of Romance (1797), wishes had been drawn to supplement histories of Greece and Rome which dwell "chiefly on wars and affairs of state."<sup>10</sup> He would like to know more about how private citizens lived and what they thought, and asserts that "modern romances are or ought to be a representation of life and manners in the country where the scene is placed."<sup>11</sup> Information about contemporary life and thought in France takes up considerable space in his novel Mordaunt (1800), as it does in Smith's Desmond (1792). That Smith holds as much as she can to the program Moore maps for the novel is evident in her work. Also, she wrote more novels encompassing more kinds of material than did Moore, or any other novelist at the time.

Charlotte Smith's range of subject matter is impressive by any standards, even those applied to the far-ranging and almost indiscriminately

voracious novels of adventure--including the adventures of itinerant objects--written during the middle and late eighteenth century. Among the subjects of interest in what a recent study has identified as distinctly masculine novels, history,

war, social mobility, violence and sex . . . were logical thematic concerns for writers in an age of empiricism when man, shorn of innate ideas, had to learn about the world through his contact with external reality.<sup>12</sup>

These too are among Smith's subjects, and the reader learns a great deal about them when he enters the world of a Smith novel. Her treatment of such subjects is serious and the method by which they are worked into the texture of her novels is skillful. On balance, hers can scarcely be considered mere sentimental novels. A brief review of the scope of her subject matter and the variety of treatments it receives will serve, better than any discursive summary, to convey the intelligence and artistry with which she brings her knowledge of the world into her novels. The evidence shows Smith dealing with the hardest issues of her day with a judicious reserve not typical of any novelist of the period, male or female; it also shows her recording the abrasive, petty comedy of personal and social concourse, and projecting the quotidian factuality of a nettlesome world.

The most significant historical event of her time was the French Revolution. Desmond, as has already been noted, incorporates a large body of information about events in France just before 1792 and about British attitudes toward these events. It also includes a lecture on circumstances leading to the French Revolution that is very like what the twentieth-century reader would expect to find in a reputable journal

written for laymen, or, somewhat after the fact, in a textbook. In a letter Desmond recounts to his friend in England, Bethel, a conversation with Montfleuri, his companion and host during a stay in France. Montfleuri is an aristocrat who is sympathetic to the spirit of rebellion, if not to its excesses. He has in fact already reformed his own estate, anticipating and precluding violence among his own dependents by correcting abuses and amending inequities in the traditional agrarian system. His reforms have been successful because he understands the causes of disaffection so completely, as he demonstrates in explaining them to Desmond. He goes as far back in time as the reign of Henri III, and concentrates on the policies and practices of subsequent monarchs insofar as they affected the quality of life in France.

There is nothing naive about the political analysis that accompanies Montfleuri's history. He takes into account for example the influence of "Mary of Medicis" and her party on her son, Louis XIII, to explain that a gesture that might seem to have been democratic in intent was in fact made to conciliate a faction among the elite:

The early part of the reign of the weak and peevish bigot . . . , Louis the Thirteenth, was marked by a faint attempt to restore something like a voice to the people, by a convocation of *les etats generaux*.

But this was rather an effort of the nobility against the hated power of the Italian favourites, the Conchinis, than meant to restore to the people any part of their lost rights (D, I, 87).

So conscientious an historian is Smith that she informs the reader in a footnote that this particular session was the "last assembly of that description that was called in France " (D, I, 87n).

Montfleuri traces iniquitous economic policies that originated during the reign of Louis XIV and persisted during the reign of his successor, when

the sums . . . extorted from the hard hands of patient industry, were either expended in disgraceful and ill-managed wars, or lavished in the debaucheries of the most profligate court that modern Europe has beheld. From the infamous means that to support all this, were then practised to raise money; from the heavy imposts that were then laid on the country, France has never recovered; but perhaps, in the discontents which these oppressions created, silent and unmarked as they were, the foundation was laid for the universal spirit of revolt, to which she is now indebted for her freedom (D, I, 89-90).

Having reviewed both the political and economic history of France up to the time of the American war, Montfleuri observes too that the intellectual heritage of Voltaire, Rousseau, Turgot, and "the application of [Turgot's] political maxims and economical systems" by Mirabeau

excited a spirit of enquiry, the result of which could not fail of being favourable to the liberties of mankind; and such was the disposition of the people of France, when the ambitious policy of our ministry sent our soldiers into America to support the English colonists in their resistance to the parent state (D, I, 90).

According to Montfleuri, dissidence at home was one of the ramifications of so imprudent a foreign policy on the part of the French government. Because members of the French ruling class were

blinded by that restless desire of conquest, and their jealousy of the English, which has ever marked its politics, our government did not reflect that they were thus tacitly encouraging a spirit subversive of all their views; nor foresee, that the men who were sent out to assist in the preservation of American freedom, would soon learn that they were degraded by being themselves slaves; and would return to their native country to feel and to assert their right to be themselves free (D, I, 91).

Smith, by means of Montfleuri, offers her readers a concise essay on the political, economic, intellectual and military circumstances in

France that invited rebellion.

The history of the French Revolution becomes a part of the novel because it is part of Montfleuri's personal history. His ethical and ideological disposition is established by means of this lengthy discourse. His moral and political principles are reflected in his treatment of his sister, Josephine, as well as in the enlightened management of his estate. Montfleuri understands Josephine's reasons for leaving her husband. They are for him as cogent as--and analogous to--the reasons for deplorable but not necessarily unjustified insurrection on the part of political dissidents. Because Montfleuri first shows himself to be a sensitive and enlightened member of his society, his humane treatment of his sister's lover is consistent with his character. He does not hold Desmond responsible for having seduced Josephine. Rather he accepts Josephine's admission that she, lonely and unhappy, initiated the affair. He treats the lovers as a man of reason ought to; he is not motivated by inherited prejudices. Montfleuri's long lecture on the history of France is therefore integral to the novel as an important adjunct to the other devices by means of which he is characterized; it is also the means by which Smith introduces the subject of history into a novel that does not treat masculine interests as intrinsically different from feminine ones.

Had Smith written about a conventional seduction, Josephine's brother would have been obliged to challenge Desmond in defense of Josephine's honor; the obligation of a brother to avenge his sister's lost honor is one of the most typical melodramatic high points of eighteenth-century fiction. Minor novelists relied on it all too often,

but even Fielding, Smollett, and Smith herself used the convention because it allowed for a sentimental treatment of the woman in question, torn by conflicting emotions, even though the duel itself is a virile, martial encounter. Instead Smith offers in Desmond a man who does not feel bound by the aristocratic code of honor. Montfleuri reasons for himself and is guided by his own conscience. He is prepared to understand a relationship that offers mutual consolation for two consenting adults so long as the liaison ends before it becomes a public scandal. Montfleuri does not condone the affair, but the lovers are forgiven. Smith thus inverts one of the most abiding conventions of romantic fiction, explaining Montfleuri's behavior as an extension of his political philosophy.

Nor did Charlotte Smith treat foreign wars as a subject of no interest to those who could not serve in them. The subject of war is important, either immediately or peripherally, in four of Smith's novels. What she knows about military campaigns is avowedly at second-hand; she cites reputable sources whenever she reports the circumstances and conditions of military operations. For the most part war makes its presence felt when her characters think about it or are affected by it.

Battle itself usually receives cursory treatment. In The Old Manor House (1793), Orlando, who serves with British forces fighting the colonial rebellion in America, is wounded early in the one bloody encounter of his short-lived military career; he is unconscious during most of the action. The remainder of his American experience is as a captive, travelling with a band of Indians toward Canada. By means of scenes he witnesses and his reflections, Smith raises moral questions

about the purpose and conduct of the American Revolution. In fact war is made a moral issue in this novel much as it is in some twentieth-century fiction.

The bestiality rather than the glamour of the American war is Smith's subject. The leader of a band of Indians employed by the British as mercenaries carries in evidence of his service to the cause

eleven scalps, some of them evidently those of women and children, others of very old, and consequently defenceless men; many of them fresh, which he said, with an air of triumph, he had taken from the enemies of the King of England within three weeks (OMH, III, 360-61).

Smith does not pause to lament the slaughter of innocents, as a sentimental novelist might be expected to. Instead she refers her reader to "Ramsay's History of the American Revolution," which she cites in a footnote, and to the "Annual Register for 1779" for corroboration that this was a war waged ingloriously. She uses examples of Indian brutality to elicit from her reader a considered criticism of national policy toward the colonial wars.

Smith returns to the subject of whether England has been altogether prudent in its choice of allies when Orlando's party is attacked by a band of Indians, and Orlando, the sole survivor, is befriended by one of them. "Wolf-hunter" is as noble a savage as Smith dares draw. He is by no means innocent of the barbarity he was raised to practice. Smith's Indians are far from sympathetic, even if Wolf-hunter derives in part from the literary stereotype Rousseau--and later Chateaubriand--sentimentalized.<sup>15</sup> During the time when Orlando travels with Wolf-hunter's party, the Indian is kind enough to spare women and children at Orlando's request when he, as second in command, can prevent

his comrades from killing them or taking them captive. What he does is so much for friendship's sake that it is hard to imagine that he would do quite as much out of native chivalry and sensibility, even though he is supposed once to have spared a woman on his own initiative. Smith holds the British government responsible for employing barbarians, and doubly culpable for condoning rather than controlling their barbarism.

The government is shown to be guilty too of reprehensible dishonesty in dealing with such volatile and unpredictable mercenaries. Wolf-hunter explains to Orlando that his party attacked Orlando's camp because

the English had not dealt fairly with them--that they were promised provisions, rum, and plunder, instead of which they got nothing in the English camp, but had lost some of their best men in defending the lines; and that, the English having thus deceived them, they were no longer their allies, but were going home to their own lands, determined to plunder the stragglers of whatever party they might meet in their way, to make themselves amends for the loss of time, and the heavier loss of brave warriors that had perished from believing the promises of the great English Captain (OMH, II, 378).

The ruthless murder of Europeans by the Indians is in part the result of a morally irresponsible government policy that employed them as combatants in the first place and that then gave them cause for vengeful and promiscuous reprisals. Smith is in this instance fair to the Indians, but she is not at all inclined to mitigate or falsify barbarity by misplaced sentiment.

The decision to make allies of the American Indians and subsequently the failure to give them their due are not the only ignoble aspects of British policy in the Revolutionary War aired in the novel. Smith uses Orlando's experience to show that English soldiers as well as

Indian warriors were exploited. Conditions under which the army was transported were of necessity less than ideal, but Orlando realizes that they might be considerably better were it not for the influence of those who stand to profit from the war. Before the crossing is over, Orlando concludes that he has no

great reason to admire the integrity of the subordinate departments, to whom the care of providing for troops thus sent out to support the glory of their master was entrusted. . . . Musty oatmeal, half-dried pease, and meat half spoiled before it has been salted down, would in any situation have occasioned diseases; and when to such defective food, their being so closely stowed and so long on board was added, those diseases increased rapidly, and generally ended fatally. But it was all for glory. And that the ministry should, in thus purchasing glory, put a little more than was requisite into the pockets of the contractors, and destroy as many men by sickness as by the sword, made but little difference in an object so infinitely important; especially when it was known (which, however, Orlando did not know) that messieurs the contractors were for the most part members of parliament, who under other names enjoyed the profits of a war, which, disregarding the voices of the people in general, or even of their own constituents, they voted for pursuing (OMH, III, 148-49; italics mine).

Smith distinguishes between what Orlando knows about the circumstances that make for such vile conditions as those on board his ship and those a young and ingenuous provincial gentleman cannot know. She herself has no illusions about whose interests were served by the war. So unsentimental is her treatment of the American Revolution in this novel that no character who has first-hand experience of it perceives the war as a romantic adventure; it is for all of them a nasty business. There are many gradations in levels of sophistication among those who know something about the nature of the British engagement in the colonies and, in this novel, Smith shows many of them.

Just as there are many degrees of political sophistication about

any war, there are many degrees of political naiveté. Smith offers, too, a sampling of uninformed popular opinion. A non-commissioned officer with whom Orlando serves is not at all interested in the issues at stake. When Orlando talks to him about his growing doubts that the British cause is a just one, Fleming answers that, before he embarked for the colonies, he heard

a great deal of clamour upon the subject; and it has been called a war upon the people, and therefore an unpopular war.--I am no politician, nor do I desire to enter into a discussion about taxation and representation, which these fellows have made the ground for their resistance. There is no end of the nonsense that may be talked in favour of their rebellion, nor the pleas of the ministerial party. For myself, as I was brought up in the army, I have always cut the matter very short--the sword is my argument; and I have sold that to my King, and therefore must use it in his service, whatever and wherever it may be pointed out to me (OMH, III, 358).

Smith is as unhappy at moral abdication on the part of individual soldiers as twentieth-century writers are, although Fleming is treated sympathetically. His education is inadequate for nice discrimination among moral and political issues; and he is economically dependent on what he earns as a soldier. Like Wolf-hunter, he is a tool of his society and reflects its morality.

Those who wish Jane Austen had been interested enough to show provincial attitudes toward the Napoleonic wars might look to Charlotte Smith's novels for evidence of what the provincial population thought about the American Revolution. There is Mrs. Rayland, an old and old-fashioned member of the gentry:

accustomed, from early impressions, to high ideas of the military glory of her ancestors, and considering the Americans as rebels and round heads, to conquer them seemed to her to be not only a national cause, but one in which her family

were particularly bound to engage.--She had contemplated only the honours, and thought little of the dangers of war. The trophies that surrounded the picture of her warlike grandfather Sir Orlando, and the honourable mention that was made of his prowess in the family annals, seemed to her ample compensation for a wound in his leg, which had made him a little lame for the rest of his life. Of Orlando's personal danger, therefore, she had, as he expected, no apprehensions, and was rather desirous he should justify her partiality to him, by emulating the fame of the heroes of her family, than afraid of what might happen in the experiment (OMH, III, 329).

If Mrs. Rowland's attitudes are comic because they are archaic, there is nothing amusing about the ignorance and naiveté that support Orlando's mother's unquestioning patriotism.

Smith uses Mrs. Somerive to illustrate the kind of uninformed and uncritical chauvinism and complacency that dominated provincial notions of the war. Mrs. Somerive,

having heard only one side of the question, and having no time or inclination to investigate political matters, . . . now believed that the Americans were a set of rebellious exiles, who refused on false pretences "the tribute to Cæsar," which she had been taught by scriptural authority ought to be paid. Thus considering them, she rejoiced in their defeat, and was insensible of their misery; though, had not the new profession of Orlando called forth her fears for him, she would probably never have thought upon the subject at all--a subject with which, at that time, men not in parliament and their families supposed they had nothing to do. They saw not the impossibility of enforcing in another country the very imposts to which, unrepresented, they would not themselves have submitted. Elate with national pride, they had learned by the successes of the preceding war to look with contempt on the inhabitants of every other part of the globe; and even their colonists, men of their own country (OMH, III, 246).

Because Smith selects Mrs. Somerive to represent this kind of uninformed assent to national policies, Smith draws on the irony, a poignant one, that such women offer their sons in "tribute to Cæsar." There is nothing poignant, however, about the ironic interaction of

church and state that allows Mrs. Somerive the comfort of her complacency. Smith points out that the church is influential in eliciting assent to nationalistic policies, and that imperialistic chauvinism filtering back into the provinces brings with it a callous, an un-Christian attitude toward both native and English colonials.

How safe from scrutiny the dubious morality of an imperialistic foreign policy may be is demonstrated by Mrs. Somerive's moral myopia. She hopes that in some unspecified way Orlando will make his fortune in the army. Fortunes in fact were not made on army pay: according to his uncle, Orlando's commission brings him roughly half a crown a day. Fortunes might be made from the spoils of conquest. The spoils of the American war, however, would have been scanty even if the British forces were victorious; the American colonies made for poor plunder. The rewards were negligible for a young man like Orlando serving in this war. If military service were lucrative, and if Mrs. Somerive knew how hopes like hers are realized, she would undoubtedly have qualms about whether Orlando (a clergyman's son) should make his fortune this way. Ill-informed as she is, her attitudes are easily influenced in favor of official policy. Smith shows, by means of Mrs. Somerive, the genesis of attitudes that are exactly what much later generations point to in condemning British imperialism.

Just as Charlotte Smith takes a hard, unsentimental look at the American war in The Old Manor House, she also records in this novel smoldering hostilities at home. Smith perceives connections between war and social mobility, hence an increase in inter-class friction during the late 1770's.<sup>14</sup> Movement among classes had been a long-standing possibility

in England, but such movement had been comparatively slow and had followed traditional patterns facilitating relatively smooth transitions from one class to another. At the end of the eighteenth-century, the movement became jarring enough to claim a great deal of attention. Competing class interests, evolving out of the economic ramifications of the American war, made for such obvious friction that the fact of social mobility began to carry political overtones. Thus Mr. Stockton, who buys the estate closest to Mrs. Rayland's, is rich because his "father having had very lucrative contracts in that war which terminated in 1763, had left his son a minor with a fortune, which at the end of a ten year's minority amounted to little short of half a million" (OMH, I, 36).<sup>15</sup> Stockton's wealth demonstrates how profitable national policy can be for mercantile interests. Existing manorial rights and privileges cannot compete with the rights and privileges such enormous cash resources can buy.

Smith captures the quality of the socio-economic threat, insofar as Mrs. Rayland herself appreciates it, in her complaint that "poultry, if she had by accident occasion to buy it, was double in price; that the prime sea fish was carried to the Castle [now Stockton's]; and more money demanded for the refuse, than she was accustomed to give for the finest" (OMH, I, 37). Mr. Stockton is the cause of a local inflation in prices that is in fact, as Smith also points out, more taxing on the income of poor members of the community than on Mrs. Rayland's. Her pride is at first more painfully affected than her purse. Even so it is the money economy Stockton represents that threatens the status and hence the power of the hereditary gentry.

In Charlotte Smith's time it was difficult to assess how much the new money would affect the national character. The character of England as a nation, an extension of the nature of an ideal British gentleman, was a matter of genuine pride. A class of landholding gentlemen, the ubiquitous gentry, was almost universally perceived as the moral fibre woven both synchronically and diachronically through English society. Inflation was hardest on the small landholder; how extensively inflationary policies would influence landholding in general was a matter of grave concern even among radical political thinkers in England. Any diminution of the pervasive presence of land-holding gentlemen within British society was viewed with alarm.

The congruence of mercantile interests and national policies which makes it possible for men like Stockton to buy estates in Mrs. Rayland's neighborhood is indirectly responsible for the aggrandizement of her servants; hence the stability of the agrarian class structure is threatened from within. Pattenson, the butler, and Snelcraft, the coachman, are engaged in smuggling, a crime created when laws are passed to protect domestic merchants from foreign competition. Their money comes, in part, from contraband "spirits, tea and lace" (OMH, IV, 473). Traditionally there had been opportunities within the manorial structure for enterprising individuals to make money, a fringe benefit of managerial positions. Added to these, the profits of illegal commerce contribute to an extraordinarily rapid accumulation of wealth, both cash and property, by Mrs. Rayland's servants.

Money alone does not guarantee a change in status; traditionally marriage had been an important part of the strategy that made for successful

upward mobility. Pretensions which are ludicrous are also alarming in a man like Snelcraft, the coachman, who

possessed an infinite deal of cunning, and knew how to get and how to keep money, with which it was his ambition to portion his two daughters, and marry them to gentlemen; and his dealings in contraband goods, as Rayland Hall was only eight miles from the coast, his having the management of the great farms at hand, and his concern in buying and selling horses, were together supposed to have rendered his object of ambition an easy attainment. Of deeper sagacity than [Mrs. Lennard, the housekeeper, and Pattenson, the butler], he foresaw that the time could not be far distant when Rayland Hall, and all the wealth that belonged to it, must change its possessor. It was a plan of Mrs. Lennard and Pattenson to enjoy and secure all they could now, and to be well assured of a very considerable legacy hereafter. But old Snelcraft had farther hopes; and for that reason, though he had at first opposed as much as he could the reception of Orlando and since expressed displeasure towards him, he of late had in his head floating visions of the probability there was that if Orlando came to the estate, he might marry his favourite daughter, Miss Patty Snelcraft, who would have such a fine fortune, and was, as her father believed, the very extract of all beauty (OMH, I, 53-54).

Because Snelcraft is not a gentleman, there ought to be significant differences between his ambitions and those of men who do consider themselves gentlemen. It is disturbing even to Smith that men like Snelcraft have no sense of the proprieties of inter-class alliances, but she recognizes that they are beginning to amass fortunes large enough so that they entertain ideas of promoting their daughters into the gentry.

Snelcraft's ambitions are identical to those of a wealthy clergyman who is a gentleman by education, position, and marriage, but not by birth. His daughter, Ann-Jane-Eliza, has already reached the age of twenty-six without having found a husband. Dr. Hollybourn, having given some thought to the value of Mrs. Rayland's estate, concludes that whichever of the two Somerive sons (Phillip, the eldest, or Orlando,

Mrs. Rayland's favorite)

became master of Rayland Hall, [he] could not fail to become a very proper match for the most accomplished Miss Hollybourn. It was certain that he had always reckoned upon a title for her; but such a deficiency might easily be made up by the successor to such a fortune. What so easy as to change a name by the King's most gracious license? and to renew the old title of Baronet, which had been so long in the family (OHM, II, 188)?

When he notices that Mrs. Rayland prefers Orlando, he confidently addresses her on the subject of a marriage between the young man and Miss Hollybourn, feeling that a daughter of his might aspire even higher.

Mrs. Rayland, however, is not willing to ally her family with that of a man who

began his classical career as a servitor at Oxford . . . [and whose] "brother-in-law the bishop," from whose nepotism his wealth and consequence had been in a great measure derived, was the son of an innkeeper. Though she always spoke highly of his piety, and his high-church principles, she had ever contemned his efforts to make himself be considered a man of family (OHM, II, 194-95).

Mrs. Rayland has given Dr. Hollybourn a place at her table, conceding the fact of social mobility but refusing to acknowledge that he is as yet eligible to marry his daughter to a Rayland; she considers two generations too short a time for the proper assimilation of a new family into the gentry. Dr. Hollybourn in turn feels that his wealth, position and education (i.e., his "manners") warrant even more than the marriage he is willing to settle for. The ironic conjunction of Dr. Hollybourn's condescension and Mrs. Rayland's indignation is part of a larger pattern of irony covering on Orlando, presumptive heir of Rayland Hall.

Mrs. Rayland is oblivious to the more radical possibility that Orlando might marry a woman whose credentials are even less satisfactory

than Miss Hollybourn's. Broader and richer ironies are tapped by means of a set of expectations among Mrs. Rayland's servants surrounding Orlando's marriage. The coachman's daughter has been "educated" and dressed in hopes of snaring Orlando, who has himself selected and educated the housekeeper's niece. Rapid upward mobility is both a hope and a fact even within Mrs. Rayland's household. The Old Manor House is strangely modern for 1793, so consciously does Smith use recently aggravated tensions in the existing class structure as a condition engendering a good part of the drama and irony of her story.

Not only does Charlotte Smith write about history, war, money, and social mobility, but she often writes about work--as sentimental and Gothic novelists do not. Nor does any of her characters embark on a vocational odyssey as Thomas Holcroft's Hugh Trevor (1794-7) does, discovering as he moves from one position to another hypocrisy and corruption in each of the professions. Rather Smith describes gentlemen and ladies at work for wages. She is certainly one of the first writers to describe, even if briefly, white-collar labor as demeaning and enervating drudgery.<sup>16</sup> Glenmorris (YP) has a Scottish estate so unprofitable that he comes to London for training in business. He is

a scholar, a poet, a young man of extraordinary, though somewhat eccentric genius; and on his very first insight into the business of a merchant's assistant, consisting of dry details, of endless accounts, and letters in a sort of bald jargon peculiar to them, he found so little pleasure in the view of being placed from day to day in a kind of railed box, with his legs dangling from a high stool, and his breast pressed against the edge of a desk, while his mind was to be thus chained down, that he would have abandoned the hope of every advantage which he was told might accrue from it, and have determined to content himself on his small patrimony (YP, II, 7-8),

had he not wanted to marry. His inheritance can offer little better

than penury. His pay as a clerk does not in fact amount to enough to buy financial security.

The central predicament in Smith's novels for both the hero and the heroine is often that, being among those who best know how to make use of an inherited "independence," one or both of them are not provided with one.<sup>17</sup> The paradox that paid labor, as a means of earnings one's independence, is in itself an abominable form of slavery is never resolved; the same paradox is in the language and the ethos of the period. Gentlemen and ladies are individuals with a certain kind of education who do not work; they subsist on income produced by investment, usually rents on agricultural property. Those who work are not gentlemen and ladies. Those who have been educated as gentlemen and ladies and who nevertheless work are a social anomaly. For those gentlemen and ladies who wrote and for some of those who read fiction, the subject seems to have been an embarrassing one.\*

Work for wages is a disagreeable subject when it comes up in Smith's novels. It is nevertheless gratifying for the twentieth-century reader to discover in her fiction a portrait of the artist as worker; so circumstantial an account as hers is striking for its modernity. The most prolific novelists of the nineteenth-century--George Gissing of course excepted--avoid describing their own labor; they were in effect "closet workers." Smith was not so nice a lady, nor so ready to underwrite an unctuous form of hypocrisy. She is willing to admit that novel-writing is often a tedious chore, and that the fantasies she is paid to generate

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\*See Conclusion, p. 289-90.

often seem romantic poppycock juxtaposed, as they are for her, to either the crises or the banality of real life. Mrs. Denzil (BM), supporting her family like Smith by writing,

leaves her bed in a morning . . . to go to her desk, from whence she rises only to sit down to a dinner she cannot eat, waited upon by an awkward boy, or a strapping country girl, who stares at madam, "bin as how she writes all them there books that be on the shelf." From this delectable repast, . . . she is not infrequently called on by an honest gentleman, in a brown rough great coat, corderoy breeches, boots, and green boot-garters, his hair curling naturally in his poll, to the great advantage of his shining face; who, with that sort of half bow which a substantial tradesman sometimes makes, as much as to say, "Humpf! for all you are a lady, I know you are poor and in debt"; pulls out a little square wafered letter

asking payment of exactly "sixty-two pounds nine shillings and eleven pence" due for clothing "your young gentlemen." The letter threatens legal action if the bearer--Mr. Thomas Tough!--is not paid in full.

However dismaying Mrs. Denzil's part in it, after a conference with Mr. Tough, she must write a tender dialogue between some damsel, whose perfections are even greater than those

"Which youthful poets fancy when they love," and her hero; who, to the bravery and talents of Caesar, adds the gentleness of Sir Charles Grandison, and the wit of Lovelace. But Mr. Tough's conversation, his rude threats, and his boisterous remonstrances, have totally sunk her spirits; nor are they elevated by hearing that the small beer is almost out; that the pigs of a rich farmer, her next neighbor, have broke into the garden, rooted up the whole crop of pease, and not left her a single hiacinth or jonquil. She knows remonstrance to be vain; or if it were not, that farmer Duckbury cannot restore her bed of sweet flowers.

Such dispiriting losses are not all that undermines her concentration.

Her maid tells her,

as she is assisting her to undress, that John Gubbin's children, over the way, and his wife, and John his-self, have all got the scarlot favor; and that one of the children is dead on't, and another likely to die. She is ashamed of the

concern she felt a few moments before for a nosegay. . . . Compassion for these unhappy persons is now mingled with apprehension for her own family. A malignant fever raging in a dirty cottage, not a hundred yards from her door, gives her but an unpleasing impression to carry to her pillow. . . . With the earliest dawn she sends her servant (her nose well stopped with rue) to enquire at their door how they are. . . . The rest of the day is passed as before; her hero and her heroine are parted in agonies, or meet in delight, and she is employed in making the most of either; with interludes of the Gubbins's family, and precautions against importing the infectious distemper into her own, the farmer arrives toward evening, who had been to the market town and had undertaken to bring her letters.

There are two. The first is from Messrs. Ramsay and Shrimpshire, lawyers acting for the trustees of an estate she is supposed to inherit; they inform her that they will honor no applications for funds until the case is out of Chancery. The second is from her publisher.

Madam,

Am much surprised at your not sending up, as promised, the end of the third volume of the new novel purchased by me. The trade expects it at the time I notified to them that it would be redy; and the printer informs me he shall stand still if not supplied immediately. Must insist on having a hundred pages at least by Saturday night; also the Odd to Liberty, mentioned by you as a close to the same: but I shall change the tittle of that, having promiss'd the trade that there shall be no liberty at all in the present work; without which assurance they would not have delt for the same, Hopin to receive the manuscript (as you have had money thereon) at the time before-named, remain,

Madam,

Joseph Clapper (BM, II, 224-33).

The hackneyed falsification of experience that is all Mrs. Denzil's scarcely literate publisher wants of her must take shape, and rapidly, in spite of anxieties and harrassment that sap her energy. There can be small pleasure in the fact that her poem, the one part of the work crucial to her self-esteem, will be printed so long as it does not too blatantly announce its subject.

Smith's critics, and even some of her admirers, thought such obviously biographical intrusions tasteless. For the twentieth-century reader, they are precious records of a profession that has few documents about early practitioners. Smith's experience as a writer stands in telling contrast to what Jane Austen's must have been, since Austen said that "Composition seems to me Impossible, with a head full of Joints of Mutton and doses of rhubarb"; George Eliot found the scratching of G. H. Lewes' pen an insurmountable obstacle to concentration.<sup>18</sup> Dickens, whose working conditions were probably little better than Smith's early in his career, barely touches on the conflicting demands of art and family life in David Copperfield. David Copperfield often works at home, and joints of mutton are a matter of concern to him because they baffle his wife. In such chapters as "Our Housekeeping" and "Domestic" (Book XV, Chapter 44 and Book XVI, Chapter 48), Dickens is not, however, primarily interested in showing the effects of a domestic pickle on his hero's writing.<sup>19</sup> Not until Gissing's Edwin Reardon (New Grub Street, 1891) is there in English fiction a writer bitterly conscious of the vicissitudes of family life as an endless series of distractions, forestalling and interrupting his work. For Reardon, the situation proves tragic; Smith's Mrs. Denzil sees and describes the ironies of the situation as something of a black comedy. Smith herself, at second remove, positively guffaws at what a "lady novelist" must manage in the course of a working day, sensibility notwithstanding.

Although work has a place in Charlotte Smith's novels, it is only a small one. Paid labor was sometimes necessary, but at the end of the

eighteenth century it was not likely to produce sufficient income to purchase an estate, hence to subsidize respectable gentility.<sup>20</sup> Some of the men in Smith's novels are relatively successful in the professions: the clergy, the law and the navy. None of her women fare well as breadwinners. Those who are forced to work, like Mrs. Denzil, barely scrape by. No woman in the eighteenth century could, after all, train for and enter a profession. As late as 1871, George Eliot reminds her readers in the introduction to Middlemarch that a talented Protestant woman cannot be groomed for achievement because, unlike Saint Theresa, she cannot embark on a socially acceptable professional career. More realistic than trying to earn an independence is the hope of marrying it, and there is no writer, Smith included, who does not grant the point.

Economic considerations are important from the very beginning of the English novel as intrinsic complications of the love plot. However romantic the novel, the importance of securing an income cannot be, and is never, ignored. Without property, usually the hero's, and cash (or the equivalent), usually the heroine's,<sup>21</sup> they will not be allowed to meet at the altar; the narrative structure of most romantic novels for over a century is in fact often deterred by strategies that will provide them with a secure income. There is a tacit formula for an economically sound marriage. J. M. S. Thompkins points out that it is articulated in one eighteenth century novel:

The theory of financial "suitability" is given by Clara Reeve in Sir Roger de Clarendon. A bride should bring her husband a dowry large enough to pay his younger brothers and sisters their portions under his father's will, without altering his own style of living; in this way justice is done and the family prestige preserved.<sup>22</sup>

The husband should, in turn, be able to offer his bride a standard of living that is equal or superior to what she enjoyed in her parents' home. This rule of thumb need not apply if one of the two is rich enough to compensate for deficiencies in the other's assets, but in general it is considered naive to ignore the socio-economic base of marriage. Complications in most love stories in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries usually involve the worrisome possibility that a deviation from the formula will upset the stability and balance of a sound domestic economy.<sup>23</sup> Social circumstances having remained much the same, Smith treats the economics of marriage much as every other eighteenth-century novelist does.

Her treatment of the marriage-market, however, is as much a reaction to the vulgarity of middle-class enterprise as Austen's is. Desmond complains about the attention he receives from "certain amiable gentelwomen between fifty and sixty, who have daughters between twenty and thirty, and who are so good as to be particularly solicitous for my settling in their neighborhood" (D, I, 112). Mrs. Bennet (Pride and Prejudice) is one such gentlewoman; they are in many respects objectionable but they are also functioning in a way that is absolutely necessary. However demeaning the admission is for a woman novelist, relationships between men and women at the end of the eighteenth-century and the beginning of the nineteenth were often governed by financial considerations, as they continued to be well into the twentieth century. Although Smith on occasion writes about sexual relationships in terms of sensuality,\*

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\*See Chapter IV, pp. 185-86, below.

she more often writes about sex as a commodity.

Parental guidance about marriage is often blatantly materialistic in Smith's novels, but guardians are seldom the all-powerful tyrants they are in Gothic novels. In Montalbert (1795), Rosalie's (foster) father\* tells her that she should "appear at assemblies, and try to get a husband . . .; for he wanted to get his girls off his hands as fast as he could" (Mont, I, 10). Rosalie, in turn, refuses "to be dressed up and offered like an animal to sale" (Mont, I, 75). She is indignant that her "mother seems to think it a matter of course." Her (foster) mother's admonition, when Rosalie refuses to marry a boorish suitor, is that she should not "be so blind to [her] own interest, or so deaf to the dictates of common sense, as to throw away, by refusing Mr. Hughson, an opportunity that may never offer again" (Mont, I, 74-75). There is a certain amount of truth in what Rosalie is told. A woman of her refinement would undoubtedly be equally uncomfortable with the alternatives open to her.

Although Austen discreetly makes the reader understand that Charlotte Lucas (Pride and Prejudice) offers, among other services, sexual intercourse in exchange for the respectability and financial security of marriage, whatever humiliation Charlotte may feel is quite private. And Austen does not suggest that lust is a driving force in Mr. Collins's character. Smith's women, on the other hand, typically meet urbane men who want sexual gratification and habitually purchase it. On what seem to be opportune occasions, they are unabashedly

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\*Rosalie is not aware that these are not her real patents until later in the novel.

explicit even in conversation with virginal young ladies. Davenant (Ethelinde;1789), for example, is a very wealthy young man who once courted Ethelinde even though she had no money, and was refused. Somewhat later, after an apprenticeship served in the company of experienced rakes, he frankly informs Ethelinde that her market price has dropped since certain unsubstantiated rumors have tainted her reputation. Nevertheless he still finds her desirable and is willing to come to terms:

I have once in my life been fool enough to offer to marry you; you'll never catch me at that again; for d--- me if I don't settle six hundred a year upon you; and I think that's a devilish handsome price for a girl who has not a sixpenny piece in the world, and a little crack in her character with that story of Sir Edward.<sup>24</sup> Come, come, don't affect all these violent airs; but remember 'tis not an offer you'll have every day. 'Tis not every body has the spirit or the cash to make it (Eth, V, 43-44).

Davenant is certainly blunt enough to pass muster as a credible gentleman in a novel written by a man. His is not the speech of a melodramatic villain but rather of a would-be roué pleased at his own worldliness.

Smith's men are also gentlemen in a civilized country; they seldom find it necessary or desirable to force themselves on a woman. That Davenant solicits sexual favors seems in this novel less offensive than what his patronizing manner implies: that Ethelinde is intrinsically valueless, unmarketable. She ought therefore to be grateful for his magnanimity. What Smith offers in Ethelinde is evidence that every woman of limited means is open to insult; she must expect to be treated as if her sex were something she too will want to use to advantage. After the turn of the century novels do not often record such interviews, at least not when one of the parties is a proper, lady-like heroine.

Charlotte Smith reveals the brutality that lies beneath the surface in polite society, a brutality that is a natural consequence of equating human relationships--sexual relationships in particular--with monetary values. Desmond's uncle, Mr. Danby, knowing something of his nephew's feelings for Geraldine Verney, articulates a point of view about marital and extra-marital relations usually suppressed in nineteenth-century fiction:

If Mrs. Verney has a penchant for Lionel, with all my soul. -- I know very well that if the stupid puppy, her husband, had as many horns as the beast in revelations, he deserves them all, and Desmond has as good a chance as another, with any woman; but I think he's a fool to be at such a cursed expence about it, and then to fancy himself so snug, like a woodcock that hides its head, and believes itself secure, -- Hah! ha! hah! (D, II, 195).

Mr. Danby goes on to share his worldly wisdom with Desmond's friend Bethel in a somewhat more refined tone. The result is if anything an even more callous view of the pecuniary implications of Desmond's relations with the Verneys. Mr. Danby asks Bethel,

when a young fellow lays down between three and four thousand pounds, to release from execution the effects of a man's wife, and stays near a month in her neighbourhood; when he is known to have declined the most advantageous offers of alliance from the families of some of the finest young women in England on her account; and when he is actually, at this time, gone abroad with her; or, however, concealed somewhere or other, how the plague can you suppose the world will not talk? It is well enough known, that Verney is a savage and a scoundrel, who will sell his wife to the best bidder ---- Why don't Lionel offer him her price at once, for now you may depend upon it he'll be sued and Verney will get devilish damages (D, II, 195-96).

Mr. Danby is not worried that Geraldine might refuse. He sees as clearly in his way as Mary Wollstonecraft does in hers that the odds are in favor of acquiescence from a woman who "must be dependent on her

husband's bounty for her subsistence during his life or support after his death--for how can a being be . . . virtuous, who is not free?"<sup>25</sup> Comments on Geraldine Verney's situation in Desmond are as radically feminist in their implications as anything in A Vindication of the Rights of Women, published also in 1792.

Mr. Danby's suggestion for an equitable solution to the problem of Desmond's relationship to the Verneys presupposes the existence of a covert and discreet form of "white slave trade" in upper-class English society.<sup>26</sup> In a novel that is so much about the French Revolution, and so sympathetic to those in France who suffered as a result of the unconstrained tyranny of the French aristocracy, evidence that individuals in England are treated as negotiable property in the manner Mr. Danby suggests becomes part of the larger, political argument of the novel. Mr. Danby's dissatisfaction with Desmond is, at the core, political. He is annoyed that, "instead of sporting his money like a man of spirit, on the turf, or with the bones, [Desmond] goes piping about and talks of unequal representation, and the weight of taxes" (D, II, 194). Sex, like riding and gambling, is for him one of the avocations proper for a man of Desmond's class. Adultery (especially if Geraldine is reluctant) would be a sign of political orthodoxy, as Mr. Danby sees it. As Smith seems to see it, one of the key subjects in the kind of romantic fiction she writes is what, in the twentieth century, is often called "sexual politics" with considerably less justification.

A brief review of subjects that are intrinsic parts of novels treated by literary historians as slight reading, deserving the neglect

they have received, cannot begin to demonstrate how dense the best of Smith's novels are. They are full of information, concrete particulars, about the way things were in England during the 1790's. The world of her novels is one in which personal freedom is contingent on the political, economic, and social terms of a complex society. There is nothing simplistic about the process of selection and abstraction that Smith uses to express intricate inter-relationships by means of the socially significant as well as realistic details of a fictional world.

Nor is there anything simplistic about Smith's political views. For her time and place they are radical but not revolutionary. She is a revisionist, as were most of those English radicals who seemed so dangerously unorthodox in the 1790's. After events in France had demonstrated that the revolutionary movement on the Continent was not going to produce a more democratic form of parliamentary government than England's, Smith was among the first to condemn publicly a cause she had formerly supported; she was not the only writer at the time to admit that his/her enthusiasm had been misplaced. Unlike those of the younger romantic poets, Smith's political vision encompassed all human relationships, and she fully appreciated the economic sources of political power. After 1793, her novels are less idealistic but no less political. They continue to treat political issues, as the earlier novels did, but these are expressed more completely in terms of private relationships that are symbolic of or analogous to public ones. Like any good novelist, she asked more questions than she answered. Her novels are not especially optimistic or comforting, nor from the point of view of a twentieth-century reader are they reductively

pessimistic. Her fictional world is only as difficult a place to live in as the world it imitates.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd ed., s. v. "original," 4.

<sup>2</sup>"Mrs. Charlotte Smith," in Biographical Memoirs, Vol. IV of The Miscellaneous Prose Works (Boston: Wells & Lilly, 1829), p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>According to Alan McKillop, "Charlotte Smith was probably the most popular contemporary novelist in the English-speaking world of the early 1790's" ("Letters," p. 247). Editions of her novels appeared during the 1790's as follows: in 1788, London -- Em (2), Dublin -- Em (1); in 1789, London -- Em (1), Eth (2), Dublin -- Em (1); in 1790, London -- Em (1), Eth (1); in 1791, London -- Cel (2); in 1792, London -- Cel (1), D (2); in 1793, London -- OMH (2), Dublin -- Em (1), OMH (1), France -- D (1); in 1794, London -- Cel (1), WW (1), BM (1), France -- Em (1); in 1795, London -- BM (1), Mont (1), Dublin -- BM (1), [Phila. -- BM (1);] France -- Cel (1); in 1796, London -- March (1); in 1797, Dublin -- March (1); in 1798, London -- YP (2); in 1799, Belfast -- Em (1), France -- Em (1), Eth (1), OMH (1), YP (1). See too the list of reviews, pp. 301-302 below, which suggests, both by the number of reviews for each and the space allocated to each (that is, until 1794-95), that the appearance of one of Smith's novels was a literary event of some significance.

<sup>4</sup>Aspects généraux du roman féminin en Angleterre de 1740 à 1800 (Aix-en Provence: Publications des Annales de la Faculté des Lettres, Nouvelle serie n° 52, 1966), p. 174.

<sup>5</sup>Essays of George Eliot, ed. Thomas Pinney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 302-03.

<sup>6</sup>Pinney, p. 303.

<sup>7</sup>In Studies in the Literary Backgrounds of English Radicalism (1947; rpt. New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), M. Ray Adams points out that the "work of no literary period in English history has been more deeply affected by political discussion and an examination of the principles and conduct of government than the last decade of the eighteenth century. Around Burke's Reflections [on the Revolution in France] developed a whole literature of protest in defense of revolutionary principles" (pp. 506). Desmond is part of the literature of protest; Letter XXIV (D, II) is an essay refuting some of the major arguments in Burke's Reflections. The debate was won by "counter-revolutionary writers" according to R.R. Palmer. For a catalogue of their publications, see The World of the French Revolution (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 210.

<sup>8</sup>For inserted quotation see Paradise Lost, II, 846.

<sup>9</sup>Various sources have been suggested for one flagrant error in terms of modern usage: Smith describes "savannahs" blooming in New York State. In America in English Fiction: 1760-1800 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1937), pp. 269-70, Robert Heilman notes that this kind of terrain is associated with the notion of America as a new Eden. Heilman reports that, after the publication of The Female American in 1767, "one has to leap over two decades to the period of the French Revolution before finding another novel picturing a contemporary Golden Age. Then comes the outburst at the center of which were the inspirational letters of Crèvecoeur and the travel works of [Gilbert] Imlay, [Thomas] Cooper, and [John] Filson. Following these picturesque salesmen, and drawn by savannas, magnolias, and mocking-birds, the imagination usually turned south, though sometimes this ideal equipment was set up, with no attention to geography or climate, along the St. Lawrence." Heilman points out that Smith quoted J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's Letters from an American Farmer, 1783 edition, in The Young Philosopher (II, 32n; II, 255; IV, 392). James R. Foster thought Smith drew on descriptions of Louisiana in Manon Lescaut, which she had translated in 1786 (p. 241). Anne Henry Ehrenpreis (see notes to pp. 384 and 385 in her edition of The Old Manor House) argues that Manon is an unlikely source, and presents evidence that Smith may have been using William Bartram's Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida (1791).

<sup>10</sup>Reprinted in Eighteenth-Century British Novelists on the Novel, ed. George L. Barnett (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1968), p. 172.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. Cf. Moore's own non-fictional A View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland and Germany (1779) and A View of Society and Manners in Italy (1781).

<sup>12</sup>Malcolm Bosse, "Action as a Governing Motif in the Minor English Novel of the Late Eighteenth Century," Diss. New York University 1970, p. 32.

<sup>13</sup>Smith is not unique for the period. Heilman observes that the American revolution, "bringing about a further intimate knowledge of the Indian, casting more serious doubts on his excellence, and suggesting stories of atrocities and cruel captivities, [appears to have] dealt a death-blow to the Noble Savage" (p. 295). A thoroughly romanticized savage does not appear until the beginning of the nineteenth century, although an idealized one dates from the seventeenth century: "The earliest known use of the phrase occurs in Dryden's Conquest of Granada (1672). . . . Rousseau, though aware that a return to the primitive state was impractical, nevertheless used the myth of the noble savage to give substance to the anathemas he hurled against civilization. Voltaire's Ingenu serves as an example of the convention of the noble savage. Chateaubriand's novels dealing with the American Indian, René, Atala, and Les Natchez, portray the romantic, sentimentalized aspect of this myth; its influence is to be found in the Indian novels of

James Fenimore Cooper." William Rose Benet, ed., The Reader's Encyclopedia, 2nd ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1965), s. v. "noble savage."

<sup>14</sup>See G. E. Mingay, English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 263-65.

<sup>15</sup>Smith treats this information neither as a sentimental novelist nor a radical propagandist would. In romantic fiction, the exact source and size of a "competence" need not be--and seldom are--stated. In polemical fiction, like Godwin's, a diatribe usually accompanies such information.

<sup>16</sup>It is extraordinary that white-collar labor should be described so early in the history of the English novel. Because Ellen Moers does not include Charlotte Smith among the Literary Women (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1976) whose work she studies, she dates the first appearance of the subject somewhat later. It is not all that extraordinary that paid labor of a respectable sort made its way into fiction at a time when the romantic movement in England was beginning to develop momentum. Jacques Barzun points out that it would "not be very difficult to document the thesis that romantic literature dethroned Eros and made him take his place as one of many subjects. Whereas most classical novel writing deals exclusively with love, Balzac, Dumas, Scott, Dickens, Vigny, introduce all manner of hitherto untouched facts and feelings into their stories. Has it not been said that Balzac created 'the metallic hero,' namely Money? And in Scott's own mind, . . . the knightly love intrigue was a subject soon exhausted and of always secondary interest." Classic, Romantic, and Modern, 2nd rev. ed. (1953; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Anchor Books, 1961), p. 212.

<sup>17</sup>Matthew Bramble, in his letter of June 8 to Dr. Lewis (Humphry Clinker), describes what an "independence" buys; Smith's aversion to London is as strong as Bramble's. The rural ideal that Smollett described in 1771 is much the same for Pope, Fielding, and many other eighteenth-century writers besides Smith.

<sup>18</sup>See William Austen-Leigh and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters, 2nd ed. (1913; New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), p. 376, and Gordon S. Haight, George Eliot: A Biography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 192.

<sup>19</sup>David Copperfield seems to elect to interrupt his work in passages that begin as this one does: "Sometimes, of an evening, when I was at home and at work--for I wrote a good deal now, and was beginning in a small way to be known as a writer--I would lay down my pen, and watch my child-wife trying to be good." After considerable, and presumably very noisy, activity peripheral to doing the family accounts, Dora "would take up another pen, and begin to write, and

say in a low voice, 'Oh, it's a talking pen, and will disturb Doady!' And then she would give it up as a bad job." What is missing is any indication that David Copperfield's production schedule or capacity to concentrate suffered in consequence of such distractions.

<sup>20</sup>G. E. Mingay reports the range of income for a landed gentleman as £300-1,000 and adds: "To enter the ranks of only the middling gentry, to have, say, a comfortable residence and an estate worth a thousand a year, meant an outlay of about £30,000 in the middle of the eighteenth century."

<sup>21</sup>The discussion of Clementina's marriage settlement should she become Sir Charles Grandison's wife is instructive. See Samuel Richardson, The History of Sir Charles Grandison, ed. Jocelyn Harris (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), V, 533-34.

<sup>22</sup>The Popular Novel in England: 1770-1800 (London: Constable & Co., Ltd., 1932; rpt. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), pp. 165-66.

<sup>23</sup>See Jane Austen, esp. Persuasion.

<sup>24</sup>The six hundred a year Davenant offers Ethelinde in a novel published in 1789 is the same as the income Mrs. Norris (Mansfield Park, 1814) enjoyed after the death of her husband. Davenant is on the whole rather generous.

<sup>25</sup>A Vindication of the Rights of Women, ed. Charles W. Hagelman, Jr. (1792; New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), p. 120.

<sup>26</sup>Mr. Danby suggests in fact that, if the sale is not secretly negotiated with Verney, he will claim his price publicly, as did Theophilus Cibber in 1738 and 1739 when he brought charges of "criminal conversation" against the man who enjoyed Mrs. Cibber's services. Because there was evidence of collusion, Cibber received only £10 of the £5,000 he claimed in the first suit; he received £500 of the £10,000 he asked for in the second. "Cibber, Theophilus," DNB (1938). The Oxford English Dictionary offers the following example of usage under "'Conversation,' 3, Sexual intercourse of intimacy": "1809 Tomlins Law Dict. s. v. Adultery, the usual mode of punishing adulterers at present is by action of crim. con. (as it is commonly expressed), to recover damages." Thus, a husband commonly received compensation for the sins of his wife in cash during the eighteenth century.

## CHAPTER II

### Purpose and Means: Characterization, Style & Structure

Charlotte Smith's are the novels of a sophisticated woman as well as a sophisticated writer. She is well aware that her audience is largely female, and she intends to please that audience. She sees no harm, in general, in a socially irrelevant, totally fanciful fiction,<sup>1</sup> but a great deal of harm in a simplistic, jejune glossing-over that pretends to describe the world as it is. She is feminist enough to insist that her novels will confront intelligent readers in a way that requires even proper young women to exercise rational and moral discernment. She offers her female readers heroines like Medora Glenmorris (The Young Philosopher), whose mother responds to criticism of Medora's behavior by saying,

if it be romantic to dare to have an opinion of one's own, and not to follow one formal tract, wrong or right, pleasant or irksome, because our grandmothers and aunts have followed it before; if not to be romantic one must go through the world with prudery, carefully settling our blinkers at every step, as a cautious coachman hoodwinks his horses' heads; if a woman, because she is a woman, must resign all pretensions to being a reasoning being, and dares neither to look to the right or the left, oh! may my Medora . . . still venture to express all that she feels, even at the risk of being called a strange romantic girl (YP, II, 14-15).

In her preface to Desmond, she defends herself against accusations that there is something indecorous about so broad a knowledge of the world in a gentlewoman; she complains that knowledge,

which qualifies women to speak or write on any other than the most common and trivial subjects, is supposed to be of so difficult attainment, that it cannot be acquired but by the sacrifice of domestic virtues, or the neglect of domestic

duties.--I however may safely say, that it was in the observance, not in the breach of duty, I became an Author; and it has happened, that the circumstances which have compelled me to write, have introduced me to those scenes of life, and those varieties of character which I should otherwise never have seen (D, I, iii-iv).

Few literary women have been qualified to write at first hand about so broad a range of subjects. One reviewer in fact observed that Smith's novels display more knowledge of the world than of the human heart.<sup>2</sup> Few writers at any time have touched on the range of duties and interests that fall within the province of an intelligent, responsible and, above all, mature woman.

Because most genteel women of her time were not forced to live in the world in quite the way Smith was, it was literature, and the novel in particular, that offered them access to information; the genre had almost immediately been assigned to and appropriated by a female audience. Early criticism of the novel is dominated by grave and condescending quibbles over the degree and kind of censorship necessary for the protection of so giddy and impressionable a readership.<sup>3</sup> Fanny Waverly (Desmond) voices the indignation of the kind of reader Smith hopes for, in a letter to her sister, Geraldine Verney:

You know, I never am allowed to converse with any of the literary people I meet, as my mother has a terrible aversion to every thing that looks like a desire to acquire knowledge; and for the same reason, she proscribes every species of reading, and murmurs [sic], when she cannot absolutely prohibit the fashionable, insipid novel.

There is so much enquiry of the sage, matronly gentlewomen of her acquaintance, who are, as she believes, deep in the secret, as to what books are proper, who are the authors, and whether there be "any offence in them:" that, by the time these voices are collected, I find, more than half I propose reading, absolutely forbidden (D, I, 259).<sup>4</sup>

Smith resented efforts to protect young women from unsavory subjects and

unsettling ideas by censoring their reading. For Smith, censorship is not an amiable effort to coddle intrinsically delicate sensibilities and protect intrinsically weak minds. She saw it rather as a shrewd policy designed to keep women from becoming knowledgeable and, hence, less docile.

Reading was the sole source of substantive education for most women in the eighteenth century; formal provisions for the education of women (as against "finishing") were virtually non-existent.<sup>5</sup> Smith's criterion for the kind of subject matter that ought to appear in a novel is a simple one; she does not include information that is easily available to her readers elsewhere, and she unapologetically reports important information she thinks her readers ought to have, but are probably denied, about the world and the society they live in.<sup>6</sup> Her novels brought her female readers information that was usually considered unseemly and useless for a young woman. In The Wanderings of Warwick, for example, all of Chapter III is an essay on slavery in the colonies. Smith wryly adds in a footnote:

Notwithstanding my apprehensions that Novel-readers, in their eagerness for mere narrative, will murmur [sic] at being detained by a sort of dissertation on negro slavery, I should have tempted their patience for a few pages more, if I had not, since I wrote this part, seen Mr. Edward's History of the West Indies (WW, pp. 66-67).

She recommends that book for a fuller and better account of slavery than she has space for within a novel.

Her practice of offering her readers footnote references is indicative of how strictly Smith interprets the common injunction that the novel should instruct as well as entertain its readers. Her foot-

notes do not display her erudition, as Scott's do; they function rather as a suggested reading list. They direct an interested reader to valuable material he/she may not have come across. Smith instructs in the broader sense as well, generally complying with the rules governing moral guidance in the novel articulated by Samuel Johnson in Rambler #4--albeit with certain deviations in her treatment of mixed characters. She is virtually unique, however, in the way she tempts and prods her readers into the non-fiction sections of their respective lending libraries.

The circumstances of Charlotte Smith's life shaped many of her opinions and offered her ample experience to draw on in her novels. She lived and worked in London and Bath, as well as in various parts of Sussex, Surrey and Kent, and in France. She lived too, when her husband was confined, in a debtor's prison. She assisted her father-in-law in business, negotiated for her husband with his creditors and their agents, dealt with lawyers and trustees during the long period when her father-in-law's will was in Chancery, and maintained her own correspondence with publishers.<sup>7</sup> She also managed a large household, finally including twelve children, both during her marriage and after her separation in 1787. She supervised the education of her children, and found employment for her sons, placing them in positions appropriate for gentlemen. When her first novel was published in 1788, she was thirty-nine years old; ten years later, she had published ten novels, two volumes of poetry, two volumes of stories for children, a collection of short tales for adults, and an account of a shipwreck. Smith was a working writer as few women who wrote novels in the eighteenth century were.<sup>8</sup>

Her reading was broad and varied. She knew the Tatler and

Spectator essays well, of course, but she also knew Paine's Rights of Man well enough to defend its arguments and she knew Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France well enough to refute its thesis. Among English poets, she mentions and/or quotes Milton, Pope, Cowper, Gray, Prior and Thomson. She alludes to or quotes from plays by Shakespeare, Addison, Colman the Elder and Garrick, Buckingham, Otway, Colley Cibber, and Congreve. The fiction she refers to is by Aristo, Le Sage, Rousseau, Prévost, Marivaux, Goethe, Fielding, Richardson, Walpole, Mackenzie, Frances Sheridan, Burney, Radcliffe, Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth and Lee. And this sampling of writers and works is only from those she mentions; it certainly represents only part of her reading.

Her particular friends in the literary world were creditable ones. She was for a time one of William Hayley's protégés. An account of her visit at his house while she was working on The Old Manor House is offered by F. M. A. Hilbish and by Anne Henry Ehrenpreis.<sup>9</sup> There is little evidence that she frequented literary circles in London, although in The Wanderings of Warwick, she satirizes literary salons and the hack writers who frequent them, fawning over the taste-makers of the day. She nevertheless was important in the literary world of her time, and was sought out by both Coleridge and Wordsworth who, conscious of being beneficiaries of her poetic legacy, paid their respects.<sup>10</sup> Her association with the literary world was neither intimate nor active. Even so, she was a consequential figure, however much in absentia. It is impossible to determine exactly how influential her novels were during the first half of the nineteenth century;<sup>11</sup> it is, however, the purpose of this study to show that her novels offer precedents for literary strategies

and techniques that we are accustomed to thinking of as originating in the nineteenth, not the eighteenth century.

The changes Charlotte Smith made in characterization and style show her well ahead of her time in developing a relevant and subtly persuasive imaginative experience for her reader. The structure of her novels is both very much of the eighteenth century and at the same time very much in the mainstream of English fiction.

A brief introduction to each of these aspects of her novels such as this chapter offers must begin with Smith's heroes and heroines. Charlotte Smith's success as a popular novelist was largely a consequence of how interesting the reading public found her characters, most especially her romantic heroes and heroines. Her minor characters are lively and they are drawn in a way that is frequently as caustic as it is vivid. It was, however, the significant changes she made in the treatment of major characters that accounted for the enormous success of her first novel, and that subsequently influenced the character of romantic fiction in England.

In Emmeline (1788) Smith in effect deposes the traditional romantic hero in favor of a new fictional creation. She begins the story by proffering Delamere, whose literary antecedents are easily identified. He is like Burney's Delvile in the violence of his passion<sup>12</sup> and in his opposition to parental prejudice. He abducts Emmeline in Lovelacian fashion, and he threatens Wertherian suicide. An amalgam of three of the most popular romantic heroes of the period, his credentials could not be better. He is nevertheless rejected by Emmeline, who elects to marry quite another kind of hero, Godolphin.

Godolphin has the personal and social virtues of Sir Charles Grandison. Unlike that of Sir Charles, however, his proper sphere is not exclusively the drawing room. It is hard to find antecedents for so active and virile a "romantic" hero in fiction in the latter part of the eighteenth century. His prototypes in this respect are in chivalric and pastoral romance, in which the activity and virility of the hero in conjunction with gentility constitute his virtù. At the end of the eighteenth century, the manly naval officer had not yet become a gentlemanly one, except in this one novel,<sup>13</sup> although he was on his way to becoming more refined: he more frequently figured as a sympathetic, benevolent, and hence sentimental character. In Godolphin, the physical strength and rugged tastes of the naval officer are assimilated to the morality and manners of a gentleman. If, like Werther, he prefers country to city life, he also prefers a "sublime" to an idyllic terrain. If he believes himself to be hopelessly in love, he chooses a stoic rather than a frenzied or sentimental manner of suffering his passion.

Just as in eighteenth and nineteenth century novels the heroine's blonde or brunette hair signals something about her character, it is meaningful that Godolphin is a dark hero. He, like the dark heroine, is characterized by his vitality and ability. Having spent most of his life at sea, at twenty-five his complexion has lost "much of it's English freshness," and his "face was animated by dark eyes full of intelligence and spirit." His presence is "so commanding, that whoever saw him immediately and voluntarily felt their admiration mingled with respect. His whole figure . . . brought to mind ideas of the race of heroes from

which he descended" (Em, III, 272). Godolphin's aristocratic lineage reveals an innate nobility derived from his chivalric ancestors. In contrast, the fashionable young aristocrats with whom he is compared are merely members of a privileged class; Delamere is a pampered, irresponsible, and willful young man, and his friend Fitz-Edward is a somewhat sybaritic rake. To Emmeline, Godolphin's "address . . . appeared to be a fortunate compound of the insinuating softness of Fitz-Edward with the fire and vivacity of Delamere" (Em, III, 272); unlike either of these gentlemen, he is neither effete nor petulant. As a character and as a new kind of hero, he assimilates what is best in the man of fashion, his sensibility and civility, to what is best in a man of action, his vigor and his fortitude. He is a passionate hero whose emotion is associated with moral strength rather than moral weakness. Whereas even Sir Charles Grandison is likely to seem an overly sentimental figure because there is something tremulous about his delicacy, Godolphin is mettlesome even at his most plaintive.

All of Smith's heroes are men capable of action but also men who feel deeply. They are men of refined sensibility, but that sensibility is always an organic extension of their intelligence and judgement. Most of her heroes are not quite such excellent gentlemen as Godolphin. There is an increasing tendency in the following novels to show fallibility in even the best of men, and this in ways that are surprising to a twentieth-century reader, who expects the moral rectitude which the nineteenth century has conditioned us to take for granted in any but a deliberately bawdy fiction.<sup>14</sup> Desmond, for example, finds in Josephine's bed a certain consolation which is not supposed to reflect on what he feels for Geraldine. The kind of infidelity he is guilty of is one the

modern reader is perfectly willing to condone; it is part of the complexity of his character and of his world that he will offer to and receive temporary solace from a woman like Josephine. None of Smith's heroes--or heroines--is so far removed by virtue from the complicated nexus of human needs and human relationships that he is not likely to find himself guilty of some deviation from absolute social or moral rectitude. None of them is however so morally fragile that he cannot sustain the consequences of his action. In an imperfect world, her heroes make do as best they can.

Charlotte Smith's heroines derive in part from Harriet Byron, who complains,

What can a woman do, who is addressed by a man of talents inferior to her own? Must she throw away her talents? Must she hide her lights under a bushel, purely to do credit to the man? She cannot pick and choose, as men can. She has only her negative; and, if she is desirous to oblige her friends, not always that.<sup>15</sup>

They, like Harriet Byron, prefer a retired domestic life to urban pleasures.

They are an ideal which the skeptical Bethel in Desmond claims is impossible; united in them are "the cultivated mind and polished manners of refined society, with the simplicity and unpretending modesty of retired life" (D, I, 19). Yet it is precisely this ideal that Egerton Brydges describes as "the traits which characterize every heroine delineated by [Smith's] pen":

An elevated simplicity, an unaffected purity of heart, of ardent and sublime affections, delighting in the scenery of Nature; and flying from the sophisticated and vicious commerce of the world; but capable, when necessity calls it forth, of displaying a vigorous sagacity and a lofty fortitude, which appals vice, and dignifies adversity.<sup>16</sup>

These are in fact the characteristics which during the next century came to be associated with what Julia Kavanaugh appreciated as the virtues and tastes of a "lady," and which were a meaningful ideal well into the nineteenth century.

But Smith's heroines are also so different from traditional heroines in some respects that they represent a break in conventions. They are astute, frequently beyond their years. They bear a certain resemblance to Marivaux's Marianne in that they are precocious in their ability to appreciate, and in how seldom they exaggerate, what is pernicious in human nature and in society. Like most romance heroines, they are sure of their own intrinsic dignity even when there is no external evidence that they are individuals of any consequence,<sup>17</sup> and they intuitively recognize those who are their natural equals. Unlike most romance heroines, they will also have ascertained, by means of judicious enquiry as well as observation, that there is real evidence of the integrity of those whom they respect. Unlike Marianne, they are aware of themselves as women of superior character rather than of superior class. Where Marianne is shrewd, they are sagacious. They aspire to and work hard to deserve respect.

Criticism is easily mounted against so smugly virtuous an adolescent heroine. F. M. A. Hilbish for example remarks that "Emmeline is so prudent that she frequently acts like a precise old maid."<sup>18</sup> Julia Kavanaugh, a nineteenth-century reader, is more sympathetic to such pretensions in Smith's heroines. She points out that they are "generally poor, and in depressed circumstances; their importance is not that of birth, wealth, or fashion--it is that of intellect and refined manners."<sup>19</sup>

Their claim to recognition is their aptitude and ability; according to Kavanaugh, in making these the primary qualifications, Smith introduced into the novel heroines who are "ladies--young ladies, and the most perfect proto-type of the lady in the modern novels of today."<sup>20</sup> Only a twentieth-century reader like Hilbish would minimize the significance of respectability. For a woman to demand respectful treatment and a respectable place in society on no grounds other than her dignity as an individual is even now a radical social posture.

The first sign of a major change in the role of the heroine comes with those who travel; the travelling heroine is in fact one of Smith's innovations,<sup>21</sup> at least insofar as the journey she takes is one she herself elects for reasons of her own. In Literary Women, Ellen Moers describes even those of Burney's and Radcliffe's young ladies whose adventures take place far from home as enduring ordeals rather than taking decisive action. Moers remarks that "the perils"

that threaten A Young Lady's Entrance into the World (the subtitle of Evelina) seem to issue from the same grim realities of eighteenth-century girlhood that inspired Mrs. Radcliffe's Gothic: the same unjust accusations and uncaused severities; the same feminine malice and masculine cruelty; the restraints on her freedom, all the way to actual imprisonment; the mysterious, unexplained social rituals; the terrible need always to appear, as well as always to be, virtuous; and over all, the terrible danger of slippage from the respectable to the unrespectable class of womanhood. If Burney and Radcliffe both traffic in real female fears, there is however an important difference between them beyond the presence or absence of the comic spirit: that is, their different sense of a woman's main guarantee of her security in the respectable class. For Fanny Burney, that guarantee was the social circle in which the heroine fixed herself, through marriage or other means; while for Ann Radcliffe it was property.<sup>22</sup>

And for Charlotte Smith the guarantee prior and subsequent to either of these is personal integrity and dignity. Her heroines often travel

in order to deliver themselves from assaults on their dignity, attaining by means of distance from "polite" society a degree of independence they are denied within it. In doing so, they venture beyond the domestic setting to which sentimental heroines are usually confined.

As R. F. Brissenden points out, the special significance attached to a young woman's entrance into society during the eighteenth century was that, more than a young man, she is ill-equipped to negotiate initiation into society without losing in the process a great deal of personal freedom.<sup>23</sup> It is therefore curious that in Smith's heroines are almost never engaged in any activity associated with "the young woman's entrance into the world." There are very few balls, card-parties, visits to fashionable watering-places, purely social excursions through the scenic countryside, regular attendance at the theatre or elegant town houses in London, and the like. The presence of the heroine at social functions is sometimes necessary but seldom, for her, pleasurable. Smith's are, after all, novels in the sentimental tradition. Rather, her heroines develop as individuals and define their respective roles in society in their private relationships with other individuals. Society in her novels is not a monolithic institution, nor is it necessary that a young woman be fully absorbed into it. In Smith's novels, the heroine frequently travels away from a fashionable milieu rather than toward one.

The most typical eighteenth-century heroine is, potentially at least, a victim of her society.<sup>24</sup> She is coaxed and coerced into adopting its rituals, methods, and ethics at the risk of her own identity and autonomy, and she is simultaneously assaulted by lascivious

men for whom the institution makes allowances not granted her. The passivity cultivated, on the one hand, as good manners becomes, on the other, the condition that allows for her victimization.<sup>25</sup> Heroines of romantic fiction before Richardson are, according to John J. Richetti, "the victims of a world which sees them as opportunities for lust and avarice."<sup>26</sup> Yet they universally fall in love with the men who persecute and/or rape them. Richetti believes that the ambivalence in their attitudes toward such men is a subversive element within the erotic-pathetic fantasy their surrender satisfies. He suggests that so complex an attitude toward a "love which destroys them is really a way for these heroines to assert personality."<sup>27</sup> If, however, the notion that rape triggers a compulsive, reciprocal passion in the victim is central to that fantasy, as Richetti asserts, that notion is also typically exploited in pornography.<sup>28</sup> Hence the significance, at mid-century, of Clarissa's refusing Lovelace. Although Clarissa is guilty of "complicity in her own degradation," she is nevertheless "literally uneducible."<sup>29</sup> Richardson's novel uses the pornographic aspect of the fantasy but finally rejects it, offering instead a heroine who cannot be tainted by vice to which she herself has not assented. Within the terms of the convention, it is predictable that Clarissa is drawn to Lovelace before the rape, but remarkable that sexual initiation does not automatically produce sexual appetite.

Clarissa is nevertheless a pathetic heroine, her apotheosis earned through suffering. Her withdrawal into death reads to some degree as capitulation on her part,<sup>30</sup> however much it serves as an indictment of her society. The pathetic heroine may not act in self-defense

or self-justification. Stated baldly by Richetti,

Any female aggression . . . would contradict in its assertiveness and independence the utter helplessness required for heroic status and for the erotic and pathetic pleasures such heroism delivers to the audience.<sup>31</sup>

The myth of persecuted innocence that so much eighteenth-century romantic and sentimental fiction exploits requires a heroine who is either terrorized into passivity (if not receptivity) or whose actions on her own behalf are invariably ineffectual.

Smith's heroines are the first in the sentimental tradition to be consistently assertive. Their capacity for deliberate, decisive, and effective action is implicit in the self-esteem and self-possession that is characteristic of them. This is not to say that the world automatically defers to such qualities in Smith's young women,<sup>32</sup> but that, without them, no individual can influence the course of events within a callous or hostile society to her own advantage as they often do. The achievements, and consequently the errors, of Smith's heroines are at least as significant as their beauty, their virtue, and their "accomplishments."

The heroines in Smith's novels are women who know--or who come to know--what they want and who act as they think best. Ethelinde, the heroine of her second novel (1789), turns down an offer of marriage from the man she loves, an offer which has her father's enthusiastic approval, because she is certain that the near-poverty in which they will have to live will undermine the relationship. If there are precedents in prose fiction for a heroine like Trollope's Alice Vavasor (Can You Forgive Her?), using her "no" so adamantly and insisting that marriage involves a way of life that is of graver and more abiding import than are the

attentions of even the best of men, Smith's are certainly among them.<sup>33</sup> Smith is in the vanguard of a revolution in fiction in that her heroines are threatened by seductive but only potentially ruinous marriages-- and not necessarily "imprudent" ones!

Such remarkable innovations in characterizing the heroes and heroines of popular novels manifestly contribute to the growing psychological complexity and credibility of the novel. Technical refinements in the art of fiction-writing are less conspicuous but no less important an achievement. Charlotte Smith's contributions as a stylist is at least as important as her impact on the matter of fiction.

Smith was the novel writer of the decade most admired for a distinguished prose style, although unqualified appreciation was not immediately forthcoming. In the opinion of the Critical reviewer, Smith's first novel showed she "is not equal to Miss Burney in elegance of language: she is not equal, perhaps, entirely equal to her in the mellowness of description, or in the highly worked pathos of distress."<sup>34</sup> Smith's style was, for the period, "plain." But the preference for rhetorical set pieces like those that embellish Cecilia gave way during the 1790's. The more dynamic, dramatic prose of writers like Godwin and Inchbald quickened the tempo of narrative fiction and the descriptive, lyrical prose of writers like Smith and Radcliff moderated its timbre.

A "poetic" prose that approaches polite speech in pace and inflection (and sometimes approaches the vernacular, incorporating for variety's sake quaint dialects and entertaining idiolects) became associated with romantic fiction during and after the 1790's. Hence Sir Walter Scott, looking backward, becomes effusive about "the polish,

the taste, and the feeling of this highly-gifted lady," which may "be traced in Mrs. Charlotte Smith's poetry."<sup>55</sup> But her poetic effects seem affectations to the modern critic, James R. Foster, who, although not among Smith's most sympathetic readers, acknowledges that at

its best Charlotte Smith's style is clear, rapid, and readable, yet at times it is slightly affected or overly poetic. However, she did not like elegance for its own sake or write a stilted or lush or declamatory style, at least not in her prose.<sup>56</sup>

Well into the nineteenth century her diction and syntax were admired for good reasons, but the modern reader is likely to find some of their characteristics objectionable.

Her syntax, for example, is characterized by its intricate and balanced structure. Smith herself remarks on Samuel Johnson's verbosity. A phrase in her description of the fireplace in a peasant hut reads: "a few large stones placed circularly," and her footnote offers the following emendation: "Or rather, as Dr. Johnson describes them, 'with some tendency toward circularity'" (4 P, II, 152n). Yet the sentences she constructs are too Johnsonian--too long and too formal--for the tastes of most twentieth-century readers.<sup>57</sup>

When Smith's prose becomes poetic, it achieves a remarkable synthesis of assonance, alliteration, and cadence. For example, Orlando pauses during a walk in the forest and listens:

a low wind sounded hollow through the firs and stone-pines over his head, and then faintly sighed among the reeds that crowded into the water: no other sound was heard, but, at distant intervals, the cry of the wild fowl concealed among them, or the dull murmur of the current, which was now low (OMH, II, 160).

Her prose lends itself to oral delivery because it so skillfully uses the sounds and rhythms of speech even when it is not deliberately poetic. Indeed, it served as a model for Thomas Erskine (1750-1823), one of the most prominent barristers in England at the end of the century, the man who defended Thomas Paine in 1792. According to Mary Russell Mitford, "Whenever Erskine had a great speech to make he used to read her works, that he might catch their grace of composition."<sup>38</sup> That Erskine was "an enthusiastic student of English classics" makes his choice of Smith's prose to imitate significant. He was himself an innovator: "His oratory, never overloaded with ornament, but always strictly relevant and adapted to the needs of the particular case, set a new example."<sup>39</sup>

What is innovative in Charlotte Smith's diction is similar to experiments at the end of the century to produce a new kind of literary language for poetry. The period was one during which, according to Oliver Elton, poets engaged in a search, albeit in part returning to older literary models, "for a fresh vocabulary, with which to represent scenery, or sound, or dim strong impressions of luxury, of the war of the elements," thus enlarging "the idiom of the senses and passions."<sup>40</sup> Smith's poetic prose impelled the diction of the novel away from an artificial and conventional lexicon and toward a more suggestive and expressive one.\*

Smith is also a transitional figure in the movement away from the formal conventions of eighteenth-century satirical portraiture. In prose fiction, character sketches of the period usually register as

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\*See Chapter IV below.

digressive asides which call attention to the bias of the narrator as well as to what is absurd or objectionable in the character. Smith anticipates Austen in taking a narrative position that, however caustic in its observations, seems unobtrusive and objective. She also anticipated Austen in the economy with which she captures the quintessential vacuity, insincerity or hypocrisy of a minor character. Smith's caricature emerges from the comic irony of a deftly turned phrase. For example, Miss Fitz-Hayman (Celestina), a rather large young woman who would like to snare a reluctant Willoughby, pretends to be suppressing a hopeless passion for him. There is a moment in the novel, just as Willoughby is concluding a visit with her father, "when Miss Fitz-Hayman, in all the languor of an unhappy love, swam into the room" (III, 225). The picture of bogus cetaceous sensibility is complete in a single stroke. Similarly, Smith evaluates the relationship between a flirtatious young woman and a mindless young man by means of a single explanatory-descriptive sentence: "when no other object was at hand, [Miss Goldthorp's restless coquetry] condescended to amuse itself with the mawkish attempts of Middleton Winslow to express the passion his father and mother had insisted on his feeling for her" (YP, I, 111). Smith's irony evolves out of a comic use of alliteration and an unexpected variation of one of the most common clichés of romantic fiction. Hers can be, and often is, a succinct and incisive prose.

However vicious her satirical thrusts, they are controlled by a very strict notion of literary propriety. Very seldom does any device or technique in her novels, even her satire, call attention to itself as a "set piece" or a strategem; she expects all aspects of a prose narrative

to be fully consonant as parts of a whole. Smith writes, in a letter, that "Miss Edgeworths Novel [sic; Belinda] is not much liked--the machinery of a cancer and a Cockatoo disgusts, but there is a strong character in it and some knowledge of life, tho the harshness and rude manner of the execution is unpleasing."<sup>41</sup> She criticizes Edgeworth for clumsy craftsmanship and questionable taste in using a disease and a bird to force her plot forward.

One other stylistic feature must be mentioned because it is extraordinary so early in the evolution of the novel and because it so clearly illustrates how carefully Smith worked to keep the machinery of her own novels from creaking. It is her treatment of chapter juncture. A new chapter usually begins very close to the moment at which the preceding chapter broke off. Smith follows and preserves the continuity of the temporal sequence very carefully and seldom allows a significant interval of time to elapse between chapters. The break between Chapter II and III, Volume IV, in The Old Manor House is a good example of the sophistication of Smith's treatment of both discontinuity and continuity at chapter juncture. The break is a brief interruption in a conversation between Orlando and the new tenant whom he discovers in possession of his parents' home when he returns from America. He asks for information about where his family has gone.

The young woman, . . . told him that she had been there only a few weeks, and was quite a stranger in the country; but that, if he could recollect any person thereabouts likely to be better informed, she would send a servant to fetch them, or with any message he might direct.

#### Chapter III

After a pause, sufficiently expressive of the difficulty

with which he thought, Orlando said, that there was at the neighboring town an Attorney with whom his father had been long connected; . . . To him he wished to send (OMH, 408).

The new chapter begins a new series of actions on Orlando's part. The hiatus between chapters is only minimally a boundary in time; it marks rather a break in the action.

Placed as it is, the end of Chapter II terminates one stage of Orlando's homecoming. The sense of an ending is achieved; of the many possible endings that might have occupied this position, the most disappointing has occurred. With the beginning of the new chapter, Orlando must begin a new set of plans and a new sequence of actions. The effect of this kind of juncture, however, is to create the kinds of tension between units of prose narrative that are exploited in poetry when an ambiguous reading is produced by playing closure off against enjambement. The continuity between chapters projects across the boundary anxieties that are even more harrowing because of the inconclusive conclusion of the preceding chapter. There is an ironic, formal closure that is unstable; like a musical progression that has not moved to the tonic, the passage ends without being resolved.

The opening sentence of a new chapter may also announce another kind of connection across the discontinuity of the chapter boundary. When there is some kind of radical displacement in the temporal sequence, Smith indicates relationships in content by means of a kind of stylistic concatenation. The break between Chapter V and Chapter VI, Volume III, in Celestina (p. 140) is a good example of what Smith often does when she must move back in the time sequence to present a second, synchronic sequence of events. Chapter V ends with an account of thoughts that

keep Celestina awake, after an upsetting interview with Vavasour, "till the tedious night was at an end." Chapter VI begins, "Vavasour, who had passed a great part of his night over a bottle," backtracking to recount thoughts prompted by the same interview. A second example is in The Old Manor House (II, p. 230). Chapter XII ends: "Such were, at this juncture, the politics of Rayland Hall." Chapter XIII begins, "The House of West Wolverton too had its politicians." In both examples, concatenation signals an interlacing of cotemporal events. So conscious a stylist is Smith that she joins her novels at the seams as carefully as she designs and cuts the pattern.

A conscientious treatment of the facade being so much in evidence, it hardly seems likely that Smith was sloppy in working out her plots. Yet, because "plot" is usually given too narrow a meaning,\* her novels have often been criticized for being poorly constructed. Her plots do not seem weak unless they are judged as "tales"; Charlotte Smith's plots cannot be evaluated apart from the meaning they are designed to reflect.

The charge that Smith's novels suffer from inadequately realized plots goes back almost to her own time; Sir Walter Scott is among those who are more than ready to forgive her for this "lapse" in craftsmanship because of the pressure she worked under, harassed by impatient publishers. But even when Smith worked carefully, there is no evidence in her novels that she is--or wanted to be--a particularly good story-teller of the kind Scott is. All of her novels use conventional and obvious story elements, and there is rarely a remarkably clever or original sequence

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\*See Chapter III, pp. 119-34.

of action in any of them. But she was certainly able to bring different strands in her story together in a seemingly natural way for the sake of dramatic effect.

The tenants' feast in The Old Manor House is one such instance; it contains a series of episodes in which the dramatic action is so intricately inter-related that the reader is aware of masterful control of the plot. The long (Book II, Chapters VIII-XII), complicated, but very plausible sequence of episodes is generated out of the interaction of a large cast of characters, all fully motivated but working at cross purposes. The tenants' feast is the first in several years which Mrs. Rayland herself will attend and to which guests other than the tenants and the servants have been invited. It had become customary, in Mrs. Rayland's old age, for Pattenson and Mrs. Lennard to officiate. Pattenson is chagrined at having to appear as butler rather than as host. He is also erroneously suspicious of a liaison between Orlando and the maid Betty, whom Pattenson has not yet succeeded in seducing. He is consequently keeping a close eye on her. Mrs. Lennard, on the other hand, is delighted that she will sit with the local gentry and the visiting General Tracy as Mrs. Rayland's companion. She suspects Monimia of secretly meeting Orlando and has ordered her to keep to her room. Hence it is possible that she will look in on her niece in the course of the evening.

Orlando however intends to introduce Monimia to his favorite sister, Selina, and has persuaded Monimia to meet them in the study just after the dancing begins. He is therefore a very unwilling and ungracious partner for Miss Hollybourn when Mrs. Rayland orders him to lead the dance with her. He cannot escape until his brother Philip is

found, the only other person there of the right age and class to take Orlando's place with the lady. Philip has disappeared with Betty, who willingly yields to him because he seems a much more promising lover than Pattenson.

Miss Hollybourn is delighted with Orlando and insists on detaining him, although he becomes increasingly inattentive and is finally quite rude, knowing that the longer he keeps Monimia waiting the more danger she will be caught. Dr. Hollybourn is interested in the estate. By proposing a match between his daughter and Orlando, he offends Mrs. Rayland, and General Tracy then finds her the more willing to approve plans to get Orlando a commission in the army (and out of the way of such social climbers).

Gen. Tracy wants Orlando far away because he seems to be the only member of the Somerive family likely to interfere with his plans to make Orlando's sister Isabella his mistress. Mrs. Somerive, however, knows what Tracy is after and is busy outmaneuvering him while he tries to gain access to Isabella in private; nevertheless, she must be careful not to offend the man who can do so much for Orlando should plans for his military career materialize.

Mr. Somerive meanwhile is preoccupied with finding and controlling Philip. The security of the family depends on financial assistance from Mrs. Rayland and the possibility that one of his sons will inherit the estate, which Philip risks should he offend Mrs. Rayland. Mr. Somerive nearly discovers Monimia while looking for Philip, and Philip nearly discovers her first, when he and Betty try the study door and, later, when he arrives drunk and ready to sleep it

off in that room.

The Hollybourns leave highly offended at the treatment Miss Hollybourn has received. Monimia is indeed caught on the way back to her room, and Mrs. Lennard subsequently makes a virtual prisoner of her. Betty is fired when Pattenson reports to Mrs. Rayland that she had been missing during the evening; he assumes that Orlando is the culprit and hopes that such scandalous behavior will do him out of the inheritance. He succeeds only in giving Mrs. Rayland that much more reason to encourage Orlando to join the army, and it is with that decision on her part finally made that the series of events surrounding this occasion ends. The tenants' feast demonstrates that Smith could manipulate the action of her story as well as she chose to. In function and complexity, it is comparable to the fête champêtre in Trollope's Barchester Towers.

Rather than growing out of dramatic action, however, most of Smith's novels, like The Old Manor House, are organized around a thematic structure. In Desmond the structure is based on relationships between rulers and subjects, both in French politics and in several representative marriage relationships. A selection of oppressive marriages, in varying degrees comparable to each other, is presented, and in such a way as to reflect the oppressive political conditions leading to the rebellion in France. In Emmeline, the first of Smith's novels, the structure develops out of a series of relationships among families all of which are, by the end of the novel, linked to each other by marriage. Its subject is fidelity (i.e., a woman's honor)--in courtship and in marriage--in a society that makes it very difficult

for a woman to choose a husband independently and wisely. The structure of the novel is built out of a variety of responses among women to internalized notions of personal honor on the one hand, and on the other to the mores of a society that condemns infidelity in a woman and condones it in a man. In novels like Smith's, the narrative is a strategy rather than a structure. The sequential development of the narrative unfolds a pattern of analogous and/or representative relationships among structural elements.

The most significant thematic relationship in Emmeline involves three contrasting marriages. The circumstances of Mrs. Stafford's unhappy marriage are analogous to those of Lady Adelina's. Their stories run parallel to a point, and then diverge. Fitz-Edward, before he meets Lady Adelina, tries to seduce Mrs. Stafford. She offers him friendship although she refuses to take him as a lover. She is a worldly woman, but a moral one. Lady Adelina becomes his mistress, but refuses his offer to share her guilt and, after she is widowed, to share with her his life and fortune. Lady Adelina is a weak woman, but her remorse is genuine. The third in the series of analogous marriages is that of Delamere's sister Frances. She elopes with Sir Richard Crofts' son, expecting and precluding Lord Montreville's disapproval; hence she is Emmeline's opposite. After her marriage she invites the attentions of Bellozane, a more cynical rake than either Delamere or Fitz-Edward, runs off with him and is finally abandoned. Unlike Mrs. Stafford or Lady Adelina, she is an immoral woman who gets precisely what she deserves.

The most important of the dramatic analogues is the one that involves the most curious feature of the plot, that the "hero" does not

appear until the middle of the novel. Only retrospectively does the reason for this oddity become clear to the reader. At the end of the novel, Delamere's position with respect to Bellozane mirrors Godolphin's position with respect to Fitz-Edward at the time when he is introduced: a duel seems imminent between a woman's lover and her brother. The scandal Lady Frances invites leads finally to a duel that is not averted; Delamere dies defending the honor Lady Frances cared so little about. The duel at the end of the novel looks back ironically on the duel that, although it brought Emmeline and Godolphin together, did not take place. The circumstances under which the hero is introduced prefigure the circumstances under which his rival will die.

Within the system of families, situations as well as characters are designed to be analogous but not identical. The reader is expected to notice and evaluate similarities and differences among them. Fitz-Edward for example is asked by his brother to accompany Lady Adelina on her journey home from Scotland just as Godolphin is asked by Lord Westerhaven, his brother, to accompany Emmeline when she returns to England. Whereas Lady Adelina's seduction is a consequence of their journey, an increased respect for Godolphin's integrity and discretion follows from behavior Emmeline witnesses while they travel: Emmeline's preference is based on rational and moral as well as emotional inclinations.

The tensions in the second half of the novel develop out of Godolphin's efforts, as well as Emmeline's, to avoid an avowal. Whereas Emmeline's intention in concealing her feelings is to protect Godolphin, his is to defer to her inclinations in the choice of a husband. He does not use his passion coercively, as both Delamere and Fitz-Edward

do. So long as he believes she is in love with Delamere, he helps and protects her but does not court her.

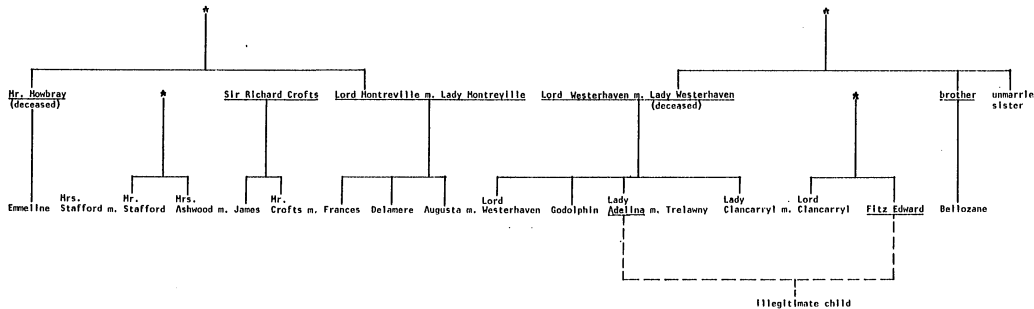
Emmeline's trip to Switzerland introduces yet another variant in the pattern of male characters. Just as Godolphin is introduced to the reader as a happy combination of what is best in Delamere and Fitz-Edward respectively\* Bellozane is introduced as a composite of all three. He is remarkably like his cousin Godolphin in appearance, and remarkably like Delamere in his indefatigable pursuit of Emmeline. He is also, like Fitz-Edward, a practiced rake. Unlike Fitz-Edward, who seduces Godolphin's sister and remains devoted to her, he seduces and abandons Delamere's sister Frances. There are comparable variants among female characters. Frances is Lady Adelina's opposite, an unrepentant adulteress. Mrs. Stafford, like both of them unhappily married, does not invite attention like Frances nor succumb to seduction like Adelina. It is in the second half of the novel that the symmetry of correspondences and relationships among the several families is worked out (see chart, p. 82).

The Lady Adelina sub-plot is related to the main plot thematically, and by means of interlocking family relationships: Fitz-Edward's elder brother, Lord Glencarryl, is Montreville's son-in-law, just as Godolphin's elder brother, Lord Westerhaven, is, and just as Sir Richard Crofts' eldest son is. Everything in the novel is, to some degree, a family matter; the structure of the novel is a system of familial alliances. Every marriage or illicit relationship reflects on the way in which a commitment to familial ties is either avowed or disavowed. Even Mrs.

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\*See p. 62 above.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG FAMILIES IN EMMELINE



Stafford, Emmeline's friend and counselor, becomes, in the course of the novel, a relative of sorts: her husband's sister marries the younger son of Sir Richard Crofts.

There are valid observations to be made about what is wrong with this rather remarkable first novel. Its "design" is too blatant. Its plot is too obviously in the service of that design: some characters seem to marry merely for the sake of symmetry in Smith's choreography. The novel has too many mirrors and analogues. It is too self-conscious, too complicated, too contrived. The same can be said about many first novels that self-consciously and too rigidly adhere to a pre-conceived plan. Most writers learn to sacrifice the tidiness of the preliminary scheme as the internal momentum of the narrative begins to determine its own directions of development, or to work from a less conspicuous plan over which no intricately woven baffle need be laid. Smith became, with practice, adept at creating novels that do not seem quite so calculated as Emmeline. It is possible to read one of her later novels--as many modern critics have--without becoming conscious of badly integrated or forced elements that betray how she is manipulating the plot, and why.

Because The Old Manor House is probably in subject the most complex and carefully worked out of Smith's novels, a brief discussion of its structure will best describe her method at its most successful. In terms of story, the novel is about who will inherit Rayland Hall after Mrs. Rayland dies. The plot requires Smith to follow and account for all those characters who might possess the estate, although it focuses most often on Orlando, the character who finally does inherit it. The

momentum of the novel is produced by means of sustained suspense, revitalized each time there is a possibility that someone other than Orlando will get control of the estate. Suspense becomes particularly acute when, after Mrs. Rayland's death, the estate falls into the wrong hands while Orlando is serving with the British forces in America. When Orlando returns, he unravels the mystery of a hidden will, detective-story fashion, and is finally able to claim Rayland Hall as his rightful legacy. The mystery of a hidden will contributes to what might otherwise seem a flimsy and unremarkable plot for so long a work. In keeping with Smith's purposes in this novel, the estate must first be kept from and then restored to an enlightened, liberal, democratic gentleman like Orlando.<sup>42</sup>

The thematic subject of The Old Manor House is the impact of mercantilism and imperialistic nationalism on the one hand and of the new democratic notions of domestic and rural policy on the other. Characters in the novel represent old and new social forces.<sup>43</sup> Those who are active and successful in serving their own interests represent those members of society who have moved or are moving into power; those who are passive and ineffectual stand for those in the existing system who are or are becoming vulnerable under new social and economic conditions. Until the end of the novel the fate of Rayland Hall remains in doubt. The questions raised, so long as that doubt is sustained, are about what kind of significance old manorial holdings will have in the future; it is impossible not to recognize that postulates about the future of Rayland Hall are also postulates about the future of the economic resources, political power, and social significance formerly

lodged in an hereditary landed gentry. In effect the novel asks how much primogeniture means, how much family means, how much money means, and how much intrigue and manipulation mean in determining what will become of Rayland Hall.

Those who want possession of the Hall belong to three distinct groups. First there are persons of family but not money: the Somerives. Secondly, there are those of money but no family: the Hollybourns and Mr. Stockton. Thirdly, there are those who have neither: the Rokers, Mrs. Lennard and other upper servants at the Hall. Mrs. Rayland herself represents an anachronistically feudal notion of the position and responsibilities of the squirearchy; the decision is finally hers to make, and her personal eccentricity, indicative of the eccentricities of a vestigial class, is the source of the problems in the novel. There are also those who want no part of the estate: the Woodfords. Members of the urban middle class, they have made their own alliance with the aristocracy and have become so successful in the City and in Parliament that they want no traffic with so sluggish an institution as the squirearchy; presumably a later generation of Woodfords will want the kind of prestige that only land can confer, but both the first and second generation of mercantile wealth and influence are happier pursuing ambitions which only London can gratify.

Both the army and the church are represented in the novel. General Tracy is a younger son, a fatuous, licentious, but nonetheless influential aristocrat; the importance of his class is still felt at least insofar as it still has access to the machinery of government and is able to function as liaison between those aristocrats who have money and power

and those merchants who can render and receive mutually beneficial services. As a representative of the church, Dr. Hollybourn is one of the new kinds of men for whom the structure of a complex bureaucratic institution provides mechanisms he can manipulate to his advantage; even his marriage serves to promote his interests within the institution, moving him closer to existing sources of power and wealth. Throughout the novel, the relationship of each representative member of society to the manor house, a traditional source of wealth, prestige, and power that is about to change hands, is played out on a personal level through highly individuated characters.<sup>44</sup>

It is because The Old Manor House follows a pattern of social interaction rather than a story convention that Orlando's personal history stands in so peculiar a relationship to the novel as a whole. He sometimes seems to function as hero of a primarily biographical fiction. However, it is a mistake to look for heroes and heroines in this novel; its title should warn the reader against doing so.<sup>45</sup> The Old Manor House is a novel in which heroic gestures are of little importance. When Orlando serves with the British forces (when the story of Rayland Hall is interrupted by an entire book devoted to events that seem to have nothing to do with the future of the Hall), his experiences in America are related to the thematic subject of the novel, and not to any developments in his own personal biography that bring him closer to possession of the estate.

The American war, like any other, increases the opportunities for profitable trade, both for those who deal on a large scale in military supplies and for those who, like the servants at the Hall, depend on

contraband, goods in short supply as a result of national policies. It also penalizes those who bear an increased burden in taxes. War as such operates against the interests of the landed gentry.

This war has special significance because the colonists are fighting at least in part against a paternal and arbitrary authority; Orlando is as it were ideologically inclined to be sympathetic to the colonists because his argument with his own father is analogous to the argument between the colonists and the British government. Orlando wants to exercise the same degree and kind of autonomy that his father enjoyed in choosing a wife; the colonists want equal representation in Parliament, the same degree and kind of autonomy enjoyed by landed gentlemen in the home provinces. That the novel does not condone rebellion against established authority in all cases is clear in Orlando's repeated attempts to win his father's approval, and his refusal to elope with Monimia in opposition to his father's wishes. Sympathy for the cause of the colonists is predicated on a carefully circumscribed condition: that rebellion can be condoned only in cases of grossly inequitable treatment where no other means of redress is effective.<sup>46</sup>

Orlando's American experience is relevant as biography only insofar as it contributes to his political education. When at the end of the novel Orlando comes into possession of Rayland Hall, it is because he is the one person who can best preserve old values and cultivate new ones, regenerating the estate instead of destroying it. As squire, Orlando is committed to the well-being of the microcosm he owns and governs just as his feudal ancestors had been; as a new kind of gentleman, he is committed to democratic and humane treatment of those he is

responsible for. So democratized is his estate that its mistress has been a servant in the house. At home, Orlando has assimilated the best of those traditional values inherent in the old manorial system; he has also come to recognize what is best in a newer, more radical system while in America.

Charlotte Smith makes her own statement about what the future of such holdings should be when she finally allows Orlando to take the estate out of the hands of the Rokers, Dr. Hollybourn, and Mr. Stockton. In Orlando's absence, the alliance between the law, the church and the new moneyed class is entirely successful in claiming lands they have no right to. Rapacious and unscrupulous men, who know how to manipulate and control vulnerable individuals and how to use public institutions for private ends, are shown to have been the ones likely to take possession of the estate for its rents, abandoning the Hall itself. For Smith, the value of the landed gentry within the social and political structure of the country is unquestionable. She asserts that such holdings fare best in the hands of a new gentry with Orlando's principles, who, "without spoiling that look of venerable antiquity for which [Rayland Hall] was so remarkable, . . . collected within it every comfort and every elegance of modern life" (OMH, IV, 531). Such men guarantee the continuity of a worthy heritage, modified and adapted to contemporary conditions.

Had Smith underscored relevant parallels and spelled out the import of the emblems she uses, fewer modern critics might dismiss her work so readily. What often seems to them facile in her novels is a polished narrative surface such as is usually only within the competence of a sophisticated and deft, as well as practiced, writer.

Having claimed so much literary sophistication and technical proficiency for an almost-forgotten female novelist whose work appeared during a period in the history of English fiction that has been accorded very little attention, one expects to meet with skepticism. It therefore seems prudent to interrupt this critical analysis of Charlotte Smith's novels and, in the following chapter, offer evidence that notable and consequential fiction should not seem either unlikely or eccentric in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Her novels in fact embody a fin de siècle confluence of various critical notions about this relatively new genre. In addition, they incorporate radically new ideas about human psychology, achieving thereby complex and subtle characterization and remarkable modifications in the stylistic fabric and structural composition of the text, as will be shown later in this dissertation. A review of both aspects of her intellectual milieu is in order before returning to the novels themselves.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>There is a lengthy comment on contemporary fiction and its relationship to a largely young and female reading public in Desmond (I, 270-76). In a letter to her sister, Fanny, Geraldine Verney says, "I cannot imagine, that novel reading, can, as has been alledged, corrupt the imagination, or enervate the heart; at least, such a description of novels, as those which represent human life nearly as it is; for, as to others, those wild and absurd writings, that describe in inflated language, beings, that never were, nor ever will be, they can . . . no more contribute to form the character of her mind, than the grotesque figures of shepherdesses, on French fans and Bergamot boxes, can form her taste in dress" (p. 270). Smith inserts a passage illustrating what she considers harmless fluff. This passage, apparently a parody, certainly proves her point; it's absurd, but quite innocuous: "When . . . the matin loving lark, on russet pinions, floating amid the tiffany clouds, that variegated, in fleecy undulation, the grey-invested heavens, hailed with his soul reviving note, the radiant countenance of returning morn; the sweet, the mild, the elegantly unhappy maid, turned towards the roseate-streaming East, those sapphire messengers, that expressed, in language of such exquisite sensibility, every emotion of her delicate soul; and with a palpitating sigh, arose" (p. 272). One pernicious aspect of the passage is the violence it does to English prose, as Smith points out when she says that the silly young woman who likes this kind of fiction reads it "as fast, as the roseate rays, and azure adventures, will let her" (p. 273), and promptly forgets what she has read. The other is merely that time is lost reading it. As for the intelligent reader, a "sensible girl would certainly throw it away in disgust" (p. 273). Smith adds, however, that "there is a chance, that those who will read nothing, if they do not read novels, may collect from them some few ideas, that are not either fallacious, or absurd, to add to the very scanty stock which their usual insipidity of life has afforded them" (p. 275). A well-read woman, Geraldine Verney admits to beginning with "very indifferent novels, [which] were the first I could obtain; and I ran through them with extreme avidity, often forgetting to practise my lesson on the harpsichord, or to learn my French task" (p. 275). The habit of reading led by degrees to the habit of discriminating reading. Had Geraldine not been so naughty a child, she would presumably have learned very little other than some music and French.

<sup>2</sup>Analytical Review, 13 (1792), 435.

<sup>3</sup>See John Tinnon Taylor, Early Opposition to the English Novel (New York: King's Crown Press, 1943), pp. 52-86.

<sup>4</sup>One is reminded of Mrs. General in Dickens' Little Dorrit (1857). She supervises the education of young women in much the same way as Mrs. Waverly's friends: "Mrs. General had no opinions. Her way of forming a mind was to prevent it from forming opinions. She had a little circular set of mental grooves or rails on which she started little trains of other people's opinions, which never overtook one another, and never got anywhere. Even her propriety could not dispute that there was impropriety in the world; but Mrs. General's way of getting rid of it was to put it out of sight, and make believe that there was no such thing. . . . Mrs. General was not to be told of anything shocking. Accidents, miseries, and offences, were never to be mentioned before her. Passion was to go to sleep in the presence of Mrs. General, and blood was to change to milk and water. The little that was left in the world, when all these deductions were made, it was Mrs. General's province to varnish" (Vol. II, Ch. ii). Censorship exercised at home became more stringent during the first half of the nineteenth century; Dickens had good reason for being considerably harsher toward Mrs. General than Smith had been toward Mrs. Waverly's friends.

<sup>5</sup>There is no mention in Smith's novels of a governess who performs tutorial functions. The role of the boarding school in providing a totally frivolous course in the "accomplishments" is often alluded to. Those of Smith's female characters who have any knowledge of the world attribute it to independent reading, usually under the guidance of a mentor who volunteers his/her services; sometimes, as is the case with Geraldine Verney, the absence of supervision on the part of a negligent mother allows a girl the opportunity to choose proscribed books. It is interesting to compare Smith's overt "feminism" (rather mild compared to that of her more militant contemporaries) with Charlotte Bronte's romantic fantasy of a woman trying to become "liberated" in Villette. Central to that fantasy is the notion that the right man for such a woman is one who not only tolerates but encourages reading; Paul Emanuel leaves difficult books where Lucy Snowe will find them. Nowhere in Smith's novels is reading, becoming educated, tied to erotic fantasies. Why the reverse should be true in nineteenth-century fiction written by women is a subject that deserves some attention; romanticism produced certain aberrations in female attitudes and behavior, hence in fiction, that are almost always, when associated with education, a way of justifying the kind of subjection that Smith abhorred. In her time, no female writer recommended servility. Even somewhat later, in Susan Ferrier's Marriage (1818), the ideal for wedlock is a union of complementary qualities and skills in two equally dignified individuals.

<sup>6</sup>Smith seems to think that men ought to derive an education of a different order from fiction. In "Don Quixote in Eighteenth Century England," Comparative Literature, 24 (1972), 210-11, Susan Staves points out that Orlando (OMH) is the first quixotic hero whose habit of reading imaginative literature is not satirized. Staves remarks that "Orlando's reading has helped make him romantic and idealistic: to

Mrs. Smith that means his reading has helped make him sensitive and good, not that it has helped make him silly" (p. 211).

<sup>7</sup> See Rufus Paul Turner, "Charlotte Smith: New Light on Her Life and Literary Career," Diss. University of Southern California, 1966. This is primarily a study of Smith's correspondence. See too McKillop, "Smith's Letters."

<sup>8</sup> Smith's experience is not unique among women writers. Cf. for one the matrimonial life and career of Margaret Oliphant in the nineteenth century.

<sup>9</sup> Hilbish, pp. 155-57; Ehrenpreis, pp. xi-xii.

<sup>10</sup> For a survey of Smith's reputation as a poet, see Hilbish, pp. 249-255. Her status as a poet was such that the subscription list for the 1797 edition of Elegiac Sonnets included the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cowper, Charles James Fox, Horace Walpole, Mrs. Siddens, and the two Wartons. See George W. Whiting, "Charlotte Smith, Keats, and the Nightingale," Keats-Shelley Journal, 12 (1963), 6. Both Whiting and Burton R. Pollin, in "Keats, Charlotte Smith, and the Nightingale," N & Q, 211 (1966), 180-81, offer evidence of strong resemblances between Smith's sonnet and Keats' ode, and suggest that some direct or indirect influence is likely. According to Pollin, there were either nine or eleven editions of the sonnets between 1784 and 1800. Wordsworth astutely observed that English poets were "under greater obligations [to Charlotte Smith] than are likely to be either acknowledged or remembered." The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London, 1876), III, 151. See too p. 507.

<sup>11</sup> The list of editions given in the bibliography of this dissertation suggests the possibility of significant influence. Her novels must have been lending-library staples well into the second half of the nineteenth century.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Mr. Collins' letter, Pride and Prejudice (Chap. 19); "And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection." What Smith deposed Austen debunked.

<sup>13</sup> In The Sailor in English Fiction and Drama 1550-1800 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 187, Harold Francis Watson notes that toward the end of the eighteenth century "the sentimental characterization of the seaman with all the virtues which effeminate landmen lack apparently increases." His summary of naval types common in fiction before 1800 does not, however, include a proper gentleman. He distinguishes "the noble pirate, polite and bloodthirsty, the swearing boatswain, blunt and brave, the humors captain, thoroughly despicable, the plain dealer, misanthropic and honest, the merchant skipper, pious and practical, and the heart of oak, rough and loyal" (pp. 202-03). William Price (Mansfield Park, 1814) may be the second naval gentleman

after Godolphin. His father, however, does not qualify. He was "a Lieutenant of Marines, without education, fortune, or connections" (Chap. 1). Of the three requisites, not having a gentleman's education, hence his manners, is the most crucial handicap because it is absolutely irreparable.

<sup>14</sup>Thackeray is not quite accurate, in his preface to The History of Pendennis (1850), when he ascribes Victorian prudery to novelists of the eighteenth century after Fielding. About his own novel, he quite rightly asserts that Pendennis should have had a liaison, a token one, for the sake of his credibility as a character. In Thackeray's words: "Since the author of 'Tom Jones' was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN. We must drape him, and give him a certain conventional simper. . . . Many ladies have remonstrated and subscribers left me, because, in the course of the story, I described a young man resisting and affected by temptation. My object was to say, that he had the passions to feel, and the manliness and generosity to overcome them. You will not hear--it is best to know it--what moves in the real world, what passes in society, in the clubs, colleges, mess-rooms,--what is the life and talk of your sons." Pendennis is like Desmond in several respects, and should have had the kind of sexual latitude Smith allowed her hero.

As for the kind of platonic, idolizing love that both Pendennis and Desmond feel for women they may not marry, and whose beds they are not allowed to share secretly, Smith has something to say in verse about the facts of such relationships, although she perpetuates the romantic fiction in her novels:

Friendship, as some sage poet sings  
Is chasten'd Love, depriv'd of wings,  
Without all wish or power to wander  
Less volatile, but not less tender.

Nevertheless,

. . . she, who years beyond fifteen,  
Has counted twenty, may have seen  
How rarely unplum'd Love will stay;  
He flies not--but he coolly walks away.

Beachy Head with Other Poems (1807), pp. 139-40.

<sup>15</sup>Richardson, II, 230.

<sup>16</sup>Censura Literaria, 2nd ed. (London, 1815), VII, 248.

<sup>17</sup>Marianne, who immediately feels herself superior to the shop-keeper who takes her in, poses questions about the source of such feelings: "où est-ce que j'avois pris mes délicatesses? Étoient-elles dans mon sang? cela se pourroit bien. Venoiënt-elles du séjour que j'avois fait à Paris? cela se pourroit encore. Il y a des âmes perçantes à qui il n'en faut pas beaucoup montrer pour les instruire" (Marianne, Première Partie, pp. 42-43). Hers is an intuitive, immediate response. She discovers in Paris the world of people who ride in carriages,

"un monde qui m'étoit tres nouveau, mais point étranger." It is for her "comme si j'avois recontré ce que je cherchois."

<sup>18</sup>Hilbish, p. 363.

<sup>19</sup>English Women of Letters: Biographical Sketches (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1863), I, 200.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>21</sup>Too often the first of the travelling heroines of this era noticed by literary historians are Ann Radcliffe's. Emmeline was the first heroine in a dramatically plotted novels to travel (1788). The journeys Smith's heroines take are logical extensions of the story and they bring about subsequent developments in the plot. The journey is not used, in Smith's novels, as plot or as a method of organization. In an earlier era, travelling heroines were associated with a different kind of fiction. In Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), pp. 42-43, Robert A. Day mentions three works that purport to be records of a woman's experiences while travelling, all directly or indirectly imitating Madame D'Aulnoy's The Ingenious and Diverting Letters of the Lady--Travels in Spain (1691); Mrs. Mary Manley's Letters (1696), Mrs. Susannah Centilivre's "Journey to Exon" (1700), and Mrs. Eliza Haywood's Bath-Intrigues (1725). In each of these, the journey is merely a framing device and the "lady" is not a romantic heroine. In Popular Fiction Before Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 169n, John J. Richetti mentions one "story of a picara" prior to Moll Flanders: The Jamaica Lady or The Life of Batavia (1720). But the picaresque heroine is only a very oblique antecedent for the romantic-sentimental heroine.

Ellen Moers, speaking specifically about the heroines of Gothic novels, claims that travel in such novels allows "a feminine substitute for the picaresque" in the course of which "heroines could enjoy all the adventures and alarms that masculine heroes had long experienced, far from home, in fiction" (p. 126). Moers claims that the interior of a Gothic castle becomes a terrain that the heroine negotiates. But there are some antecedents in the eighteenth century and many earlier for a genuine picaresque heroine--e.g., Moll Flanders, Charlotte Summers, and many in sub-literary fiction--whose adventures are very different in quality from those of a gothic heroine. I would argue against the notion that travel is used at the end of the eighteenth century as it is used in the picaresque novel. For example, in Humphry Clinker, Moore's Mordaunt and Smith's novels, travel offers opportunities for discovery, reflection and hence self-discovery through exposure to new environments, acquaintances and experiences.

<sup>22</sup>Moers, p. 136.

<sup>23</sup>Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade (New York: Harper and Row, Barnes & Noble Import Division, 1974), p. 284.

<sup>24</sup>Brissenden describes a pervasive fascination in the eighteenth century with Clarissa as a kind of transcendent victim. He believes that the perpetual "threat . . . of rape . . . in the background of most sentimental novels" is symbolic of the gravest violation of the individual and is symptomatic of an attitude toward what is repressive in society underlying all sentimental fiction (p. 284).

<sup>25</sup>Harriet Byron complains that a woman cannot select a man who pleases her but "has only her negative; and, if she is desirous to oblige her friends, not always that" (Sir Charles Grandison, I, 230).

<sup>26</sup>Richetti, p. 208.

<sup>27</sup>Richetti, p. 208.

<sup>28</sup>In Man's World, Woman's Place (New York: Dell, 1971), p. 63, Elizabeth Janeway observes that in pornography women are "raped and fall in love with the rapist." She believes that the "purpose of this choice of utter submission is to absolve the man who inflicts the outrage on them of his guilt," and that the "all-powerful hero enjoys his license to sin because he has granted his victim the power to absolve him." Cf. Richetti, p. 146.

<sup>29</sup>Elizabeth Hardwick, Seduction and Betrayal (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 200; see too Richetti, p. 162.

<sup>30</sup>Richardson's intentions have often been misunderstood. One reader who missed his point entirely is Mary Wollstonecraft (Vindication, p. 120).

<sup>31</sup>Richetti, p. 208.

<sup>32</sup>As it frequently does in Radcliff's novels. See Moers, pp. 137-38.

<sup>33</sup>Strong and/or willful heroines figure in such novels as John Moore's Mordaunt (1800), Holcroft's Anna St. Ives (1792), Mrs. Inchbald's Simple Story (1791). Even more interesting is a line of heroines that, beginning with Moore's Mordaunt, appear most often in novels by male rather than female writers. They are intelligent and well-educated women, having frequently been tutored by their fathers or under special circumstances, of which the most common is a childhood spent on the Continent. They may or may not also be rather good horsewomen but, at the least, they are described in terms of imagery that has to do with horsemanship. They are often named Diana (in Moore's novel, the heroine has a female mentor named Lady Diana Franklin), and they are often "dark" heroines. One might cite, among others, Scott's Diana Vernon (Rob Roy), Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth (Daniel Deronda), Meredith's Diana of the Crossways. The heroine who has genuine obligations or commitments of her own, or one who wants to satisfy herself more than she wants to accommodate others, is a character in English fiction that owes a great

deal to Smith's heroines. It is more typical of male than female novelists that this kind of heroine is identified with curiously conflicting notions of her sensuality on the one hand and her sexual aloofness on the other. This may be why they so often draw on the mythological reverberations surrounding the name "Diana." Austen's Elizabeth Bennet is a heroine of this type, but Austen makes no effort to associate Elizabeth's social demeanor with an attitude toward sexuality that is in the least remarkable; neither does Smith in her headstrong heroines.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. too Holcroft's Anna St. Ives (1792). Anna's choice of husbands is also a political decision. Holcroft's novel is overtly didactic in ways Smith's never are. The conclusion of the novel nevertheless looks to reformation by means of the moral force of an ideal rural community which, although it is utopian in structure, functions as a social force in much the way Smith intends the regenerated manor house to function. See pp. 87-88 above. Alice Vavasor in Trollope's Can You Forgive Her? (1864-65) may well be the first heroine in a popular novel to insist that the rural domestic sphere is too restrictive for an able woman; even so, she is willing to accept a compromise nicely embodied in a wedding gift from Plantagenet Palliser, "a service of Sèvres china" accompanied by the news that John Grey will enter Parliament. The brief scene in Chapter LXXIX between Palliser and Alice Vavasor is extraordinary for its "delicacy"; its implications are revolutionary. Between them, Palliser and Alice delineate a new territory, drawing-rooms adjacent to the political arena, as part of a woman's proper sphere.

<sup>34</sup>Critical Review, 65 (June, 1788), 530.

<sup>35</sup>Works, IV, 33.

<sup>36</sup>Foster, p. 241.

<sup>37</sup>Hilbish, p. 446.

<sup>38</sup>The Life of Mary Russell Mitford, told by Herself in Letters to Friends (L'Estrange ed.; New York, 1880), II, 358-59. Mitford re-read a number of Smith's novels in 1854; they were readily available through a lending-library in Bristol.

<sup>39</sup>Dictionary of National Biography, s. v. "Erskine, Thomas."

<sup>40</sup>A Survey of English Literature (1912; rpt. London: Edward Arnold, 1965), p. 27.

<sup>41</sup>1802; McKillop, "Smith's Letters," p. 255.

<sup>42</sup>In The History of the English Novel (London: 1934), V, p. 190, Ernest A. Baker notes that Smith's novels show she was "conscious that the industrial revolution was in full swing, and that the rich merchant and mill-owner were in the act of ousting the old aristocracy from their

pre-eminence." Even more to the point, Richard Gill (Happy Rural Seat: The English Country House and the Literary Imagination [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972], p. 239) observes that "the novelist obviously intends to represent in the old manor house . . . the decline of the aristocracy in a world of rising tradesmen and parvenus. Moreover, like the poets, she anticipates the much-used nineteenth-century technique of contrasting houses--balancing Ragland [sic] Hall and the loyalty of its inhabitants to immemorial custom against the once-splendid neighboring castle purchased, remodeled, and abused by rich merchants. Therefore despite lapses into melodrama The Old Manor House not only prefigures the social themes of later novelists like Wells, Galsworthy, and Waugh but their literary strategies as well."

<sup>43</sup>Hilbish makes the same observation, p. 298: "Beginning with an underlying principle, she arranged the plot and portrayed characters for the purpose of exposing contemporary evils."

<sup>44</sup>Cf. concluding remarks on Godwin in Gary Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 256-60.

<sup>45</sup>I believe that the same point should be made about Austen's Mansfield Park, which is strikingly similar to Smith's Old Manor House in several respects. Austen may well have been consciously rephrasing the question in terms appropriate to a later generation: the significance of the manor house in Austen's society is a moral issue rather than an economic and political one.

<sup>46</sup>G. E. Mingay observes that the "dissatisfaction of the small gentry, farmers, and urban middle class mounted to a peak during the American war. The effects of high taxation stimulated criticism of the government's policy and war management, a criticism not untinged with sympathy for the aims of the American rebels" (p. 261).

<sup>47</sup>Monimia's "elevation" is not as romantic as Pamela's. The Cinderella motif is evident only in its dismal features, e.g., the wicked step-mother appears in Mrs. Lennard. Monimia is inescapably plebian to the end of the novel. In part, Smith guarantees that she is never transformed into an elegant lady in the reader's mind by allowing Orlando to marry her before he comes into his inheritance. The interim between their marriage and the end of the novel shows them sharing the cheapest of lodgings in London, and Monimia secretly taking in plain sewing to contribute to their support. Monimia not only has no accomplishments, there is no reason to believe that she has any aptitude for music, drawing or even for fine needlework. The typical adaptation of the Cinderella motif in the eighteenth-century novel is likely to follow a pattern set in Pamela. The young woman is provided with a benevolent and accomplished mistress who teaches her more than a servant need know, hence providing her with the most basic skills that distinguish mistress from servant. She is thus inadvertently, but fortuitously, prepared for the role she will have to assume as the wife of a gentleman.

### CHAPTER III

#### Eighteenth-Century Backgrounds

i

Twentieth-century literary critics and historians have usually assumed that few generally accepted theoretical principles about the formal properties of realistic prose fiction had evolved in England by the end of the eighteenth century. The novel was supposed to be about contemporary men and manners, the romance about imaginary and prodigious events. Documents like Clara Reeve's The Progress of Romance (1785) and John Moore's A View of the Commencement and Progress of Romance (1797) are evidence that even practicing novelists did not necessarily take note of formal differences between novels and romances. Neither contains anything more subtle than the distinction Dr. Johnson offered as early as 1750,<sup>1</sup> although a great many genuine novels of very different kinds had appeared in the interim.

In twentieth-century criticism it is usually taken as axiomatic that most eighteenth-century novelists simply made use of all that is omnivorous and elastic about the genre. Worthwhile results have been produced by studies investigating the manner in which the novel absorbed and modified conventions and basic narrative patterns drawn from related literary genres. It has indeed proved useful to examine Clarissa as an adaptation of the principles of tragedy, as Richardson intended and announced in the postscript to the novel. It is useful to examine Joseph Andrews as a form of "comic romance" or a "comic epic-poem in prose," as Fielding pronounced it in the preface. It is useful to

know that while writing Caleb Williams Godwin was aware of affinities between the basic plot of his "tale" and the story of Bluebeard.<sup>2</sup> Eighteenth-century novelists, from the mid-century through the nineties, borrowed heavily from and were strongly influenced by earlier prose fiction, although they do not usually acknowledge--as Fielding, Richardson, and Godwin did--that they were deliberately appropriating and modifying existing literary structures and conventions. But a writer need not be aware of a debt to specific sources or of the influence of his contemporaries for our critical analysis of his work to profit from comparison with analogues. Twentieth-century critics have in fact arrived at valuable insights into the mechanics and meaning of eighteenth-century novels by examining fairy-tale elements in Pamela, for example, or the conventions of heroic romance in Tom Jones.<sup>3</sup>

However avidly modern literary historians and critics have studied avowed and unavowed sources and analogues, they have not been equally eager to investigate statements about theoretical principles governing prose fiction made by late-eighteenth-century novelists and reviewers. Most twentieth-century critics assume in fact that the state of the craft was so deplorable during the last quarter of the century that it does not bear investigation. Only very recently, for example in studies like Leo Braudy's Narrative Form in History and Fiction and Eric Rothstein's Systems of Order and Inquiry in Later Eighteenth-Century Fiction,<sup>4</sup> has the premise been that even the earliest of major English novels lend themselves to certain kinds of structural

analysis because they were in fact ordered according to rather sophisticated structural principles. If the work of major novelists is just beginning to receive this kind of reading, it is not surprising that the literary craftsmanship of lesser writers has received little attention. It has rather been assumed that most novelists writing at the end of the eighteenth century consciously imitated only the most rudimentary of fictional structures.

No single comprehensive document exists to demonstrate that during the 1790's writers and reviewers drew on a common theory of prose fiction. Novelists offer scattered and skimpy testimony that they were conscious of literary principles governing the formal properties of the genre. Statements about literary practice in prefaces (and often in the texts of their novels) are frequently intelligent and to the point, but they are usually restricted to a particular aspect of contemporary practice; they do not constitute a systematic description of the genre. No writer articulated a fully developed rationale for the kind of novels he or she produced. Similarly, evidence in the critical reviews of a shared theory of prose fiction is spotty and inconclusive. Observations by reviewers on the art of the novel are of very unequal quality and often seem naive and irrelevant. (The fault may not in fact be entirely with the reviewers; many of the novels they were required to evaluate were amateurish and of poor literary quality.)

Evidence that the more professional novelists and reviewers shared a common critical vocabulary is, however, abundant. Among the elements of fiction habitually named are: design, composition, plot, narrative, character, probability, unity, uniformity, variety, contrast,

grouping, symmetry, imitation, and expression. In eighteenth-century reviews these terms are used to describe ordinary features of the novel; a novel of merit is judged to be so when it meets certain tacit criteria in exhibiting these features. The recurrence of what is clearly a kind of technical terminology suggests that there must have been a body of assumptions about the structure and features of novels that reviewers and readers shared with those who wrote them. Yet the twentieth-century reader has no way of interpreting or discriminating among such apparently overlapping, and perhaps synonymous, terms as "plot," "narrative," "design," and "composition." One of the primary obstacles blocking access to and appreciation of late-eighteenth-century novels seems to be the tendency on the part of the twentieth-century reader to discount what may well be relevant critical observations because he cannot gloss the critical lexicon.

## ii

Part of the difficulty in arriving at an accurate gloss is that two very different approaches to literary criticism were concurrently being applied to fiction, often by the same writers and critics. The first was neo-classical and Aristotelian. Criticism of this kind focuses on the mimetic relationship between literature and experience, and is concerned with the moral ends or purposes of a work of art. The second was psychological.<sup>5</sup> Such criticism is primarily concerned with the relationship between aesthetic experience and other kinds of cognitive and emotional experience; in psychologically-oriented criticism,

a work of art need not embody an exemplary moral lesson so long as it affects the emotional disposition of the reader in a way that induces him to be a little more responsive, humane, and hence a little better than he would otherwise be. In reading eighteenth-century criticism, it is important to recognize that even a common term, like "plot," cannot be assumed to mean precisely the same thing in one context that it does in another; it might be used in the Aristotelian sense with neo-classical didactic overtones: "an imitation of an action" serving a moral purpose or offering moral instruction, or it might be used to describe the "design" or "composition" of the work: the plan according to which the writer disposed his materials and therefore the more complex matter of what the reader understands when he perceives the plan and deduces its implications.

Further complicating matters, any discussion involving aesthetic theory usually involved the assumed relationship between painting and poetry, among Aristotelian critics for reasons that have to do with the mimetic nature of the work of art and among psychological critics for reasons that have to do with how the work of art makes its meaning intelligible. What is more, the painter's idiom served as a useful vehicle for aesthetic ideas because it was familiar to both professional critics and laymen..

Because one of the permanent issues in all forms of criticism during the first half of the century had been the "ut pictura poesis" controversy, a great deal of formal literary criticism was expressed in terms of painting. Although the phrase is from Horace and not Aristotle, it became part of eighteenth-century classical exegesis as

the source for interpretations that would extend the import of Aristotle's term "mimesis" so that it might serve as part of a universally applicable aesthetic theory. The notion that poetry and painting are closely allied kinds of representation was formally introduced in England in 1695 by Dryden in the preface, "Parallel Between Poetry and Painting," to his translation of Du Fresnoy's De Arte Graphica,<sup>6</sup> and many neo-classical theorists saw poetry and painting as two very similar forms of "imitation." By mid-century, there was in fact a large body of visually descriptive poetry exploiting the parallel, of which perhaps James Thomson's "The Seasons" is the most notable example. On the other hand, there were those--most notably Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in Laokoön--who objected to the assimilation of one mode of representation to another. On one side of the debate, the point being argued was that certain terms are equally or analogously à propos for verbal and visual modes of representation; on the other that terms appropriately describing the features of one medium cannot be equally applicable to a different medium.

So long as the question continued unsettled, the descriptive vocabulary that already existed for painting almost inevitably appeared in literary criticism. The tendency toward assimilation of one art form to another proved irresistible, continuing into the nineteenth century (and beyond).<sup>7</sup> Hence during the late eighteenth century the general practice was widespread of "seeing literature as the contentual norm of painting and music, and at the same time of seeing either painting or music as the technical norm of literature."<sup>8</sup>

The issue in the "ut pictura poesis" argument is mimesis; the

debate was largely over what the verbal and visual arts respectively are capable of imitating. The most contested areas were those in which it is possible for verbal and visual representations to overlap: e.g., historical painting and descriptive writing. For some, the attempt to paint pictures in words was a laudable undertaking, extending the mimetic scope of language from the Aristotelian spheres of action and emotion to include the sensible world. For others, most prominently of course Lessing, the attempt was fatuous because of limitations intrinsic to each medium. Lessing insists that, because verbal discourse is necessarily a sequence in time, it cannot properly imitate or represent objects in space; similarly, painting is suited to representing objects in space but cannot depict a temporal sequence. Both sides in the "ut pictura poesis" debate admit the possibility that certain paintings or sculptures imply action and suggest emotion, and that poetic discourse often sets in motion the reader's own image-making faculties, memory and imagination. The aesthetic experience in itself is for them peripheral to a theory of art; although both sides recognize that the reaction to a work of art is complex, they mention the reaction merely as the natural effect of genuine artistry on a cultivated sensibility. Neither side is particularly interested in conducting a profound exploration of the expressive or evocative capacity of art. For these critics the central issue is rather about the capacity of one medium or another to represent various kinds of experience.

If some writers and critics used a painterly vocabulary because they were considering contemporary applications of Aristotle to the "ut pictura poesis" controversy, the general reading public learned to use

a painter's vocabulary from William Gilpin. Laokoön was published in 1766, so the issue of the relationship of medium to mimesis was very much alive when Gilpin first published his Essay on Prints in 1768. Whatever the importance of Gilpin's theories about the picturesque, it is at least as important that his immense popularity brought the Essay on Prints into wide circulation, and with it the convenient glossary of terms for the "principles of painting" in the Preface. The terms he lists and defines became, in the last quarter of the century, the approved jargon among people with any pretension to culture or taste. Because an appreciation of picture-like scenes was supposed to distinguish those of refinement and sensibility, the painter's vocabulary became voguish enough to invite satire, as in the "lecture on the picturesque" that Catherine Morland, avid to acquire good taste, swallows whole (Northanger Abbey, Chapter 14). Even so, educated laymen as well as serious critics employed terms that usually apply to painting to describe the features of literature wherever they seemed apt; there was no body of equally well-known and equally sophisticated terms available with which to describe the formal properties of literature.

Inevitably a part of the Aristotelian approach to criticism is the question of the proper choice--morally as well as aesthetically--of subject matter. The ends of both visual and literary representations were firmly understood to be moral ones. Both painting and literature were expected to portray idealized rather than realistically specified human subjects. And in literature, the dramatic action was supposed to end in an ideal rather than a realistic resolution: poetic justice being meted out so that each character got what he deserved. Although

neo-classical critics differed over precisely what kinds of imitation each of the art forms ought to attempt, they tended to agree that aesthetically satisfying representations must also be morally satisfying.

The Aristotelian notion that most significantly affected the early development of the novel was that prose fiction, like drama, ought to imitate action. Well into the second half of the century, this premise was so unshakable that, even when descriptive detail and landscape-painting were being used extensively in verse, setting received almost no attention in the novel. Nor, for that matter, are costumes usually described. Specific objects that belong to the characters in a novel are scarcely mentioned unless the object becomes part of an action: weapons and carriages seem real enough when they are put to use, but however often characters "drink tea" the reader is scarcely conscious that a tea service has in fact been brought into the room. So rare are the exceptions in eighteenth-century fiction that they receive what sometimes seems an inordinate amount of attention from modern critics. The "thinginess" of Defoe's novels and the room at the spunging house in Clarissa come to mind as meat for the critics, but in this context a better example can be found in Sir Charles Grandison. There Richardson does indeed make use of a tea set, a "fine set of old Japan China with brown edges," to illustrate and contrast character (Charlotte Grandison's and that of her newly-wed husband) in precisely the way Austen would have. It is not that Richardson could not, but that he usually did not make use of objects in this way.<sup>9</sup>

In a study of concrete description in the eighteenth-century novel, John Graham points out that Fielding "may serve as a base point

for any discussion of the changes that took place in the latter part of the eighteenth century" with respect to how anything other than action gains entrance into the novel. In Fielding's novels,

static concrete detail, even if self-willed, such as a suit of clothes chosen by the wearer, was only appearance [in the Platonic sense] in life, and in art as in life, it had no value, did not need to be described or analyzed, except as it partook of action or generated a moral concept.<sup>10</sup>

The mimetic scope of the novel was thought of critically in terms of Aristotelian drama: solely imitation of action.

In addition, as both Marivaux and Richardson almost simultaneously realized, the novel might imitate the process of "reflection" because thought is the "action" of the mind. Reflection had not been notably incorporated into the earlier French romans. Marivaux forewarns his readers,

Si vous regardez La Vie de Marianne comme un Roman . . . votre critique est juste; il y a trop de réflexions, et ce n'est pas là la forme ordinaire des Romans, ou des Histoires faite simplement pour divertir. Mais Marianne n'a point songé à faire un Roman non plus (Vie de Marianne, Avertissement, 2<sup>de</sup> partie, tome 1<sup>er</sup>).

Very soon after the 1740's--and in England before<sup>11</sup>--extensive and minute reflections might be advertised as an asset. In the Author's Preface to the 1759 edition of Clarissa, Richardson explains that the "instantaneous Descriptions and Reflections" and "affecting Conversations" are meant to enliven a story that would otherwise be told in "the dry, narrative, unanimated Style of a person relating difficulties and dangers surmounted" (italics mine solely in the last).

An example of the kind of "narrative style" Richardson means is Sarah Fielding's The Adventures of David Simple (1744).<sup>12</sup> David Simple's falling in love is not one of the more affecting experiences, or romantic

ones, to be found in fiction. Having met an attractive young woman while visiting at her home,

a short time's conversing with his Mistress, convinced him, how much he liked her: He resolved to watch her very narrowly, to see, if her Mind was equal to her Person, which was indeed very agreeable: but Love so magnified her Charms in the Eyes of David, that from the moment he took a Fancy to her, he imagined her Beauty exceeded that of all other Women in the World. For which Reason he was strongly possessed, she was in all respects what he wish'd her to be.

Courting her, he was

always received by his Mistress with chearful Smiles and Good Humour. He lived on in this agreeable manner for three Months . . . , thinking he had now found the greatest Happiness to be attained in this World, in a Woman he could both love and esteem.

She is not only beautiful, but her

Behaviour was in all respects engaging; her Duty to her Father, Complaisance and Affection to her Sister, and Humanity to the Servants, made him conclude, his travelling was at an end; for that in her he had met with every thing he wanted.

The modern reader cannot help agreeing with Richardson that this style of narrative is "dry and unanimated" even though it catapults the reader through time, space, and profound emotional experiences at a most extraordinary pace.

One of the earliest formal distinctions applied to prose fiction, therefore, is between the kind in which "action" is only the activity of moving bodies--interrupted from time to time by rhetorically-composed speeches--and the kind in which it is also the closely reproduced activity of the mind reflecting on the motivations and repercussions of action.<sup>13</sup> In the earliest novels that try to imitate closely the process of thought, it is usual to find a form of first-person exposition: either a first-person narrator, like Marivaux's Marianne,

or a series of letters, Richardson's method. Not until the 1780's did the novel begin to have an effective alternative; the development and refinement of the indirect interior monologue in Burney's Cecilia and in the novels of writers like Charlotte Smith and Mrs. Inchbald is critical for the maturation of the genre. Without the indirect interior monologue, and the delicate modulations from sympathetic identification to extreme ironic distance from the character's point of view which it allows, the nineteenth-century novel would have been quite impossible.

Although the indirect interior monologue had been received appreciatively during the last decade of the eighteenth century,<sup>14</sup> many readers were not prepared to admit that passing thoughts might be even more important in a novel than incidents and adventures are. Godwin intended to give psychological processes priority over the action in Caleb Williams; he explained that he began writing the novel in the third person but that he then decided to make it a first-person narrative because

the thing in which my imagination revelled the most freely, was the analysis of the private and internal operations of the mind, employing my metaphysical dissecting knife in tracing and laying bare the involutions of motive, and recording the gradually accumulating impulses, which led the personages I had to describe primarily to adopt the particular way of proceeding in which they afterwards embarked (*italics mine*).<sup>15</sup>

In exploring what interested him most, Godwin wrote one of the most untypical novels of the 1790's. Not all of his readers were persuaded that the experiment was entirely unsuccessful.\* Yet his audience was prepared to accept the validity of his premise: that unarticulated

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\* See pp. 130-32 below.

Processes may properly be the subject of a novel as a legitimate extension of the Aristotelian precept that articulated thoughts are third in importance, after plot and character, among the elements of tragedy (Poetics, VI).

iii

Writers, like Henry Fielding, and critics, like James Beattie, who speculated about the art of fiction after the mid-century expressed their theories in ways that are distinctly Aristotelian, and the issues and ideas presented above influenced the direction taken by neo-classical criticism of prose fiction even during the late eighteenth century. The lexicon all such critics and writers used is characteristic of their predisposition to align themselves both in and within the Aristotelian camp.

For convenience' sake in first introducing the vocabulary of neo-classical criticism, Irving Babbitt's summary of Lessing's position on the relationship between plot in fiction and design in painting is handy; Babbitt deliberately incorporates key words of the neo-classical vocabulary into a short paragraph that contains both the central notions and the typical lexicon of those who looked to Aristotle:

Like virtually all the Renaissance critics, [Lessing] insists that art, including poetry, is an imitation. Like the most orthodox of them, he regards it not only as an imitation but as an imitation of human action. To action in the sense of plot or general purpose he would subordinate all other elements in poetry, such as character, sentiments, diction, etc., just as in painting he would subordinate all other elements--light, color, expression, etc.--to design (italics mine).<sup>16</sup>

Lessing, in 1766, makes very much the same kinds of distinctions that for example Smollett does in the dedication to Ferdinand Count Fathom in 1753:

A Novel is a large diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life, disposed in different groups, and exhibited in various attitudes, for the purpose of an uniform plan, and general occurrence, to which every figure is subservient.<sup>17</sup>

The ever-present analogy between painting and literature offers Smollett, as it does Lessing, a set of terms that are in part applicable to the features of fiction. Smollett mentions "groups" and "attitudes," and he uses the word "plan" in this context to mean something that is roughly equivalent to the "design" of a painting. But the word also implies a direction of development, leading finally to dramatic resolution. That the word means "plot" as well as "design" becomes evident when Smollett explains that

this plan cannot be executed with propriety, probability or success, without a principal personage to attract the attention, unite the incidents, unwind the clue of the labyrinth, and at last close the scene, by virtue of his importance (*italics mine*).<sup>18</sup>

The loose concatenation of incidents in Smollett's novels is justified by his belief that a novel is somewhat different from a play in that its unity may depend on the relationship of all parts to a central character rather than on plot alone: a very un-Aristotelian notion.

Most of Smollett's contemporaries, however, considered the tightly constructed and purposive "plan" far more important to the unity of a work of art, fiction or painting, than anything else. Novels might rely more heavily on "design" or on plot, or might attempt a balance of both unifying elements; for most writers and critics,

the choice of one way or the other of unifying a novel was a matter of preference rather than principle. But all agreed that a novel must show some kind of unity of "action," "plan," or "design."

The notion that the "design" of a novel should exhibit something like balance and direction also appears in Laokoön. In Babbitt's paraphrase,

for Lessing, as for the classicists in general, beauty does not consist primarily in expression, but in a certain informing symmetry and proportion that, like true plot in tragedy, points the way to some human end (italics mine).<sup>19</sup>

Similarly--and as late as 1795--Richard Cumberland claims that a good plot must comply with rigorous standards for a kind of balance that is called "symmetry." Cumberland says that a novel

may be considered as a dilated comedy; its plot, therefore, should be uniform, and its narrative unbroken: episode and digression are sparingly, if at all, to be admitted; the early practice of weaving story within story should be avoided; the adventures of The Man of the Hill, in The Foundling, is an excrescence that offends against the grace and symmetry of the plot; whatever makes a pause in the main business, and keeps the chief characters too long out of sight, must be a defect.<sup>20</sup>

All arguments for "symmetrical" plots apparently claim Aristotle for authority although, as this one does, they seem rather to refer to the kind of multiple-plot symmetry characteristic of Roman comedy and of many Shakespearean, Restoration, and eighteenth-century comedies. The way Cumberland speaks of the Man of the Hill episode in Tom Jones suggests that he would not exclude interwoven plots or interpolated narratives that function in the way flashbacks do, as chronologically displaced exposition. Cumberland seems to be objecting to the Man of the Hill episode because the narrator is not himself, other than in this

single instance, an agent of dramatic action; he does not either create or resolve complications in the plot.

Neo-classical theories of fiction often include a classical and/or neo-classical taxonomy of literary genres that clarifies for the modern reader what the critic seems to be saying about the difference between "plot" and "design." Such statements frequently need clarification, as is the case with what Fielding says about the kind of fiction he is writing in the preface to Joseph Andrews. There his definition of a "comic romance" approaches the matter of genre in a very orthodox but very general way. In the preface Fielding wrote for his sister's novel, David Simple (1744), he dilates on what he conceives as the relationship between "fable and action." He identifies two prototypical plot structures illustrated respectively by each of the Homeric epics. They

differ principally in the Action, which in the Iliad is entire and uniform; in the Odyssey, is rather a Series of Actions, all tending to produce one great End. Virgil and Milton are, I think, the only pure Imitators of the former; most of the other Latin, as well as Italian, French, and English Epic Poets, chusing rather the History of some War, as Lucan and Silius Italicus; or a Series of Adventures, as Ariosto, &c. for the subject of their poems.

In the same manner the Comic Writer may either fix on one Action, as the Authors of Le Lutrin, the Dunciad, &c. or on a Series, as Butler in Verse, and Cervantes in Prose have done.

Fielding places David Simple among those narratives that are episodic,

where the Fable consists in a Series of separate Adventures detached from, and independent on each other, yet all tending to one great End; so that those who should object want of Unity of Action, here, may, if they please, or if they dare, fly back with their Objection, in the Face even of the Odyssey itself.

The "incidents arising from this Fable" exhibit unity of theme as well as a single purpose in lieu of unity of action. In explaining

the nature of this kind of unity in David Simple, Fielding says

that every Episode bears a manifest Impression of the principle Design, and chiefly turns on the Perfection or Imperfection of Friendship; of which noble Passion, from its highest Purity to its Lowest Falsehoods and Disguises, this little Book is, in my Opinion, the most exact Model (*italics mine*).

Thus in episodic narratives Fielding uses the term "design" to denote a structural alternative to "unity of action." Whereas incidents are absorbed into the "plot" of a dramatically unified narrative because they are the cause or consequence of other actions, incidents are absorbed into the "design" of a thematically unified narrative because they turn on the same subject. And, of course, there is no reason why the two kinds of patterning, "plot" and "design," may not appear in the same narrative. More will be said later in this chapter about the reason for such thematic links, as Fielding sees it, in his own novel Tom Jones.

In 1783, James Beattie arrived at a taxonomy of fictional narratives which starts by dividing fables from romances. Beattie groups narrative fictions as follows:

- I. Fable
  - A. Allegorical
    - 1. historical allegory: Arbuthnot's History of John Bull
    - 2. moral satire: Pilgrim's Progress, Gulliver's Travels
- II. Romance
  - A. Serious
    - 1. historical: Robinson Crusoe
    - 2. poetical: Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa
  - B. Comic
    - 1. historical: novels of Marivaux, Gil Blas
    - 2. poetic: Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, Amelia

The term "fable" does double duty in Beattie's lexicon. It is the name of a generic class of narratives, those that are primarily moral in purpose: fables like Aesop's, satires and apologues.<sup>21</sup> It is

also used as a synonym for "plot." "Romance" applies to all prose narratives that do not merely "illustrate an idea about life,"<sup>22</sup> hence what we commonly designate "novels."

Beattie distinguishes among "romances" two kinds of plot: historical and poetic (or epic). Historical plots are chronological, and poetic plots, like those of epic poetry, begin in the middle of things. For Beattie, however, even "historical romances" must show a higher degree of organization than mere chronological sequence. A string of weakly connected episodes makes for a flawed "historical romance," one with an irregular "fable." For this reason, although Beattie wants to place Smollett's novels with Marivaux's and with Gil Blas, it seems to him that Smollett did not know "how to contrive a regular fable by making his events mutually dependent and all co-operating to one and the same final purpose" (*italics mine*).<sup>23</sup>

Beattie's criticism of how Richardson handles Lovelace in Clarissa shows how thoroughly Aristotelian his critical bias is. He is speculating about how the "fable" might have been improved:

Had [Lovelace's] crime been represented as the necessary cause of a series of mortifications, leading him gradually down to infamy, ruin, and despair, or producing by probable means an exemplary repentance, the fable would have been more useful in a moral view, and perhaps more interesting (*italics mine*).<sup>24</sup>

That the circumstances leading to Lovelace's death are not a necessary or inevitable extension of the dramatic action of the novel itself seems to Beattie a structural flaw that weakens the moral force of the novel. Conversely, he approves of the "fable" of Amelia because it

is entirely poetical and of the true epic species, beginning in the middle of the action, or rather as near the end as possible, and introducing the previous occurrences in the form of narrative

episodes. Of [Tom Jones], the introductory part follows the historical arrangement, but the fable becomes strictly poetical as soon as the great action of the piece commences, that is, if I mistake not, immediately after the sickness of Allworthy, for from that period the incidents proceed in an uninterrupted series to the final event, which happens about two months after (*italics mine*).<sup>25</sup>

Beattie's classification system notwithstanding, his conception of what a novel is like is largely based on the Aristotelian notion of unity of action applied to a larger and more various structure than the drama; it is therefore very like the first of Fielding's categories, those fictional narratives that are in structure like the Iliad. He appreciates a narrative structure with a moral purpose and a tightly integrated plot, beginning near the end of the "action" and telescoping prior events by means of interpolated "narrative episodes." There is no provision in Beattie's taxonomy for a casually plotted novel, let alone a carelessly plotted one.

Eighteenth-century readers like Beattie wanted in fact a carefully plotted novel, but they did not necessarily expect all of their reading pleasure to come from this essential element of fiction. J.M.S. Tompkins points out that eighteenth-century readers had a somewhat different set of expectations from those of nineteenth-century readers, to whom plot was "indispensable." Before the turn of the century, according to Tompkins, "the chain of ordered and interconnected happenings" had not yet established such an ascendancy over their minds, and the gist of their novels is often best expressed in terms of contrasted sentiment or of mental development.<sup>26</sup>

It might be better if that statement were somewhat amended. Eighteenth-century readers insisted that there be a "chain of ordered and interconnected happenings," but they did not expect to devote all of their

attention to the plot itself. It is the sine qua non of fiction, but not necessarily the source of all meaning in fiction.

Fielding, who took great pains with the plot of Tom Jones and then took as many pains to conceal as much of the structure as possible until the denouement, expected some of his critics to lose patience with a novel that seemed at first poorly constructed. He warned them

not too hastily to condemn any of the incidents in this our history as impertinent and foreign to our main design, because thou dost not immediately conceive in what manner such incidents may conduce to that design. This work may, indeed, be considered as a great creation of our own; and for . . . a critic to presume to find fault with any of its parts, without knowing the manner in which the whole is connected, and before he comes to the final catastrophe, is most presumptuous absurdity (Tom Jones, Book X, Chapter i; italics mine).

An eighteenth-century critic like Beattie fully appreciated Fielding's strategy; the surprise that comes at the end of the novel increases the reader's pleasure:

when we get to the end, and look back on the whole contrivance, we are amazed to find that of so many incidents there should be so few superfluous, that in such a variety of fiction there should be so great probability, and that so complex a tale should be so perspicuously conducted, and with perfect unity of design (italics mine).

Beattie is so enthusiastic about the intricacy and purposeful development of the plot of this novel that he says, since "the days of Homer the world has not seen a more artful epic fable (italics mine)."<sup>27</sup> But he comments too on an equally important design principle that governs the selection and deployment of incidents, of which few may seem in the least "superfluous" in a superior novel.

Eighteenth-century plots are in fact full of what seem to modern readers improbable accidents because the eighteenth-century reader

expected a good novelist to show connections, before the end of the story, between most characters and virtually all incidents; a fully realized design must finally emerge. The eighteenth-century reader, for example, would have had less difficulty than the twentieth-century reader does with the character of Will Ladislaw in Middlemarch; he would have understood that an important part of Ladislaw's function is to connect (both by means of family relationship and by means of the action in which he participates) groups of characters that, although thematically analogous, are not connected by means of the plot. Hence part of Ladislaw's function is to close gaps in the "design" of the novel.

Whereas it is generally considered good form in a modern novel to create discontinuities, presumably because ours is a world view that precludes a coherent teleology and therefore avoids total fictional closure, it was considered good form in most eighteenth and nineteenth century novels to resolve apparently random events into a perceptible and meaningful pattern, because theirs was a world view predicated on the belief that ontological patterns and their significance (if not their causes) can be ascertained by means of inductive reasoning from empirical evidence.<sup>28</sup> More will be said about this aspect of eighteenth-century philosophy in another context later in this chapter.

In the very last year of the eighteenth century, Thomas Holcroft formulated a description of the difference between the novel and the romance that expresses where all the tendencies in the evolution of fictional plot for the novel had come together. Unlike Beattie, Holcroft provides for episodic narratives, but now separates them from those that show a unity of both plot and theme:

Modern writers use the word Romance to signify a fictitious history of detached and independent adventures and, under that idea, call *The Télémaque* of Fénelon and the *Cyrus* of Ramsay, Romances. Lesage's *Gil Blas* and Smollet[t]'s *Roderick Random*, though of a different species come under the same denomination. A Novel is another kind of work. Unity of design is its character. . . . [I]n a Novel, a combination of incidents, entertaining in themselves, are made to form a whole; and an unnecessary circumstance becomes a blemish, by detaching from the simplicity which is requisite to exhibit that whole to advantage. Thus, as in a dramatic work, those circumstances which do not tend either to illustration or forwarding the main story, or which do not mark some character or person in the drama, are to be esteemed unnecessary.<sup>29</sup>

Even though Holcroft compares the structure of the novel with that of the drama, he allows for incidents that "illustrate" the main story as well as those that "forward" it, and he allows for incidents that serve only as exposition of character. His notion of the novel is therefore of a more capacious form than the analogy to the drama would, without such qualifications, suggest. Thomas Holcroft's statement is a workable assimilation of contemporary practices in novel writing to Aristotelianism of a sort, unity of design substituting for unity of action as the structural principle that distinguishes the novel from other species of prose fiction.

## iv

The evolution among psychological critics of theories about the reader's relation to the text also leads to "unity of design" as distinctive to and requisite in the novel. However, a very different route brought the psychological critics to the same point that the critics we have been reviewing reached by way of Aristotelian drama criticism. In tracing it, one must recognize first that theirs is a

philosophical system that postulates a virtual identity between epistemological and aesthetic experience. For the psychological critics, reading a book is like reading the world.\* Because Henry Home, Lord Kames, is by far the most important figure in this group, the Elements of Criticism (1762) will serve to document its critical principles.<sup>30</sup>

In Lord Kames' discussion of the relationship between the psychology of perception and the aesthetic pleasure derived from a work of art, the crucial perceptual categories are similarity and difference, and the reason for the priority they are accorded is epistemological. In absorbing information about either the existing world or the created world of prose fiction, according to Kames, perceptual and rational faculties function to apprehend "variety" and comprehend "uniformity." For Kames, as for all post-Lockian philosophers, the association of ideas is the foundation of epistemology. Sequential relationships, cause and effect among them, offer variety. The acquisition of knowledge, however, has to do with intellectual processes for which variety merely offers opportunities:

The mind of man . . . is wonderfully adapted to the course of human affairs, which are continually changing, but not without connection: it is equally adapted to the acquisition of knowledge, which results chiefly from discovering resemblance among differing objects and differences among resembling objects: such occupation, even abstracting from the knowledge we acquire, is in itself delightful, by preserving a middle rate between too great uniformity and too great variety.<sup>31</sup>

Comparison and contrast are then the most important of epistemological processes because they are the means by which experience is organized and becomes knowledge; they are also a source of aesthetic pleasure

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\*See Chapter VI, pp. 266-73 below.

because the intellectual activity involved in discovering similarities and differences is not solely a means to an end, but is in itself enjoyable.

The mimetic relationship between the world and the book is thus located in the reader's experience. His perception of variety and comprehension of uniformity ought to be exercised in the same way in reading fiction that it is in "reading the world."<sup>32</sup> Among many of the psychologically-oriented critics, reading poetry or prose fiction is in fact supposed to require "continuous activity and repeated reaffirmations by the reader"; there must be "imaginative activity" on the part of the reader that mirrors the imaginative activity of the writer.<sup>33</sup> For this reason (as well as for the sake of revitalizing and engaging the reader's attention) in "every sort of writing intended for amusement, variety is necessary in proportion to the length of the work."<sup>34</sup> For Kames, the book must approximate the diversity and richness of experience in the world. It must persuade the reader that it too is characterized by plenitude, and its capacity to do so depends on a density of characters and incidents proportional to its length.

The work of art ought to be designed to offer both variety and uniformity. Variety, says Lord Kames, is "numbers of objects in a group or in succession,"<sup>35</sup> and the perception of analogous relationships among these objects is a way of discerning kinds of "uniformity." In certain kinds of cognitive experience, simplicity and uniformity generate aesthetic pleasure. Variety, for example, "contributes no share to the beauty of a moral action, nor of a mathematical theorem."<sup>36</sup> But in those areas of experience in which seemingly random information presents itself

to the individual, what is perceived has little significance until it is assimilated to classes of knowledge and categories of abstraction by means of analogy. The aesthetic importance of variety in a work of art is that it offers a multiplicity of discrete objects and/or events within an associative nexus. What Fielding says about the thematic unity of David Simple is very much like what Kames says about the epistemological structure of fiction.\* In fiction (as in painting too), a variety of individuated figures and incidents generated out of an original thematic unity invites the opposite: inductive assimilation and reintegration when the reader identifies the genetic source, the theme.

In recognizing that the reader's pleasure is in part derived from the exercise of this kind of discrimination, Fielding anticipates a great deal of what psychologically-oriented critics of both the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries say about the structure of fiction. Among his instructions to "modern critics," he warns against finding out

too near a resemblance between certain characters here introduced; as, for instance, between the landlady who appears in the seventh book and her in the ninth. Thou art to know, friend, that there are certain characteristics in which most individuals of every profession and occupation agree. To be able to preserve these characteristics, and at the same time to diversify their operations, is one talent of a good writer. Again, to mark the nice distinctions between two persons actuated by the same vice or folly is another; and, as this last talent is found in very few writers, so is the true discernment of it found in as few readers; though, I believe, the observation of this forms a very principal pleasure in those who are capable of the discovery (Tom Jones, Book X, Chapter i).

In making this point, even if Fielding applies it only to such minor

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\*See p. 114 above.

characters as his landladies, he testifies to the fact that the novel, virtually since its inception, has been used for its capacity to offer the reader the pleasures of "true discernment": the consequence of perceiving and analyzing degrees of "uniformity" and "variety" among like figures. In the preface to David Simple Fielding applies the notion to the incidents of the novel when he discusses the thematic relationship of each to the unifying "design" of the novel.

Because comparison and contrast are key words in the criticism of the period, the modern reader must be on the alert for a shift in meaning that did not occur until after mid-century. "Contrast," according to the Oxford English Dictionary, was first used to mean a "person or thing of most opposite qualities" in 1764. Until then, and still the primary meaning during the last part of the century, "contrast" was either the "juxtaposition of forms, colours, etc., so as to heighten the effect of corresponding parts and of the whole" (1742), or comparison "of objects of like kind whereby the difference of their qualities is brought out" (1731). It is in the first sense that Fielding uses the word as part of his defense of mixed characters:

The foibles and vices of men in whom there is great mixture of good, become more glaring objects from the virtues which contrast them and show their deformity (Tom Jones, Book X, Chapter i; italics mine).

Insofar as the reader finds himself sympathetic to a largely virtuous character he experiences, according to Fielding, the greater pain, i.e., "when we find such vices attending with their evil consequences to our favourite characters." In Fielding's warning about not properly discriminating between his two landladies, he is applying the second

sense of the word. Fielding does not employ the kind of contrast in which spotless virtue is set opposite unmitigated vice; he wants the reader to perceive deviations from an ideal of goodness or to perceive subtle differences among characters rather than stereotypes.

The use of the word "contrast" during the late eighteenth century almost always implies a deviation from the norm for the sake of heightened effect or to show the difference between similar, hence comparable, entities. The word is used in fact in a way that is very close to what Gilpin means by "contrast" in a painting. Contrast within a group of figures is "the opposition of one part to the other":

with reference to the body, contrast consists in giving it an easy turn, opposing concave parts to convex. . . . [C]ontrast often arises from the air of the head: which is given a turn of the neck from the line of the body.<sup>37</sup>

For an individual figure, contrast is any deviation in part of that figure from the vertical axis.

No part of Gilpin's discussion of "contrast" implies opposition. It is always presented as a way of achieving an interesting, balanced symmetry. Neither mirror-image duplication nor a one-to-one antithetical correspondence on either side of the vertical axis, contrast is a way of balancing deviations on either side of that axis. Gilpin uses the word to mean something that makes a figure or group "interesting" in much the same way that Fielding uses the word to mean inconsistencies in character that make "mixed" rather than monolithic characters "interesting" in fiction. Such moral deviations draw the reader's interest just as deviations from verticality draw the eye to a figure in a painting. In fiction, the juxtaposition of folly or a little

vice heightens the effect of a character's virtue on the reader.

Fielding, Kames and Gilpin are all very much aware of a structural phenomenon that a modern critic points out as typical of "complex fictions"; in them "we deal with what Ludwig Wittgenstein calls family resemblances. Characters bear asymmetrical relationships with each other."<sup>38</sup> The process of comparison and contrast, by means of which the reader perceives the implications of similarities and differences among characters and incidents is quite similar to what the same critic calls the act of tracing "the cognitive structure of a work--its pattern of meanings."<sup>39</sup>

What Kames means by "uniformity" might in fact be expressed in the language of modern structuralist criticism as a kind of redundancy by means of analogy. Variety in a work of art should, according to Kames, offer both the surprise of novelty and the relevance it achieves by introducing elements that are meaningful increments to the central import of the text.

It is important in this context to recognize that for eighteenth-century critics novelty is a consequence of the structural design. As McKenzie puts it,

novelty consists in the structure of the thought, the associations, comparisons, relationships of the material and most certainly not in the material itself. Familiarity with the material, which is used [by these critics] to mean merely previous experience with separate images or ideas, or stated oversimply, knowledge of the vocabulary as opposed to the way it is used is without question.<sup>40</sup>

"Novelty" is a surprising idea or association. It is not something that can be located in the text except as a striking contiguity or conjunction of elements so suggestive as to invite analysis. Hence, in order to

apprehend the "pattern of meanings" in the text, the reader must interpret its unusual substantive and structural relationships.

Family resemblances among groups of similar characters are, according to this notion of "design," essential to the novel because only by comparing such groups does the reader perceive the telling "contrast." Hence in late eighteenth-century novels one of the crucial elements is called "grouping," a term that comes from painting. Such groups must be in some way analogous because each must reflect on the central theme of the novel and each must contrast with the others, affording variations on that theme. But the full significance of "grouping" is best seen in relation to the influence of critical categories the novel borrowed from painting, and will be taken up later in this chapter in that context.

Changes in the structure of fiction during the second half of the century are reflected in the assimilation of an Aristotelian descriptive and taxonomic vocabulary to one that reflects the kind of internal structure the psychological critics looked for. A carefully constructed novel was supposed to offer its readers both a conventional plot and a cohesive, meaningful and moral "design"; looking backward from a twentieth-century vantage point, the attempt to balance the forward thrust of the plot and an emerging pattern of contrasting groups of characters and incidents makes such more or less successful eighteenth-century novels prototypes for novels like George Eliot's Middlemarch and, indirectly, for novels like Anna Karenina.

In 1795, Richard Cumberland used a spider's web as emblematic of a fictional structure that shows linear development in time and a

fixed spatial design; his purposes in drawing on this analogy will be discussed shortly, but his choice is neither random nor novel. In The Metamorphoses of the Circle, Georges Poulet discusses the pervasive significance the image of the spider and its web acquired during the eighteenth century inasmuch as it seemed emblematic of consciousness:

No doubt, there is not a single writer of the time who does not accept Locke's principle, according to which the feeling of existence manifests itself in a point of consciousness, and there is not one, either, who is not persuaded that the incessant repetition of this point in every moment of time will form a sensible plurality of which the detail can never be enumerated by the mind. But for certain thinkers the problem consists, precisely, not in joining these different and particular points by capricious and vagabond lines, but in establishing between each one of these points and all the others, an ensemble of intelligible and structural relationships. Speaking symbolically, the cobweb offers a marvelously clear representation of this ensemble of relationships.<sup>41</sup>

Poulet shows too that fictional point of view becomes important as that position at the center of each network of perceptions "from which one seizes the ramifications of things."<sup>42</sup>

Discussing the intrinsic relativism of a system of belief within which there are an infinite number of distinct and different centers, he locates the source of the equanimity and liberalism of the period in the conviction that resolution of apparent disagreement emerges merely by looking at matters from a more comprehensive and inclusive perspective. Truth thus

consists in a series of points of view, and the supreme point of view, the only one which could embrace the cosmos, is the point of view of God. This does not prevent all the points of view being true, and all places and moments being centers of a circle which envelops some part of the truth.<sup>43</sup>

Although there is a multiplicity of points of view in the world, the aesthetic that develops out of this view is one that at first requires

a work of art to organize itself around only one. It must have a center "around which the other parts distribute themselves to form a whole."<sup>44</sup> Poulet quotes Dryden on the need for a principle of order in drama which makes the hero the equivalent of the viewpoint used in the orthographic representation of perspective. The lines of perspective that converge on the hero form a structure very like the spider's web, except that Dryden sees the need for an explicitly three-dimensional image; the visual effect of the convergence is then to produce a maximum amount of foregrounding for the hero.

Poulet traces back into the seventeenth century the notion that the reader's experience in comprehending the order implicit in a work of art must begin by locating its center and then grasping the pattern deployed around it. He reports that

the German poet Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg had conceived art as a seeming disorder, dissimulating a true order; when one acceded to the center, she said, one saw the chaos coming to order around this point.<sup>45</sup>

That the novelist should create a structure that offers the reader this kind of experience is what Richard Cumberland means when he compares the process of writing a novel to the process of spinning a web.<sup>46</sup>

Richard Cumberland uses the image of the web when he is trying to explain what he calls "the rules of composition." He rehearses principles that are, in his view, common practice, and rightly so according to a consensus among all authorities who matter. As he works out the analogy, the narrative is the continuous filament spiralling out from the center. The fragile integrity of the web is secure only so long as the narrative continues to develop in a credible fashion and so long as additions seem

pertinent, as parts of the whole. If, however,

the writer's zeal for the introduction of new and striking incidents, wherein consists the merit of this species of composition, be not tempered by a due attention to nature, character, and probability, the whole web is broken, and the work falls to the ground.<sup>47</sup>

Skillful treatment of the narrative line is of vital importance because the action of the novel claims and holds the reader's attention, and entertains him. According to this metaphor, the narrative thread is not, however, the primary structure.

The notion that a new incident might damage the integrity of the web points to a structure prior to the linear narrative, to which it must conform. The spokes in the image of the web stand for that structure, and the filament must circle and connect them. The "design" of the novel still, for Cumberland, involves variety, contrast and an intelligible moral structure that emanates from a center through a balanced round of, as it were, spokes.

Cumberland defends certain aspects of his novel from an hypothetical "lady critic" who would take exception to immoral and/or unpleasant episodes in them as follows:

In vain I urge, that contrast is the soul of composition; that joy and sorrow, health and sickness, good and evil, chequer life itself through every stage; that even virtue wants an opposite to give its lustre full display; she does not think that scenes, which address themselves to the passions, can be defended by arguments that apply to the judgment; I may be justified by the rules of composition: she is trying me by those of decorum.<sup>48</sup>

The rules of composition, so far as Cumberland knew them, did indeed require contrast. They were also--unfortunately--beginning to seem to require morally tidy antitheses. Contrast has already, for Cumberland,

supplanted "variety" as the first rule of composition.

Just as Cumberland points out to his overly nice "lady critic" that contrast is central to the notion of fictional structure he believes he must satisfy, a reviewer pointed out to Godwin in the same year that, had he shown a craftsmanlike competence and a proper respect for the "rules of composition," he would have provided contrast to the obsessive and destructive relationship that is the subject of Caleb Williams:<sup>49</sup>

To us it appears, that the author is not sufficiently aware of the necessity of drawing a general outline of the plot of any work of the imagination, before the narrative is entered upon; and that from this cause, as well as from a wish to avoid common place subjects, he has greatly restricted his power, and the effect of his composition. He has no tale of rational love, no marked instance of personal attachment, no fondly anxious parent, or child devoted to filial duty, in the development of his story.<sup>50</sup>

The reviewer then observes that the novel manages to command the reader's attention and interest in spite of its narrow focus on three individuals. What makes it difficult for the twentieth-century reader to perceive the nature of the reviewer's argument is that it seems immediately absurd to find fault with the "plot" of Caleb Williams when it is virtually unique among late-eighteenth-century novels for having a truly well-knit plot.

The reviewer is not necessarily quibbling over Godwin's failure to offer opportunities for the exercise of smug as well as sentimental sympathy and unqualified moral approbation. If he were, he would not have compared the novel with two others that he admires: Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloïse and Goethe's Werther; Caleb Williams seems to him inferior to these novels solely in "felicity of subject." To claim

that the respective subjects of these novels are felicitous is certainly not the opinion of a prude; the sentimental subjects the reviewer finds attractive in these novels are not the kind that are commendable for their propriety. The comparison he makes is telling: it reveals how little he is conscious of rather striking differences among narrative strategies and of differences in the pace and quality of dramatic action among the three. The three novels are for him comparable because they focus narrowly on a very few characters and because each is admirable for the intensity of emotion it evokes.

According to the reviewer, all three are extremely restrictive in the breadth of perspective they offer the reader and therefore in opportunities for him, by exercising his own perceptual and rational faculties, to entertain and instruct himself, as it were. The reviewer therefore finds it quite remarkable that the reader's interest does not wane; he feels that praise is due because Godwin successfully holds the reader's attention in spite of limitations that seem to be an enormous handicap. Translated into Kamesian terms, there is little "variety" in Caleb Williams, largely because the cast of characters is so restricted; a much larger population is necessary for strategic grouping. If the reader's pleasure, both intellectual and aesthetic, depends on whether the writer has offered the opportunity to exercise one's faculties in discerning analogous groups of characters and in discovering the significant similarities and differences among them, Caleb Williams does not have the potential for very much of this kind of pleasure. The reviewer is using the word "plot" in fact to mean "design," and he quite rightly points out that "design" has received very little attention in Caleb Williams.

Again noting similarities to Heloise and Werther, the reviewer points out that the pleasure derived from this novel is in the unity and intensity of the reader's emotional response. Caleb Williams seems to him to affect the reader emotionally in a single way but to a very high degree, whereas typically in his experience a novel affects the reader in a great many ways, intellectual as well as emotional, but never so intensely. The reviewer is on the whole impressed with what Godwin achieves, that is, he appreciates what would now be considered the difference between an "epic novel" like War and Peace and a "dramatic novel" like Madame Bovary. He understands and approves Godwin's intention, has no quarrel with the political import of his subject matter, and, as has been shown here, notices the functional purpose served by his literary strategy: to engender an especially fervent response in the reader by affecting him emotionally. He is not, however, altogether convinced that the best novels are written in this way. In the 1790's most novels were not in fact so written.<sup>51</sup>

The reaction of the reviewers to Mrs. Radcliffe's romances was mixed precisely because the central question raised by her fiction is whether it is good or bad literary practice to rely so entirely on narrative in a novel. Some enjoyed the enormous emotional gratification offered by a narrative contrived to intensify feeling. When The Mysteries of Udolpho appeared, The Monthly's reviewer was delighted with "the care which had been taken to preserve [the reader's] mind in one uniform tone of sentiment, by presenting to it a long continued train of scenes and incidents" within "a story so well contrived to hold curiosity in pleasing suspense."<sup>52</sup> The reviewer for The Critical,

however, did not approve. He points out first of all that Mrs. Radcliffe's novel creates a curious and for him questionable relationship between the reader and the writer (one that we have since come to take for granted, most especially in detective stories, and which accounts in part for why Caleb Williams seems so "modern"). In 1794, The Critical's reviewer had strong misgivings about the propriety of a relationship that is a "contest of curiosity on one side, and invention on the other" in which the writer "has certainly the advantage."<sup>53</sup> He is not comfortable at finding himself engaged in a guessing game with the writer.

The Critical reviewer is also dissatisfied with Udolpho because there is much about the novel itself that seems to him facile, superficial, and vacuous. What he requires of a novel is that it satisfy what are for him conventional expectations and that it provide worthwhile intellectual gratifications: "Four volumes cannot depend entirely on terrific incidents and intricacy of story. They require character, unity of design, a delineation of the scenes of real life, and the variety of well supported contrast." The central formal requirements, then, are for him "unity of design" and "variety of well supported contrasts," that is, a pattern of relationships expressing a meaning or theme by means of related analogues. Narrative is written off as merely "intricacy of story."<sup>54</sup> This reviewer was conservative for his time. The new wave favored dramatic, and even melodramatic, fiction.

Although plot was never undervalued in the eighteenth century, suspense was not always appreciated. It is the high value placed on suspense as an aspect of plot in the nineteenth century that makes for significant differences in the characteristic kinds of plots used then

and the kinds used during the eighteenth century. Some nineteenth-century novelists, however, objected to this kind of story-telling. Trollope's

doctrine is that the author and the reader should move along together in full confidence with each other. Let the personages of the drama undergo ever so complete a comedy of errors among themselves, but let the spectator never mistake the Syracusan for the Ephesian; otherwise he is one of the dupes, and the part of a dupe is never dignified (Barchester Towers, Chapter 15).

And he "ventures to reprobate that system which goes so far to violate all proper confidence between the author and his readers by maintaining nearly to the end of the third volume a mystery as to the fate of their favourite personage." And some eighteenth-century critics rather enjoyed suspense. For Beattie, one of the merits of Tom Jones is that

the circumstances are all so natural, and rise so easily from one another, and cooperate with so much regularity in bringing on, even while they seem to retard, the catastrophe, that the curiosity of the reader is kept always awake, and instead of flagging, grows more and more impatient as the story advances, till at last it becomes downright anxiety.<sup>55</sup>

Godwin designed Caleb Williams to produce this kind of anxiety in the reader, although he does not call it suspense:

I felt that I had a great advantage in . . . carrying back my invention from the ultimate conclusion to the first commencement of the train of adventures upon which I purposed to employ my pen. An entire unity of plot would be the infallible result; and the unity of spirit and interest in a tale truly considered, gives it a powerful hold on the reader, which can scarcely be generated with equal success in any other way (italics mine).<sup>56</sup>

Godwin thus describes the kind of fictional structure that produces suspense and it is for him, as for Beattie, a matter of how the plot is constructed. So entirely unified a plot, one that does not offer the "variety" that Tom Jones does, did not, however, get unqualified approval from the reviewers.

That novels like Caleb Williams and Mrs. Radcliffe's appear during this period and are appreciated (albeit by somewhat different if overlapping audiences) is evidence of a growing interest in the psychology of the characters in the novel and especially in psychological aberration. Characters in popular fiction during the 1790's frequently suffer psychic assault or succumb to an obsession. Caleb Williams offers examples of both; other novels that explore abnormal psychology are for example Lewis' The Monk, Moore's Zeluco, and Mrs. Inchbald's Simple Story. The psychology of "feeling," the interconnected operations of the "mind" and the "heart," affected developments in characterization at the end of the eighteenth century perhaps as much as Freudian psychology affected characterization in early twentieth-century fiction.

The liberation of feeling that we think of as coming with the turn of the century was preceded by a period during which the activity of feeling and the quality of feelings were under close study. As early as 1762, Lord Kames regrets that the word "feeling" is commonly used "to signify what we feel or of what we are conscious; and in that sense it is a general term for all our passions and emotions, and for all our other pleasures and pains."<sup>57</sup> He warns that this is a "less proper sense" in which to use the word than the two meanings he attaches to it: (a) it denotes "one of the external senses," i.e., the biological capacity for experiencing sensation; and, (b) it signifies "that internal act by which we are made conscious of our pleasures and our pains."<sup>58</sup> It is because common usage ignores the process of conscious appropriation and evaluation of sensations and emotions that it is a lax and hence a less than proper use of the word. For Lord Kames, the force of the word must, in addition to denoting the contents of feeling, include an awareness

that feeling is a cognitive process. What we feel is of interest, but of greater interest is the fact that we become and are "conscious of our pleasures and pains."

Kames also makes a distinction between the content of feeling and the process of feeling on the one hand, and, on the other, a thought that expresses feeling: a sentiment. In his study of significances attached to this word during the eighteenth century, Erik Erämetsä points out that "sentiment" was closely tied to intellectual rather than emotional predispositions, and that it "often implied a moral evaluation, an attitude of approval or disapproval from a moral point of view."<sup>59</sup> He observes that "no mention of 'feeling' or 'emotion' is made under sentiment in any of the eighteenth-century dictionaries consulted" in his research. He notes, however, that Lord Kames is the first to show a relationship between emotion and sentiment. According to Kames, every "thought prompted by passion is termed sentiment." Erämetsä remarks that even in this definition "'sentiment' is . . . defined as 'thought,' although the Heart is explicitly implied to be the predominant component and the ultimate source of the type."<sup>60</sup>

Lord Kames distinguishes three distinct levels of emotional experience: content, process, and thoughts (i.e., emotions that have been informed by moral considerations and that have acquired a conscious and verbal shape.) Having insisted on these distinctions, Kames points the way toward a full presentation of the interior life of a character: what he feels, how he feels, and the kinds of ideas he entertains in consequence of feeling. It is on the basis of such distinctions that the kind of character Henry James calls "a center of consciousness"

becomes possible.

The word "feeling" denotes a complex relationship between the head and the heart. According to Lord Kames, "we are conscious of internal action as in the head; of passions and emotions as in the heart."<sup>61</sup> His examples of internal actions are: "deliberation, reasoning, resolution, willing, consenting." He points out that such internal actions are attributes of a subject in whom there is another class of attributes which are totally different in quality. "Passions and emotions, which are internal agitations, are also attributes. With regard to [internal actions], I am conscious of being active; with regard to [internal agitations], I am conscious of being passive."<sup>62</sup> The distinction between head and heart, then, in addition to being a distinction between intellectual and emotional processes, is also a distinction between active and passive modes of conscious experience.\*

In Kames' epistemology, perception usually provides an individual with an accurate image of the physical attributes of an object. He dismisses most of Locke's and all of Berkeley's "idealism" as kinds of sophistry, insisting that the individual perceives what is physically perceptible about the real world and denying that there is any radical discontinuity between the thing-in-itself and the idea of that thing in the mind of the perceiver. He defends this assertion solely on the ground that we function so well on the common-sense assumption that things are what they seem to be that, even though there is no such thing

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\*Kames is no incipient Freudian. He insists that both internal actions and agitations are phenomena of consciousness itself; therefore, there can be no motion of either the head or the heart "but those of which we are conscious," even though passions are suffered involuntarily.

(according to Kames) as an innate idea, the congruity between an object and its image is so basic to our experience that it seems to be a priori true: "Nature determines us necessarily to rely on the veracity of our senses; and upon their evidence the existence of external objects is to us a matter of intuitive knowledge and absolute certainty."<sup>63</sup>

Distortion is, however, likely to occur in the mind of the observer because of the curious nature of the procedure that links sensible experiences to cognitive processes.

In Kames' epistemological system, the head and the heart are joined by a special faculty, feeling. Feeling is

a general term signifying that internal act by which we are made conscious of our pleasures and our pains; for it is not limited, as sensation is, to any one sort. Thus, feeling being the genus of which sensation is a species, their meaning is the same when applied to pleasure and pain felt at the organ of sense

although it is also

proper to say, I feel pleasure in a sumptuous building, in love, in friendship, and pain in losing a child, in revenge, in envy. . . .<sup>64</sup>

Feeling, it should be noted, belongs to the head: it is an action and not an agitation, and its province is to register whether an agitation is pleasurable or painful. Because, however, it is an action that records emotions, feeling is the source of certain kinds of epistemological errors.

We are not so constituted as to perceive objects with indifference: these, with very few exceptions, appear agreeable or disagreeable; and at the same time raise in us pleasant or painful emotions. . . . These are accurately distinguished: the pleasant emotion is felt as within the mind; the agreeableness of the object is placed upon the object, and is perceived as one of its qualities or properties. The agreeable appearance of an object of sight is termed beauty; and the disagreeable appearance of such an object is termed ugliness.<sup>65</sup>

On the one hand, feeling, in the process of determining whether they are pleasurable or painful, appropriates sensations and emotions and translates them into phenomena within the intellectual sphere, thus obscuring the distinctions between the head and the heart. On the other, feeling tries to locate an external cause in a hypothetical quality, like beauty, which corresponds to what is, in fact, a subjective response, thus mistaking phenomena of the mind for phenomena in the world. Feeling, then, is a faculty that muddles the difference between subjective and objective experience.

Mid-eighteenth-century conceptions about the role of the head, the heart, and feeling were being revised, but had not yet radically changed, at the turn of the century. The need to align subjective and objective experience diminishes, and there is, instead, a growing desire to justify and explore those kinds of subjective experience for which there are no objective equivalents. Among Romantics, feeling came to be more exclusively identified with the heart as a mode of cognition more subtle and acute than those of the head, and equally trustworthy. The shift during the second half of the eighteenth century is, then, from Lord Kames' posture, that feeling is somewhat suspect as a potential source of erroneous notions about the world because it processes information that is exclusively subjective, to that of the Romantics, which is that

feeling transcends the logical process by sympathetically detecting and realizing qualities in the external world, [and] it can also discern and satisfy more subjective values and reactions which are no less real. Analogies, for example, need not conform to strictly rational demands: what might logically appear as the most diverse phenomena may excite the same feeling and consequently form analogies which,

though they obviously exist to the human organism alone, are none the less true and valid simply because they are human responses.<sup>66</sup>

Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, there is a growing awareness that knowing and feeling are so intimately linked that what one knows is, in part, determined by how one feels, and, in turn, how one feels is, in part, determined by what one knows.

Imagination however remained suspect during this period.

According to Lord Kames, imagination is a "singular power of fabricating images without any foundation in reality."<sup>67</sup> Sometimes the imagination produces images that are delightful, but the allure of images that have no "foundation in reality" has its dangers. The imagination functions well when it serves the rational faculties; it may, however, enthrall them.

In 1759 (and with overtly didactic intent) Dr. Johnson writes about an astronomer who comes to believe that he controls natural phenomena. Johnson describes the onslaught of insanity as follows:

By degrees the reign of fancy is confirmed; she grows first imperious, and in time despotic. Then fictions begin to operate as realities, false opinions fasten upon the mind, and life passes in dreams of rapture and anguish (Rasselas, Chapter 43).

Madness is for Johnson the tyranny of a private fiction. He is prepared to recognize that in general man is not quite the rational creature he would like to be:

Disorders of intellect . . . happen much more often than superficial observers will easily believe. Perhaps, if we speak with rigorous exactness, no human mind is in its right state. There is no man whose imagination does not sometimes predominate over his reason, who can regulate his attention wholly by his will, and whose ideas will come and go at his command. No man will be found in whose mind airy notions do not sometimes tyrannize, and force him to hope or fear beyond the limits of sober probability. All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity (Rasselas, Chapter 43).

An apologue is not, however, the place to explore degrees of psychological aberration even if Johnson is sensitive to them.

Toward the end of the century, however, there is a marked shift in interest and attention away from what is reasonable about the mind and toward what is unreasonable about it, even though there is still "a general suspicion of imagination or emotion (the two were loosely identified as having lack of judgment in common) as being wild, disorderly, and verging at times on actual insanity."<sup>68</sup> Not only are emotion and imagination linked to madness, but the fantasies of madmen are linked-- by means of the imaginative faculty--to the fantasies of fiction-writers; the former are thought of as private fictions, as Dr. Johnson conceived them, and the latter are for public consumption.<sup>69</sup> The danger of novel-reading is that impressionable minds are exposed to the influence of aberrant fantasies whenever they draw on the stock of questionable fiction designed primarily to excite the imagination. If such novels are persuasive enough, the ingenuous, ill-educated reader (that is, adolescent women in particular) is likely to use such fantasies as models for, in essence, irrational behavior.

The idea that many individuals, and men in particular, might succumb to and act on the belief in an irrational public fiction emerges in the political sphere rather than the literary marketplace. At the end of the century fear of innovative, untested public fictions dictates some of the very conservative policies which Edmund Burke defends in his Reflections on the Revolution in France. The egalitarianism of the revolutionary ideology is for him "that monstrous fiction which, by inspiring false ideas and vain expectations into men destined to travel

in the obscure walk of laborious life, serves only to aggravate and embitter that real inequality which it never can remove."<sup>70</sup> After the Reign of Terror, it became difficult for many to underestimate the dangers of intellectual constructs in the public sphere. The force unleashed by an ideology--a fiction, a creation of the intellect and imagination--had been of incalculable magnitude. For those who had at first supported the cause of the French Revolution, one of its first consequences was a terrifying realization that men who pass for sane are capable of vicious, bizarre, and profoundly destructive behavior. For those who were writers, the rational faculty in man never again inspired unquestioned confidence. Coleridge and Wordsworth were even more deeply affected than novelists like Charlotte Smith, for example; they were much younger, more ingenuous, and more idealistic in 1793 than she.

Burke's defense of the traditional social order is in effect a justification based on the proven utility of an older ideology: its capacity to maintain political stability. Burke prefers a society in which decisions are made on the basis of precedent, and even of prejudice, to one in which decisions are left to individual discernment. He does not trust the "private stock of reason" in individuals because he suspects "that this stock in each man is small." He has no faith in the intellectual or moral capacities of a man "hesitating in a moment of decision skeptical, puzzled, and unresolved."<sup>71</sup>

Burke's is a political posture. But what frightened Burke fascinated the better novelists of the period. Those moments of decision that seemed to Burke so dangerous for the political stability of a

society became the most compelling and interesting moments for the characters in the most interesting fiction of the decade. Describing the process of rational decision was easily justifiable on old terms; it is an instructive action, especially when it produces a morally sound decision. Describing the process of psychological disintegration and the kinds of thoughts (quite apart from the behavior) it produces offered new opportunities for instruction, albeit by bad example. Equally significant in terms of appropriating new materials and methods was the recognition that these are best represented by carefully selected expressive and symbolic devices rather than an exhaustive, "realistic" analysis.

Even psychologically-oriented critics, however, were slow to see the value of symbolic objects and actions. Aristotelian theories of representation tended to prevail among them so that, according to Gordon McKenzie, most "believe that poetry is imitative in giving a representation of experience";<sup>72</sup> he mentions Hartley, Hume, Gerard, Harris, and Campbell. Gerard in fact locates part of the reader's pleasure in noticing and appreciating the writer's attempt to render persuasive imitations; the reader engages consciously in the "act of comparison" between the original and the copy, and "the exactness of the resemblance, our discovery of it, and the art we conceive necessary for producing it, concur to make up our gratification" (Essay on Taste, 1757).<sup>73</sup> The single and very influential exception is Lord Kames. He is the only critic to use the word "imitative"

in a more nearly modern sense. To him only painting and sculpture are in their nature imitative. . . . The historic significance

of Kames' usage is that the old Aristotelian sense has begun to lose its hold along with the whole apparatus of classical criticism.<sup>74</sup>

For Kames literature is, in its autonomous self, expressive and evocative; consequently he is not much interested in questions involving mimesis.

Kames judges a literary representation solely in terms of how effectively it elicits a response. Verbal descriptions that evoke sufficiently vivid images in the mind of a reader--i.e., that draw on his own memories and the emotions commonly associated with such memories--are not only appropriate in literature but desirable. Kames points out that an effective description is one that deals with a specific concrete object, and especially one that is highly individuated and particularized, because such descriptions are most likely to be "vivid." When offered a sufficiently striking object, the reader's imagination will translate verbal cues into pictorial images, drawing on his own memories of similar objects to fill in all necessary details. Such imaginary pictures have what Kames calls "ideal presence," a compelling and persuasive kind of reality similar to the kind memories have. How that picture is perceived and interpreted is analogous to how the individual perceives and interprets memories, and both are analogous to how he perceives and interprets the world presented to his senses; that is, all three are very similar kinds of epistemological experiences.

McKenzie points out that

the demand for specific images, frequently expressed by such terms as "accurate," "definite," and "specialty," "vivacity," is an integral part of the psychological approach. . . . It is in fact a transference to literary criticism of the established method, both epistemological and psychological, of arriving empirically at generalizations by investigating the smallest observable

details, rather than accepting generalizations and trying to fit the detail to the correct category.<sup>75</sup>

For the psychological critics, the importance of the particular object in literature has to do with how it summons the reader to active participation, so that the act of reading is also an exercise in inductive--and perhaps interpretive--thinking.

By the mid-century poetry using descriptions in order to arrive at something akin to pictorial representation was popular. Among those writing "nature" poetry were Thomson, Young, Akenside, Gray and Joseph Warton. The intention of this kind of word-painting was, however, very different from what the psychological critics valued in "vivid" descriptions of particular objects, although the impetus for both can be traced to post-Lockian interest in the concrete physical world. Insofar as the notion became popular that poetry ought to imitate in its own fashion what painting imitates, poetic description had become an art of graphic details. Cicely Davies shows the bias of this painterly interest in landscape by citing Thomas Warton's criticism of Milton. Davies remarks that Warton "objects to the lack of pictorial truth in Milton's description of Eden" because

Milton's description conveys the atmosphere of the scenes by appealing to the emotions through various sensory effects; and his description of Paradise expresses its beauty and luxuriance by the selection of representative objects, not by the careful enumeration of the features of the landscapes. But in the mid-eighteenth century the descriptive poet, like the painter, was expected to convey as clearly as possible the effect upon the sight; and he could only do this if he attended to details of contour and colour (*italics mine*).<sup>76</sup>

The vocabulary Davies uses in order to explain the effect of description in Paradise Lost is very like that of the psychological critics. It was

in fact true that the influence of the psychological approach to criticism toward the end of the century led to an increased interest in Milton's poetry (and Shakespeare's as well).<sup>77</sup>

The psychological critics are sensitive to what can be achieved by means of carefully selected and especially meaningful objects, both because such objects offer the reader certain kinds of cognitive experience and--even more germane to developments in both poetry and prose--because they may suggest or express something of the moral character and/or meaning of the work. The beginnings of a theoretical rationale for symbolic representation are implied in earlier essays on aesthetics; only later is it articulated. According to Jeffrey (in 1829), for example, the experience of poetry

consists in the fine perception of that subtle and mysterious Analogy which exists between the physical and moral world--which makes outward things and qualities the natural types and emblems of inward gifts and emotions, or leads us to ascribe life and sentiment to everything that interests us in the aspect of external nature (italics mine).<sup>78</sup>

Once objects are perceived as in some way carrying or expressing psychological, emotional, and moral implications, they become available to fiction-writers as expository devices. Objects come to be used emblematically and a character's manner of treating and perceiving objects can be used to show (rather than tell) the reader what his mental and emotional experience is like.

The introduction into fiction of particular objects coincides, as John Graham points out, with an expanded interest in physiognomy:

Only late in the century did the particular become significant as revealing value, and then the artist could use the concrete detail as an individuating factor to present his figures. With this development, the use of physiognomy was encouraged as part

of the search for meaning behind the physical, for value in the concrete object.<sup>79</sup>

And at about the same time, facial expression is awarded an important place as part of the content of a painting because it carries information about typical "manners" and individual emotions. Gilpin calls "expression"

the life and soul of painting. It implies a just presentation of passion, and of character: of passion, by exhibiting every emotion of the mind, as outwardly discovered by any peculiarity of gesture: or the extention, and contraction of the features: of character, by representing the different manners of men, as arising from their particular tempers, or professions.<sup>80</sup>

That characters must "read" both objects and faces becomes, in the late eighteenth-century novel, a metaphor for all personal and social relationships. Understandably enough, characterization becomes more complex, subtle, and various in tandem with such complex and subtle ideas about the nature of human perception and cognition, psychological functions underlying all motivation.

vi

How important it is for a reader to understand all the implications of a critical vocabulary coming together during the 1790's from so many different sources becomes evident as soon as one begins to read reviews of Charlotte Smith's novels and of those of her contemporaries. The reviews draw on Aristotelian terms, on terms that apply to painting, and on attitudes as well as terms that come from looking at the novel from the reader's point of view, as the psychologically oriented critics do.

The opening remarks, for example, of a favorable review in the Analytical of Charlotte Smith's The Old Manor House treat disparagingly a consensus among naive readers about what is most worthwhile in a novel:

If it were inquired what is the principal excellence of novel writing, the greater number of readers would perhaps place it in novelty of story, variety of incident, and an arrangement happily contrived to awaken, and to keep alive curiosity.<sup>81</sup>

In other words, plot. The reviewer, however, prefaced what he had to say about The Old Manor House by appealing to a select "class of readers, who, even in the perusal of a novel, look further than to the present momentary amusement of fancy or gratification of feeling." He expects that such readers will, as he does, "give [Smith] . . . great credit for her talents as a novelist" because they too "value a fictitious tale in proportion as it exhibits a true picture of men and manners; and, in judging of the merit of any work of this kind, will, first of all inquire what characters it describes, and with what degree of accuracy and strength it delineates them." The reviewer values the vivid portrayal of individual character, seeing characterization as the "ability of a writer to perceive and portray all those details of attitude, emotion, intellect, position, and environment whose particular and unique clustering in each individual makes him what he is."<sup>82</sup> While such characters must be individuated, they must also represent social types (without themselves being types), and they must be grouped in meaningful ways within the variety, the social panorama, displayed in the novel.

In contrast, another review, also from the Analytical, is

unfavorable even though the novel it examines contains an array of interesting characters. The apparent continuity of Lord Kames' critical lexicon is evident in this reviewer's opening remarks:

In constructing the story of a novel, next to the difficulty of inventing incidents, is that of connecting them by such a skilful arrangement, as to afford the reader a pleasing perception of uniformity amidst variety.<sup>83</sup>

His criticism of the lack of structural cohesion in Elizabeth Percy: A Novel, Founded on Facts, "Written by a Lady" refers to principles of composition in painting in support of his objections:

A sufficient number of people are, it is true, brought together; many fine feelings and passions are put into motion; and, before the novel is half finished, we have six tender attachments, and two marriages. But the general effect is that of a confused picture, where the figures, however pleasing or striking, considered individually, produce on the whole an indistinct impression, for want of being properly grouped.<sup>84</sup>

The reviewer acknowledges that this novel has "variety" (i.e., a "sufficient number of people"). His criticism is of its "design" or "composition." The "design" of Charlotte Smith's novels always receives favorable notice.

However often "grouping" is mentioned by novelists and critics, few other than Smith offer evidence that they were conscious of problems in perspective, although the two are closely related technical matters. Gilpin discusses perspective, of course, in terms of painting. He points out that "perspective" and "keeping" must be thought of together. Perspective "is that proportion, with regard to size, which near and distant objects, with their parts, bear to each other. It answers to keeping" which, for Gilpin, is a word that "implies the different degrees of strength and faintness, which objects receive from nearness and

distance."<sup>85</sup> That Smith uses this term suggests that she, for one, was conscious that the problem of connecting foreground and background is important in fiction as well as painting. The hero of Marchmont, who briefly considers writing for money and solicits advice from a bitter professional, is told that

narrative, let is be about what you will, is read because the mind acquiesces, and it requires no trouble to think about it. . . . Never mind improbabilities--put together a sufficient number of facts<sup>86</sup>--the more the better. If you are too idle to choose the trouble of inventing, collect eight or nine of the most popular works of that sort; take a piece of one, and a piece of another, and put them together, only a little altered, just to disguise them: never mind whether or not what the painters call keeping, can in this motley assemblage be attended to; nobody thinks about that: sprinkle the whole plentifully with horrors of some sort or other, to stimulate the languid attention, and you will have a certainty of sale at least among the circulating libraries, which, after all, is the principal sale that can be expected (II, 224-25).

For Smith, in fiction as in painting groups of figures should not all be on the same plane. Some occupy the foreground, others are at varying distances in the background. Thus groups of characters within a single and fairly homogenous social class are all close to the foreground within a relatively shallow setting, as in Smith's Emmeline.<sup>\*</sup> Or, as in Desmond, the planes between foreground and background may be wider apart. The political issues in Geraldine Verney's marriage compare to, or contrast with, the issues of the French Revolution,<sup>\*\*</sup> which serves as a pertinent rather than decorative backdrop for the action of the novel. In using a plan in which the dramatic plot of the novel must show thematic relationships to historical events in the background, Smith is one of

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<sup>\*</sup> See Chapter II, pp. 79-83 above.

<sup>\*\*</sup>See Chapter VI, pp. 276-79 below.

the first novelists to explore one of the more difficult and rewarding uses of "perspective" in the novel.<sup>87</sup> This is perhaps the most remarkable of the many ways in which Smith anticipates Austen and Scott. She anticipates Austen (as does Frances Burney D'Arblay in Camilla [1796]) in organizing members of a family around her theme, Scott in relating the historical context of public events to personal experience.<sup>88</sup>

For Smith, the quality of the novel is not determined by the narrative so much as by the "design." Contrast, grouping and keeping are as important as is action to the structure of the novel. Like other novelists of the period, Smith was forced to consciously weigh the merits of suspense against the dangers of melodrama and maudlin sentimentality. Readers who attend to a novel only when their interest is captured and held by curiosity and anxiety prefer cheap melodrama to thought-provoking fiction, and during the 1790's writers were even more sensitive to the implications of this preference than they are today. Not enough fiction was in print for there to be distinct "pulp" and "literary" markets. All novelists were appealing to the same audience; better writers hoped to cultivate rather than cater to the coarser tastes of a substantial part of that audience.

Charlotte Smith was among those who were critical of fiction that is contrived primarily to sustain suspense. In the persona of one of her heroes, Warwick, she advises her reader that, since he already knows the outcome of the account Warwick is about to give of his "wanderings,"

you must divest yourself of the consciousness of the happy catastrophe, at least while the story is telling; and suppose that it is possible your hero and heroine may perish in every one of the difficulties in which they are involved--for you

know that, when once we are sure people will be happy, we no longer feel any interest for them; and therefore all novels, or at least most of them, close with a marriage, with which mind must set out (NW, p. 7).

Although there were by the 1790's all too many novels that were constructed as strings of perilous incidents, these were not by Smith's standards good novels--as her wry reflections imply. Smith did not want readers who appreciated nothing other than the rising and falling tension of suspense. Rather she wanted readers who were prepared to grasp the "design" and hence the meaning of her novels.

Charlotte Smith's treatment of character depends on psychological subtleties that were not universally understood or appreciated at the end of the century. According to Sir Egerton Brydges, her most ardent apologist, her treatment of character was the source of a certain amount of discomfort for some among her readers, for whom

her touches of character were too nice; they were too exquisite for the apprehension of some; while to many they laid open the obliquities of the heart, or the head, with too keen a pen.

For want of . . . glaring colours, and farce-like personages, some taxed her with want of fancy, and some with departure from real life. The reverse appears to be the truth.<sup>89</sup>

For both Brydges and Smith, there is a norm, a kind of clarity and validity of consciousness, at which perception, ratiocination, and emotion function independently, albeit cooperatively; confusion and error (i.e., "obliquity") happen when one of these, most often emotion, exerts so strong an influence over another that the necessary and formal functions of each are restricted or perverted. Neither Brydges nor Smith trusts such deviation.

But to say this much does not fully explain the ramifications of

Brydges' statement, in an eighteenth-century context. The twentieth-century reader is correct, in part, if he infers that what Brydges means by "the obliquities of the heart, or the head" is a critical phrase meant to describe both the emotional and intellectual processes which motivate Smith's characters. He will also, in part, be correct if he infers that "the farce-like personages" are types that respond to experience in a direct, simple, predictable, and consistent way, whereas Smith's characters are more realistic individuals in that their response to experience is indirect, ambivalent, unpredictable, inconsistent. It is tempting, from our point of view, to read this part of Brydges' statement as if it were solely a fuzzy anticipation of Forster's distinction between round and flat characters, at least insofar as the round character is developed in a more complex and subtle fashion than the flat one and is, consequently, the more difficult and potentially disturbing phenomenon. Such a reading, however, misses what is most crucial about Brydges' statement: for him and for Smith there is no dichotomy between emotional and intellectual processes, and hence major characters must not be done in "glaring colours." Brydges' phrase implies the Kamesian view that such deviations derive from a complex nexus of processes gone amiss. Obliquity from the norm involves misperception and misconception as well as ill-conceived sentiments.

When, in Smith's novels, a character notices the physical world around him, what he notices is always emotionally charged and therefore meaningful in an idiosyncratic, subjective way. How much their subjective response is allowed to distort objective perception becomes a crucial test by means of which her characters achieve or lose stature. Dignity

and integrity are both the sources and the rewards of clarity. Clarity is difficult, first, because the world is complex. It is also difficult because circumstances and relationships are contingent and fluid. Discernment depends, therefore, not only on the ability to see clearly but also on a special kind of cognitive flexibility by means of which it is possible to deal with chance and change, multiplicity and duplicity, motives and meanings. The faculty that can and should assist discernment is the one that can itself project contingencies and alternatives: the imagination.

Because Smith mistrusts, most of all, the influence of emotion over other faculties, she is especially wary of imagination. She sees it as an activity of the head that is all too readily enlisted in the service of the emotions, and that shows a remarkable facility for influencing perceptions. For her, imagination functions best as a mode of speculation. It serves the rational faculty by assembling data into alternative plans of action or interpretations of the actions of others. It is most reliable when it carefully and circumspectly extrapolates what might happen from information about what has already happened, thus, in a sense, creating probable fictions, the validity of which can be either discerned or tested. It is least reliable when it is allowed the latitude to develop fictions that are highly colored by the emotions. For Smith, the kind of fiction that is produced when emotions and imagination are free from rational constraints is an erroneous projection or extrapolation; it is mimetically unreliable as a picture of the world. Such idiosyncratic fictions are, nevertheless, among the most effective devices Smith uses in her novels. She demonstrates that, although a wrongheaded

fiction says nothing accurate about the external world, it reveals psychological processes in a way that is both valid and dramatic. However fanciful, the fictions that her characters create about themselves and the world they inhabit illustrate real and universally relevant psychological processes in a form that is already and in itself literary.

From Lord Kames through Smith and Brydges there is continuity in ideas about how the mind works and about how to account for deviations from an ideal balance of emotional and rational faculties. The nature and effects of both private and public fictions become part of the machinery of Smith's novels. The notion that the world is so complex and unstable that it all but confounds intellectual faculties in moments of decision affects literary strategies in the treatment of character. The notion that private and public fictions (as defined above) are analogous to literary fictions affects the relationship of the narrative voice to the narrated fiction; fiction is seen as projecting and reflecting a private vision, a point of view. The notion that private fictions, like ideologies, have consequences affects the treatment of motivation in characters; "justifiable" behavior becomes instead the kind of behavior a character can find a way of justifying.

Smith draws on all of these new possibilities (or newly disturbing ones) in her novels. Subsequent chapters will focus on techniques she appropriates, modifies, or invents to present new subtleties in characterization within this highly structured fictional world.

Charlotte Smith's purposes are served in each of her novels in large part by means of characterization, that is, what is brought about

when the reader perceives "a pattern of meanings" among her various more-or-less subtly differentiated characters and is persuaded that he can discern what kind of behavior is, or should be, normative. It may well be that the reason her novels are so little appreciated in the twentieth century is that her "designs" are so successfully negotiated by her narratives that they seldom obtrude enough to be noticed as explicit and intentional structures.

Charlotte Smith never advertised what she was doing. There was in fact no reason why she should if the central argument of this chapter is on the mark and she was merely following the rules, as she knew them, for how a good novel is put together. And, in fact, Emmeline's conventional features--not its innovative ones--received the following appreciative attention in the Monthly Review; space being limited, the reviewer apologetically remarks,

We must . . . content ourselves with observing, in general terms, --that the whole is conducted with a considerable degree of art; that the characters are natural, and well discriminated: that the fable is uncommonly interesting; and that the moral is forcible and just.<sup>90</sup>

If the modern reader is prepared to read the novel on its own terms, he too might voice qualifications like those of the Critical's reviewer:

We have sometimes thought, that the work hung heavy on our hands; yet, on trial, we know not what should have been omitted. Each little, seemingly unimportant incident, develops [sic] the character in question or elucidates it. Even the little artless scenery of the introduction contributes to explain the catastrophe.<sup>91</sup>

But a great many novels of the first stature have met with and survived objections of this kind, some with perhaps less reason or justification for each of the parts of a full-scale novel that affects the reader

as somewhat too long or sometimes a bit tedious. Properly understood, Charlotte Smith's novels should likewise be judged for their merits rather than rejected out of hand.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The novel's "province is to bring about natural events by easy means, and to keep up curiosity without the help of wonder: it is therefore precluded from the machines and expedients of heroic romance." (Rambler #4.) Cf. Clara Reeve, The Progress of Romance and the History of Charoba, Queen of Egypt, ed. Esther M. McGill (1785; rpt. New York: The Facsimile Text Society, 1930), p. 111: "The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things.--The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written."

<sup>2</sup>See preface to Fleetwood edition, 1832; reprinted in Caleb Williams, ed. George Sherburn (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), p. xxix.

<sup>3</sup>See for example Robert Palfrey Utter and Gwendolyn Brydges Needham, Pamela's Daughters (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1936), pp. 328-31, and Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (1957; rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 204, on Pamela; E.M.W. Tillyard, The Epic Strain in the English Novel (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), pp. 52-54 on Tom Jones.

<sup>4</sup>Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, respectively.

<sup>5</sup>I am indebted to and have drawn freely on throughout this chapter Gordon McKenzie's scholarship and critical insights in Critical Responsiveness: A Study of the Psychological Current in Later Eighteenth Century Criticism, Univ. of California Pubs. in English, Vol. 20 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949).

<sup>6</sup>See William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism (1957; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 264. For a brief history of the controversy in England see pp. 254-82. See too Cicely Davis, "Ut pictura poesis," MLR 30 (1935), 159-69; W. G. Howard, "Ut Pictura Poesis," PMLA 24 (1909), 40-123; R. W. Lee, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting," Art Bulletin 22 (1940), 197-269; Lawrence Lipking, The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 38ff.

<sup>7</sup>See M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (1953; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 88-94.

<sup>8</sup>Wimsatt and Brooks, p. 274.

<sup>9</sup>Sir Charles Grandison, IV, 418.

<sup>10</sup>John Graham, "Character Description and Meaning in the Romantic Novel," Studies in Romanticism 5 (1966), p. 209.

<sup>11</sup>See Day, pp. 119-122, for a discussion of early fiction that attempts psychological realism but delivers various kinds of conventional rhetorical modes: e.g., the soliloquy, the tirade, and esp. the letter. See too pp. 32-36 and ff. on Lettres portugaises (1669) and its influence on early letter-novels in England.

<sup>12</sup>Ed. M. Kelsall (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>13</sup>In The Amiable Humorist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 24-25, Stuart Tave describes the direction this distinction takes: "The reaction against satire . . . was a rejection of the basic satirical assumptions of clear and fixed standards, cosmic, social, and moral, against which the aberrations of man are measured with a just severity. The reaction was, on its strong side, the substitution of a more historical view of life, one in which particular persons, motives and circumstances, explanations, light and shade, were valid and necessary considerations that preceded judgment."

<sup>14</sup>Such an appreciation is implicit in what Tompkins calls "Charlotte Smith's careful record of motive" (p. 177) when she talks of attributes of her fiction that contributed to her popularity. Mrs. Inchbald's Simple Story (1791), often praised for its use of gesture, is also remarkable for the access the reader has, in varying degrees, to the characters' thoughts. The Radcliffian romance of course relies very heavily on the indirect interior monologue for its effects.

<sup>15</sup>Godwin, p. xxviii.

<sup>16</sup>The New Laokoon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), p. 44.

<sup>17</sup>Dedication, Ferdinand Count Fathom (1753), quoted in Joseph Bunn Heidler, The History from 1700-1800 of Criticism of English Prose Fiction (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1928), p. 60.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Babbitt, p. 45.

<sup>20</sup>Introduction to Henry, quoted in Heidler, p. 158.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Sheldon Sacks, Fiction and the Shape of Belief (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel, 2nd ed. (1967; rpt. London: Hutchinson University Library, 1974), I, 17.

<sup>23</sup>"On Fable and Romance," Dissertations Moral and Critical (1783); reprinted in Scott Elledge, ed., Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), II, 929.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Elledge, p. 930.

<sup>26</sup>Tompkins, p. 344.

<sup>27</sup>Elledge, p. 930.

<sup>28</sup>For a most suggestive essay on the significance of circular patterning in the eighteenth century see Georges Poulet, The Metamorphoses of the Circle, trans. Carley Dawson and Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), pp. 54-67.

<sup>29</sup>Preface (dated 1799) to Alwyn: or the Gentleman Comedian (1780); reprinted in Barnett, p. 150.

<sup>30</sup>See H. W. Randall, The Critical Theory of Kames, Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, 22 (1940-41), Chap. V, for a study of the history and influence of the Elements of Criticism. There were seven editions between 1762 and 1788. In A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), I, 106, Lord Kames receives very high praise from René Wellek: "Among attempts at a general theory of literature [in the second half of the eighteenth century], Lord Kames' Elements of Criticism (1762) seems the only independent and systematic synthesis. Compared with it, Hugh Blair's widely known Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres is only an unoriginal textbook."

<sup>31</sup>Elements of Criticism, ed. Abraham Mills (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1833), pp. 158-59.

<sup>32</sup>A common phrase; Smith uses it in Desmond (I, 271) and elsewhere.

<sup>33</sup>McKenzie, p. 220.

<sup>34</sup>Kames, p. 159.

<sup>35</sup>Kames, p. 160.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Gilpin, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup>Martin Price, "The Fictional Contract," ed. Frank Brady, John Palmer, and Martin Price, Literary Theory and Structure (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 169.

<sup>39</sup>Price, p. 176.

<sup>40</sup>McKenzie, p. 211.

<sup>41</sup>Poulet, p. 55.

<sup>42</sup>Poulet, p. 57.

<sup>43</sup>Poulet, p. 64.

<sup>44</sup>Poulet, p. 58.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. Cf. Wallace Stevens, "Anecdote of the Jar," The Collected Poems (New York: Knopf, 1968), p. 76.

<sup>46</sup>It is fair to infer that the novels of writers implicitly or explicitly pursuing this purpose are in some sense "epistemological," as Eric Rothstein does. In analyzing what he perceives as both epistemological purpose and method in certain eighteenth-century novels, Rothstein says, "If one is to have knowledge, one must have knowers to make and test inferences, and so we are shown a central character or matrix of characters who pretend to be interpreters of experience. We are invited to join their experimental groups as critical observers who can (and do) learn more, or at a different rate, than they do" (p. 244). My sole reservation here is to Rothstein's emphasis. He seems to argue that the pattern in such novels is dictated more by their purpose than by their method. I would argue the contrary, that the epistemological structure is a conventional method of literary presentation, its purpose in general being understood as so obvious and "natural" as to be virtually taken for granted.

<sup>47</sup>Henry, Book X, Chapt. I.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>As did Mary Shelley in Frankenstein (1817) when she introduced two idealized families in order to show the opposite of the relationship Dr. Frankenstein has with the monstrous creature that is, as it were, his child; the "design" of the novel shows thus a proper use of "grouping."

<sup>50</sup>The Analytical Review 31 (1795), in Williams, p. 397.

<sup>51</sup>Williams, p. 398.

<sup>52</sup>Series 2, 15 (1794), in Williams, pp. 392-33.

<sup>53</sup>Series 2, 11 (1794), in Williams, p. 390.

<sup>54</sup>Cf. Andrew L. Griffin, "Wordsworth and the Problem of Imaginative Story: The Case of 'Simon Lee,'" PMLA, 92 (1977), 395. Griffin points out that to Wordsworth the "later decades of the eighteenth century have been a kind of literary lost weekend. Modern literature, like gin, has worked to 'blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor.' By this strong drink Wordsworth specifically means narratives: 'events' in print, fictional or national." Griffin's analysis is of the anti-narrative thrust of "Simon Lee."

<sup>55</sup>Elledge, p. 930.

<sup>56</sup>Godwin, xxvi.

<sup>57</sup>Kames, p. 475. All of the following quotations appear in the Appendix, "Terms Defined or Explained."

<sup>58</sup>Kames, p. 476.

<sup>59</sup>A Study of the Word "Sentimental" and of Other Linguistic Characteristics of Eighteenth Century Sentimentalism in England (Helsinki, 1951), p. 16.

<sup>60</sup>Erämetsä, p. 23.

<sup>61</sup>Kames, p. 475.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Kames, p. 478 n.

<sup>64</sup>Kames, p. 476.

<sup>65</sup>Kames, pp. 480-81.

<sup>66</sup>Walter Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England (1946; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p. 148.

<sup>67</sup>Kames, p. 476.

<sup>68</sup>McKenzie, p. 203.

<sup>69</sup>See Patricia M. Spacks, "Ev'ry Woman is at Heart a Rake," Eighteenth Century Studies, 8 (1974), pp. 36-41, for a discussion of the relationship between Johnson's mistrust of the imagination and ideas about female sexuality. See esp. p. 39 for Fanny Burney being warned that, in keeping a journal, she is engaged in a possibly erotic activity as well as for Mary Wollstonecraft warning against the nature of the titillations the reader gets from sentimental fiction.

<sup>70</sup>Ed. Thomas H. D. Mahoney (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955), p. 42.

<sup>71</sup>Burke, p. 99.

<sup>72</sup>McKenzie, p. 211.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>McKenzie, p. 244; Kames, p. 247.

<sup>75</sup>McKenzie, p. 244.

<sup>76</sup>Davies, p. 167.

<sup>77</sup>The revival of the sonnet form by Charlotte Smith and William Lisle Bowles is evidence of this interest. On late eighteenth-century attitudes toward Shakespeare, see Kenneth Muir and S. Schoenbaum, A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 243-44; see esp. p. 244 on the first study of Shakespearean imagery published in 1794. Equally interesting is the pictorial use made of Shakespearean and Miltonic subjects. In Romanticism and the Social Order 1780-1830 (London: Blandford Press, 1969), p. 369, R. W. Harris notes that, "since Garrick and Mrs. Siddons had again made Shakespeare's characters household words, it was natural that artists should turn to Shakespeare for inspiration. In 1786 John Boydell, an engraver, established a Shakespeare Gallery, to which almost all the great artists of the day, including Reynolds, contributed. The gallery was open to the public, and engravings of the pictures were sold throughout the country. After Shakespeare, the greatest literary influence was that of Milton, and Henry Fuseli started a Milton Gallery, for which he painted forty pictures."

<sup>78</sup>Contributions to the Edinburgh Review (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1844), III, p. 284; quoted by McKenzie, p. 255.

<sup>79</sup>Graham, p. 210.

<sup>80</sup>An Essay on Prints, 5th ed. (London: Caddell & Davies, 1802), p. 16.

<sup>81</sup>The Analytical Review 16 (1793), in Ioan Williams, ed., Novel and Romance, 1700-1800 (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), p. 377; subsequent quotations are from the same review, pp. 377-78.

<sup>82</sup>Williams, p. 379.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Gilpin, p. 30.

<sup>86</sup>Cf. Irving Stone, Irving Wallace, and others in our own time. Smith shows here, and in what follows, the kind of critical intelligence that sets her apart from the "lady novelists."

<sup>87</sup>Erich Auerbach's discussion of Stendhal in *Mimesis* (trans. Willard Trask [1946; rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1953], pp. 407 ff.) is in many respects relevant to developments in English fiction after 1789. The beginnings of perspective are in synchronic, spatial expanse. There is a sense of temporal change, but not of historical evolution. Because Stendhal's novels show a "time-perspective" but little historical perspective, Auerbach finds it "not too easy to describe Stendhal's inner attitude toward social phenomena. It is his aim to seize their every nuance; he most accurately represents the particular structure of any given milieu, he has no preconceived rationalistic system concerning the general factors which determine social life, nor any pattern-concept of how the ideal society ought to look; but in particulars his representation of events is oriented, wholly in the spirit of classic ethical psychology, upon an analyse du coeur humain, not upon discovery or premonitions of historical forces; we find rationalistic, empirical, sensual motifs in him, but hardly those of romantic Historism" (p. 408). There is the same difficulty in describing the effect of temporal perspective in late-eighteenth-century English novels.

<sup>88</sup>The function of the historical context in Scott's novels is, in a structural sense, somewhat like the function of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Tom Stoppard's play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead: significant action on the part of Scott's "heroes" is largely determined by and within the context which, because it is the factual history of the time, is fixed. In *Waverley*, for example, Edward Waverley becomes associated with Scottish Jacobites and his personal history develops as a consequence of political events surrounding the invasion of the Pretender, Prince Charles (1745), including the story of his love for Rose Bradwardine. Scott made use of a kind of literary "determinism" in fact. Because his device is the history of nations, his novels are very much to the taste of modern critics, especially Marxist ones. His political views are, however, considerably less radical than those of writers like Smith.

<sup>89</sup>Censura Literaria, VII, 254.

<sup>90</sup>79 (Sept., 1788), 242-43.

<sup>91</sup>65 (June, 1788), 531.

## CHAPTER IV

### Characterization and Settings: Sensations and Emotions

The most conspicuous technical development in Charlotte Smith's novels, and one which her readers immediately recognized as a valuable asset in prose fiction, was that she introduced descriptions of natural scenery. How much this contributed to the fuller realization of characters was not immediately evident, yet the simple fact that she used landscape received universal approbation. In recalling the original reception of *Emmeline*, The Orphan of the Castle, Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges ranks Smith's use of landscape as fourth among those characteristics that, in 1788, impressed readers as singularly original developments in prose fiction. He reports that Emmeline

displayed such a simple energy of language, such an accurate and lively delineation of character, such a purity of sentiment, and such exquisite scenery of a picturesque and rich, yet most unaffected imagination, as gave it a hold upon all readers of true taste, of a new and most captivating kind. The simple charms of *Emmeline*; the description of the Old Castle in Wales; the marine scenery in the Isle of Wight; the Character of Godolphin; and many other parts, possessed a sort of charm, which had not hitherto been imparted to novels.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Walter Scott ranks Smith's "power of natural description" third in importance, after her "invention, that highest property of genius" and "her knowledge of the human bosom."<sup>2</sup> Mary Russell Mitford, as late as 1880, judges Smith as inferior to no novelist other than Austen; her enthusiasm is primarily for Smith's "landscape painting."<sup>3</sup> In 1941, F. M. A. Hilbish, summing up earlier critical appraisals and offering her own, admits that such descriptions, a novelty in prose fiction throughout

the 1790's, became, in large part because of the success of Mrs. Radcliffe's "picturesque" and "sublime" landscapes, so marked an asset that they were used mechanically even by Smith herself: "Occasionally Mrs. Smith uses nature for its own sake, dragging it in as a superficial ornament and disrupting the plot." Even so, Hilbish points out, Smith's landscapes are very rarely irrelevant. Nature may sometimes make a gratuitous appearance in her novels, but usually

she employs it as a dramatic background to develop and influence character and to aid the plot as she pictures naturally the scenes through which her hero moves. This harmony between one's inmost feelings and external nature is an attribute of modern fiction. Earlier than the late eighteenth century it was a characteristic of poetry but not of prose. In France it first passed into prose in the writings of Rousseau; and in England, first in the novels of Mrs. Smith.<sup>4</sup>

Hilbish's observations are important because they point to a right beginning for a study of Smith's treatment of character in the novel. Smith's descriptions are functional rather than decorative: they derive from and are appropriate to verse, but they undergo sufficient modification to demonstrate that good fictional prose can and should sometimes approach poetry.

J. M. S. Tompkins quite rightly points out that Smith's are "sober, veracious sketches" in contrast to Radcliffe's "glowing, ideal pictures."<sup>5</sup> It is important to make this distinction; the tendency among those who write about Jane Austen is to perpetuate the notion that Northanger Abbey parodies Emmeline, hence suggesting that Smith's landscapes, like her novels, are similar but inferior to Radcliffe's: neither assertion is true.<sup>6</sup> A study of Smith's landscapes ought to begin on its own terms, rather than as a search for evidence that aesthetic

notions about picturesque and sublime scenery had infiltrated the English novel as early as 1788, or that Smith is one of Radcliffe's sources.

A more than cursory reading of Charlotte Smith's novels shows an important innovation in the treatment of place, whether interior or exterior. Place in Smith's novels becomes a setting instead of simply a location. Characters had travelled in fiction before 1788, and plots constructed by recording stages of a journey are among the most primitive forms of organization for long narratives; narratives based on this convention were certainly popular and numerous in England in the eighteenth century. Characters also had held and expressed opinions about places they visited, in keeping with--hence, also revealing--their respective tastes. What is new in the 1790's, and largely Smith's contribution, is the notion that a useful way of presenting a character is to show the interaction between him and his setting. The purpose of this chapter is to show that Smith's landscapes offer her opportunities to employ a variety of poetic conventions to explore the emotional life of her characters. She had an eye for interiors too, and her descriptions of houses and rooms are, like her descriptions of landscape, functional more often than decorative. (The next chapter shows what some of those functions are.)

In showing how a character perceives, thinks about, feels about, is affected by, and is forced to act in or react to a setting, Smith reveals what is characteristic about the genesis and evolution of thought and feeling in that character. Coming in the middle of a period during which feelings are at the center of philosophical inquiries into epistemology, aesthetics, and morality, Smith perceives a multitude

of nice distinctions to be made among emotions.\* The interaction between a character and his setting is for her a way of eliciting a very broad range of response. Radcliffe made the most of one of the ways in which this interaction becomes dramatic, the influence of setting on character, but Smith's interest begins with sensations one is barely conscious of entertaining and extends to emotions that present themselves in a form so intense that one is barely able to endure them.

Equally significant are the opportunities provided by setting to distinguish the point of view of the author from that of her characters, and to distinguish among her characters' several points of view toward the same setting. In Smith's novels, setting is often a device to show and vary distance between the character's point of view and the narrator's. As Wayne C. Booth points out,<sup>7</sup> moral issues that are raised when the point of view of the author is not clearly distinguished from the point of view of certain kinds of characters are of some consequence, because the novel is so popular a literary form. Smith often uses "mixed characters," and consequently runs the risk of seeming to ask her reader to condone impropriety or immorality.<sup>8</sup>

Smith drew on two of the most important Continental novels of the eighteenth century, Manon Lescaut and The Sorrows of Young Werther, both of which embody the problem. She wrote sonnets from Werther's point of view, in his persona, precisely because it is a seductive one;<sup>9</sup> she glosses over the intention of her fictional text, however, when she has Emmeline cite Shakespeare on romantic love as her literary authority

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\*See Chapter III, pp. 135-40 above.

(Delamere earlier cites Goethe as his): "Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them--but not for love" (Em, IV, 409). Even more to the point, Smith was forced to withdraw a translation of Manon Lescaut after its publication in 1786 because critics condemned it as a novel that condones immorality.<sup>10</sup> Both Manon Lescaut and The Sorrows of Young Werther are novels in which evidence of ironic distance between author and character is difficult for a naive reader to perceive; it can be located only by means of the knowledge and experience a sophisticated reader brings to the text, and even then the degree of distance remains indeterminate.

The audience for fiction during the 1790's was largely young and female, hence neither well-educated nor worldly. If there is a good deal of rich fiction to be written about deplorable characters (and both Manon and Werther are evidence that there is), there must also, in an age worried about the influence of novels on the young, be subtle and relatively unobtrusive modes of presentation that prevent such fictions from being "misread" should they become popular--and Smith certainly wanted her novels to be popular and lucrative. Writing about the relationship between character and setting affords Smith an opportunity for regulated seduction of the reader on the one hand and regulated irony on the other. How close the author's point of view comes to sharing or rejecting the character's becomes in her novels a significant way of controlling reader affect and indicating intention.<sup>11</sup>

Smith's methods derive from poetry. She makes use of such readily recognizable poetic conventions as the pathetic fallacy, simile, metaphor, the animation of inanimate objects, symbol and emblem. A

poetic prose style is not all she achieves by doing so. Because she shows the evolution of feeling within a setting, she gives the process a texture borrowed from the physical space within which it is located, and a dynamic borrowed from the duration and pace of the temporal sequence within which it arises. It thus becomes possible to render psychological phenomena as felt experience.

That Smith's use of landscape in the novel is closely related to contemporary practice in poetry is best illustrated by a passage from The Old Manor House. Smith shows, in Orlando, the way in which sense and sensibility<sup>12</sup> reassert themselves after Orlando suffers a temporary lapse into the kind of thinking that is the most treacherous consequence of the pathetic fallacy. Orlando comes to understand that a maudlin conviction of doom he had formerly extracted from a gloomy forest actually originated in the effect on his own mind of his own fears. The same forest confirms the optimism of a happier man in a greener season:

The sight of the many well-known objects on [Orlando's] way [from the Somerive home to the manor house]--every tree, every shrub, recalled to his mind a thousand pleasing ideas; and as he passed hastily through the fir wood, where in a dreary night of December he had last parted from Monimia, or at least passed a few agitated moments previous to their parting, he compared his present sensations with what he had at that time felt, and laughed at the superstitious impression given him then, and on some former occasions, by the gloom of the winter sky--when he fancied that, in the hollow murmur of the breeze, he heard, "Orlando will rvisit these scenes no more!"

Every object, then wrapped in real and imaginary horrors, was now gay and joyous. It was a lovely glowing evening, towards the end of April.--The sun was set, but his beams still tinged with vivid colours the western clouds, and their reflection gave the water of the lake that warm and roseate hue which painting cannot reach.--The tender green of spring formed to this a lovely contrast; and, where the wood of

ancient pines ceased, his path lay through a coppice of low underwood and young self-planted firs--the ground under them thickly strewn with primroses and the earliest wild flowers of the year.

Hope and pleasure seemed to breathe around him--Hope and pleasure filled the heart and flashed in the eyes of Orlando; and perhaps the moment when he reached the door of the old Hall, though he was forced to stop a moment to recover his breath and recollection was one of the happiest in his life (OMH, III, 304-305).

Orlando's error was that he confused "seeming" with "being."

It is significant that what he has done is called "superstitious" because that word points back to an earlier episode during which Orlando, in his capacity as self-appointed tutor, perceives and tries to correct superstitious beliefs that Monimia has entertained. He tells her that she is wrong to have attributed certain inexplicable noises in the manor house to ghosts. He understands that her ignorance and credulity were fertile ground, and misconceptions had easily taken root; that fears elicited by the mysterious noises had attached themselves to fallacious notions she had been given. Superstition is, for him, a concurrence of fear and misconception. The kind of error Orlando catches himself in is similar to Monimia's. The grim appearance of the forest in fall and winter, like the noises Monimia hears, is a fact. Orlando's fear that he might be killed fighting the American colonists and never return, like Monimia's of mysterious activity in the house, is both real and understandable. "Fate" is a conception about something invisible and supernatural. The notion may or may not be valid, but Orlando does not seriously believe that a man can know his own fate. For Orlando to suppose that the world around him proffers omens is to be superstitious.

There is an interesting difference, however, between what accounts for Monimia's gullibility and what accounts for Orlando's. If it is

Monima's ignorance that invites one kind of superstition, a belief in ghosts, it is Orlando's sentimentality that invites another, belief that there are external signs that authenticate a presentiment. Sentimentality and sensibility share certain presuppositions about the natural world. The first of these is that it is in some sense to be read, that it is intelligible. The second is that the information gleaned from that reading is in some way pertinent to human experience. The sentimentalist is one who discerns in the world a significance that he himself projects onto it. He sees himself reflected in nature; therefore, there is something suspect about the purpose and validity of what he does. The man of true sensibility, however, is one who reads aspects of the natural world as analogues of human experience. His purpose is rational, and there is every reason to expect him to arrive at valid and relevant insights by means of the analogy. Orlando's error is to have mistaken something portentous and ominous about the forest for what he should have taken as something analogous in its appearance to the quality of his mood. He erroneously reads a reflection of his own forebodings as if it were a verification of them.

Smith points out that Orlando exceeds proprieties which distinguish a disciplined sensibility from a kind of voluptuous sentimentality when she tells the reader that the forest, as Orlando perceived it, was "wrapped in real and imaginary horrors" (italics mine). Imagination must be exercised with great discretion if it is to function, as it should, to enrich the quality of an experience or perception; otherwise it is likely to cloak, disguise, hence, falsify. Orlando should have exercised the kind of reserve that, for example, William Lisle Bowles exhibits in

a sonnet called "Absence" (written 1793; OMH was published in the same year). The sonnet records an experience very like what Orlando's would have been had he, like Bowles, distinguished between the setting itself and the feelings a responsive individual entertains about it:

There is strange music in the stirring wind,  
 When lowers the autumnal eve, and all alone  
 To the dark wood's cold covert thou art gone,  
 Whose ancient trees on the rough slope reclines  
 Rock, and at times scatter their tresses sere.  
 If in such shades, beneath their murmuring,  
 Thou late hast passed the happier hours of spring,  
 With sadness thou wilt mark the fading year;  
 Chiefly if one, with whom such sweets at morn  
 Or evening thou hast shared, afar shall stray.  
 O Spring, return! return, auspicious May!  
 But sad will be thy coming, and forlorn,  
 If she return not with thy cheering ray,  
 Who from these shades is gone, far, far away.<sup>13</sup>

When Orlando feels more optimistic and when spring has made the setting itself less gloomy, his relationship to the terrain registers properly: as a simile and not as "pathetic fallacy." Orlando's sense of the terrain he moves through is that its aspect is like his state of mind.

What Orlando's relationship to a landscape should be is in fact identical with what Coleridge, when he published his Poems in 1797, thought the proper relationship between a poet and the landscape he draws on. In the preface to that volume, he says that the "most exquisite" sonnets are those in which "moral Sentiments, Affections, and Feelings are deduced from, and associated with, the scenery of Nature." According to Oliver Elton, Coleridge's "description of the sonnet is avowedly drawn from the practice of Bowles and Charlotte Smith, and fairly represents the stage which the form had reached before Wordsworth took it up."<sup>14</sup> Smith's sonnets had first appeared in 1784, and had gone through four

reprintings and editions by 1789, when Bowles' were first published. Coleridge describes a poetic practice of long standing, and it is a practice that Smith transferred from the sonnet to the novel.

What Coleridge perceives as the essence of the sonnet--that it is "a small poem, in which some lonely feeling is developed"--becomes a distinctively "pre-romantic" mode of characterization in Smith's novels. The development of a "lonely feeling" is in her fiction a device that assists in the development of character; how a character thinks and feels becomes part of the process of presentation. Smith draws on landscape in order to provide a place in which and a time during which a character is occupied with exploring and analyzing his thoughts and feelings. The act of feeling has extension and duration insofar as it is located in both space and time; the identity of the character, like that of a persona, is implied by the nature and quality of his thoughts and feelings.

Making use of setting in this way, Smith makes some of her characters function as centers of intelligence and emotion or, in eighteenth-century terminology, centers of feeling. This early in the development of the novel in England it is more usual to find characters constructed out of ideas and "passions" that are assigned to them as attributes; a criticism that might be levelled at Jane Austen is that she is too often guilty of merely doing so with major characters even if she is masterly at making comedy come of it. In the characters' relationship to the tangible factors of their environments, Smith finds materials by means of which she tries to catch the quality of a feeling even as that feeling begins to present itself to consciousness. Smith's range, with

regard to feelings, begins with an order of sentience that is close to the most primitive kind of biological irritability; it extends through sensitivity, sensuality, sensibility, self-conscious sentimentality, and even approaches the limits of acute sensile experience.

A sense of the importance of time, filled and felt time, to the exploration of feeling is probably the most significant aspect of what was original in this area of Smith's technique, although it is more common among critics to notice that she spends time on descriptions of the setting rather than that she fills time with them. In The Old Manor House, Smith's heroine is the most ingenuous, self-effacing, and insubstantial of ingenues. Yet even she has feelings, and there is a great deal to be gained by telling the reader what they are. What is to be lost by any mode of telling that does not extend considerably in time is the precise quality of the fluctuations and nuances of feeling in so thin and fragile a character. Instead of telling what it is that Monimia feels, therefore, Smith sets out to show feeling in process. For example, at one point Monimia is waiting for Orlando to keep a nocturnal appointment. A sudden storm has come up and Orlando, under the circumstances, may have decided against returning to the manor house. As time passes--and Smith has materials out of which to construct temporal duration in the storm itself\*--Monimia becomes increasingly restless and anxious. At first the storm closes in on and affects those around her, beginning with Betty, a servant and friend, who is angry because Monimia had refused to join her in a prohibited walk dismally terminated by

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\*I have given the passage almost in full to show, in this instance, how carefully Smith develops those materials.

the rain:

The day had been unusually warm; but towards evening a thunder-storm came on, and, as it grew later, a tempest of wind, with heavy and continual rain.

Betty, sulky that Monimia refused, and still more sulky that she got nothing by her long walk, but nearly spoiling all her finery, had not come to Monimia's room any more; but she received, at the usual hour, the usual summons for tea. She thought both Mrs. Rayland and her aunt uncommonly peevish and tedious, and that the sermon one was reading, while the other fell asleep, was most unreasonably long. At length she was dismissed, and, retiring to her turret, began to listen to the wind, that howled in tremendous gusts among the trees, and to the rain falling in torrents, the rushing of which was redoubled by the leaden pipes that, from the roof of her turret, threw the water in columns on the pavement below. Would Orlando come? Through such a tempest it were hardly to be wished he should. . . . Monimia then could not desire he should come; yet she felt, in despite of her reason, that she should be very unhappy if he did not; for, though so many causes might combine to detain him, her humble ideas of herself, and the pictures she had made of the beauty and attractions of the Miss Woodfords [cousins of Orlando's visiting the Somerive house], added another which rendered her wretched. "Alas!" cried she, "Orlando, among them, will be too happy to think of me; and it is quite ridiculous to suppose, that he will quit these ladies to come through the storm almost five miles to poor Monimia. No, no! Orlando will not come."

. . . . .  
[Monimia] endeavoured to sit down to read--but the violence of the wind, which she fancied every moment increased, and the flashes of lightning which she saw through her narrow casement, to which there was no shutter, distracted her attention; and she could only sit in miserable anxiety, listening to the various noises which in such a tempestuous night are heard around an old building, and especially such a part of it as she inhabited; where, around the octagon tower or turret, the wind roared with violence from every point; while, in the long passages which led from thence to her aunt's apartments, it seemed yet more enraged, from being confined. She now traversed her small room with fearful steps; now sat down on her bed, near the door, that she might the more readily hear Orlando if he should come; and now got on a chair, and opened her casement to observe if there seemed any probability of the storm's abating: but still, though the thunder had ceased, the clouds, driven against each other by violent and varying gusts of wind, produced vivid flashes of lightning, which suddenly illuminated the whole park. But Orlando came not, and it was now near an hour past his usual time. . . . Another and another hour passed: amidst the heavy gusts and

mournful howlings of the wind, she had counted the clock, that, with a more than usually hollow sound, told twelve, one, two!-- Orlando certainly did not mean to come--no! it was unreasonable to suppose he would; unreasonable to flatter herself that he would quit a cheerful circle of his relations, to traverse the extensive commons and lanes, and all the park, that lay between West Wolverton and the Hall, in such a night, when no person would think of going out but on life and death. Yet, while she thus argued with herself, a few tears involuntarily stole from her eyes; and as she gave up all hopes for his coming, and lay down in her clothes on her bed (for she had not the resolution to undress herself), she sighed deeply, and said to herself: "And yet, if it had been me who was expected, I do not believe any storm could have hindered me from trying to see Orlando! and I am sure no company would.--Yet he is quite in the right, I know, and I do not blame him" (OMH, I, 60-62).

In this passage, the movement of the storm, of Monimia within her room, and of Monimia's thoughts and emotions is a braid in which the separate strands have been interlaced to create a sense of occupied and pre-occupied time.

Monimia is affected by the storm in ways that are almost pre-cognitive. The visual and aural commotion around her feeds her agitation. The result is that, when the passage circles back on itself to record her thoughts at the end of the evening, they too have been affected by the conditions under which Monimia has been waiting: they are similar to, but less magnanimous than, those she entertained at first. Her attitude has become meaner, more petty; her jealousy is less wistful; her resentment more bitter. That Monimia is capable of petulance is touching; it is also a boon to her worth as a character. Her role in the narrative is otherwise as a paragon of modesty and humility. The storm brings out the worst in her, and it is this bit of evidence that she too is vulnerable that makes her tolerable.

Filled and felt space also depends on how Smith's characters

occupy and move within it. The most frequently cited of her landscapes is her description in Emmeline of the Isle of Wight; it is worth looking carefully at the entire treatment of the Isle of Wight episode to ascertain precisely what there is about it that makes it so memorable. Only a close reading reveals that the episode is extraordinary because Smith uses the features of the space in so many different ways even in the first of her novels. Each of these, however, serves the same purposes. The terrain and the weather have a role to play as part of the circumstances that cultivate the growth of Emmeline's love for Godolphin, and both function in part to express the character and quality of that feeling as it develops. The episode begins when Emmeline and Mrs. Stafford arrive, with Lady Adelina's child, at the island. They are not expected, and Emmeline is sent ahead in order to allow Lady Adelina time to prepare for the reception of the child. Emmeline's feelings toward Godolphin are described first in clichés typical of the period:

Pleasure, in spite of herself, glowed in her bosom at the idea of again meeting Godolphin; tho' she knew not that he had conceived for her the most pure and ardent passion that was ever inspired by a lovely and deserving object (Em., III, 304).

The time it takes her to move from where the boat is docked to Godolphin's house, and Emmeline's first visual impression of Godolphin, are described in ways that are untypical. The setting and the scene are suggestive, but the reader is left to deduce the emotional content entirely from the description itself. The passage focuses on what is seen. Emmeline's

walk lay along the high rocks that bounded the coast; and it was almost dark before she entered a small lawn surrounded with a plantation, in which the house of Godolphin was situated. About half an acre of ground lay between it and the cliff, which was beat by the swelling waves of the channel. The ground on the other side rose more suddenly; and a wood which covered the hill behind it, seemed to embosom the house, and take off that look of bleakness and desolation which often renders a situation so near the sea unpleasant except in the warmest months of Summer. A sand walk led round the lawn. Emmeline followed it, and it brought her close to the windows of a parlour. They were still open; she looked in; and saw, by the light of the fire, for there were no candles in the room, Godolphin sitting alone. He leaned on a book, which there was not light enough to read; scattered papers lay round him, and a pen and ink were on the table.

Emmeline could not forebear looking at him a moment before she approached the door. She could as little command her curiosity to know on what he was thus deeply thinking (Em, III, 305).

This passage is extraordinarily modern for all that it does not say. The reader must suppose what emotions account for Godolphin's posture and what emotions account for Emmeline's pleasure in watching him. Were it possible, the reader would satisfy Emmeline's curiosity. Since it is not, he projects what he knows into the scene. Unarticulated emotions infuse the passage, although they originate with the reader. The most that can be attributed to Smith's hand, in the passage itself, is a faint suggestion of something erotic about the "swelling waves" of the channel and the way nearby hills seem to "embosom" the house.

After Emmeline is announced and enters the room, Godolphin's reactions to her presence are described in great detail. He is, at first, speechless. Then, "'Miss Mowbray!' exclaimed he--'Is it indeed Miss Mowbray?'" is all that he manages to articulate; it is scarcely a polite greeting. The passage continues by noting that for

a moment he surveyed her in silent extasy, then congratulated himself upon his unhopèd for good fortune; and answering her enquiries about Lady Adelina, he suddenly seemed to recollect the papers which lay on the table, hurried them into a drawer, and again returning to Emmeline, told her how happy he was to see her look so well. He thought indeed that he had never seen her so infinitely lovely. The sharpness of the air during her walk had heightened the glow of her complexion; her eyes betrayed, by their soft and timid glances, the partiality of which she was hardly yet conscious; she trembled, without knowing why; and could hardly recover her composure (Em, III, 305).

A good deal of the rhetoric in this passage is stereotyped, especially that describing Emmeline's appearance and her reaction to Godolphin's presence. But Godolphin's sudden impulse to clear the clutter from his desk is not a cliché. The reader will later be told, and has every reason to suspect already, that Godolphin's desk contains love poems written to relieve his despair. The bit of stage business is effective because it embodies, in an action, Godolphin's emotional situation: he must hide his feelings for Emmeline just as he stows the expressions of those feelings in his desk.

A conversation soon takes place between Lady Adeline and Emmeline that is a well-worn convention in sentimental novels: because the heroine finds herself reacting in inexplicable ways to what is said about the man she is beginning to love, she comes to recognize what she feels. Lady Adelina inadvertently--but predictably--suggests that Emmeline and Godolphin deserve each other:

"There is . . . but one being on earth who resembles [Godolphin]: --it is my Emmeline! If ever two creatures eminently excelled the rest of their species, it is my friend and my brother!"

Something throbbed at the heart of Emmeline at these words, into which she was afraid to enquire: her engagement to Delamere, yet uncancelled, lay like a weight upon it; and seemed to impress the idea of her doing wrong while she thus listened to the praises of another; and felt that she listened with too

much pleasure! She asked herself, however, whether it was possible to be insensible of the merit of Godolphin? Yet conscious that she had already thought of it too much, she wished to change the topic of discourse (Em, III, 307).

This scene might well have been written by Richardson: Harriet Byron has a great many conversations with Sir Charles Grandison's sisters during which she is told that her merit alone approaches his. The prior commitment, however, is his and not hers.

A sequence that could not have been written by Richardson, that looks forward toward later developments in the novel, begins the morning after Emmeline arrives. Emmeline is up early,

and looking towards the sea, saw a still increasing tempest gathering visibly over it. She wandered over the house; which tho' not large was chearful and elegant, and she fancied every thing in it bore testimony to the taste and temper of it's master. The garden charmed her still more; surrounded by copse-wood and ever-greens, and which seemed equally adapted to use and pleasure. The country behind it, tho' divested of it's foliage and verdure, appeared more beautiful than any she had seen since she left Wales; and with uncommon avidity she enjoyed, even amid the heavy gloom of an impending storm, the great and magnificent spectacle afforded by the sea. By reminding her of her early pleasures at Mowbray Castle, it brought back a thousand half-obiterated and agreeable, tho' melancholy images to her mind; while it's grandeur gratified her taste for the sublime (Em., III, 313).

The reference to "the sublime" notwithstanding, this passage could not be called conventional in 1788.<sup>15</sup> Emmeline makes a number of observations that are as telling as her taste for sublime landscapes. Her tastes matter, but other things matter too. She has, first of all, snooped around Godolphin's house and "fancied everything in it bore testimony" in Godolphin's favor. Emmeline has virtually interrogated the house--the metaphor is a legal one--as Elizabeth Bennet not too many years later interrogates a housekeeper after a somewhat more

decorous form of snooping. Eighteenth-century heroines, sentimental ones in particular, judge men in part by the elegance and taste exhibited by their houses, but they are not usually interested in the grounds. Emmeline, however, inspects the garden. She finds that it is balanced for pragmatic and esthetic effects, evidence that Godolphin's notions of husbandry show prudence as well as taste. It is quite extraordinary in a supposedly "sentimental" novel of this period that a hero be judged for his domestic economy. Equally extraordinary is the reason for Emmeline's enthusiasm for the surrounding countryside. What others might find unattractive, and what must appear gloomy at the approach of the hurricane, is a setting she enjoys "with uncommon avidity." Unlike the Radcliffian heroine, whose "taste for the sublime" is also a taste for what is alien and exotic, Emmeline's is for a kind of landscape that is virtually native and familiar. It is an easy affinity for what is called "sublime," that draws her to the sea. It is an affinity Godolphin feels too. However antiquated the terminology, it is clear that Smith makes use of this kind of setting in order to show that there is nothing effete about either Emmeline's sensibility or Godolphin's.

Emmeline moves indoors when the storm breaks. As soon as an opportunity presents itself, she goes back to watching the storm from a protected position within the house. It is then that a meeting which Godolphin intends to avoid takes place. (A meeting that happens even though characters try to prevent it is a device Smith often uses.) After breakfast, Lady Adelina and Mrs. Stafford having gone off together,

Godolphin went out to give some orders; and Emmeline retired to a bow window which looked towards the sea.

Could she have divested her mind of it's apprehensions that what formed for her a magnificent and sublime scene brought shipwreck and destruction to many others, she would have been highly pleased with a sight of the ocean in it's present tremendous state. Lost in contemplating the awful spectacle, she did not see or hear Godolphin; who imagining she had left the room with his sister, had returned, and with his arms crossed, and his eyes fixed on her face, stood on the other side of the window like a statue.

The gust grew more vehement, and deafened her with it's fury; while the mountainous waves it had raised, burst thundering against the rocks and seemed to shake their foundation. Emmeline, at the picture her imagination drew of their united powers of desolation, shuddered involuntarily and sighed.

"What disturbs Miss Mowbray?" said Godolphin.

Emmeline, unwilling to acknowledge that she had been so extremely absent as not to know he was in the room, answered, without expressing her surprise to see him there--"I was thinking how fatal this storm which we are contemplating, may be to the fortunes and probably the lives of thousands."

"The gale," returned Godolphin, "is heavy, but by no means of such fatal power as you apprehend. I have been at sea in several infinitely more violent, and shall probably be in many others."

"I hope not," answered Emmeline, without knowing what she said--"Surely you do not mean it?"

"A professional man," said he, smiling, and flattered by the eagerness with which she spoke, "has, you know, no will of his own. I certainly should not seek danger; but it is not possible in such service as ours to avoid it."

"Why then do you not quit it?"

"If I intended to give you a high idea of my prudence, I should say, because I am a younger brother. But to speak honestly, that is not my only motive; my fortune, limited as it is, is enough for all my wishes, and will probably suffice for any I shall now ever form; but a man of my age ought not surely to waste in torpid idleness, or trifling dissipation, time that may be usefully employed. Besides, I love the profession to which I have been brought up, and, by engaging in which, I owe a life to my country if ever it should be called for."

"God forbid it ever should!" said Emmeline, with quickness; "for then," continued she, hesitating and blushing, "what would poor Lady Adelina do? and what would become of my dear little boy?"

Godolphin, charmed yet pained by this artless expression of sensibility, and thrown almost off his guard by the idea of not being wholly indifferent to her, answered mournfully--"To them, indeed, my life may be of some value; but to myself it is of none. Ah, Miss Mowbray! it might have been worth preserving

had I--But wherefore presume I to trouble you on a subject so hopeless? I know not what has tempted me to intrude on your thoughts the incoherences of a mind ill at ease. Pardon me--and suffer not my folly to deprive me of the happiness of being your friend, which is all I will ever pretend to."

He turned away, and hastened out of the room; leaving Emmeline in such confusion that it was not 'till Mrs. Stafford came to call her to Lady Adelina's dressing-room, that she remembered where she was, and the necessity of recollecting her scattered thoughts (Em, pp. 313-315).

Awkward and, hence, titillating scenes like this have precedents in English fiction, the embarrassing and difficult conversations between Sir Charles Grandison and Harriet Byron foremost among them. Slips of the tongue, innuendo, double entendre, protestations of friendship, and so forth, are typical of all such dialogues. They are designed to become confessional even though the speakers think they are doing their best to avert disclosure.

Three things about the passage are, however, rather remarkable. The first is that Emmeline's interest in those endangered by storms at sea is not academic or purely sentimental. She and the Stafford family are about to cross to France. She and Mrs. Stafford have in fact remained on the island a day longer than was planned because this particular storm has made it too dangerous to return to the mainland. Her "apprehensions" are not fanciful ones, nor are her thoughts about those in danger sentimental affectations. She and those around her have been and almost immediately will be exposed to the dangers she imagines others at that moment experiencing.

Secondly, when Godolphin talks about himself as a man committed to a profession, he is probably the first hero in English fiction to do so. So commonplace has it become today for characters in novels, and

real people, to describe themselves in part by what they do that it is easy to miss the precise significance of what Godolphin says.<sup>16</sup> Not only is he a man who has a profession because, as a younger son, he must, but he is a man who likes and is committed to his profession because it is challenging and important. Scott in Rob Roy (1817)<sup>17</sup> and, a year later Austen in Persuasion show men who work because they have to, but who also find gratification in the work they do. Smith anticipates both Scott and Austen, and is more radical than either of them. Godolphin is the first gentleman-lover, a thoroughly respectable and refined aristocrat, to say that the gratification he gets from his work is of value apart from money. So slight a shift in emphasis in fact expresses a notion of manhood entailing labor, risk, and achievement that is astonishing for the period. Godolphin's is a new kind of virility; dynamic and energetic like the sea with and against which he works.<sup>18</sup>

Lastly, the conversation is unique in the way it reacts with the storm. In addition to suggesting subjects for Emmeline and Godolphin to talk about, the storm provides a setting for the dialogue, an emotional climate and a metaphor for feelings that are not articulated. The scene begins with Emmeline and Godolphin posed in the window. It is the reverse of the situation when Emmeline first arrived at the house; this time Godolphin watches Emmeline. Their respective postures within the setting, the bow window and the storm beyond it, are strikingly theatrical. The pose is sustained for an interval during which they do and say nothing.<sup>19</sup>

Typically an eighteenth-century novel depends, at emotionally

charged moments like this one, on conventions that are "dramatic," i.e., very like soliloquy and the stage aside (Inchbald's Simple of course excepted). Either the character or the narrator articulates thoughts and feelings that occupy an interval during which action and dialogue are suspended; presented thus, these are what Lord Kames calls "sentiments." In spite of the fact that from its beginnings the novel pretends to use colloquial language, declamation is common in highly emotional scenes (perhaps deriving from the tirade of French neo-classical or English heroic drama).

Smith uses a verbal picture of the sea instead, thus avoiding declamation but also refusing explication. If there are precedents for her way of using the storm, they are in the way suggestive imagery functions in verse drama (not including heroic tragedy). What Emmeline is conscious of and able to articulate, her sentiments, seems inadequate as expressions of her feelings, whereas what is intemperate about the motion of the sea seems to resonate with something she feels but cannot articulate. The awesome but enthralling energy of the stormy sea serves both as mood for the scene and metaphor for the emotions of the actors, Godolphin's as well as Emmeline's.<sup>20</sup>

The purpose of the entire Isle of Wight episode is to show Emmeline becoming conscious of the quality and intensity of her feelings for Godolphin, sensing the quality and intensity of his feelings for her, and ascertaining whether the affinity she feels for him is spurious or genuine. The many ways in which the terrain, the house, and the weather are suggestively used become tangible evidence of the complex interaction among perception, emotion, and judgment in the evolution of Emmeline's

feelings for Godolphin. What Smith attempts in this episode is very difficult; so far as she succeeds, she does so by means of techniques that are new to the novel; they were soon to become conventional.<sup>21</sup>

In Celestina Smith draws on another device common in poetry and applies it to yet another storm; she animates the natural world in order to make it seem threatening. Her subject is death; her intention is to show the emotions of those who witness it. Celestina has been living with Mrs. Elphinstone and her husband in the Hebrides. Mr. Elphinstone is ingenuously and impractically engaged in attempting to make a fortune in the fishing trade, about which he knows nothing. Celestina and his wife are certain that a man who is both inept and inexperienced cannot help ruining himself in such a business venture. He remains incorrigibly optimistic. Throughout a long summer, Mrs. Elphinstone and Celestina patiently suffer his jejune and grating prattle about imminent success. Mr. Elphinstone is an irritating, incompetent, inconsequential man, yet his death is of consequence.

Smith begins to prepare for the event by recording something unremarkable and habitual; it is in the ironic interplay between Celestina's detachment and the increasingly animated and animate movement in the sea and sky that tension first develops and then fear:

Celestina . . . went out as was her custom, even although the evening was already closed in; and standing on the edge of the rocks, near the house, remarked the singular appearance of the moon, which was now rising. It was large, and of a dull red, surrounded by clouds of a deep purple, whose skirts seemed touched with flame. Large volumes of heavy vapour were gathering in the sky, and the heaving surges swelled towards the shore, and broke upon it with that sullen regularity that fortels [sic] a storm. From the North, arose distinctly the pointed rays of the Aurora Borealis: fiery and portentous, they seemed to flash like faint lightning a little while till the moon

becoming clearer, rendered them less visible.

Not a sound was heard but the dull murmurs of the sea on one side, and the rapid waterfalls on the other, whose increased noise foretold with equal certainty an approaching tempest. Celestina, who was in that disposition of mind to which horrors are congenial, walked slowly on notwithstanding; but quitting the cliffs, on account of the gales of wind which now blew from the sea, she went along a narrow pass, where there was a cairn, or heap of stones loosely piled together, the work of the first wild natives of the country; and as that was as far as she thought proper to venture from the house, though it was not much more than eight o'clock, she leaned pensively against it, and watched with some surprise the fluctuations of the clouds that were wildly driven by the wind across the disk of the moon, and listened with a kind of chill awe, to the loud yet hollow echo of the wind among the hills; which sometimes sobbed with stormy violence for a moment, and then suddenly sinking, was succeeded by a pause more terrible (C, III, 49-50).

What begins as an interest in the pictorial qualities of the scene becomes, for Celestina, a pervasive but unaccountable fear. When Montague Thorold, whom she does not recognize, approaches her, her first impulse is to run, although he has done nothing that could be construed as threatening.

The threat is in the setting, and Celestina has begun to respond to it even before Thorold tells her that Mr. Elphinstone's boat is in danger and that it is impossible for those on the beach to reach it.

Thorold

had, during this dialogue, taken her arm and led her towards a point of the rock, where she saw, by the pale and uncertain light of a moon, wrapped continually in volumes of clouds, the boat struggling among the dark heavy waves which often totally concealed it, and continually driven by gusts of violent wind from the point it was trying to reach (C, III, 53-54).

Celestina runs to the house, breaking in on and surprising Mrs. Elphinstone, who asks her what is wrong.

"Ah! dear Madam!" replied Celestina: "Mrs. Elphinstone--his boat--"

"What of him?" interrupted her terrified friend: "is he drowned? is he lost?"

"No, no! I hope, I believe not," cried Celestina; "but a boat, which they say is his, is beating off the island, and the people are afraid it will go to pieces."

This was enough for the unhappy Mrs. Elphinstone, who feeling, in its most dreadful light the evil which threatened her, now ran herself wildly towards the beach.

They arrive too late; the boat has gone down.

Mrs. Elphinstone and Celestina looked out in vain for the place where a few moments before the boat had been: no vestige of it remained and they saw only, by the waining [sic] moon, which but served to lend new horrors to the view, the wild waves dashing over those rocks in sheets of white foam; while the fury of the winds and the beating of the rain hardly allowed them to stand on the precipice that overlooked the scene of stormy desolation.

Mrs. Elphinstone insists on remaining where she can see the beach. She

continued to wander backwards and forwards for some moments, till her terror quite overcame her; and she threw herself on the ground, saying, in a low and solemn voice, to Celestina-- "Elphinstone is drowned; I know he is; and here I will wait to see his corpse, which will be driven on shore in the morning." Then starting up, she would have gone down to the shore, from an idea which suddenly occurred to her that he might yet be saved by swimming. Celestina, not knowing whether it was best to prevent or to indulge her; unable to dissimulate, and affect hope she did not feel, was in a situation hardly better than that of her distracted friend whom she supported, when Montague Thorold joined them. Mrs. Elphinstone, occupied only by the terror of the moment, took no notice of the extraordinary circumstance of a stranger, whom she had never seen before, thus suddenly appearing; but unconscious of every thing, and heedless of who he was, requested, in accents of piercing anguish, his assistance to help her down the winding path which led to the beach.

Together, the three

reached the place, where seven or eight men were already assembled. The moon was by this time down, and the darkness was only broken by livid flashes of faint lightning, which, with the thunder muttering at a distance, increased the horrors of the storm. Amid the black and swelling waves, however, objects were seen floating, and many of these heavy seas had not broken on the shore, before these objects were discerned to be the bodies of those who had perished, and

that of the ill-fated Elphinstone was one of the first which was thrown on the beach, and too well known by his unhappy wife (C, III, 56-59).

There is, in this episode, much that reveals what it is about Smith's fiction that straddles the line dividing the eighteenth-century novel from that of the nineteenth century. The diction and style of the narrative belong to the eighteenth century. For us, the language too often seems inappropriate, evasive, and euphemistic. Its "elegance" and "delicacy" tend to disguise, as in the episode just quoted, an unexpected modernity. The action is rendered more naturally than is usual in eighteenth-century fiction. There is more genuine, purposive movement and less ranting and frenzy than one would expect. Mrs. Elphinstone's distraction is nicely caught in the "impropriety" she is guilty of when she demands assistance from a total stranger.

Charlotte Smith's descriptions, however, look forward well into the nineteenth century. A good deal about the treatment of the storm in Celestina anticipated Dickens' description of the storm in David Copperfield during which Ham and Steerforth are killed. Dickens offers a richer, more hectic, more melodramatic episode. His storm is more intricately bound up in his plot, it is longer, the damage it does is both providential and ironic, the reader is aware of a great many significant and insignificant details all of which give substance to David Copperfield's experience. Dickens' descriptions are not, however, very notably different from Smith's. As David Copperfield approaches Yarmouth, the sky is

a murky confusion--here and there blotted with a colour like the colour of the smoke from damp fuel--of flying clouds, tossed up into most remarkable heaps, suggesting greater heights in the clouds than there were depths below them to the bottom of the deepest hollows in the earth, through which the wild moon seemed to plunge headlong, as if, in a dread disturbance of the laws of nature, she had lost her way and were frightened. There had been a wind all day; and it was rising then, with an extraordinary great sound. In another hour it had much increased, and the sky was more overcast, and blew hard (Chapter 55).

Both Smith and Dickens animate the natural works in order to express its capacity to threaten, or to seem threatening. Dickens relies on similes; Smith relies on metaphors implied by the verbs she chooses. Dickens wants, at the outset, a larger, grander, more ominous effect than Smith does when Celestina first notices the storm.\* Smith is interested, as Dickens is not, in the niceties of Celestina's reaction before the storm is perceived as a threat, and, in particular, in the curious dissociation between the emotions of a detached observer and the emotions the rising storm seems to be expressing. Dickens' storm must first be portentous because it must later be providential. Smith's storm is quite arbitrary although seasonal. It exists independently of Celestina, who "watched with some surprise the fluctuations of the clouds that were wildly driven by the wind across the disk of the moon," etc. It is over a period of time that the storm first begins to seem and then becomes threatening; over the same period of time Celestina's emotions undergo various transformations. Subtle modulations in Smith's diction reflect subtle modulations in the quality of what Celestina hears and sees. The melodramatic and ironic purposes served

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\*See pp. 187-88 above.

by Dickens' description result in qualities very different from what comes from the more restricted purpose served by Smith's in creating and controlling mood. The diction, style, and animation of the two descriptions are not, however, dissimilar insofar as Dickens too must first create and control mood.

Also remarkable is the similarity between Smith's and Dickens' treatment of the bodies of those drowned during the storm. The last sentence in the Celestina passage\* describes something very like the moment when David Copperfield sees

eddy fragments . . . in the sea, as if a mere cask had been broken, in running to the spot where they were hauling in. Consternation was in every face. They drew him to my very feet--insensible--dead (Chapter 55).

If both Smith and Dickens recognized that an animate natural world is an effective and affective way of establishing the mood that surrounds a terrifying event, they both recognized too that amplification, however trenchant, vitiates an account of genuine anguish. The unmitigated fact of death, that a human body has become a thing, need only be noted to be chilling. Both authors set a wooden body against an animate seascape to quicken an apprehension of death.

By focussing on what is dramatic about an event that causes suffering rather than on the consciousness of suffering in a character--typically the way sympathy is elicited in eighteenth-century novels--Smith avoids falling too far on the side of sentimentality and pathos. The storm itself offers her materials for rendering the occasion awesome

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\*See pp. 189-90 above.

and palpable so that the pathos elicited by the account is as bleak as the emotions of those who witness the death of Mr. Elphinstone are stark and raw.

Even more remarkable than her animation of the natural world is her use of metaphor or symbol for aspects of human experience that until the twentieth century could enter the novel only by indirection. More blatantly than in Emmeline, Charlotte Smith uses the sea in Celestina as metaphor or symbol for female sexuality and sensuality. In doing so, she predates the move among Romantic poets away from the simile and toward the stronger, more vital and organic bonding between the natural world and human emotions possible through metaphor and symbol. In The Mirror and the Lamp, M. H. Abrams locates the time and the terms on which Coleridge discarded the simile.

In 1802 he wrote a remarkable letter to the poet, Sotheby, which signalizes a profound change in his critical thinking, and provides a key to his later philosophy both of poetry and of mind. A few years earlier, Coleridge had revered and emulated the sonnets of William Bowles. Now he takes exception to Bowles' persistent device (in the familiar convention of the meditative-descriptive poem of the preceding century) of setting up a natural scene merely as the occasion for a parallel with human life, sentiments, and morality.<sup>22</sup>

Abrams quotes from that letter:

Nature has her proper interest, and he will know what it is who believes and feels that everything has a life of its own, and that we are all One Life. A poet's heart and intellect should be combined, intimately combined and unified with the great appearances of nature, and not merely held in solution and loose mixture with them, in the shape of formal similes.<sup>23</sup>

But as early as 1791 Smith had produced a passage in which a simile suggests and then disappears behind a metaphoric or symbolic reading.

Believing that she has lost Willoughby forever, Celestina searches out settings that are compatible with her misery. So self-indulgently morbid is she that she has made

for herself a species of gloomy enjoyment from the dreary and wild scenes around her. A little time before, she had been imagining how pleasant the most desolate of these barren islands might be rendered to her by the presence of her beloved Willoughby. She now rather sought images of horror. The sun, far distant from this northern region, was as faint and languid as the sick thoughts of Celestina: his feeble rays no longer gave any warm colouring to the rugged cliffs that rose above her head, or lent the undulating sea that sparkling brilliance which a few weeks before had given gaiety and cheerfulness even to these scattered masses of almost naked stone, against which the water incessantly broke. Grey, sullen, and cold, the waves now slowly rolled towards the shore where Celestina frequently sat whole hours, as if to count them, when she had in reality no idea present to her but Willoughby lost to her for ever--Willoughby forgetting her, and married to Miss Fitz-Hayman (C, III, 39-40).

So long as Smith reports Celestina's self-dramatization-- she sees herself as a pathetic figure at the center of a sorry situation--the setting is at the service of her imagination; it offers "images of horror." When, however, Celestina becomes absorbed in the facts and emotions of her situation, she becomes oblivious to sensation. Her sensibility no longer mediates between the setting and the reader. If there is a significance to be "read" in the terrain, it is one that Celestina herself does not perceive. The narrator steps in and rather discreetly suggests, by means of a simile, that the terrain is in some sense analogous to and/or reflective of the quality of those unnamed sensations and emotions Celestina experiences. If Celestina's thoughts are like the sun, then the "undulating sea" that has become "grey, sullen, and cold" is tacitly like something

else. Having arrested Celestina's capacity to gloss the significance of the terrain, and herself offering, and promptly withdrawing, only a suggestion, Smith requires an interpretation, if there is to be one, of the reader. The terrain that begins as an explicitly sentimental setting becomes implicitly symbolic. The transformation is effected by means of modulations in point of view: from Celestina's to the narrator's, to the reader's.

When Charlotte Smith uses setting, as she uses the seascape in Celestina, to reflect or express the emotional lives of her characters, she also closes the gap between the experience of her characters and that of her reader. Setting treated poetically elicits a response from the reader such that he is persuaded there are genuine affinities between the genesis and development of emotions in the characters' and in his own feelings. Emotions evolve at a reasonably slow pace and with sufficient variety in tempo and color to suggest a comprehensive range, from provisional inclination (or receptivity) to an involuntary, ineluctable surge. The characters' emotions seem "realistic," and the reader comes away from the novel feeling that he has sympathetically and intimately shared them.

If it enriches the reader's experience to participate in a character's emotional life, it is not at all necessary, or for that matter desirable, that he share a character's ideas and opinions. What a character thinks must be judged for its validity and its morality. It becomes necessary, therefore, to maintain a certain distance between the point of view of a character and that from which his cognitive processes are perceived. Such disengagement produces rather

sophisticated varieties of comedy and irony in her novels. Often for Smith's reader, her fictional "world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel."<sup>24</sup> Ways in which Smith uses setting to distinguish what is reliable from what is unreliable about a point of view are the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Brydges, VII, 248.

<sup>2</sup>Scott, IV, 33.

<sup>3</sup>Mitford, II, 248.

<sup>4</sup>Hilbish, p. 537.

<sup>5</sup>Tompkins, p. 355.

<sup>6</sup>For example, Frank W. Bradbrook draws on Mary Lascelles's observation (p. 60) that Catherine Moreland's ineptitude may have been designed to contrast with Emmeline's facility; he extrapolates, from a contrast in characterization, a contrast in the respective qualities of each of the novels: "In Northanger Abbey Jane Austen ridicules the sentimental and romantic conventions of Charlotte Smith by contrasting with them an ordinary, simple girl taken from everyday life and described realistically. In Love and Friendship, sentimentality and romance are ridiculed by exaggerating them to absurd proportions. This is the method that is used in the later part of Northanger Abbey, when Jane Austen is satirizing the horror and terror story and its conventions" (p. 103). There is very little about Emmeline that is either horrifying or terrifying; Bradbrook seems to suggest that there is, and that the novel is something of a gothic romance. See Chapter V, pp. 206-10 below.

<sup>7</sup>The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961). See Part III, esp. Chap. 13, pp. 377-98, for a discussion of this problem.

<sup>8</sup>How far a writer might go in using a "mixed character" was a matter of opinion in the 1790's. Most critics preferred bowdlerized texts to those that offered bad examples. The following excerpt from a review of Desmond shows the reviewer trying not to sound like a prig even though he would like the novel better were Desmond's behavior less objectionable: "If we have an objection, it is to the want of keep in the character of Desmond; his connection with Josephine ought to have been avoided. . . . But our Authoress may say, she did not intend to make him perfect. Perhaps not, we are not advocates for perfect monsters, but where faults answer little good purpose, they may as well be avoided." The European, 22 (July, 1792), 23.

<sup>9</sup>Sonnets XXI-XXV, Elegiac Sonnets, 3d ed. (London, 1786).

<sup>10</sup>See Hilbish, pp. 118-20.

<sup>11</sup>Such control requires rather sophisticated machinery which Smith among others is responsible for inventing. For example, Anthony Burgess, drawing on almost two hundred years in the evolution and refinement of that machinery, constructs, in A Clockwork Orange, an elaborate system of literary safeguards to control the reader's tendency to sympathize too much with the narrator--the Wertherian fallacy--who is interesting because his attitudes and behavior are criminal--the Manon Lescaut ploy. But the absence of functional equivalents in the film version allows "misreading." Control is so ineffective that unsophisticated viewers tend to see the action "from the hero's point of view," rather than to see him from the author's point of view.

<sup>12</sup>Smith anticipates Austen's interest in sense and sensibility. The vocabulary they use is sometimes misleading, but both Smith and Austen distinguish between sentimentality and sensibility. Sentimentality is a simplistic, and either simpering or fervid, response to what is "picturesque" or "sublime" in nature and to what is sympathetic or pathetic in individuals. Sensibility is a sensitive and sensible response to the natural world and to the people in it. What we mean by sensitivity is close to what the word sensibility conveyed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including overtones to the effect that a temperament of this kind is somewhat "artistic" and/or refined.

<sup>13</sup>In English Poetry and Prose of the Romantic Movement, ed. George Benjamin Woods, Rev. ed. (Fairlawn, N.J.: Scott, Foresman, 1950), p. 164.

<sup>14</sup>Elton, p. 76. Elton quotes Coleridge, p. 75.

<sup>15</sup>Fry points out that the "sea during a storm is a standard item in the catalog of sublime scenes," and quotes Burke, Addison, and Baillie on "sublime" tempests (p. 87).

<sup>16</sup>Cf. too Austen's clergymen and Dr. Hollybourn (OMH) who, if lacking a true sense of vocation, takes a very professional interest in the fiscal base and internal politics of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, as Trollope's clergymen do.

<sup>17</sup>Frank Osbladistone wants to be a poet and, on the whole, takes his vocation seriously. His father, though born a gentleman, has made a mercantile fortune. Frank Osbaldistone comes to understand--he almost appreciates--his father's sense of achievement from speculation, labor and the risks of his vocation; Frank himself is too much a gentleman to share his father's zeal.

<sup>18</sup>The naval officer is identified even by Scott with something new and enterprising in British society; Frank Olbadistone's tribute to his merchant-father is expressed in terms of naval imagery. Frank recognizes that "in the fluctuations of mercantile speculation, there is something captivating to the adventurer, even independent of the hope of gain. He who embarks on that fickle sea, requires to possess the skill of the pilot and the fortitude of the navigator, and after all may be wrecked and lost, unless the gales of fortune breathe in his favour. This mixture of necessary attention and inevitable hazard,--the frequent and awful uncertainty whether prudence shall overcome fortune, or fortune baffle the schemes of prudence, affords full occupation for the powers, as well as for the feelings of the mind, and trade has all the fascination of gambling without its moral guilt." Rob Roy (London: J. M. Dent, 1957), p. 7. See too p. 92, n. 13 above.

<sup>19</sup>Such intervals are filled in opera, in musical theatre, and usually in films with music that is designed to express the quality and amplitude of emotions evolving while action and dialogue are suspended. (Soap opera has a veritable code of tonal signals to do the job.) In drama, it is virtually impossible to signal the significance of silence without filling that interval with words: the soliloquy and the aside are paradoxical conventions. Verse drama is sometimes able, through the imagery that characterizes the diction, to suggest the quality of an emotion, but only when and insofar as the character himself articulates his feelings.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Mrs. Gaskell's use in North and South of both the factory and agitated crowds of people as a setting against which her love story develops and as a measure of what is virile and erotic about the man who controls both. That Charlotte Smith makes any use at all of such possibilities is quite extraordinary.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre, Chap. 15. There is a conversation very like the one between Emmeline and Godolphin after Jane Eyre has saved Rochester from the fire. After she returns to her room, she cannot sleep but until "morning dawned I was tossed on a buoyant but unquiet sea, where billows of trouble rolled under surges of joy. I thought sometimes I saw beyond its wild waters a shore, sweet as the hills of Beulah; and now and then a freshening gale, wakened by hope, bore my spirit, triumphantly towards the bourne; but I could not reach it, even in fancy,--a counteracting breeze blew off land, and continually drove me back. Sense would resist delirium: judgment would warn passion. Too feverish to rest, I rose as soon as day dawned." The way Brontë points to and points out the significance of her symbolism shows how consciously she is using a literary device and how much she wants her reader to notice it. The way Smith places, rather than points to, her symbolism is by twentieth-century standards not only more modern but considerably more tactful.

<sup>22</sup>Abrams, p. 294.

<sup>23</sup>To W. Sotheby, 10 Sept. 1802, Letters, I, 403-6, quoted in Abrams, p. 294.

<sup>24</sup>Horace Walpole, To the Countess of Upper Ossory, 16 August 1776, Letters, ed. W. S. Lewis, 32 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-73).

## CHAPTER V

### Characterization and Setting: Reason, Imagination and Point of View

Most literary historians credit Smith with being among the first to use sublime or murky landscapes and the awesome interior spaces of castles in a romantic and/or Gothic manner.<sup>1</sup> Like both the Gothic and sentimental novelists (and the Romantic poets), she is interested in the effect on the psyche of what is extraordinary in the inanimate world. She often shows that effect as a therapeutically elevating experience for those whose sensibilities are attuned to what is "picturesque" or "sublime"; it is sometimes also the source of metaphysical, moral and psychological insights. The emotions evoked by what is beautiful or awesome in nature are the subject of many of her sonnets, and such feelings are allowed to those of her characters whom she endows with fine and cultivated sensibilities.<sup>2</sup>

That Smith is among the first English novelists to make meaningful and dramatic use of commonplace interiors goes virtually unnoticed. In the typical eighteenth-century novel, rooms, houses, and castles are located and named, but seldom furnished.<sup>3</sup> In Smith's novels objects within ordinary rooms are sometimes as noteworthy as the features of a sublime landscape. Her purpose is usually to show the cognitive faculties of her characters in operation, just as the purpose outdoor settings serve is usually to show emotional faculties in operation. Unlike most writers of her time, she is interested in the reactions of those of her

characters whose feelings are either less than or overly delicate and refined. She often shows kinds of incongruity as well as congruity between the object perceived and its significance to a particular perceiving mind, and she is interested in pursuing the implications and consequences of misguided or fatuous perceptions and conceptions. For such purposes she uses distinctive interior settings of which some--but not necessarily the most interesting ones--seem, in the Gothic fashion, uncanny.

Philippe Séjourné is the only literary historian to have fully credited Smith with being one of the first novelists to use objects in a deliberately meaningful, hence modern, way. He suggests that Smith's purpose, for example, in noting the kinds of furniture found in Rayland Hall (OMH) is to frame a portrait of Mrs. Rayland, noting that

l'aménagement intérieur de la demeure de Madame Rayland est démodé sans doute, mais l'auteur s'intéresse ici seulement à définir un cadre qui convienne à son personnage, en entrant d'ailleurs dans le détail de façon peu habituelle; elle tient en effet à préciser: "The furniture was rich but old-fashioned: the beds were of cut velvet or damask, with high testers, some of them with gilt cornices:--the chairs were worked, or of coloured velvets, fringed with silk and gold, and had gilt feet:--fine japanned cabinets, beautiful pieces of china, large glasses, and some valuable pictures. . . . etc."<sup>4</sup>

Séjourné quite rightly points out that such carefully realized visual detail is virtually unique in late-eighteenth-century fiction, but the purposes for which Smith uses descriptive detail are only in part explained by analogy to a frame. The passage Séjourné selected is, to begin with, curiously chosen to support an assertion that the objects in a room are itemized in order to frame character and, by implication, enrich characterization. It appears in the middle of

the novel, long after the reader has become familiar with Mrs. Rayland, and it is uncharacteristic precisely because it lists so many pieces of furniture.<sup>5</sup> The list *Séjourné* cites has a very different purpose from the one he attributes to it; before discussing that function, I offer for comparison a passage that is indeed designed to delineate character.

The following appears at the beginning of The Old Manor House, immediately before Mrs. Grace Rayland is distinguished from her older and younger sisters. It is typical of Smith's manner that, as happens here, a telling detail within the room becomes a kind of emblematic focal point within a leisurely, apparently digressive expository passage, in which narrative information and attitudinal signals are subtly interwoven:

[Orlando Somerive's] introduction [at Rayland Hall] was principally owing to the favour of an old lady, the widow of a clergyman, who was among the ancient friends of the family, that still enjoyed the privilege of being regularly sent for in the old family coach, once a year; a custom which, originating in the days of Sir Hildebrand, was still retained.

This lady was a woman of sense and benevolence, and had often attempted to do kind offices to the Somerive family with their rich maiden relations; but the height of her success amounted to no more, than obtaining a renewal of the very little notice that had ever been taken of them, after those capricious fits of coldness which sometimes happened; and once, some time after the death of the elder Mrs. [Barbara] Rayland, bringing Orlando to the Hall in her hand (whom she had met by chance fishing in a stream that ran through their domain), without being chidden for encouraging an idle child to catch minnows, or for leading him all dirty and wet into their parlour, at a time when the best embroidered chairs, done by the hands of dame Gertrude Rayland [Sir Hildebrand's wife], were actually unpapered, and uncovered for the reception of company (OMH, I, 5).

The unpapered, embroidered chairs are important because the characters and the author, respectively, perceive their significance. For the two maiden ladies, they are important both because they were made by their mother, and because, like everything else in Rayland Hall, they derive from an earlier period; they themselves have added nothing contemporary to the furniture of the Hall, but have assiduously preserved what they inherited. From the author's point of view, the chairs are important insofar as the care they receive typifies the fussy and priggish concern with dated objects as well as the dated values characteristic of the Rayland women. In Smith's novels, an object in a room is usually of some consequence for one of her characters, as are the chairs in this episode, and what Smith signals to her readers when she notices such objects are the attitudes they evoke in her characters.<sup>6</sup> Objects are rarely noted solely for the sake of what they contribute to the "formal realism" of the fiction. They carry an additional emblematic or symbolic significance.

The catalogue of antiquated furniture Séjourné uses as an example of a framing device appears in the middle of the novel when a number of characters, not including Mrs. Rayland, tour a part of the manor house which is no longer in use. The occasion is the annual tenants' feast. Because some of the guests are conducted through this part of the house as if they were visiting a museum, they are aware of kinds and classes of old-fashioned furniture, and what Smith records, therefore, is what they would be expected to notice about the contents of the rooms they visit. Because Mrs. Rayland never enters this part of the house, these pieces of furniture never frame her. Their significance with respect to

the current owner of Rayland Hall is precisely that rooms and furniture once necessarily numerous and elegant have become, in her lifetime, historical curiosities.

It is a measure of the decline of the social and political influence of the manor house, and of the Rayland family, that Mrs. Rayland preserves, but does not use, so large a part of her house. The symbolic function of the setting is, in this respect, comparable to the symbolic function anachronistic mansions play in so much of Faulkner's fiction: the significance of the setting lies in the disjunction between how such houses were meant to be used and how they have come to be used. Smith's device here is to delineate a frame which, counter to expectations raised by the social, economic, and political history of her class, never contains the current Mrs. Rayland. Smith's intention is to show an ironic relationship between setting and character, or, in Séjourné's terms, between the frame and the portrait.

The tour allows Smith an opportunity to enrich the characterization of several minor figures in the novel by means of their reactions to what they see and to each other. More interesting is its effect as one of several contiguous episodes which prevent Orlando from keeping a secret appointment with Monimia. To a series of events that take place within the rooms in which the gentry dine and dance--hence a sequence in time within a restricted space--Smith adds a series of events laid out along the corridors and staircases of Rayland Hall. By means of both the temporal and spatial dimensions of her setting, she extends the reader's sense of duration in a dramatic fashion just as she does in a lyric fashion

in ways described in Chapter IV.\*

Within each of these episodes, Smith offers a protracted account of how time passes, very deliberately slowing down narrative time to approximate the time that actually elapses. The cumulative effect of these more or less comic episodes is to develop in the reader a kind of suspense analogous to Orlando's anxiety at being forced to keep Monimia waiting. The reader shares his impatience over a span of time during which he is required to function socially as heir apparent to the manor house. What is annoying, what is ludicrous, what is compromising, and what is malicious about the various demands made on him for the sake of courtesy and decorum evoke in the reader a kind of sympathy for Orlando that is remarkably free from sentimentality. Smith uses plot stratagems to generate suspense and not, as is usual in eighteenth-century novels, the author's poignant account of his character's agitation and dismay.

Smith's interest in the relationship between character and setting is much more complex than twentieth-century critics, Séjourné among them, suggest. One of the most common uses Smith makes of setting is a test, by means of the simplest kind of objective material, of the kinds and quality of distortion or clarity with which a character apprehends the circumstances around him.

The beginning of her first novel, Ermeline, the Orphan of the Castle, offers two contrasting episodes which illustrate how Smith makes use of setting to document perceptual and cognitive processes, thus revealing character. The experience of the foppish servant, Millefleur,

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\*See pp. 177-79 above.

when he loses his way among the corridors of Mowbray Castle, demonstrates, in comic fashion, that the substance of the objective world proves peculiarly malleable in the minds of certain individuals:

[B]y missing a turning which should have carried him to the kitchen, he was bewildered among the long galleries and obscure passages of the castle, and after several efforts, could neither find his way back to the women [servants], nor into the kitchen; but continued to blunder about till the increasing gloom, which approaching night threw over the arched and obscure apartments, through windows dim with painted glass, filled him with apprehension and dismay, and he believed that he should wander there the whole night; in which fear he began to make a strange noise for assistance; to which nobody attended, for indeed nobody for some time heard him. His terror encreasing, he continued to traverse one of the passages, when a door at the corner of it opened, and Emmeline came out.

The man, whose imagination was by this time filled with ideas of spectres, flew back at her sudden appearance, and added the contortions of fear to his otherwise grotesque appearance, in a travelling jacket of white cloth, laced, and his hair in papillotes.

Emmeline, immediately comprehending that it was one of Mr. Delamere's servants, enquired what he wanted (Em, I, 14).

Similar buffoonery in Gothic novels is rarely managed tastefully. Comic episodes involving servants are usually incidental diversions. Smith, however, connects Millefleur's error to others like it in the novel and, equally important, she paces the farcial episode so rapidly that it is over before it begins to seem forced.

Millefleur's experience illustrates how a badly regulated imagination re-shapes incomplete and distorted perceptions, projecting its own fears and embodying them in a persuasive and, in this case, paralyzing fantasy. Mowbray Castle, in itself benign, offers ample material for fanciful re-creation. Millefleur, a minor character, is a richer one for having been treated in this way. The rapid pace and economy of the episode keep its duration proportional to his relative insignificance.

As "Gothic" comedy, it is illustrative rather than intrusive. Elsewhere, Millefleur's vanity is described and dismissed in a conventional way, by means of a pointed, satirical account of his appearance and manners. Here the episode requires, for dramatic purposes, no more than a satiric type. Inasmuch as this episode, however, explores the source and progress of folly in the mind of such a man, it fleshes out a skeletal stereotype. Millefleur seems to be a substantial, a realistic character. Consequently his way of interpreting experience merits, and even invites, comparison with Emmeline's.

A properly regulated imagination, like Emmeline's, is one which assists discernment. Even under genuinely threatening circumstances, her imagination never escapes the controls exercised by rational thought, and therefore she never loses the capacity for accurate perception and effective action. In short, Emmeline is able to keep comprehension and apprehension in proper balance. Mowbray Castle, in her mind, is a fixed and familiar structure and events in it, however singular, are explicable:

A total silence had long reigned in the castle, and her almost extinguished candle told her it was time to take some repose, when, as she was preparing to do so, she thought she heard a rustling, and indistinct footsteps in the passage near her room.

She started--listened--but all was again profoundly silent; and she supposed it had been only one of those unaccountable noises which she had been used to hear along the dreary avenues of the castle. She began anew to unpin her hair, when a second time the same noise in the passage alarmed her. She listened again; and while she continued attentive, the great clock struck two.

Amazed to find it so late, her terror increased; yet she endeavoured to reason herself out of it, and to believe that it was the effect of her fancy: she heard it no more; and had almost determined to go out into the passage to satisfy herself that her fears were groundless, when just as she approached the door, the whispers were renewed; she saw the lock move, and heard a violent push against it (Em, I, 31-32).

Emmeline's fears prove to be not at all fanciful, and two men force themselves into her room. Her escape through the halls of the castle is exciting because it is a successfully executed maneuver. She evades the two men because she makes use of a strategic advantage. The castle being her home, she knows the passages, even in the dark, as her pursuers do not. She outwits and outdistances Delamere and Millefleur who, lost themselves, prove to be inept and clumsy instead of romantically villainous.

The distinctive manner in which Smith uses Mowbray Castle in each of these episodes should clarify the difference between her intentions when she makes use of setting in what has since come to be considered a "Gothic" manner and when she uses it in a way that is, in fact, quite the opposite of Gothic in purpose. The very same familiarity with the castle that facilitates Emmeline's escape precludes the kind of mystification that envelops the typical Gothic heroine in an atmosphere charged with suspense and horror. Millefleur's is the "Gothic" experience; he is terrified by what is unfamiliar, unknown, and unknowable. Smith's purpose, however, is comic, so that his horror, rather than communicating sensations of terror to the reader, amuses him. Emmeline's experience is not at all Gothic; she proves herself to be the kind of heroine who can rapidly plan and execute an escape, and not the kind who is overwhelmed by the emotions she experiences. So self-possessed is she that she immediately heads for Lord Montreville's room to lodge a complaint against his son, with Fitz-Edward and other members of the household as witnesses. Having publicly embarrassed Delamere, she has guaranteed the security of her own room. Delamere cannot risk losing face a second time, having

word reach his friends in London that his country cousin not only refused his attentions but repeatedly eluded him.

Whereas Millefleur's self-induced illusion paralyzes him in a situation in which he is not in fact the victim of any external threat, Emmeline's self-sustaining discernment is the source of her power to act effectively and decisively when she is threatened. It is this quality of thought, her acumen and decisiveness, which provides for this kind of action, judicious and effective, that distinguishes her, as well as many of Smith's other heroines, from the distressed heroine of the typical novel before 1789 and from the heroine of the typical Gothic novel of the 1790's.

Episodes like these illustrate that the relationship between character and setting is in Smith's novels a functional one. "Reading" the inanimate world is often in Smith's fiction to be taken as the equivalent of a dramatic action, just as the act of reading nature and finding meaning in it may be the "action" of a poem. Characters are not only seen against settings, they interact with them. What a character does to or makes of another character is, in fiction, an action that is expected to have an effect on subsequent action. The effect of what a character does to or makes of his surroundings is in Smith's novels a reflexive action: it both reveals and affects his own attitudes toward and behavior within the world in which he finds himself.

Smith's reasons for using setting so often and in such detail can be expressed as the obverse of Ivy Compton-Burnett's reasons for making almost no use of concrete description in her own novels:

It might be better to give more account of people's homes and intimate background, but I hardly see why the date and style

of the Gavestons' house should be given, as I did not think of them as giving their attention to it, and as a house of a different date and style would have done for them equally well. It would be something to them that it was old and beautiful, but it would be enough.<sup>7</sup>

According to Compton-Burnett, how extensively or minutely a setting is treated varies among novels according to how relevant setting is as an extension of characterization. For her, the significance the characters themselves find in objects within the rooms and houses they inhabit is what merits the objects' inclusion in the narrative, and, as she suggests, a qualitative difference between the novel of manners and the romance lies in the kind of significance customarily attributed to setting in each kind of fiction.<sup>8</sup> If, as is generally assumed, only very modern writers consciously interrelate all elements in fiction, then Smith's innovative correlation of setting and point of view was for the 1790's remarkably advanced (and this in addition to the realistic effects she gets by enumerating and describing concrete objects that are the components of a setting).

Sometimes Smith makes use of setting in conjunction with hindsight--two points of view held by the same character, one of which reflects the other--to show the intellectual and moral insight that comes with experience and maturity. A common purpose of interpolated narratives in eighteenth-century novels is to take advantage of hindsight, to show a character correcting and commenting on his own experience from a new and usually more comprehensive perspective, as Fielding uses Mr. Wilson's story in Joseph Andrews. Most often such narrative digressions are moral fables which reflect directly or indirectly on unresolved moral problems in the main narrative. Fielding's Amelia is perhaps the best example of an

eighteenth-century novel that makes repeated and varied use of this device for the sake of "unity of design."<sup>9</sup> In Amelia, however, such narratives become ironic when events subsequently prove the perceptions they express either fallacious or insincere (as the reader is persuaded, at the very beginning of the novel, Booth's and Miss Matthews' respectively are).

Usually an interpolated narrative compares or contrasts with the main narrative in a clear and exemplary way. Smith for example introduces a digressive short narrative in The Wanderings of Warwick for the sake of contrast. The reader is invited to compare the clarity of perspective in the interpolated narrative with the obstructed and shifting perspective in Warwick's narrative, within which it appears.\*

Marianne Shaftesbury<sup>10</sup> is given to displaying her sensibility. A young officer tells Warwick about his love for and disillusionment with this woman, to whom he had been engaged. Her lover conveys the nature of the attraction she had had for him by means of a pictorial rendering of a room which he thought reflected her character:

--it was elegantly dressed with flowers;--her toilet was tastefully set out;--her music book was open at a pathetic song;--every thing around seemed to breathe tenderness and love;--and I reflected with delight that the fair form-- the elegant mind that made these arrangements was soon to be mine (WW, p. 53).

The young man is taken in by appearances which have been artfully arranged precisely so as to frame Marianne; the relationship between the character and the frame is, however, an ironic one. The décor of the room has been conceived and executed by Marianne herself as a backdrop for a particular kind of histrionic posturing.

Marianne, who weeps "over the fictitious distresses of a novel,

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\*See pp. 229-33 below.

and [shrinks] from the imaginary sorrows of an imaginary heroine" (WW, p. 53) reveals, through effective action rather than affective posturing, how superficial her notion of sensibility is. She orders a slave child brutally beaten in her presence for a minor error, and, what is more, she seems to relish the spectacle. Her lover is appalled to discover how callous Marianne is, and appalled at his own obtuseness in accepting the décor of her room as evidence of her character. In discovering that Marianne is not what she seems to be, he learns how naive it is to assume that external forms reflect internal qualities. Disillusioned, he comes to understand that true perspicacity is possible only when perception and inference are guided and tested by judgement. Smith uses a catalogue of appurtenances in this episode to show that even an apparently comprehensive body of tangible evidence can be misinterpreted or misleading. There is nothing unusual about Smith's use of the interpolated narrative in this novel, but remarkable indeed is the attention and importance she gives to physical objects. As in this passage, interior settings are almost always introduced as a function of point of view, gathering significance from those attributes and qualities characters locate in them or invest them with.

In Smith's novels, literary objectivity and mimetic realism as well as social satire are usually associated with the sweeping vision of a virtually omniscient narrator who scans and reports all relevant points of view. The authorial voice she habitually uses is colorless and unobtrusive. She seldom interrupts the narrative with overt instructions about how characters should be judged or how events should be interpreted. Instead, agreement or disagreement among heterogeneous points of view

function as indirect evidence of Smith's intentions: that is, as confirmation or criticism of any one among them. The first part of this chapter continues the examination of episodes in which Smith uses settings and props to explore perceptual and cognitive processes in a comic, satiric, or ironic vein, and in which she directs the reader by implicitly authenticating or explicitly confirming one among the several points of view she presents. The second part will examine episodes in which settings and props function as part of the apparatus by means of which Smith incorporates romantic episodes into novels that otherwise pretend to be "true pictures of men and manners."

What seems "realistic," authentic, and credible in Smith's novels frequently has the same persuasive but questionable kind of validity that polls and petitions document. The greater the heterogeneity among parties who agree, or the larger the number of parties who agree, the more the thing they agree on seems objectively true. Similarly, converging points of view seem to validate the objective truth of what is reported in a novel. When characters--especially those toward whom the narrator shows little sympathy--share her opinions and attitudes, the narrator's point of view seems to be comprehensive, judicious and authoritative in spite of its subjective bias.

Scanning more than one point of view allows Smith a great deal of latitude in producing realistic fiction. As the following passage illustrates, when several converging and diverging points of view with respect to even a few features of a room are tracked at the same time, the possibilities for various kinds of narrative richness, including symbolism, rapidly increase, but not at the expense of the reader's conviction that

the presentation is realistic. At the same time that he is first introduced to three of the major characters in The Old Manor House, he is also aware that, although these characters represent different points of view, some of them at times conflate. The reader is made aware of four distinct attitudes toward the portrait gallery at Rayland Hall. At any given moment, the perspective enjoyed by the narrator, Mrs. Lennard, Mrs. Rayland, or Monimia may or may not coincide with that perceived by one or more of the others. It is by means of modulations among shared or singular points of view that information about what is visible in the gallery serves, simultaneously, several purposes: dramatic, satiric, psychological, and symbolic.

Mrs. Rayland had been long confined by a fit of the gout; and the warm weather of Whitsundtide had only just enabled her to walk, leaning on a crutch on one side, and on Mrs. Lennard on the other, in a long gallery which reached the whole length of the south wing, and which was hung with a great number of family pictures. . . . The little withered figure, bent down with age and infirmity, and the last of a race [of which she was arrogantly boasting as they walked]--a race, which in a few years, perhaps a few months, might be no more remembered--was a ridiculous instance of human folly and human vanity, at which Lennard had sense enough to smile internally, while she affected to listen with interest to stories which she had heard repeated for near forty years. It was in the midst of her attention to an anecdote which generally closed the relation, of a speech made by Queen Anne to the last Lady Rayland on her having no son, that a sudden and violent bounce towards the middle of the gallery occasioned an interruption of the story, and equal amazement in the lady and her confidante; who both turning round, not very nimbly indeed, demanded of Monimia, who had been sitting in one of the old-fashioned bow-windows of which the casement was open, what was the matter?

No proper answer is given until after Mrs. Rayland has been escorted out of the room by Mrs. Lennard; then the questioning continues as follows:

[Mrs. Lennard] peremptorily insisted on knowing what it was that had bounced into the room, and struck against the picture of Sir Hildebrand himself; who in armour, and on a white horse

whose flanks were overshadowed by his stupendous wig, pranced over the great gilt chimney-piece, just as he appeared at the head of a county association in 1707 (OMH, I, 15-17).

Monimia then explains that Orlando had been tossing a ball outside the window, teasing her, and it had accidentally entered the room.

The gallery is, from the narrator's point of view, a stage set on which characters move. The characters themselves are rendered as figures on that stage: Mrs. Rayland and Mrs. Lennard pacing its length, and Monimia framed at the bay window in which she sits. The moment of surprise and confusion when Orlando's ball intrudes on the scene affords Smith an opportunity to show a mildly comic shuffle as the older women turn toward the window. Each of the individualized, particular objects within the gallery contributes to the "formal realism" of the scene.

The gallery is also a symbolic place. Because Mrs. Rayland perceives it as such, it is the specific locus within the house which expresses the values of Sir Hildebrand in his generation, and of Mrs. Rayland, anachronistically, in hers. As such, it is the object of Mrs. Lennard's scorn and of the narrator's satire. More specifically, the room embodies, in its portraits, pride of family and, for this reason, is the particular place within the house that functions as symbolic of a notion that Mrs. Rayland cherishes and that the narrator deprecates. Solely from the narrator's point of view, it is as symbol of an excessively high value placed on family that this room--and within it, as emblematic focal point, Sir Hildebrand's portrait--is threatened by the relationship between Orlando and the plebian Monimia. When Orlando's ball comes through the window, the room is, as it were, invaded. It

is because of the symbolic status of the room that Orlando's childish accident seems meaningful; the reader is inclined to see it as heralding future assaults on Rayland haughtiness.

The episode is significantly placed in time as well as space; it takes place in 1775. A breach between the American colonies and England is imminent. The gallery houses a pictorial history of the Rayland family, which has traditionally aligned itself politically with conservative and royalist parties. A Rayland had been "one of the first of those to whom the title of Baronet had been granted by James the First" (OMH, I, 3), and the manor house had been a royalist stronghold during the civil war (circa 1646; OMH, I, 28). Later in the novel Orlando breaks with family tradition, becoming sympathetic to the cause of rebellious colonists in America. The accidental affront to Sir Hildebrand's dignity seems to foreshadow Orlando's considered repudiation of the family's aristocratic bearing and its longstanding allegiance to the crown. For Orlando, the American war is neither heroic, honorable nor justifiable.

The complex manipulation of points of view in this episode persuades the reader that it is dramatically and psychologically realistic even though, as the first episode of the novel and the one in which three prominent characters appear for the first time, it carries an unusually large and dense burden of expository information. It also persuades the reader that the sympathies and antipathies he feels for the characters have been elicited by a fairly "objective" account. Each character has been allowed to offer his own point of view. The passage uses mild satire to suggest rather than prescribe normative attitudes. It is hard to distinguish a voice that is distinctly the author's because particularly

marked irony in the narrative voice deflects attention from itself by merging with Mrs. Lennard's thoughts; the worst of the satire directed at Mrs. Rayland reflects on Mrs. Lennard's hostility rather than the narrator's.

Beginning the dramatic action of the novel this way, Smith invites a certain kind of relationship with her reader and sets up certain expectations. By implication, the narrator is perceptive, shrewd, sensitive, witty, and discreet; she has the best of intentions as well as the best of credentials. She is to be trusted because she is fair. The novel is overtly concerned with socio-political issues from the start: the characters cannot be introduced without accounting for class interests and prejudices. The reader is immediately aware that the novel offers a criticism of contemporary English society, but he is also fairly sure that the characters and their story will be given priority over the author's thesis. It is not surprising that Smith presents herself and her novel in this way. Central to the democratic ideology of those who, like Smith, were in the radical camp in England<sup>11</sup> is the notion that a rational individual is capable of perceiving and conceding the truth about a situation when it is properly, fairly, and fully presented to him. Smith offers her reader what she believes is the truth about a situation, but she does not propagandize or preach.

In circumstances that make fewer demands than initial exposition does, Smith makes use of setting and of ironic distance between the narrator's and the characters' points of view for concise and usually comic characterization; the relationship between a character and an object become emblematic of his attitudes and opinions. The intellectual

pretensions of Miss Hollybourn, whose father would like to see her married to the heir of Rayland Hall, and her own amatory pretensions toward Orlando are captured in part by what she says about and in part by the subject and quality of a painting that catches her attention during the tour of the hall. Miss Hollybourn most condescendingly

explained to the two Miss Somerives the Loves of Cupid and Psyche, which were painted on the wall; though the picture was so little illuminated by the two wax-candles, carried by Orlando and a servant, that nothing but her passion to display her universal knowledge, could have induced her to attempt clearing up the obscurity in which the wavering and unequal light involved a story not very clearly told by the painter (OMH, II, 191).

Smith's irony cuts two ways. One edge goes to Miss Hollybourn; the discrimination and taste of the English squirearchy gets the other.

The kind of double irony Smith draws on by means of the painting anticipates the way in which Austen uses the portrait of Harriet Smith that Emma executes (Emma, 1816, Ch. VI). Emma is satisfied that the portrait will be "a standing memorial of the beauty of one, the skill of the other." Here too the irony cuts both ways; Harriet is not elegant and Emma's drawing is amateurish. The portrait does yoeman's service as an emblem. Because it distorts what it intends to idealize, it stands for all that is wrong with Emma's perceptions. In addition, the portrait elicits telling and characteristic responses from those among Emma's friends who habitually play up to her pretensions. Their complicity in cultivating what there is about Emma that is like Miss Hollybourn's arrogance is shown in operation. For Austen, the burden of responsibility for Emma's error is shared by those in her society who feed her vanity. The consensus, that Emma is a reasonably good painter, is persuasive,

but it is not valid: those who agree are less than honest or they are poorly qualified to make such judgements. It is the complicity of her friends that, in this novel, mitigates Emma's culpability. Knightley's is the one point of view that functions as a corrective to all the misinformation she receives about the painting. Although Austen tells us that Emma had deliberately improved on Harriet's figure "to give a little more height and considerably more elegance," only Knightley comments on the distortion: "You have made her too tall, Emma." Austen then declares that "Emma knew that she had, but would not own it." Knightley's opinion is corroborated by both the narrator and Emma herself. He is thus shown to be the only reliable and candid critic among her friends.

Austen makes use of converging points of view in this scene in a way that is very like what Smith does with converging points of view in the opening scene of The Old Manor House.<sup>\*</sup> Each of the points of view characterizes a member of Emma's circle; together they explain what is meaningful about the portrait as an emblem of misperception and misjudgment in Emma and among those who would be her friends. In addition, Austen's unobtrusive irony operates through Knightley's unchivalrous criticism and Emma's unexpressed admission; irony in the narrative voice deflects attention from itself by merging with the expressed and unexpressed thoughts of her characters. Austen might well have learned both techniques from Smith.

Whereas "realism" in Smith's novels is associated with multiple

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<sup>\*</sup>See pp. 215-18 above.

and shifting perspectives, romance is usually associated with a single emotionally charged point of view. Beginning with her third novel, Celestina, romantic episodes are rhetorically distinct from the bulk of the novel. They are assigned to a first-person narrator within novels in which all else is related by an omniscient third-person narrator. The timbre peculiar to the voice of one of the characters gives such interpolated narratives a tone and color qualitatively different from those of Smith's authorial voice. Within such episodes Smith uses interior settings to explore the relationship between imagination and cognition, presenting imaginative images of or notions about the setting as a function of point of view. Some of the devices Smith uses anticipate the Gothic vogue, some follow it.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes Smith uses setting in conjunction with point of view as a way of manipulating mood, anticipating effects usually thought of as original with Edgar Allan Poe.<sup>15</sup> And, in some of Smith's first-person narratives, the distortions and improbabilities of romance become manifestations of interrelated actual and psychological experience, each of which affects-- and sometimes generates--the other; that is, the narrative is romantic because the narrator is imaginative, but not necessarily reliable. Smith found a variety of distorted and muddled perspectives to be useful, meaningful, and/or effective ways of painting the inanimate world.

Smith's interpolated narratives are especially interesting because a distinct line of development in the relationship between point of view and setting is conspicuous in her treatment of this conventional feature of the eighteenth-century novel. Interpolated narratives in her early novels offer explicit information; they are

chronicles, personal and familial histories. Interpolated narratives in her later novels are explicitly accounts of personal experiences, but they are implicitly documents that reveal how the narrator's mind works. They offer, in addition to information about the events themselves, evidence about the significance of these events to the narrator, about how they are remembered, and how much these memories are affected by the narrator's imperceptiveness or imagination. In such narratives, concrete objects figure prominently, but are not important solely in themselves; instead they are important because the mind that perceives them is indirectly depicted by means of the kinds of images it retains of such objects. By squinting through the eyes of a character who is very far from normative, Smith in effect subverts the "formal realism" particular concrete objects are supposed to bestow on a fiction, achieving instead psychologically realistic heightening and/or falsification of experience.

The interpolated narratives in Emmeline and Ethelinde, Smith's first two novels, are nicely done but quite conventional for eighteenth-century fiction. Lady Adelina's and Mrs. Montgomery's histories are summary accounts, encompassing significant events affecting two generations of a family, the narrator's and her parents'. In both, story or plot dominates the account. Neither is enriched by attention to extraneous literary ornaments; physical spaces are named and/or located geographically, but not described in detail. These are factual tales, documenting a cause-and-effect sequence leading to the time of narration and digressing only to elaborate on the motivations and repercussions of crucial actions. Both are sad stories and seem to want a more

sentimental treatment than they get; mishap and misery are described in an almost perfunctory manner.

Because Mrs. Montgomery's story in Ethelinde was so popular and is so typical of the kind of interpolated tale that, during the last part of the eighteenth century, was often detached from a novel and reprinted in the miscellanies, Robert D. Mayo uses it in The English Novel in the Magazines 1740-1815 to illustrate the type.<sup>14</sup> Mayo, who prefers the style of the interpolated narrative to that of the rest of the novel, observes that, "in its brevity and its simple outlines, the 'History of Caroline Montgomery' contrasts sharply with the more involved and pretentious fable in which it is enclosed."<sup>15</sup> He seems to be echoing the complaint of Miss Stanley in Austen's "Catherine," that "Ethelinde is so long."<sup>16</sup> Kitty grants that the novel's length "is a very common Objection . . . , but for my own part, if a book is well written, I always find it too short." Kitty (and presumably Austen too) finds "the story of Ethelinde" very interesting and the descriptions of the Grasmere landscape beautiful. Even more important, the novel was a significant and controversial literary phenomenon. When Kitty first decides to discuss Mrs. Smith's novels with Miss Stanley, she means the conversation to be about "Books . . . universally read and Admired, [and that have given rise perhaps to more frequent Arguments than any other of the same sort]."<sup>17</sup> Thus, according to Austen, the novel itself was in and after 1789 remarkable and disturbing, although she does not explain why. The interpolated narrative does not get special attention, nor is there any reason why it should.

The interpolated narrative that ends Smith's third novel,

Celestina, is noteworthy for being an early example of an historical, Gothic romance. Smith uses the hero's romantic response to a sublime setting to create a mood appropriate for "The Interesting History of the Count de Bellegarde." In the last volume of the novel, Willoughby finds his way to a castle in the Pyrenees during a tempestuous storm, a violent upheaval in the natural setting. The French Revolution is in progress in the distance (signs of battle are visible when he begins his trek into the mountains), a violent upheaval in the political setting. His mind and emotions are in a state of exaltation; he experiences a rare intensity of perceptions and emotions, in which he is conscious of his own experience as a romantic event on the psychological plane, analogous to the storm and the war, which are romantic and dramatic experiences on other planes. Willoughby's imagination seizes on the setting as material for fantasy, creating a romance in which he assigns himself a role:

Willoughby, as he marched gravely along, through the long galleries, and across the gloomy hall, fancied himself a knight of romance; and that some of the stories of enchanted castles, and wandering adventures, of which he had been so fond in his early youth, were here realized (C, IV, 231).

Willoughby hears, at the castle of the Count de Bellegarde, a story quite as marvellous as anything he has read. He has happened on the one man who can, in recounting his own remarkable history, gratuitously and fortuitously account for Celestina's birth. Within the novel, as Willoughby crosses a boundary between experiences, between realistic events and romantic ones, the reader is invited to cross that boundary with him, suspend disbelief, and, like Willoughby, experience in the Count de Bellegarde's narrative a kind of wonder, horror, and awe that

no other part of the novel excites.

Willoughby's perception of himself as a romantic figure is handled quite seriously; it is by no means the kind of ingenuous self-delusion which Austen makes fun of in Northanger Abbey.<sup>18</sup> The intensity that builds as Willoughby moves from idyllic to awesome landscapes in the Pyrenees, from an emotional response that is sentimental to one that is sublime, is sustained by his sense of role and by his romantic expectations when entering the castle. The heightened intensity creates in the reader a suspenseful expectancy, satisfied by the titillating "horror" of the Count's history.<sup>19</sup> Willoughby's imagination effects for Smith a radical change in tone and mood, thus preparing the reader to exercise a qualitatively different kind of belief from what the novel up to this point requires of him.

The evidence of subsequent interpolated narratives suggests that Smith realized that a first-person narrative need not be restricted to commonplace or familiar experiences in order to be convincing. Beyond the skeletal sequence of events, nothing need be, in a strict sense, possible and/or probable. And even the events themselves need not meet ordinary standards of probability. Her interpolated narratives are often set in foreign countries or in relatively inaccessible, hence exotic, parts of the British Isles, places in which it is easy to imagine adventures that could not happen in civilized domestic regions. Adventures that are inconceivable in rural England are not necessarily unthinkable in the Scottish highlands (YP) or a French countryside terrorized by roving banditti (D).<sup>20</sup> Descriptions of the landscape and architecture contribute to the feeling that a place and culture

are alien, and therefore that astounding escapades are fitting for the territory.

Smith seems to have perceived too that by giving the story to one of her characters it becomes, in Morse Peckham's terms,<sup>21</sup> an "interpreted situation" recaptured by memory and reconstructed in a literary form. Even a naive narrator is aware that a spoken or written account of past experiences is implicitly literary, and is likely to introduce a certain number of emendations for the sake of brevity or emphasis. In Smith's later novels, such accounts make no pretense of journalistic factuality; the interpolated narratives become increasingly conscious attempts to be true to felt rather than factual experience. Setting offers opportunities for a character to demonstrate how he "half-creates"<sup>22</sup> what he perceives. The more fanciful his reading of the world, the more information he inadvertently reveals about himself. Occasions when a character expresses his emotional responses to a setting are also opportunities for Smith to make use of what he sees and of the tone and style of his narrative voice to create moods that are as much indicative of his temperament as they are appropriate to the scene and the circumstances.

Desmond, Smith's fourth novel, is the first in which she uses the close identification between the reader and a first-person narrator for its emotive intensity. Unlike the interpolated narratives in her first three novels, the story of Geraldine Verney's gruelling journey through the French countryside is supposed to have been delivered in written rather than oral form. Geraldine's version of her own experiences has therefore been treated like fiction inasmuch as the written

narrative has been composed and published, albeit in a letter. Geraldine describes people and scenes as she remembers having reacted to them. Descriptions that are meant to convey her psychological state as well as what she actually saw exaggerate what is horrifying about the setting; conversely, such descriptions are meant to evoke the reader's horror--whether at what is ghastly or at what is Gothic about the scene.

The account of Geraldine's adventures is highly condensed (D, II, 258-264), focussing on the grisly predicament she is in just before Desmond finds and rescues her. She has been travelling alone, complying with a peremptory summons from her husband. She is detained at a post-house by a group of people who have "a wild and savage appearance" in a part of the country "where hardly any traces of civilization appeared." There are supposed to be banditti operating in the vicinity. Her initial apprehensions about the company she finds herself in develop while she is warming herself just after entering the house:

A fire of vine stalks and turf was made in the chimney of the room, which was floored only with earth, or rather with mud--and never will the circle, that gathered round it, be erased from my recollection--The blaze of the fire, threw catching lights upon their harsh features; and, as all their eyes were fixed on me, I fancied myself surrounded by daemons.

The transition from plain description to an imaginative interpretation is followed by another shift in tone and mood: Geraldine entertains sentimental thoughts about the fate of her children, should she be killed. Then action in the room brings her back to a straightforward statement about the primitive cuisine of the household:

One of the women began to prepare supper--a coarse cloth, disgustingly dirty, was spread on a board that reached the whole length of the kitchen--The pot au feu was brought forward to receive a supply of leeks; a large dish of onions and garlic was heated, with something they called beef.

The lull in suspense during this digression ends when Geraldine hears that these preparations are for men who are expected shortly, and whom she suspects are the banditti she has heard about. Geraldine is so terrified that she feels faint and requests wine. Again there is a bit of business, first interrupting and then quickening the suspense. One of the women provides wine,

and, on her request for money, I took out a parcel of assignats I had in my pocket--She immediately seized them, and carried them to one of the men, who looked at them by the fire light, then turned towards me his hideous countenance, and grinning horribly, nodded to me, and thrust them all into his pocket.

Geraldine surmises that the man will attack her for whatever valuables she has in addition to the money but, just as tension begins to build, horses are heard outside. Everyone races out of the house except one of the women, left to guard her. Again there is a lull; noises of fighting are heard, but action inside the post-house is frozen. Then, taking the initiative on behalf of her cohorts,

the beldam . . . approached me in an attitude as if she were about to strike me, with a long knife, which she had been using over the fire--I arose to avoid her, when a figure, covered with blood, rushed into the room, staggered towards the chimney, and fell at my feet.

It proves to be Desmond, less seriously hurt than he seems to be. With Desmond's entrance the scene reaches a climax; it ends when Geraldine faints as soon as she realizes who this man is. The company Desmond has brought with him drive off the crew in possession of the post-house, and by the time Geraldine revives the episode is over. Geraldine

travels on under Desmond's protection quite safely until they find her dying husband.

Smith produces the restrained, sinister melodrama of this episode by focussing alternately on what seems to be evil and what seems to be uncouth about Geraldine's captors. What Geraldine's fear exaggerates out of perspective, her finicky disgust at slovenly house-keeping and her cool grasp of the crude and elemental greed around her forces back into perspective. Smith gets striking effects by interlarding reasonable and fanciful trains of thought, action that is loathsome and action that is menacing, and alternately bald and lurid descriptions of the room and of the grotesque creatures and foul objects it contains.

Smith's first attempt to fully integrate persona and tale is The Wanderings of Warwick. It is a record of events that fall outside the scope of The Old Manor House, Smith's fifth novel, and was printed as a sequel to that novel. Having elected to drop the story of Warwick and Isabella after they elope, she uses this narrative to account for what happens to the couple before they are reunited with the Somerive family, an event that is recorded at the end of The Old Manor House. It is therefore the equivalent of an inserted narrative, published separately in one volume.

The Wanderings of Warwick is, except for a brief introduction, a first-person account, confessional in character. Warwick has a sound literary background; his dialogue in The Old Manor House is characterized by allusions to and quotations from English poetry. He even entertains the idea of earning his living as a writer just

before he is reconciled with his uncle and reinstated as his heir. His narrative is a written rather than an oral account by his choice. The story he tells is therefore quite different from Lady Adelina's or Mrs. Montgomery's, and even from the kind of narrative that appears in Geraldine Verney's letters. Warwick thinks of himself as a writer, and of his biographical account as a formal, literary exercise.

Smith points out in a prologue that, although Warwick and his family are now comfortably settled and wealthy and although they enjoy the good company of Orlando and Monimia, all is not well. Not only is this novel unusual because it begins with the hero and heroine married but also because the reader is informed at the outset that they are not going to live happily ever after. Even though the worst of the difficulties created by Warwick's elopement with Isabella are resolved and both are once again safely at home and a part of reputable English society, their future is not at all secure. Warwick may think of himself as perfectly content but, according to Smith, if he

was ever in danger of feeling himself less happy, it was from the sameness of his present felicity.--His gay and volatile spirits having now no object in pursuit--nothing to hope and nothing to fear--were continually leading him into dissipation, from which in fact he had no other relish than as it broke the monotony of domestic life (WW, pp. 2-3).

For all the insight and maturity he claims to have achieved by the time he recounts his story, he has changed very little.

The Warwick who tells the story is especially concerned with accounting for attitudes and opinions which he claims to understand better at the time of narration--a time when he presumably no longer entertains them--than he did at the time when they influenced his actions.

His narrative attempts to be as much an account of the psychological sources of behavior he now regrets as it is an account of the events themselves. It is therefore an account of error, misperception, misjudgement--all those varieties of intellectual mismanagement because of which individuals endanger their comfort and happiness and that of those who depend on them. There is, however, a double irony at work in his narrative because the reformed Warwick is sometimes as obtuse as he perceives himself to have been in the past. At the time he tells the story, Warwick is as likely as before to find himself embroiled in situations like those he congratulates himself for having survived. He is still restless and impetuous; from these qualities the transition is easily made to imprudence and improvidence. He believes nevertheless that his analysis of his past errors is objective, and that his narrative embodies a new and solid self-knowledge. It ends as follows:

Had I never passed through the severe trials of indigence, I might, when every gratification was in my power, have yielded to the propensities to which I am by disposition inclined and have still been the dissipated Man of the World, instead of considering myself, as I now do, the Steward of my two Boys (WW, p. 288).

Warwick is very smug indeed.

What Warwick's narrative, as a whole, seems to illustrate is that his reformation is very superficial; he is still inclined to imagine himself to have been the relatively innocent victim of internal and external forces he was powerless to control. If Smith believed, as Godwin did, that "whatever dispositions any man may possess in favor of the welfare of others, two things are necessary to give them validity: discernment and power,"<sup>23</sup> then she created in Warwick a character in whom imagination impedes discernment and debilitating passions erode power.

However much Warwick would like to be so, he cannot be trusted to provide for the welfare of others.

What Warwick's imagination does to what is objectively real about the furniture of a Spanish courtroom serves as graphic illustration of the process that also makes his assessment of the people around him so unreliable. Imprisoned on suspicion of murder and treated harshly because of unfriendly relations between Spain and England, he has legitimate reasons for being apprehensive when he is brought before the local magistrate. His imagination, in a manner typical of the kind of unreason he exercises throughout the novel, turns the stark, foreign courtroom into something quite different from what it is. As Warwick remembers it,

I was conducted attended by guards with their bayonets fixed, through passages arched with stone, into a large gloomy room, without any other furniture than a table of black wood, a great chair at one end of it covered with tapestry, and two wooden stools on each side, for the secretaries, as I supposed, of the magistrate, who was not yet arrived. Around the room hung rusty helmets, and antique-breast plates, which seemed to have served against the Moors. I had time enough to contemplate this hall of justice, which brought to my mind descriptions I had read of the places where the officers of the Inquisition sit on the miserable victims of superstition. I fancied myself about to fall into the hands of this cruel and arbitrary tribunal, or some other equally unjust and inhuman (WW, pp. 246-47).

In Warwick, genuine fears engender unrealistic ones. That Warwick begins to perceive the courtroom as peculiarly macabre is another in a long series of circumstances in which his imagination distorts his perceptions.

Smith, making use of Warwick's point of view, produces a narrative that exploits the melodrama and pathos which informs his image of himself as the victim of his own passions, of natural catastrophes, and

of unnatural villains. His narrative is conceived and colored as if it were a romance. The reader is, on the one hand, invited to share Warwick's horror as his imagination "gothicizes" a medieval hall. On the other, he is encouraged to notice that Warwick's misadventures are in large part the result of his characteristically erroneous notions about his relationship to the world in which he moves. Warwick's cognitive faculties are too much under the influence of his imagination and his behavior is not often enough governed by pragmatic common sense.

It is impossible in this introductory essay to survey the interpolated narratives in each of Smith's novels. As was shown above, the direction of development through the first five novels leads to a narrator in The Wanderings of Warwick who is purposively unreliable: in subsequent novels, interpolated narratives are usually to some degree "unreliable." In Warwick this sophisticated rhetorical strategy allows Smith to treat moral issues indirectly and ironically at the same time that she manipulates eerie, sentimental, and suspenseful moods. The integrity of the fiction is not violated, because Smith's irony frames but does not intrude on Warwick's tone. Throughout the many permutations of mood, the tone is consistently his; its tendency to modulate into a self-indulgent whine is its endemic and unmistakable flaw.

The admixture of irony and affect is better balanced in Warwick than it is in either Manon Lescaut or Werther, both of which invite the indiscriminating approbation that is so commonly the danger of first-person narratives. Both of these novels are too easily read as entirely sentimental and not at all ironic and the reader is likely to mistake the moral stance he ought to take toward the Chevalier des Grieux and

Werther, but he is not likely to misconstrue Warwick's obliquity, however much he empathetically shares Warwick's variable and intense moods; the signs are too clear to be misread.

The one other interpolated narrative that needs to be introduced here (although all are interesting) is in Smith's last novel. Mrs. Glenmorris' history illustrates the final evolution in Smith's fiction of the interpolated narrative; it is a psychologically symbolic romance. The Young Philosopher (1798) is an essentially realistic, satiric, and political novel within which one volume is devoted to an account of the courtship and early years of marriage of Mrs. Laura Glenmorris. She is introduced at the beginning of the novel as an altogether attractive woman of intelligence and integrity. She will, however, succumb to temporary insanity before the novel ends. But the only evidence the reader has of the weakness that subsequently leads to madness is implanted in Mrs. Glenmorris' version of her personal history.<sup>24</sup>

Smith is so explicit here that there can be no doubt that she intends Mrs. Glenmorris' narrative to offer evidence of a tendency toward unreason. In the preface, she announces that one of the moral purposes of this work is "to shew . . . the triumph of fortitude in the daughter, while too acute sensibility, too hastily indulged, is the source of much unhappiness to the mother" (YP, I, vi). Mrs. Glenmorris' daughter, Medora, deals with and escapes from those who threaten her without ever entertaining fanciful notions about herself and her situation. Mrs. Glenmorris, however, betrays her excessive sensibility almost exclusively by means of what is excessively fanciful about her narrative. Within this one volume, and by means of Mrs. Glenmorris' point of view, Smith

can avail herself of the imaginative latitude romance offers without endorsing the attitude or behavior of an individual like Mrs. Glenmorris, or violating the literary decorum observed in the other three volumes of the novel.

In The Young Philosopher, Smith seems to have deliberately set out to make full use of the relationship between the psychology of a character who is predisposed to think of herself as a victim--of passion, destiny, or personal enemies--and literary strategies that are available in romance, however inappropriate they are for a realistic fiction. Unlike Radcliffe's unacknowledged (and probably unconscious) use of fantasy to embody situations that are psychologically meaningful, Smith consciously embeds symbolically expressive objects and situations in the story Mrs. Glenmorris tells. Consequently Mrs. Glenmorris' tale testifies to the speaker's proclivity for perceiving her own experiences according to a simplistic and fatalistic model: the fairy tale. Since Mrs. Glenmorris was treated very badly indeed, it seems that the Gothic style of her account is simply in keeping with the exceptionally Gothic features of her biography. For Smith, however, there is a real difference between the point of view of a person like Medora Glenmorris, who perceives that she is in danger, and a person like Laura Glenmorris, who believes that she is being victimized.

How much Mrs. Glenmorris' narrative is a romance is most obvious if we note how closely Smith's treatment of setting in this part of the novel resembles its handling in fairy tales and chivalric tales. According to Mrs. Glenmorris, her mother had imprisoned her in a castle far from London in order to prevent her from seeing Glenmorris,

the man she later marries. She begins the description of the castle:

Lady Mary had prevailed on my father to purchase this place, because it had, above two hundred years ago, been the principal seat of her family. It had at that period been a fortress, and still retained many marks of its former strength. The country it stood in was wild and gloomy, and from its gothic windows there was a view of the Irish Channel, and an immense extent of land, covered at times by the tide, which took off the bold grandeur of a sea view, and left only ideas of sterility, danger, and desolation, in its place (YP, II, 30-31; italics mine).

The description of the landscape surrounding the castle promotes symbolic rather than picturesque values. There is a level at which the notion of the "picturesque" includes a sense that landscape lends itself to interpretation, that a landscape is a coherent entity within which individual objects are distinctive and meaningful parts of the whole.<sup>25</sup> One may "read" a landscape by apprehending what is remarkable and suggestive about it as a natural phenomenon and therefore find it picturesque. For Laura Glenmorris, however, the landscape she remembers reads like that which surrounds the Grail castle in medieval romance: it is desolate, dangerous, and, most significantly, sterile.

Smith draws on materials in this part of Mrs. Glenmorris' narrative that are properly a part of the romance tradition, that are preserved in fairy tales, and that express the notion Mrs. Glenmorris entertains of herself as the prisoner-victim of an evil mother and an ineffectual step-father. Laura is the younger daughter, rather like Cinderella, who has been sacrificed for the sake of her older sister. She has been carried away and locked into a kind of tower, like Rapunzel. So hostile to life is the area around the fortress that it is one "in which most of the trees [that had been planted the year before] had

refused to grow" (YP, II, 34). Also imprisoned in Lady Mary's castle, Laura's step-father, an active and successful eighteenth-century businessman, seems to become an ancient and impotent fisher-king:

. . . in his easy chair my poor old father sat like the statue of a gothic king, brought from some other part of the house, and new clad and modernised to represent the passive master of this (YP, II, 32-33).

The description of Lady Mary's improvements begins with the windows, which are transformed so that they seem like small prisons in themselves:

The walls . . . were made to yield to the slight and elegant introduction of modern windows with brass frames, enclosing the largest crown glass; and these were double; one sash opening door-wise within the room, the other at the other extremity of the wall's thickness [of seven feet], and in the interval there were placed pots of exotic flowers and shrubs (YP, II, 32).

The encased flowers and shrubs seem emblematic of Laura, whose beauty is similarly confined.

When Glenmorris searches her out, she sees him as a knight who has come to rescue her, and herself as a damsel in distress. They meet when she is out walking on a sand terrace which surrounds the house, and, when she joins Glenmorris on the beach below that terrace, it is as if she were crossing a significant territorial boundary:

He asked me if I had the courage to venture down from the terrace, which would then afford us a shelter [preventing observation], to the sands below it; and when I assured him I had, he sprang down before me, and assisted me to follow him (YP, II, 50).

Throughout the narrative that describes the persecutions Mrs. Glenmorris experiences after her marriage and during the period before her kidnapped husband returns to her, each of the places she lives in is

conceived of and presented as a significant station in a symbolic journey. There is for example a cave at the shore which she perceives as a tomb and, in contrast, a grotto-like cave in a forest which is for her Arcadian and hence restorative (II, 131 and 158).

Smith creates in Mrs. Glenmorris the kind of character who perceives herself and her experiences through the distortions of an overactive imagination.<sup>26</sup> An imagination like hers will, under duress, take control as hers finally does; the consequence is madness. By means of Mrs. Glenmorris' imagination, however, Smith crosses the literary boundary that divides realistic from fabulous fiction so that, contrary to what Samuel Johnson claims in Rambler #4, it is possible to incorporate devices very like the "machines and expedients of heroic romance" into a realistic fiction.<sup>27</sup>

Smith expresses what is idiosyncratic about the way reason operates in her characters in many ways, of which the relationship between imaginative and rational faculties is for her one of the most revealing; it led her to experiment with the relationship between point of view and various kinds of fictional veracity: credibility, objectivity, psychological validity, symbolic significations. Of increasing interest in her later novels is the way she experiments with "unreliable narrators," and concomitantly the way she allows a character to show himself in part by his way of reading the significance of objects in the inanimate world, or of reading significance into them. Settings often function in Smith's novels as touchstones. The way in which a setting is apprehended indicates the composition and the quality of a point of view: the unique alloy of perception, imagination and judgment that constitutes and individuates a fictional character.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>According to Tompkins, "it is Charlotte Smith, herself a poet, who first begins to explore in fiction the possibilities of the Gothic castle, and her Emmeline (1788) is the first heroine whose beauty is seen glowing against that grim background, or who is hunted along the passages at night" (p. 266). This observation is often quoted in subsequent surveys of the period, but the remainder of what Tompkins has to say is usually omitted. She remarks, "Castle Mowbray, however, contributes little to the plot and is soon left behind," adding in a footnote: "Mrs. Smith continued to provide castles and aged mansions in her novels, notably Castle Rochemarte in Celestina (1791) and Rayland Hall in The Old Manor House (1793), but her predominant interests were not romantic, and in The Banished Man (1794), in which two more of these edifices were described, she complained that her material was exhausted" (p. 266n). Unlike Tompkins, most literary historians do not distinguish Smith's romantic castles from her fashionable residences, her venerable halls, her prisons, her derelict buildings, and so on.

<sup>2</sup>See Fry, Chapters II and III, for an excellent study of Smith's use of sensibility in characterization and of picturesque and sublime scenery in settings (insofar as she adopted and refined modes of presentation that were conventional by the end of the eighteenth century).

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Richardson, for example, offers this terse description of Clarissa's lodgings at a glove-maker's house: "Two neat rooms, with plain, but clean furniture, on the first floor," one of which "they call the dining-room." The only fully realized room in the novel is the one in which Belford finds Clarissa at the spunging-house (his letter of July 16 and 17).

<sup>4</sup>§éjourné, p. 214n.

<sup>5</sup>The following passage is characteristic. By way of introducing the tenor and style of Mrs. Rayland's official correspondence, Smith describes a single piece of furniture in detail: "Mrs. Rayland . . . called for her writing materials, which seldom saw the sun, and being placed in form at her rose-wood writing-box, lined with green velvet and mounted in silver, produced, at the end of four hours, the following letter, piquing herself on spelling as her father spelt, and disdaining those idle novelties by which a few superfluous letters are saved" (OMH, I, 73). The passage offers Smith an opportunity to modulate to a suitably ironic tone.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Elizabeth Gaskell, Cranford (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1906), p. 20. Mrs. Gaskell makes use of a carpet to express the quality of the "unacknowledged poverty" and "very much acknowledged gentility" that characterizes life in Cranford. The narrator visits Cranford and discovers that nothing has changed except that "Miss Jenkyns had purchased a new carpet for the drawing-room. Oh, the busy work Miss Matty

and I had in chasing the sunbeams, as they fell in an afternoon right down on this carpet through the blindless window! We spread newspapers over the places and sat down to our book or our work; and, lo! in a quarter of an hour the sun had moved, and was blazing away on a fresh spot; and down again we went on our knees to alter the position of the newspapers. We were very busy, too, one whole morning, before Miss Jenkyns gave her party in following her directions, and in cutting out and stitching together pieces of newspaper so as to form little paths to every chair set for the expected visitors, lest their shoes might dirty or define the purity of the carpet." Just as Smith points out that what was most remarkable about Orlando's introduction to Rayland Hall is that the small and dirty boy was tolerated even though the paper was off the furniture, the death of Captain Brown is so appalling that the carter who is invited in to tell about it "stood with his wet boots on the new carpet, and no one regarded it" (p. 24).

<sup>7</sup>"A Conversation Between I. Compton-Burnett and J. Jourdain," Orion (1945), excerpted in Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 307.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>In Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 151, Robert Alter suggests that in doing so "Fielding is moving toward a new kind of integration of narrative and thematic materials, a first anticipation of the masterful interlocking of separate lives through shared situation that gives Middlemarch such remarkable structural coherence. The accounts of the respective unions of Miss Matthews and Hebberts, of the Booths, the Jameses, the Bennets, the Trents, are all narrative regressions, but they all relate to the principal thematic concern of the novel."

<sup>10</sup>The name Marianne is associated with sensibility here as it is in Sense and Sensibility; her last name points to the philosophic source for the notion. In "Translations of the Vie de Marianne and their Relation to Contemporary English Fiction," Modern Philology 15 (1917), Helen Sard Hughes traces two English translations made before 1750 and reprinted later in the century. Marianne is re-named "Indiana" in one of them but is, under both names, "The Virtuous Orphan." Because competing translations were reissued, Hughes concludes "the demand very obviously justified such an augmentation of the supply" (p. 512). During the second half of the century, according to Hughes, the novel "must have had an extensive vogue in translated form" as well as in French "among the more cosmopolitan of the English reading-public" (p. 511). It seems unlikely that either Smith or Austen would have used the name had they not expected it to resonate with the name of Marivaux's heroine. Whereas Smith exaggerates ironies implicit in Marivaux's novel, Austen plays down what is shrewd and self-serving about sensibility in the Gallic heroine. Austen's Marianne is ingenuously trusting and romantic; her mother, whose delight in Willoughby is

not entirely disinterested, takes up the slack. According to Austen, sensibility, anglicized and provincialized, verges on sentimentality.

<sup>11</sup>The *Old Manor House* was published in 1793, and is the last of Smith's partisan novels. Like many others who had been sympathetic to the revolutionary cause in France, she was disenchanted when it began to seem barbarous by English standards: with the regicide and the Reign of Terror.

<sup>12</sup>See Tompkins, Appendix III (p. 375), for ways in which Radcliffe and Smith may have borrowed from or influenced each other.

<sup>13</sup>See for example Booth, pp. 201-02.

<sup>14</sup>Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1962, p.249ff.

<sup>15</sup>Mayo, p. 251. Mayo explains that the "History of Caroline Montgomery" is "very close to the models afforded by a long line of magazine precedents, being a case history or edifying 'picture of life' presented in the form of a first-person chronicle" which "follows a single narrative line, beginning with the subject's family and social origins, and proceeding with economy and speed through a series of unforeseen trials and discoveries, the whole being designed to 'gratify the fancy,' arouse 'pleasing suspense,' and generate love of goodness" (p. 252).

<sup>16</sup>Works, ed. R. W. Chapman, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), VI, 199.

<sup>17</sup>Austen, pp. 198-99. According to Chapman, the bracketted clause had been erased and is here restored.

<sup>18</sup>The ironic deflation of Gothic expectations in *Northanger Abbey* is achieved finally when Catherine comes to understand that she herself was the author of the fantasy which had both charmed and terrified her: "Her thoughts being still chiefly fixed on what she had with such causeless terror felt and done, nothing could shortly be clearer than that it had been all a voluntary, self-created delusion, each trifling circumstance receiving importance from an imagination resolved on alarm, and everything forced to bend to one purpose by a mind which, before she entered the abbey, had been craving to be frightened. She remembered with what feelings she had prepared for a knowledge of *Northanger*. She saw that the infatuation had been created, the mischief settled, long before her quitting Bath, and it seemed as if the whole might be traced to the influence of that sort of reading which she had there indulged" (Chap. 25). It is noteworthy that Catherine perceives the cause of her error to have been in an improper relationship between emotion and imagination. Mrs. Radcliffe and her imitators are blamed for teaching Catherine a way of looking at and feeling about the world so likely to produce Gothic distortion and block accurate perception; Charlotte Smith, however, may well have been important among those

writers who taught Austen to make use of "self-created delusion" as a particularly rich mode of characterization even when the setting is not potentially Gothic.

<sup>19</sup> According to Walter Jackson Bate, who cites Hume's "Dissertation on the Passions" (1757) as one eighteenth-century source for the notion, the emotions are supposed to "have common ground: the intensity set up by one provides easy access for the admission of a further emotion; and grief, love, anger, hate, and fear may all easily pass into each other. The border line between feelings, indeed, is so thin as to be almost hypothetical" (p. 153).

<sup>20</sup> Hilbish comments on the more bizarre adventures in Smith's novels with a certain amount of disapproval: "Although Mrs. Smith's free rein of invention carries her beyond bounds in Mrs. Glenmorris's story (*The Young Philosopher*, II), she does not approach such extremes in her other novels, albeit she is not wholly free from these devices in any novel. Her most simple plot is found in *Desmond* (1792), where all the incidents, except the encounter with the band of marauders in southern France, are freed from perplexities. When Mrs. Smith stays in England in her novels, her ingenuity is curbed; but it runs wild in foreign countries" (p. 437). For my own reading of Mrs. Glenmorris' narrative, see pp. 235-38 above; for evidence of how the marauders are described in *Desmond*, see pp. 227-29 above.

The specific advantages of alien and primitive settings are discussed by Sir Walter Scott in the 1831 introduction to *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822): "The strong contrast produced by the opposition of ancient manners to those which are gradually subduing them, affords the lights and shadows necessary to give effect to a fictitious narrative; and while such a period entitles the author to introduce incidents of a marvellous and improbable character, as arising out of the turbulence, independence and ferocity, belonging to old habits of violence, still influencing the manners of a people who had been so lately in a barbarous state; yet, on the other hand, the characters and sentiments of many of the actors may, with the utmost probability, be described with great variety of shading and delineation, which belongs to the newer and more improved period, of which the world had but lately received the light." When Smith places her characters in foreign countries, she does so in order to take advantage of opportunities like the ones Scott gets by placing his characters in historically turbulent times as well as places. Prodigious events seem possible beyond the pale, especially when credible characters report them.

<sup>21</sup> Speaking about epistemological skepticism at and after the turn of the century in *Man's Rage for Chaos: Biology, Behavior, and the Arts* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1965), p. 291, Peckham uses this phrase when he describes the relationship between mind and matter for "Romantic innovators" who were "convinced . . . that man's very mode of thinking--his categorial construction of the world--was not derived from the world but from himself, that the world, the environment, as

contrasted with the interpreted situation, was forever inaccessible." In these terms, Smith's interpolated narratives begin to offer a Romantic treatment of phenomena; her third-person narration usually does not.

<sup>22</sup>Developments in this direction show Smith only a little more conservative than the avant-garde. Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote "The Eolian Harp" shortly after Warwick was published, and William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," in which this phrase appears (l. 106), is dated 1798, the year in which The Young Philosopher was published. According to Abrams, a "number of romantic writers . . . , whether in verse or prose, habitually pictured the mind in perception, as well as the mind in composition, by sometimes identical analogies of projection into, or of reciprocity with, elements from without. Usually, in these metaphors of the perceiving mind, the boundary between what is given and what is bestowed is a sliding one, to be established as best one can from the individual context. Sometimes, as in Coleridge's formulation of the 'coalescence of subject and object' in the act of knowing, there is not, nor can there be any attempt to differentiate the mental addition from that which is given. . . . But in most passages the implication is that the content of perception is the joint product of external data and of the mind (p. 62)."

<sup>23</sup>Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793) Bk. V, Ch. IV.

<sup>24</sup>Conversely Smith shows the pettiness and bigotry of the hero's aunt, Mrs. Crewkherm, by allowing hers to be the first description the reader receives of George Delmont. Smith interrupts the dialogue between Mrs. Crewkherm and Dr. Winslow in order to finish the introduction herself, in order to do justice to the character of her hero. She says that, rather than leaving "the picture to be finished by the hard and cold pencil of Mrs. Crewkherne, George Delmont ought to be represented as he was at Eton" (YP, I, 46). Mrs. Crewkherm's point of view is brought into relief in marked contrast to the sympathetic picture seen and presented from the author's point of view. Reliable and unreliable reports are part of the dramatic (as well as the melodramatic) machinery of this novel.

<sup>25</sup>Jacques Barzun (Classic, Romantic, and Modern [New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1943; Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., 1961], 2nd rev. ed., p. 204) points to the romantic impulse to discern meaning and/or purpose in natural phenomena by referring, first, to a definition of the picturesque formulated by De Quincey: "It is . . . the characteristic pushed into a sensible excess. The prevailing character of any natural object, no matter how little attractive it may be for beauty, is always interesting for itself, as the character and hieroglyphic symbol of the purposes pursued by nature in the determination of its form" (Life & Writing, II, 287-88)." If, as DeQuincey suggests, an appreciation of the picturesque requires the observer to press toward the symbolic meaning expressed by a natural object, then the impulse to interpret the picturesque is related to the impulse, on the part of

an observer, to invest natural objects with symbolic meaning. Both are impulses toward ascribing to reality a semantic dimension.

Barzum goes on to point out that romanticists agreed that the artist should modulate "freely between experience and imagination": "To use the real and make it serve a purpose is the common feature of romantic realism; it does not imply ignorance but subordination of reality. . . . The union of factuality and truth--truth being fact seen from a point of view--is what many . . . romanticists meant by Imagination (Coleridge distinguished it as the Secondary Imagination), the faculty that creates, or re-creates, reality, and to which we owe all art" (p. 204). Insofar as Smith makes use of landscapes because they are either picturesque or symbolic, her fiction explores the kinds of meanings yielded when an artist makes use of the real. It is important, therefore, to attend to precisely what kind of use she makes of any particular landscape.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Miss Wade's narrative in Little Dorrit. Dickens thought of the interpolated narrative as an experiment in which he was trying to establish an organic link between Miss Wade's personal history and the action of the novel. He says, "In Miss Wade I had an idea, which I thought a new one, of making the introduced story so fit into surroundings impossible of separation from the main story, as to make the blood of the book circulate through both." (John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens, ed. A. J. Hoppe [London: J. M. Dent, 1966], II, 184-85.) Miss Wade is a much less sympathetic and complex figure than Mrs. Glenmorris. Both are meant to be unreliable narrators, in part because they suffer from psychological disorders. Miss Wade's narrative is all too obviously contrived to reveal a single, dominating aberration; its transparency contributes to the general effect that Miss Wade is a kind of humors character. Mrs. Glenmorris, however, is an apparently normal but potentially unstable character; her narrative suggests possibilities in her personality that are not evident under ordinary circumstances, but that are realized when, later in the novel, she is faced with a crisis. The reader who knows how she has dealt with anxiety in the past can indeed see her psychological collapse as an organic extension of tendencies that are intrinsically part of her personality. No single, typed, overriding personality trait is, however, responsible for either past or present behavior.

Dickens' more successful experiment in distinguishing third-person from first-person narratives is the reverse of Smith's usual practice. In Bleak House Esther Summerson's subjective account is, in the ordinary sense, realistic and reliable; the authorial voice is the one that articulates symbolic interpretations of phenomena in the inanimate, and animate, world. Third-person narration in Bleak House tends toward romance, but in an ironic mode; first-person narration tends toward ingenuous candor, a translucent objectivity, and hence a kind of realism, but in a sentimental mode. In Smith's novels, the same elements combine differently. Romance is linked to sentiment and subjectivity in first-person narratives; realism to irony and a commonplace, collective objectivity that characterizes almost all her third-person narration.

27 Johnson distinguishes between the novel and the romance as follows: the novel's "province is to bring about natural events by easy means, and to keep up curiosity without the help of wonder: it is therefore precluded from the machines and expedients of heroic romance, and can neither employ giants to snatch away a lady from the nuptial rites, nor knights to bring her back from captivity; it can neither bewilder its personages in deserts, nor lodge them in imaginary castles." Mrs. Glenmorris, however, inhabits a castle surrounded by a wasteland. She has been taken from her would-be husband by an evil and imperious mother--a giant of sorts--and is rescued by a knightly (i.e., landed albeit impecunious) gentleman.

## CHAPTER VI

### Characterization and Stylistic Strategies: Feelings and Sentiments

Assigning psychological implications and symbolic attributes to settings and signalling by means of setting the location on a social or moral map of one or several points of view are not the only means Smith used to present complex and often problematic attitudes in and among her characters. Her mode of characterization almost always shows the dialectical interaction of mind and heart, perspicacity and myopia, conscious intellectual honesty and involuntary psychological falsification or aberration. Among the most strikingly "modern" of those of her methods that do not in some way involve the use of landscape or setting are techniques that allow for an ironic interplay between style and content. Recent studies--after Mark Schorer's "Fiction and the 'Analogical Matrix'"<sup>1</sup>--have confirmed the reader's sense that in a good novel artistry is pervasive; it is demonstrable even in the verbal texture and implied imagery of the narrative. If a good novelist is judged in part by his/her ability to make the language of fiction a meaningful medium, Charlotte Smith is indeed a good novelist. Evidence from her novels demonstrates how much the language of good prose fiction contributes to the import of a novel.

Stylistic strategies account in fact for a substantial part of a reader's sense that Smith's characters are complicated and ambivalent creatures, hence human and "realistic." In this chapter I will discuss

four such techniques: the use of rhetorical style and diction as modes of characterization, the use of a sustained metaphor to connect characters to and evaluate them with respect to each other, the use of letters to show how characters advertise themselves, and the use of the interior monologue to show how characters analyze each other and themselves. One such device is so often used in conjunction with another that it is impossible to examine each separately.

Techniques like these are used more or less ironically, varying according to what degree, as well as what kind, of approval and/or disapproval Smith intends a character to receive. The effect of such manipulation is to complicate the moral design of putatively popular fiction. What makes Smith's novels so fascinating and provocative among the popular novels of her time is that valences that are almost equal to the ones that draw the reader's judgement toward the moral center of the novel also attract him toward competing issues, suggesting conflicting but not quite equal moral valuations. Smith's novels are never dogmatic. They tend to raise more questions in the reader's mind than they answer, among them questions about his own tendencies toward simplistic moralizing and, whether her subject is love or politics, toward uncritical partisanship.

The first of her novels is remarkable for its treatment of the several suitors who vie for Emmeline's hand. Before proceeding to a close examination of how Smith uses a lexicon idiosyncratic to a particular suitor for its ironic import,<sup>2</sup> it is necessary to say something about why Smith's characters are different from others that seem superficially similar and about how and why the central situation in Emmeline is different from the "problem" at the core of most sentimental novels.

Emmeline is, among other things, a critique of the melodramatic conventions of romantic fiction. Passive and ingenuous heroines, passionate but chaste heroes, and villains bent on satisfying lust and/or greed have no place in this novel. Smith apparently found such characters too crude to illustrate the compromises, accommodations, and rationalizations that lead into dismal marriages, and the proper subject of a complex courtship-marriage novel is the possibility of a bad marriage or no marriage at all (Cf. Pride and Prejudice, Middlemarch, Can You Forgive Her?, Anna Karenina, and others). The motives of stock figures in sentimental fiction do not illustrate or explain why good people recommend or consent to bad marriages. What is more, the stock heroine is not a protagonist in the dramatic action of the plot. According to the formula of sentimental fiction, the hero and the villain act, the heroine reacts. Her success as a character is usually a function of how long she suffers, and of how much variety there is in her elegant pathos.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, Emmeline is her own champion. In this novel, all potentially threatening characters are vulnerable, either by nature or social standing, to measures the heroine herself can take against them. Only after Emmeline has been given ample opportunity to demonstrate how well she fends for herself does Smith introduce a suitable hero, one whose virtues complement hers. He is never required, as romantic heroes usually are, to act as her surrogate, confounding those who want to deprive her of her property or her virginity (or, by forced marriage, of both).

Emmeline is in several respects similar to Burney's Cecilia, to which it is frequently compared, but a single modification in the conventional treatment of parental opposition--which Burney uses in the

conventional way--changes both the dramatic and moral structure of this novel, and affects future developments in fiction dealing with courtship.<sup>4</sup> Opposition to the marriage of Delamere and Emmeline on the part of his family does not cause, it merely complicates, the central moral issue of the novel. Both novels examine a problem that is far from original: what the proper balance ought to be between the need to give and receive affection and the need to satisfy and sustain a sense of personal honor and integrity. Smith's novel insists, in ways that have precedents in Shakespeare but seldom in eighteenth-century fiction, that the decisions made and actions taken by a romantic heroine are as interesting, serious, and relevant to any reader, male or female, as the decisions and actions of a romantic hero. It shows too that for a lady faced with a thorny situation in which love and honor make conflicting demands on her, there are internal and external operations equivalent in complexity and importance to those required of a gentleman, and as likely to require intellectual and physical exertion on the part of an assured and assertive individual. Such situations are dramatic and momentous even if they do not require the use of muscle or weapons.

Both Emmeline and Cecilia are courtship novels, but Burney's novel is pointedly about Cecilia's market value. She is a more or less desirable commodity to Delvile, his parents, and to each of her various suitors. Of some interest are Cecilia's opinions of these individuals, opinions which function as social criticism of the circle in which she moves--but they are of little consequence. Her "ideas and opinions" seldom produce both independent and sound decisions. She is advised, persuaded, or coerced into acting by those whose respective relationships

to her are anything but disinterested. Burney's heroine is easily manipulated and easily duped; matters that affect her future are rarely under her control. She is a fairly energetic and mobile heroine, but her activity does not take shape as the kind of determined and purposive action that would make her functionally the protagonist of her story.

In the marriage market that Smith creates, Emmeline is as conscious of being a buyer as is any of her suitors. She is not easily duped, and she does not allow herself to be manipulated. Her choice of a husband is a personal decision, but the terms on which she makes that choice--her sense of "conscious worth"--are programmatic and of universal import (in the sense that the characteristics, problems, and behavior of certain fictional characters are psychologically and sociologically relevant both for contemporary and later generations of readers). She successfully defeats adversaries or negotiates terms with them, thus acting very much the protagonist.

In Smith's novels, beginning with Emmeline, the authenticity of a woman's dignity, manifest in but not commensurate with her elegance, is tested within her proper sphere. The kind of action that demonstrates courage, judgement, and integrity within that sphere is no less valorous for being less bloody than the kind that tests a man's virtù. For Smith's women as well as her men, merit is measured by achievement.

The most important among the suitors Emmeline must reject is Delamere. The significance of this rejection is two-fold. First, Delamere is very like the conventional romantic hero. Bad manners and morals notwithstanding, such lovers usually succeed, charming both the heroine and the reader, because of their glamour and élan. In Delamere,

however, what is shoddy about the romantic ideal is made to show. Hence he fails.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, Delamere offers Emmeline what is supposed to be an ideal marriage. Austen fully appreciates why Smith took issue with conventional expectations about such marriages. It is important to see Delamere, as Austen did, posing problems for Emmeline that are almost as knotty as the one Essex posed for Queen Elizabeth.<sup>6</sup> For women who require autonomy, keeping at bay men who find the exercise of power attractive is no small achievement. Delamere and his offer may be appealing, but marriage to him is not in Emmeline's best interests. Delamere is potentially despotic. In a time and place in which a wife has virtually no civil status independent of her husband, in which the terms of domestic government are entirely at his discretion, a cavalier is not the best choice.

Smith uses several stylistic strategies to turn Delamere's habitual modes of thought and speech against him. Cumulatively they are evidence that Delamere is quite incapable of conceiving of human relationships in terms other than coercive. Rakes repent and reform; men like Delamere pose special problems. A thorough and unlikely intellectual transformation would have to take place before he could possibly admit reasons for conducting himself differently. His arguments, his literary allusions, and his vocabulary are all indications of what is simultaneously delicious and dangerous about him. Smith is careful to present all that is attractive about Delamere and genuine about his devotion to Emmeline. She wants her reader to understand that Emmeline refuses the inordinate risks of marriage to such a man even though she cannot help finding the man himself appealing. It's a nice point, but a crucial one. Emmeline's

ambivalence is what makes her decision difficult and meaningful.

One of the most damning exchanges shows Delamere trying to justify ignominious behavior in the name of a noble act of rebellion. Delamere wants Emmeline to elope with him. As he has done before, he pleads that she must minister to the passion she has inadvertently activated. His argument is so conventional in romantic fiction, and so commonly put to women then and now, that it takes an unconventional heroine indeed to recognize it as sheer casuistry. But it is not sophistry. Like many heroes of his selfish stamp, Delamere is quite sincere.<sup>7</sup> Feeling more imposed on than intimidated, Emmeline exclaims,

"What would you have me do? Good God, what is it you expect of me?"

"To go with me to Scotland to-morrow--to night--directly!"

"Oh, no! no!--Does not Lord Montreville depend upon my honour?--can I betray a trust reposed in me?"

"Chimeras all; founded in tyranny on his part, and weakness on yours. He had no right to exact such a promise; you had no right to give it. But however, send to him again to say I have seen you--summons him hither to divide us--you may certainly do so if you please; but Lord Montreville will no longer have a son; at least England, nor Europe, will contain him no longer--I will go where my father shall hear no more of me" (Em, I, 98).

Delamere ignores Emmeline's argument, which, fully developed, is certainly more cogent than his. Lord Montreville in fact has the right to expect his niece, whom he supports, to behave honorably toward the family, and Emmeline certainly has the right to decide for herself whether to honor the obligation she feels toward Lord Montreville. Delamere certainly does not have the right to deny Emmeline the freedom to make and keep agreements independent of his advice and consent. She is under no formal or personal obligation to consult a young cousin, especially one whose attempts at persuasion are hard to distinguish from

harrassment. There can be no doubt that Delamere is in the wrong.

There should also be no doubt in the reader's mind that it is not wise for a young woman to become dependent on a man who cannot distinguish deferential from obsequious assent. The distinction is crucial to Emmeline; her only claim to personal dignity depends on it. She is willing to respect Lord Montreville's wishes, but only so long as he does not try to exercise control over her. Although her economic and social status are contingent on decisions he makes, the fact that her consent is solicited and given distinguishes dependence from servility. Lord Montreville allows her that much dignity. It is far from certain that Delamere would do so.

The effect of this, and other exchanges like it, is to draw on the reader's experience, both in life and through fiction, to counter Delamere's arguments. The reader understands, and Emmeline herself is elsewhere required to say, that, although she had little choice but to be someone's dependent, she is at least free to choose whom she will depend on. She need not choose a man whose notions of personal honor are so shallow that his defence can be constructed only of specious arguments and perverse threats. If in fact Delamere were being cynically manipulative, the evidence against him would be less damaging.<sup>8</sup> As it is, the man himself seems, as Smith intends, sophomoric.

The elopement Delamere forces on Emmeline shows him at his worst. The account itself is an ironic commentary on the forced abductions still obligatory in romantic fiction at the end of the eighteenth century, however hackneyed. The treatment, however, is remarkable for the way in which Smith maintains a delicate balance between the titillating

prurience expected in such episodes and insinuations that they are unsavory and offensive. Censuring Delamere, as most writers would, is not the same as what Smith attempts: exposing him to the reader's censure. She slants the account itself by lacing it with words that show Delamere celebrating the liberation of Emmeline solely in terms of his rights over her vis-à-vis his father's:

For some moments after Emmeline found herself in the chaise, astonishment and terror deprived her of speech and even of recollection. While Delamere, no longer able to command his transports at having at length as he hoped secured her, gave way to the wildest joy, and congratulated himself that he had thus forced her to break a promise which only injustice he said could have extorted, and only timidity and ill-grounded prejudice have induced her to keep (Em, I, 148; italics mine).

This much of the narrative is conventional enough, as are the tone and style of Emmeline's indignant protest, immediately following this passage. In order to develop the usual sexual overtones, the account need only dwell for a while on the tremulous resistance of terrified virtue.

Smith does indeed turn at this point to the reactions of her heroine, but not in the usual manner. The shift is not from Delamere's thoughts to Emmeline's fears; it is rather from his "sentiments," the ideas and feelings he expresses, to her "feelings," unexpressed ideas and emotions. Smith negotiates the shift in mid-sentence, as inconspicuously as possible:

Delamere, by all the soothing tenderness of persuasion, by all the rhetoric of ardent passion, tried to subdue her anger, and silence her scruples; but the more her mind dwelt on the circumstances of her situation, the more it recoiled from the necessity of entering under such compulsion into an indissoluble engagement. The rash violence of the measure which had put her

in Delamere's power, while it convinced her of his passion, yet told her, that a man who would hazard every thing for his own gratification now, would hardly hereafter submit to any restraint and that the bonds in which he was so eager to engage, would with equal violence be broken, when any new face should make a new impression, or when time had diminished the influence of those attractions that now enchanted him (Em, II, 148-149; italics mine).<sup>9</sup>

A lexicon that evokes erotic images associated with conquest and subjugation so long as it is attributed to Delamere sours as Smith moves from his point of view to Emmeline's. The lexicon recurs in the language of Emmeline's thoughts but is inflected differently; there, such words are not erotic, not even romantic. The kind of passion they describe is nasty; the kind of man who gives himself up to it is wanton and capricious. Insofar as the reader shares Emmeline's point of view, Delamere's stature as a headstrong but honest lover suffers.

The action remains suspended during a lengthy, indirect interior monologue, which moves freely between thoughts that Emmeline herself must have consciously entertained and insights that must be attributed to the more mature and knowing narrator.<sup>10</sup> The result is a thorough examination of what is for Emmeline an emotional quandary. Although most of the monologue is devoted to Emmeline's reasons for wanting and even inviting Delamere's attentions, the argument against him surfaces periodically in the diction which, whenever it touches on what is or might be his point of view, turns imperious. If Emmeline finds it difficult to resist all that is seductive about Delamere, she is not unique:

. . . No woman perhaps can help having some regard for a man, who she knows ardently and sincerely loves her; and Emmeline had felt all that sort of weakness for Delamere; who in the bloom of life, with fortune, title, person and talents that

might have commanded the loveliest and most affluent daughter of prosperity, had forsaken every thing for her, and even secluded himself from the companions of his former pleasures, and the indulgences his fortune and rank afforded him, to pass his youth in unsuccessful endeavours to obtain her.

The partiality this consideration gave her towards him . . . had created in her bosom a sentiment warmer perhaps than friendship; yet it was not that violent love, which carrying every thing before it, leaves the mind no longer at liberty to see any fault in the beloved object, or any impropriety in whatever can secure it's [sic] success, and which, scorning future consequences, risks every thing for it's present indulgences.

Still artless and ingenuous as when she first left the remote castle where she had been brought up, Emmeline had not been able to conceal this affection from Delamere. Her eyes, her manner, the circumstances of the picture, and a thousand nameless inadvertences, had told it him repeatedly; but now, when he seemed to have taken an ungenerous advantage of that regard, it lost much of it's force, and resentment and disdain succeeded.

Delamere tried to appease her by protestations of inviolable respect, of eternal esteem, and unalterable love. But there was something of triumph even in his humblest entreaties, that served but to encrease the anger Emmeline felt (Em, II, 149; italics mine).

The monologue is deliberately tentative about Emmeline's feelings. Emotions that had been in the process of becoming something very like love have been arrested, and the germ of a new attitude appears. Only by slow stages is Emmeline herself persuaded that, although Delamere may be the most attractive of men, he is not one of the best.

A subsequent conversation between Delamere and Emmeline draws on a literary parallel, another stylistic strategy used ironically against him. Smith has Delamere compare himself to Werther in order to satirize coercive paths, the conventional complement to compulsion in the eighteenth-century romantic novel. (The device has been an unfortunate one for her. She surely did not expect to be accused, as she has been,<sup>11</sup> of being a committed Wertherian.) Smith understood

quite well what Goethe found attractive about Werther's passion. She saw, too, as Goethe did, that Werther's credentials cannot compare with Albert's when it comes to the question of which kind of man makes the better husband.

Delamere warns Emmeline that Goethe's novel should have taught her "the danger of trifling with violent and incurable passions" (Em, II, 170). He shifts the burden of moral responsibility to her with this ominous warning:

. . . should I ever be in the situation this melancholy tale describes, how do I know my reason would be strong enough to preserve me from equal rashness. Beware, Miss Mowbray--beware of the consequence of finding an Albert at Woodfield (Em, II, 170).

Delamere's professions of impotence, his image of himself as the prisoner-victim of his passion for her, are offered as reasons why Emmeline must, because she is the object of that passion, pander to it:

I am not master of myself when I think of losing you! But you, who feel not any portion of the flame that devours me, can coolly argue, while my heart is torn in pieces; and deign not even to make any allowance for the unguarded sallies of unconquerable passion!--the phrenzy of almost hopeless love! Sometimes, when I think your coldness arises from determined and insurmountable indifference--perhaps from dislike--despair and fury possess me. Would you but say that you will live only for me--would you promise that . . . none of the people you have seen or may see, shall influence you to forget me--I should, I think, be easier (Em, II, 171).

However grandiloquent the delivery, the argument is not a creditable one and Emmeline is not impressed. Delamere's speech is reminiscent of Lovelace's style of wooing,<sup>12</sup> but ironically undercut by a heady mixture of trite metaphors. His eloquence, as well as his argument, strikes a false note.

Emmeline has become, in the interim between the abduction and this interview, increasingly piqued at suppositions others as well as Delamere make about what she ought to be feeling and what she ought to do. Indignation at Delamere's importunate wooing finally prevails:

I have told you that I will neither make or receive any promises of the nature you require. I have already suffered too much from your extravagant passion to put it further in your power to distress me (Em, II, 171).

Emmeline emphatically, and in exactly those terms, refuses to be a "distressed heroine." Never after this episode is Emmeline susceptible to Delamere's personal appeal; she indulges and even coddles him solely because she holds herself answerable for the effect her actions, hence his reactions, might have on those in the Montreville family to whom she feels obligated.

Smith invites the reader to discern, as Emmeline does, what is disagreeable and dangerous about Delamere before she introduces Godolphin, a more astute, responsive, and responsible suitor. She does not want the reader to see the two men as rivals, although the plot of the second half of her novel requires Godolphin to see Delamere in that way. Rather she wants Delamere discredited in an open field and on the basis of his own performance so that Emmeline's feelings for Godolphin develop with the reader's approval and seem from the first more judicious without being less romantic than her mild infatuation with Delamere. Sir Walter Scott remembered how disappointed he was, having read this novel as an adolescent, that Delamere does not finally

win Emmeline.<sup>13</sup> One wonders whether he would have felt the same disappointment had he re-read Emmeline later in life.

Delamere is not the only one of Emmeline's suitors whose manner and style of thought are used by Smith to ironically expose what is unworthy in him. Rochely, a middle-aged banker, suffers at Smith's hand in much the same way. Just as Delamere's characteristic lexicon has to do with power, Rochely's has to do with money. If Delamere's logic is spurious, Rochely's is scrupulous but mean. Like the banker he is,

he set about examining the state of his heart exactly as he would have examined the check book of one of his customers.

He found himself most miserably in love. But avarice said, Miss Mowbray had no fortune.

By what had passed in his bosom that evening, he had discovered that he should be wretched to see her married to another.

But avarice enquired how he could offer to marry a woman without a shilling?

Love, represented that her modest, reserved, and unambitious turn, would perhaps make her, in the end, a more profitable match than a woman educated in expense, who might dissipate more than she brought.

Avarice asked whether he could depend on modesty, reserve, and a retired turn, in a girl not yet eighteen?

After a long discussion, Love very unexpectedly put to flight the agent of Plutus, who had, with very little interruption, reigned despotically [sic] over all his thoughts and actions for many years; and Rochely determined to write to Lord Montreville, to lay his circumstances before him, and make a formal proposal to marry Miss Mowbray (Em, I, 100).

Rochely's thoughts are channeled through and take on the character of his professional interests. Because he is a minor character and not a particularly sympathetic one,<sup>14</sup> he receives harsher treatment than Delamere; Smith's method is satire rather than nuance.

In a formal debate between allegorical figures Smith can be more caustic than in an interior monologue.<sup>15</sup> The formal properties

of the debate imitate what is stringently, if objectionably, logical about how Rochely's rational faculties operate, but even here the satire is not pure. Although the device allows for a maximum of ironic distance between the narrator and the character, Rochely is not presented as an execrable figure. Smith brings him just within the pale by showing the triumph of what is irrational, and therefore in matters of love somewhat redeeming, even in a man like Rochely.

However critical Smith is of characters like Rochely and Delamere, she also extends some sympathy to them. Because she does, they acquire something of the psychological density and ambiguity that make people in the real world baffling and disquieting entities to understand and evaluate. They are not merely stock figures. Delamere for example has a boyish gaucherie that makes him seem less the cavalier and more the swain. His attempt, when he first meets Emmeline, to force his way into her room\* serves nicely as an introduction to a zealous but inept roué. Subsequent episodes show his proficiency as a gallant lagging behind his enthusiasm. The reader nevertheless understands that Delamere will not always be a bungling amateur. A man of his class and inclinations has ample opportunity as he matures to become an adroit profligate. Any forbearance offered him ought to be both genuine and strictly provisional.

Similarly Rochely is pitiable as well as contemptible. The world he inhabits is tangential to the world of the novel. At the

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\*See Chapter V, pp. 208-09 above.

point of intersection, Mrs. Ashwood's house (Rochely is on the fringe of Mrs. Ashwood's set), he happens to meet a woman he would not ordinarily encounter. Emmeline, in need of temporary asylum, has had no choice but to accept an opportune invitation to this unlikely house. Mrs. Stafford, Emmeline's closest friend, has asked Mrs. Ashwood, her sister-in-law, for this favor for two reasons: because arrangements can be made between close relatives on short notice, with little explanation or to-do, and because Mrs. Ashwood's is a place Delamere is not likely to ferret out. Unusual but not improbable circumstances bring Emmeline to the point at which her world and Rochely's impinge on one another. Once there Emmeline finds herself surrounded by and isolated within a circle of socially ambitious, pretentious, and vulgar people. Incongruous among them, she attracts a fair amount of attention, most of it alternatively waspish and patronizing. Rochely, however, responds properly to Emmeline's lady-like reserve and courtesy.

The feelings Rochely experiences are novel. He finds himself becoming a regular rather than an occasional visitor at Mrs. Ashwood's, spending his time there solely with Emmeline.

Emmeline, who was generally at work, or drawing in the dressing-room, never discomposed herself; but sat quietly to what she was doing; listening with the most patient complaisance to the long and uninteresting stories with which he endeavoured to entertain her; an attention which greatly contributed to win the heart of Rochely; and he was as much in love as so prudent a man could be, before he ventured to ask himself what he intended? or what was the family and what the fortune of the person who now occupied most of his time and a great portion of his thoughts?

Mrs. Ashwood . . . would sometimes make her party in another room, where the subject of laughter with her own admirers, was the growing passion of the rich banker for the fair stranger (Em, I, 80-81).

Inexperienced in such matters, Emmeline mistakenly judges Rochely's companionship innocuous. Smith's purposes are served by Emmeline's naiveté. Emmeline's compassion, and with it a degree of the reader's, is extended to Rochely so long as she thinks of him solely as an acquaintance in need of her friendship:

Emmeline did not, when present, escape ridicule on this subject: but as she had not the least idea that a man so much older than herself had any intention of offering himself as an husband, she bore it with great tranquillity, and continued to behave to Mr. Rochely with the attentive civility dictated by natural good breeding; while she heard, without any concern but on his account, the perpetual mirth and loud bursts of laughter which followed his compliments and attentions to her (Em, I, 81).

However repulsive a figure he cuts as a suitor, Rochely is allowed a little sympathy for recognizing Emmeline's worth and for treating her with dignity. The terms on which he proposes marriage show that he appreciates her value; the price he puts on it is, by his own standards, very high.<sup>16</sup>

Stylistic strategies that enrich the characterization of minor figures like Rochely as well as major ones like Delamere also extend the scope and implications of the novel as a whole. The explicit theme, the kind of man and marriage that are most desirable for a woman like Emmeline, is nicely served by requiring the reader to think twice about what some of Emmeline's suitors offer; calculated vacillations in the reader's response to a character encourage a deliberative rather than a superficial reading. In addition, one of the implicit themes of the novel emerges by means of such strategies. What is distinctive about the lexicon typical of each man points toward what for him is the aptest analogue for the relationship between husband and wife, and

it is an analogue that shows affinities between the man's private mores and the public mores of his class. For Delamere, who expects to inherit a peerage, marriage is like government in that it has to do with the exercise of power; for Rochely, marriage is like banking, and has to do with the exchange of commodities. As a suitor, each is indelicate, a criticism to be taken seriously. Each is deficient in magnanimity in ways that reflect on them as individuals and in general on aristocrats and plutocrats. The analogue each applies to marriage brings into sharp focus each one's shallow, self-serving notion of his rights and privileges. What is tactless about each suitor is also what is deplorably parochial in a member of his class.

It is quite possible not to notice that each of Emmeline's rejected suitors, of whom Rochely and Delamere are only two, is of a different class and that cumulatively they range from a servant to a future peer. For the reader who does notice, the novel is a richer, more interesting, and more important work than it overtly purports to be. Social criticism in this novel begins to carry broader political overtones for the reader who sees that individual instances of corrective satire are part of a comprehensive critique of abuses in the social order.<sup>17</sup> The critique is of a liberal rather than a radical bent; injustice seems to originate in what is inhumane in men rather than what is wrong with the system.

Even so, Emmeline is by no means a thesis novel. It is in many respects a novel of ideas; it questions notions generated by and tolerated for the sake of class interests, but it does not argue against them.

Smith uses rather subtle methods of alluding to larger issues. Parts of the novel are in consequence disquieting and even provocative, but none of Smith's methods violates the literary decorum proper to a romantic novel.

Smith's interest in showing how the perceptual and cognitive faculties operate has been discussed in Chapter VI above in terms of how she uses the relationship between these faculties and the inanimate world. Smith's interest in how they function in the animate world is best seen in her metaphoric use of diction to suggest all that is conditional, conjectural, presumptive, and dubious about social intercourse.

The dynamics of perception and cognition in society are the implicit thematic subject of Celestina. Words that have to do with sight and blindness are woven into the fabric of the novel, and operate as a recurring metaphor for congruities and discrepancies between things as they seem and things as they are.

The crux of the novel is a missing and apparently irretrievable piece of information: proof of the identity of Celestina's parents. She is an orphan, taken in by Willoughby's mother when she was an infant and raised as a member of the family. Rumors spread that she is Willoughby's half-sister, and that the marriage they are planning would be incestuous. Unfortunately for the young lovers, the spurious story offers a very plausible explanation for certain unusual behavior on the part of Willoughby's mother. Erroneous conjectures are gleefully fostered by

those interested in preventing the marriage, but they are also cultivated by those who are entirely disinterested and even by those who at first encourage Willoughby to take Celestina's good character in lieu of a dowry and a name.

If the rumors are true, Willoughby's mother had arranged to keep both a lover and an illegitimate daughter in her own household, successfully passing off impeccable deportment for impeccable propriety. Until her death she had always been thought of as a virtuous and benevolent woman. After her death her image is modified, even in the minds of her friends, when information which has always been available about her is reinterpreted. The revised version appeals to those in polite society who like to think of themselves as worldly-wise and tolerant.<sup>18</sup>

Once a new "reading" of circumstantial evidence is suggested, even those who are themselves morally irreproachable--a minister, for example--find it difficult to discount the possibility that what seemed like an unusually close friendship between a widow and her son's tutor might easily have involved illicit intimacy. The possibility of a single lapse qualifies but does not change their opinion of Mrs. Willoughby. That Celestina is Willoughby's half-sister is what most members of their society "see" as the most reasonable implication of certain scant and ambiguous facts. It seems more likely that Willoughby's mother left England in order to conceal her own pregnancy than that she happened on the child at a convent in a foreign country and brought her home.<sup>19</sup> Rumor has a certain substance in this case because the society in which Willoughby and Celestina have to live is inclined to believe it.<sup>20</sup>

The mystery in this novel is not there merely to be solved.<sup>21</sup> It is there to show why and how a "misreading" of past events acquires the status of fact, how it blocks dramatic resolution of the plot, and with what consequences. The apparently insoluble mystery of Celestina's birth becomes the center of a centrifugal vortex. Around it the action of the novel spins off in several directions, following haphazard, floundering, and aimless efforts on the part of both the hero and the heroine to begin necessarily divergent lives. As if in a dream, they are involuntarily engaged in precipitous and unsatisfactory action. Meanwhile each separately ruminates over his/her dilemma and grapples with implacable psychological tensions.

Celestina and Willoughby are primary among a group of characters all of whom must negotiate a course toward private goals within the same field. Any headway made by some blocks passage for others: progress is repeatedly either forestalled or diverted into circuitous routes. Each of the characters must then either change his goal or calculate the most expedient detour. "Making do" is a matter of calculating what is the best, the most efficacious, thing to do, and usually on the basis of insufficient and suspect information. Private desires are almost universally at cross purposes. Social intercourse throughout this novel is therefore a tricky matter.

Verbal and non-verbal intercourse and its distortions or failure are the machinery of Celestina. Rumor, lies, and blackmail are among the many forms of perverted discourse, and undelivered letters are significant among the forms of interrupted discourse that complicate the action. The involuntary language to be read in faces and eyes is an

important adjunct to verbal discourse, and one that is frequently more honest than speech.<sup>22</sup> The social world of the novel is one in which all information-bearing signals must be carefully absorbed and interpreted and all behavior is or ought to be monitored.

Because reading and misreading the behavior of other people are significant actions, Smith in Celestina uses a lexicon that has to do with vision metaphorically as well as literally. In this novel "seeing" and "reading" are terms that describe the respective functions of the perceptual and cognitive faculties. In an introduction to Austen's Sense and Sensibility Tony Tanner makes several observations that might as easily apply to Celestina. He says that the exigencies of public roles in Jane Austen's world required a suppression of private emotions and that the "stress of being involved in private and social realities at the same time means that a lot of the important activity takes place in that small area where inner and outer realities meet--the eyes."<sup>23</sup> He lists a number of examples to show that "the whole vocabulary of vision is much in evidence throughout" the novel, and observes that "in a world of so many secrets and imposed suppressions the eyes have to be unusually busy, not only encountering surfaces but having to penetrate them, not only deciphering the signs but interpreting them." In such a world "the information anyone receives is likely to be imperfect" and "the mis-reading of insufficient evidence" therefore becomes an important factor among circumstance that determine the dramatic development of the novel. Sense and Sensibility and Celestina are in fact very similar in several respects,<sup>24</sup> of which the combined dramatic and metaphoric use of vision is only one. One analogue should suffice as evidence that Austen

certainly would have appreciated, and may have appropriated, some of Smith's techniques.

One of the nicer touches in Sense and Sensibility is the scene at Lady Middleton's party (Chapter 28) when by observing his eyes, Austen captures what is guileless and what is guilty about Willoughby. Elinor catches his "eye, and he immediately bowed, but without attempting to speak to her." Later in the evening when he is forced to greet the sisters, he addresses "himself rather to Elinor than Marianne, as if wishing to avoid her eye, and determined not to observe her attitude." Although he is trying his best to seem cool and detached, he loses control for a moment; his "complexion changed and all his embarrassment returned; but as if, on catching the eye of [Miss Grey, his fiancée], he felt the necessity of instant exertion, he recovered himself again."

Smith's Willoughby is similarly forced to look away during an interview with a woman he once courted. Having had no choice but to give Celestina up, he presumably entertains emotions that are rather different from what Austen's Willoughby is supposed to be feeling. Their behavior, however, is similar. When Celestina "turned her expressive eyes on his, to enquire whether he could really behave thus cruelly towards her," Willoughby's "eyes met hers; but as if he could not bear her looks he turned them away towards the door" (C, IV, 94). The quality of shared but unacknowledged anguish implicit in these gestures is more like what Austen achieves in Persuasion than what she tries for in Sense and Sensibility; the difference, however, is that Smith's lovers are desperate while Anne Elliott and Wentworth think that they are resigned.

Smith exploits the poignancy of Willoughby's and Celestina's distress in several scenes like the one where the line quoted above appears. All of them depend in large part for their effect--sentimental but not maudlin--on what eyes express and what characters do or do not choose to see. The device provides Smith with a dignified alternative to the often frenzied declamation more common in novels of the period: for example, in Fanny Burney's Cecilia.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout Celestina Smith characterizes and satirizes the society she portrays by calling attention to the relationship between sight and insight in the individuals she introduces. When Willoughby reluctantly allows himself to become part of his uncle's social set, he moves among people who see very badly indeed. His uncle, Lord Castlenorth,

was, indeed, never very much celebrated for discernment; but his Lady highly piqued herself on her sagacity--on the facility with which she read characters, and penetrated the views of those with whom she conversed--her blindness therefore was evidently wilful--and that of her daughter, unless her love or her vanity intercepted her sight, was equally strange--certain it was that they either could not, or would not, attend to the reluctant melancholy of Willoughby, under which he with difficulty concealed the bitter agonies of despair; and they appeared perfectly satisfied with him and with themselves (C, IV, 129-30).

Willoughby finds little to like in the calculated obtuseness of Lady Castlenorth and her daughter; Lord Castlenorth's native stupidity seems less objectionable.

The entire household operates on duplicity, facilitated by Lord Castlenorth's blindness. At the center of all intrigue is the fourth member as it were of the Castlenorth ménage: Captain Cavanaugh. In the Castlenorth drawing room, there is "one face . . . in the circle, that, though it wore looks of festivity, yet was now and then seen to

survey Willoughby with indignant scorn; and then, as if checked for indulging it, to resume the smile of approbation and complacency" (C, IV, 130). It is Cavanaugh's. Captain Cavanaugh has been attentive to both Lady Castlenorth and her daughter. His intimacy with the mother, in addition to being an end in itself, has given him the freedom of the house, hence ample opportunity to secretly court Miss Fitz-Hayman. He is privy to Lord Castlenorth's plan to consolidate the family's hereditary holdings by marrying his daughter to his nephew, and his purposes are best served if interest is fixed on Willoughby's relationship to Miss Fitz-Hayman, diverting attention from any inadvertent indication of the covert understanding he has with her. Within the Castlenorth household, Cavanaugh's plan to marry the heiress is the hub to which the schemes and intrigues of other members of the family are connected, and around which they unwittingly rotate. His duplicity succeeds because others are undiscerning.

"Misreading" in social intercourse is often in this novel pointedly described as a collaborative effort. Willoughby, who is usually too astute to blunder badly, becomes engaged against his will to Miss Fitz-Hayman under circumstances that invite mishap. Lord Castlenorth proposes the marriage at a dinner party at which Willoughby has had a great deal too much to drink, and "Willoughby, between the verbose confusion of his uncle's mode of delivery and his own incapacity of attention, heard it all but understood nothing" (C, IV, 132). If the message was in part garbled by Willoughby's fuddled brain, it was also in part garbled by Lord Castlenorth's maundering. The consequence of this particular misunderstanding is that Willoughby is honor bound to

become Miss Fitz-Hayman's fiancé because he seemed to consent to the engagement in public.

Only after Willoughby discovers the liaison, presumably still innocent however improper, between Miss Fitz-Hayman and Cavanaugh does he have the kind of information that gives him leverage. His freedom from a distasteful commitment is given him as blackmail, solicited from Miss Fitz-Hayman with polite irony:

I know that the partiality, whether real or affected, with which you have appeared to favor me, has been superseded by Captain Cavanaugh's more eminent merit; and, though I am very willing to relinquish all prospect of an honour of which I am unworthy--I cannot feel much satisfaction, in reflecting on the idea you seemed to have entertained of my facility or blindness;--nor, indeed, can I, without regret, see you likely to--(C, IV, 179).

Willoughby is interrupted because Miss Fitz-Hayman anticipates the warning he is about to deliver; she refuses to hear criticism of the Captain. Willoughby, who would like to dissuade her from yielding to this man's influence,

could not, without astonishment, observe the blind infatuation of a woman, possessed of rather a good understanding; but he found that the art of Cavanaugh, to the success of which his very handsome figure had undoubtedly contributed, had so completely attained the government of Miss Fitz-Hayman's mind, that she no longer saw but with his eyes (C, IV, 184).

Miss Fitz-Hayman's infatuation is described as having begun with what her eyes alone saw and having ended with the loss on her part of all independent vision. Willoughby's discernment is contradistinctive to her self-imposed blindness; he has been able to see his way out of a prudent but disagreeable marriage by seeing through Cavanaugh's intrigue.

Misreading is more common in this novel than true insight, and it is not restricted to the sub-plot, described above, in which Willoughby barely escapes being absorbed into his uncle's family. Celestina's situation is often misinterpreted during the period when she and Willoughby are separated, and each time in ways that force her into more profound isolation. The first of several such errors happens almost as soon as she discovers that she and Willoughby will not be able to marry.

Willoughby's disappearance just before the wedding, to search for proof that he and Celestina are not siblings, remains a mystery until Vavasour, one of his friends, explains it to Celestina. Vavasour very coolly reels off the information that she may be Willoughby's half-sister, and Celestina immediately "changed countenance, felt that she did; and again her complexion altered" (C, III, 148). Habitually in the company of sophisticates and prostitutes, Vavasour is not particularly adept at interpreting women's reactions, although he watches hers with more than passing interest. He has been more than a little taken with Celestina since he first met her, but until now he has respected Willoughby's prior claim. Believing her to be free, Vavasour "sat eagerly reading on her countenance the emotions of her heart, and interpreting them his own way" (C, III, 149). He misjudges her confusion at being suddenly faced with a radical revision of ideas about her relationship to her foster-mother and Willoughby, and consequently with a painful review of her emotions. His inferences, that she is conscious of being fair game and of Vavasour as a beguiling captor, are wide of the mark. With unseasonable, urbane gallantry, he invites her to transfer

to himself affections now unprofitably invested in Willoughby. Celestina is of course appalled, discourages his attentions, and finally exerts herself to avoid his company.

The matter of Vavasour is however later complicated by disturbing and perplexing inclinations toward him that Celestina discovers in herself. Reading him rightly, she misreads her own response to a man of his habits. She assumes that she is not vulnerable to his seasoned suavity, but, like Emmeline in Smith's first novel, she finds herself responding to what is undeniably attractive about him and flattering about having a man of such broad experience with women dote on her.

Most personal and social relationships described in Celestina are such imbroglios that even the most incisive and sagacious minds and hearts are confounded by them. It is nevertheless possible for those who do not mask or distort spontaneous and simple expressions of emotion to recognize spontaneity and sincerity in each other. The novel does not ignore such relationships, and Celestina is easily drawn into several of them. She shares a coach, for example, with Lady Horatio Howard, a minor character who functions almost entirely as a kind of Jamesian ficelle. The circumstances that bring them together are accidental and arbitrary, yet they so easily "read" each other's meanings (C, III, 181), that they are almost immediately intimate friends. Such unimpeded rapport is, however, rare. The novel is primarily about misperception and misunderstanding as the cause of stalemates that are followed by dismal torpor or frenetic activity.

Only once, in Desmond (1792), did Smith write an epistolary novel. Epistolary fiction, still very popular at the end of the eighteenth century, was on the decline. The novel told in letters seems to have begun to lose ground as soon as writers like Smith chose to convey indirectly the psychological experience of their characters. The interior monologue as Smith uses it is a much more concise and unambiguous strategy for presenting vacillating states of mind than letters are. Drawn out in a series of letters, mixed or vacillating feelings require long, often tedious, documentation; also, novels in letters were, often justifiably, open to censure for inadequately distinguishing indefensible rationales from conscientious self-examination. Individual letters that appear in her other novels are almost always ironic devices, reflecting the writer's idiosyncrasies and affectations. It would seem from the evidence that Smith did not consider letters an appropriate vehicle for many psychological and most emotional muddles.

In the introduction to Desmond, Smith expresses doubts about whether she has succeeded "so well in letters as in narrative (D, I, 1). Very little action is narrated by the correspondents, so that when Smith distinguishes letters from narrative she seems to be aware of important differences in content that in her novel at least are intrinsic to the difference in form. Her reason for using letters is not given, but there is a significant observation to be made from which useful inferences may be drawn. As Allene Gregory noted, the "letters devoted to the actual narrative would scarcely fill more than one of the three volumes. The rest is devoted to conversation and arguments about the [French] Revolution."<sup>26</sup> It would seem therefore that Smith's reason

for using letters has to do with the largely political and didactic import of the novel.

Desmond is largely about ideas and opinions that have already been formulated as political arguments; epistolary dialogue seems therefore to have been decided on as the logical form of a novel that records "sentiments," the verbal expression of ideas and opinions, rather than "feelings."<sup>27</sup> There is an ongoing exchange between the correspondents on subjects of contention, and the letters themselves often record conversations and formal debates. Smith supposed that readers who "object to the matter, will probably arraign the manner, and exclaim against the impropriety of making a book of entertainment the vehicle of political discussions" (D, I, vi). Her justification is first the overwhelming significance of events in France to contemporary history and second her personal experience, which allowed her to hear at first hand arguments on both sides of the issue. She claims to be both authoritative and fair: "I am conscious that in making these slight sketches, of manners and opinions, as they fluctuated around me; I have not sacrificed truth to any party" (D, I, vi). She is also shrewd; she offers the reader "the arguments I have heard on both sides; and if those in favor of one party have evidently the advantage, it is not owing to any partial presentation, but to the predominant power of truth and reason, which can neither be altered nor concealed" (D, I, iii). Smith's disavowal of unwarranted bias is of course a rhetorical trick; the novel is tastefully executed propaganda.

Desmond is an overtly and avowedly political novel,<sup>28</sup> and it transmits an important record of the debate in England over the French

Revolution prior to the Reign of Terror and after the publication of Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France. The polemic is biased but the novel as a whole is not dogmatic. The treatment is intelligent and discriminating in ways that are suggestive of the combination of conviction and misgivings that, in twentieth-century fiction, is associated with the maturing of the political novel as a sub-genre. Partisanship is inescapable in Desmond, as it is for example in Arthur Koestler's Darkness at Noon; like novelists in our own country, Smith treats it as a complex phenomenon often influenced in conflicting ways by class interests and by individual conscience.

There is no space here to do justice to this remarkable novel, but Smith's method and her intention in linking matters of domestic government to issues in the political sphere is nicely illustrated by a sequence of opinions in three consecutive letters. Although the letters do not seem to address themselves to the same issues, proximity and recurring allusions to animals link them and invite cross reference. The specific political issue is aired in the third of the letters: whether there is or can be any rationale for slavery. Smith intends to show that all oppression--specifically of French peasants and of women--derives from the same kind of rationale that justifies slavery. She broadens the scope of the subject in order to attack the ideological source of oppression: the arrogant supposition that social inferiors and dependents, especially those whose labor or whose persons are of monetary value, are less than human. The several allusions to animals vividly illustrate how certain classes of individuals are virtually denied membership in the species because it is expedient to use them as chattels.

The first of the three letters is from Geraldine Verney, recently arrived in France, to her sister. She writes that circumstances in and around Paris are not as bad as rumors reaching England suggest, and that she is persuaded that reforms benefiting the French peasants are in progress. She then observes that her sympathy for those who effected a greater democratization of French politics

must be from conviction, for it cannot be from the prejudice of education . . . we were always brought up as if we were designed for wives to the Vicars of Bray--My father, indeed, would not condescend to suppose that our sentiments were worth forming or consulting; and with all my respect for his memory, I cannot help recollecting that he was a very Turk in principle, and hardly allowed women any pretensions to souls, or thought them worth more care than he bestowed on his horses, which were to look sleek, and do their paces well (D, II, 159-60; Letter XVII).

The aside, in which daughters are equated with horses, seems gratuitous, but leads directly to the next letter, in which Geraldine not only perceives herself as property but as property legally held captive.

Geraldine has in the interim between letters taken a house in the suburbs of Paris while waiting for her husband to arrange to have her brought to him. She has every reason to believe that he intends to sell her services to some of his powerful friends in return for the money and patronage he desperately needs, having already spent both his fortune and hers on various forms of debauchery, even of depravity. If her husband does indeed plan to venture into the white slave trade, she is already on her way to market; against the advice of friends, she has insisted that it is her moral duty to join him in the interior of France when he summons her. While waiting to continue the journey, she writes to her sister:

You, my Fanny-- . . . have never been unhappy, and have never known . . . the strange and, perhaps, capricious feelings of the irretrievably wretched--Since I have found myself so, I have taken up a notion that I do not breathe freely, while I am within the house; and like the poor maniac, who wandered about in the neighborhood of Bristol, I fancy "that nothing is good but liberty and fresh air" (D, II, 176-77; Letter XVIII).

Her claustrophobia is emblematic of a psychological rebellion against surrendering herself to Verney's purposes, even if morally she feels compelled to.

The notion that she is a prisoner is then developed indirectly by means of the creatures her son captures in the garden. Because Geraldine feels incarcerated indoors, she lives

all-day about the gardens; while the sun is high, Peggy attends me with the three children, in some shady part of them; and George often amuses himself with catching the little brown lizards which abound in the grass, and among the tufts of low shrubs on this dry soil--He brings them to me---I bid him take great care not to hurt them--I explained to him, that they have the same sense of pain as he has, and suffer equally under pressure and confinement--He looks very grave as I endeavour to impress this on his mind; and then gently putting them down, cries, "no! no! indeed! I will not hurt you, poor little things."

Geraldine's fears, both for herself and for her children, develop around the analogy so that the child is both the antithesis of the husband who has made her "suffer . . . under pressure and confinement" and is potentially the injured lizard:

How much a tone, a look, an almost imperceptible expression of countenance will awaken to new anguish an heart always oppressed like mine!--As, liberating his prisoners, he says this--I look round on him, his sweet sister, and his baby-brother, and internally sighing, say, "Oh! would I were sure, if ever your poor mama is torn from you, that nobody will hurt you, poor little things!"

Geraldine and her children are in danger because they are legally and, according to the creed of both the church and the drawing room, morally

bound to suffer the consequences of Verney's neglect or abuse of them.

The issue of the slave trade and its relevance to the marriage market are then respectively the explicit and implicit subjects of the third letter. Writing to a friend, Desmond records a conversation with a member of Parliament who owns an estate in the West Indies. Desmond has been arguing against treating human beings like cattle. The M.P. replies,

You are young . . . and have but little considered the importance of this trade to the property of the British nation; besides, give me leave to tell you, that you know nothing of the condition of the negroes neither, nor of their nature--They are not fit to be treated otherwise than as slaves, for they have not the same senses and feeling as we have . . . . They have no understanding to qualify them for any rank in society above slaves: and, indeed, are not to be called men--they are monkees (D, II, 184; Letter XIX).

The reference to monkeys evokes earlier references to horses; between the two analogous allusions is the fable-like episode of the lizards. If the reader identifies with Geraldine's plight as a potential victim of the white slave trade, he has been given every reason to see the plight of a Negro slave from the same perspective. And, of course, the analogy works the other way as well; those who oppose the institution of slavery are invited to oppose those features of the institution of marriage which invite or condone the treatment of wives as slaves.

A thorough analysis of Desmond is long overdue. In a study that must introduce so many aspects of Smith's fiction that merit serious and considered attention, there is no space for the kind of close, critical reading Desmond requires. As an experiment in political fiction, it is at least as extraordinary as Godwin's Caleb Williams. The sophisticated use of juxtaposition and metaphoric connection described above is only one

of several insidious and seditious strategies that Smith uses to make her point.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike Caleb Williams, Desmond is not an exciting, suspenseful novel. Both its "matter" and its "manner" are relatively untheatrical. Smith concedes to popular taste in Geraldine's melodramatic adventures on her way to her husband. Fortuitously, he is dying, repentant, and anxious to charge Desmond with the responsibility for her care and protection; the novel ends in a gush of sentiment.<sup>30</sup> Otherwise, Desmond is almost entirely a discussion of questions raised by events in France and by events in Geraldine's marriage: the two issues finally merge when Geraldine admits that rebellion against her despotic husband would have been warranted. If Geraldine seems all too much a Griselda, it is because Smith pulls her punches. By deferring the revolution in Geraldine's "sentiments" about the duties of a wife until after Verney dies, she avoids a censurable act of rebellion; Geraldine's virtue remains untainted. Nevertheless the radicalization of her heroine is complete at the end of the novel, and must be taken as its central action, although it is a psychological, moral and political reversal rather than a dramatic one.

Because the plot involves so little dramatic action, Desmond is very much out of the mainstream of the English novel as that channel was carved out during the nineteenth century. It is easy to understand why Desmond has until now been neglected; it is difficult to understand why those interested in political and especially feminist literature have turned their attention to Mary Wollstonecraft's fiction rather than to Charlotte Smith's.

Having examined in this and the two preceding chapters several

of the literary strategies by means of which Smith influenced the development in English fiction of rich and complex modes of characterization, and having presented something of the scope and depth of her treatment of subject matter and literary conventions in the first two chapters of this essay, I believe that it is incumbent on me to try to explain why so innovative and competent a literary journeyman--I make no claim for her as a masterly artisan--is so little read today. The concluding chapter of this study suggests that Smith lost her popular appeal because changing taste during the nineteenth century made her manner seem abrasive and her tone seem gloomy. Even the critical praise she received was qualified in ways that proved to be damning.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The World We Imagine (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), pp. 24-45.

<sup>2</sup>Smith seldom does a satiric "character" purely for the effect of the portrait as a set piece. Her satire almost always shades off into irony; hypocrisy and affectation are never in her novels innocuous, nor are their effects neutralized or dissipated by exposure. See for example the treatment of Sir Richard Crofts in Emmeline (I, 105-10). However ludicrous a figure he cuts, Sir Richard keeps the Mowbray estate from Emmeline, first, by destroying evidence that it is legally hers, and, second, by taking measures to prevent a marriage with Delamere.

<sup>3</sup>John J. Richetti argues persuasively that the passivity of the heroine of the scandal-chronicles is an essential feature of popular romantic fiction in the first half of the eighteenth century. Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969). Richetti observes that "the dominant fable" in Mrs. Mary Manley's fiction is "the tragic destruction of female innocence by a masculine world of rigid economic forces, summed up in her vituperative rhetoric by 'avarice' and by 'lust,' which is simply avarice transferred to the world of emotions." To be truly pathetic, the heroine must be defenceless and, to be "truly defenceless, innocence in this fictional world must be poor in a literal sense; the persecuted maiden's story is an oblique comment on the absolute economic dependence of eighteenth-century women" (p. 152). About Mrs. Eliza Haywood's fiction, Richetti remarks that its success was due to "her ability to manipulate the fable of persecuted innocence to obtain the maximum erotic-pathetic intensity" (p. 207). The typical heroine remains, for the most part, a persecuted innocent until the last decade of the eighteenth century. During the second half of the century, however, rape seldom happens, although it often seems imminent. A melodramatic, eleventh-hour rescue functions as catastrophe in such novels as Holcroft's Anna St. Ives (1792) and Inchbald's A Simple Story (1791).

<sup>4</sup>According to Marvin Mudrick, "a new character" makes its first appearance in Austen's Pride and Prejudice. Elizabeth Bennet is a "free individual," who must "choose, within the bounds set by prudence, . . . an individual equally complex, and undefeated by his social role" (Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968] pp. 124-25). In fact, Emmeline chooses as freely and as consciously as Elizabeth Bennet does, and Godolphin fits Mudrick's description of a suitable husband for such a woman. The initial development of this "new character" must be put at least as far back into the eighteenth century as 1788. Elizabeth's forerunners include, in addition to Emmeline (and several others among Smith's heroines), Holcroft's Anna St. Ives (1792), Moore's Horatia Clifford (Mordaunt, 1800), D'Arblay's Camilla (1786), among others. These are novels in which choices are made in spite of social strictures.

<sup>5</sup>In discussing similarities between Emmeline and Burney's Cecilia, Anne Henry Ehrenpreis remarks that "Delamere seems always to behave as phrenetically as Delville does in the climactic scene when he and his mother do battle for Cecilia (Book VIII, chapter ii); it is as if Mrs. Smith exaggerated Delville's defects in Delamere so as to render him unfit to be the hero. Godolphin . . . , we may be sure, will never dash his head against the wainscot or stamp out of the room in a frenzy" (Introd., Em, xiv). See also J. M. S. Tompkins, p. 132n.

<sup>6</sup>Writing about Lord Essex, Austen says, "This unfortunate young Man was not unlike in character to that equally unfortunate one Frederic Delamere. The simile may be carried still farther, and Elizabeth the torment of Essex may be compared to the Emmeline of Delamere" ("The History of England," Works, VI, 146). This quotation is usually taken to mean that Austen sympathized with Delamere. It seems to me, however, that she intends the reference to Delamere to reflect ironically on Essex. Earlier in the same piece, she groups Essex, Delamere, and Gilpin, calling them "those first of men" (p. 143). If Austen means William Gilpin, she is poking fun at the kind of sensibility Delamere displays. If she means the "linen-draper bold," hero of William Cowper's "The Diverting History of John Gilpin" (1785), her joke depends on taking the conventional phrase "unbridled passion" in its most literal sense. John Gilpin's horse runs away with him, ultimately returning him to the point they started from; he never reaches his destination. Hence, "unbridled passion" likewise misses its mark.

<sup>7</sup>Although there is no doubt that Delamere means what he says, it is also true that Smith intends the reader to recognize that his diction as well as his behavior follows literary models. Austen reverses the situation in order to burlesque the longstanding convention of filial disobedience. Because Sir Edward proposes the marriage, his son, Edward, feels obliged to reply, "Lady Dorothea is lovely and engaging; I prefer no woman to her; but you know Sir, that I scorn to marry her in compliance with your Wishes. No! Never shall it be said that I obliged my Father. . . ." His father recognizes the source of this "unmeaning gibberish": novels ("Love and Freindship," Works, VI, 81). Cf. Frances Brooke, The History of Lady Julia Mandeville (1763). Brooke's tragic plot turns on the notion that two pairs of parents anticipate and try to preclude rebellion over the question of whom their children should marry.

<sup>8</sup>Delamere's friend, Fitz-Edward, functions as a foil; he is a rake capable of reforming. Smith takes pains to show why a man who has been more consciously predatory than Delamere also has the greater potential of redeeming himself.

<sup>9</sup>This kind of shrewdness in a fictional heroine can be traced back at least as far as 1678. The Princess de Clèves confronts M. de Namours with some unpleasant insights into his character: "J'avoue . . . que les passions peuvent me conduire, mais elles ne sauraient m'aveugler. Rien ne peut m'empêcher de connaître que vous êtes né avec toutes les dispositions pour la galanterie et toutes les qualités qui sont propres à y

donner des succès heureux; vous avez déjà eu plusieurs passions, vous en auriez encore; je ne ferais plus votre bonheur, je vous verrais pour une autre ce que vous auriez été pour moi. . . ." (Mme. de La Fayette, La Princesse de Clèves, Quatrième partie).

<sup>10</sup>In The Language of Meditation (Elms Court, G. B.: Arthur H. Stockwell, 1973), p. 45, John Halperin points out that the language of the indirect interior monologue in Jane Austen's novels is "consistently . . . literal, general, and abstract" and suggests that "these qualities of Jane Austen's language tell us, among other things, that while the protagonist may be having difficulty developing a coherent view of herself and of the world, the omniscient mind which surrounds the protagonist has no difficulty in doing so, and is only waiting, as it were, for the protagonist's understanding to catch up with its own." Similarly, although Emmeline is not yet prepared to unravel her mixed feelings about Delamere, Smith intercedes, describes them, and puts them in context.

<sup>11</sup>See for one Bradbrook, p. 103.

<sup>12</sup>In "The Style and the Action in Clarissa," Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, 3 (1963), William J. Farrell observes that "Lovelace writes and even speaks in a style long associated with the courtly love letter" (p. 366), and that "the appearance and disappearance of Lovelace's courtly style suggests the pattern of his triumphs and failures" (p. 375). For Delamere, the reverse is true; the courtly style, because it has been suspect since Lovelace used it, accounts in part for his failure.

<sup>13</sup>Works, IV, 33-34.

<sup>14</sup>Rochely invites satire because his manners and morals are unseemly for a man of his age and appearance and for the position in society his money buys him. He is not a gentleman: "Mr. Rochely was nearer fifty than forty. His person, heavy and badly proportioned, was not relieved by his countenance, which was dull and ill-formed. His voice, monotonous and guttural [sic], was fatiguing to the ear; and the singularity of his manners . . . often excited a degree of ridicule. . . . With a person so ill calculated to inspire affection, he was very desirous of being a favorite with the ladies; and extremely sensible of their attractions. In the inferior ranks of life, his money had procured him many conquests, tho' he was by no means lavish of it" (Em, I, 80).

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Charles Reade, The Cloister and the Hearth (Chapter 29). As late as 1861, the process of decision-making is recorded as a debate between "Vengeance" and "Prudence" in the mind of the villainous burgomaster, Ghysbrecht. The device is a literary commonplace. The Psychomachia of Prudentius is usually cited as the prototype. In A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 36, D. W. Robertson, Jr., points out that, in medieval allegorical debates even "when the abstractions used in literary works are derived from medieval 'psychology' and have explicit physiological associations, they are used for their moral or philosophical significance rather than for the betrayal

of 'strong motions of the soul.'" The inner debate remains, as late as Reade's novel, a way of eliciting the reader's moral judgement of a fictional character rather than a way of engaging his sympathy.

<sup>16</sup>When Rochely applies to Lord Montreville for the hand of his niece, he opens his letter by announcing, "I have seen Miss Mowbray, and like her well enough to be willing to marry her, if you, My Lord, have not any other views for her." The bulk of the letter is a list of Rochely's assets: "I have sixty thousand pounds in the stocks; viz. eighteen in the three percent. consols, twenty in Bank stock; ten in East India stock; and twelve in South Sea annuities." As he enumerates the mortgages he holds and his real property, he mentions too that "after the death of my mother, who is near eighty, I shall have an estate in Middlesex worth ten [thousand] more" (Em, I, 101). Throughout, the tenor of the letter is such that his values seem very like Moll Flanders'. His concerns are the monetary values and status that accrue from a settlement, a dowry, and an inheritance; marriage and death are events that have economic significance for him. His letter shows him converting "all subjective, emotional, and moral experience . . . into pocket and bank money, into the materially measurable." Dorothy Van Ghent, "On Moll Flanders," The English Novel (1953; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 53.

<sup>17</sup>Only a close textual analysis would demonstrate how subtle and comprehensive the undercurrent of socio-economic criticism is in Emmeline; such an analysis would be too long to be included in this study. Only a very close reading of the text would show, for example, how integrally Smith treats the symbolic interdependence of the aristocracy, represented by Lord Montreville, and the middle-class professional, represented by Sir Richard Crofts, in achieving their respective political ambitions, and the ramifications of such close cooperation for their respective families.

<sup>18</sup>The very respectable Lady Horatio Howard for example tells Celestina, "I have lived so long in the world, that though I do not hastily, and on slight grounds, believe such a report, yet I should not wonder were it in the event to be verified" (C, III, 197).

<sup>19</sup>Smith begins the novel as a kind of Cinderella story: an orphan, adopted into a wealthy family, is about to marry above her station and in spite of opposition, primarily the resentment of a wicked stepsister of sorts: Willoughby's sister (Austen may have modelled Mrs. John Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility on Matilda Molyneux). When Smith introduces the question of incest, it is not to explore the romantic possibilities of a lurid situation; it is to prevent the fairy tale from coming to a happy ending without introducing a villain.

The appetite in question is that of a reputable middle-aged woman; as it turns out, there are no incestuous longings in this novel. The possibility of incest figures only because it is easy to believe that Mrs. Willoughby, one of the best of women, did not invariably curb her sexual desires. The subject of the sexual impulses of a respectable

woman recurs in Celestina's often involuntary and inexplicable feelings toward would-be suitors in spite of the genuine devotion she consciously intends to sustain toward the now-inaccessible Willoughby. However virginal, Celestina is not unresponsive.

The multifarious aspects of female sexuality are the thematic subjects of this novel, in much the way courtship and marriage are the thematic subjects of *Emmeline*; the women in the novel represent various gradations in a spectrum of male-female relationships from purely platonic affection (Celestina's feelings for Montague Theroïd) to prostitution (Emily Cathcart's feelings toward Vavasour).

<sup>20</sup>Again Lady Horatio Howard speaks for the norms of polite society when she reviews the implications of the rumor. She tells Celestina that, if "it should be found that you are related, the very idea is attended with too much horror to be dwelt upon; and even if it is a fabrication of Lady Castlenorth's, unless it can be clearly proved to be so, your whole life might be embittered by it" (C, III, 193-94).

<sup>21</sup>As soon as Willoughby is told of the rumor, he conducts a thorough and unsuccessful investigation. Had it succeeded in producing information about Celestina's parents, this novel would have been one of the first detective stories in English fiction. For Smith's purposes, however, the investigation must fail. Hence only an improbably coincidence can finally bring Willoughby into contact with the Count de Bellegarde; probable means have already been exhausted.

However fortuitous the circumstances leading to the denouement in Smith's other novels, this is the only novel in which she resorts to something very like a *deus ex machina*. The "Gothic" version of Celestina's birth is discounted at the beginning of the novel; at the end it must somehow be proven true. In order to resolve the peculiar difficulties of a plot that has been created around a mystery, Smith contrives a romance that--however farfetched--explains all.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Fanny Burney, *Cecilia* (VII, ii): Cecilia "read with terror in the looks of Mrs. Delville the passions with which she was agitated." Graham reports that "a sharp rise in the use of physiognomy in the novel began around 1760 and continued until, by 1785, an essential part of character revelation and dramatic conflict was expressed through complete and subtle readings of passing expressions" (p. 210). See too his "Lavatar's Physiognomy in England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 (1961), 561-72. There were five English translations of Johann Caspar Lavatar's *Essay on Physiognomy*, appearing in twenty versions, between its publication in 1772 and 1810.

<sup>23</sup>Introduction to *Sense and Sensibility* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 19.

<sup>24</sup>Mentioned here are: the name "Willoughby," his engagement to an heiress, resemblances between Mrs. John Dashwood and Matilda Molyneux, and the use of a lexicon associated with sight.

<sup>25</sup>A particularly stormy scene is the subject of Book VI, chapter xiii. It offers good examples of the kind of stagey declamation that is the rule in Burney's novels.

<sup>26</sup>Gregory, p. 215.

<sup>27</sup>The evidence of Smith's decision to use letters for this particular novel does not support David Goldknopf's contention, in The Life of the Novel (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), that the epistolary novel is not as closely related to the drama as Robert A. Day claims. Goldknopf's assumption, that "the novel typically organizes itself through the medium of action" (p. 65), is a questionable one, in part because his use of the word "action" seems too restrictive. Nevertheless, these are his conclusions: "To the extent . . . that the novel became structured by a pattern of action, the epistolary novel became increasingly disadvantaged. Its life, like that of certain prehistoric animals, had to be confined to an age when its weaknesses were not decisive. In this light, Jane Austen's abandonment of the epistolary format becomes significant, because she was the first novelist to balance and coordinate structured action, empirical realism, and psychological insight into a design--on a cameo scale, to be sure--which is familiar even today" (p. 65; italics mine). Desmond demonstrates that when letters are used as a vehicle for communicating "sentiments," the epistolary form is not handicapped as it is when letters are used for what is better done by means of narrative or interior monologue. The letters in this novel manifestly do the work of speeches; thus, Desmond approaches the drama, albeit closet drama, in one of the ways Day suggests is significant to the evolution of the genre. See Told in Letters, pp. 194-95. The structure of Desmond is a pattern of interrelated dialogues rather than "a pattern of action."

<sup>28</sup>Desmond fits Irving Howe's description of a political novel, although it is pre- and not post-Napoleonic. Howe calls the political novel "the kind in which the idea of society, as distinct from the mere unquestioned workings of society, has penetrated the consciousness of the characters in all of its profoundly problematic aspects, so that there is to be observed in their behavior, and they are themselves often aware of, some coherent political loyalty or ideological identification. They now think in terms of supporting or opposing society as such; they rally to one or another embattled segment of society; and they do so in the name of, and under prompting from an ideology." "The Idea of the Political Novel," Politics and the Novel (1957; rpt., New York: Avon Books, 1970), p. 21.

<sup>29</sup>Desmond has not entirely escaped notice. In The Epistolary Novel (1933; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 112, Godfrey Frank Singer observes that Smith need not have doubted her ability "to make a novel go as well in letters as in the narrative which was her accustomed medium in her earlier work. When one has read the book . . .

any thought of her possible failure is dispersed." But Singer does not explain the nature of her success. On the other hand, some critics are not persuaded that the novel is at all successful. In "The Happy Marriage: The Influence of Charlotte Smith on Jane Austen," Studies in the Novel, 7 (1975), p. 129, William H. Magee submits that the "marriage theme would be more effective if the story were told from Geraldine's point of view, but Charlotte Smith wanted to use Desmond to develop her unrelated political theme."

<sup>30</sup>The end of the novel seemed, nevertheless, effective and commendable to the European's reviewer, who observed that "the denouement, or rather conclusion of the story is unembarrassed by a crowd of im-probabilities huddled together; a fault too common in the last volumes of novels" (22 [July, 1792], 22).

## Conclusion

Nineteenth-century critics were on the whole more sympathetic to and enthusiastic about Smith's novels than twentieth-century critics have been. In 1845, one discriminating reader noted that, "whilst the performances of most of her contemporaries have been consigned to a well-deserved oblivion, at the end of nearly half a century, some of Mrs. Smith's are still read with pleasure and interest by all persons of taste."<sup>1</sup> Of all those in fact who have written about Smith, Julia Kavanagh, in English Women of Letters, has made the most astute remarks. Her insight into the significance of Smith's heroines has already been mentioned.\* She was also very clear about the kind of novel Smith wrote. She sees Smith's fiction as "a connecting link between opposite schools, and the most characteristic representative of the modern domestic novel,"<sup>2</sup> related on the one hand to Burney's novels and on the other to Radcliffe's. The union Smith effects is, according to Kavanagh, between a fiction of "caricature" and one of "imagination," i.e., between social satire and romance. She finds Smith's characters in general "living and real."

What Kavanagh objects to in Smith's novels is indicative of why they went out of favor during the nineteenth century. For Kavanagh it is a "mistake" that there are in her novels

incidents too harrassing and painful. There is a grandeur in tragic sorrows, a holiness in death; but the mere anxieties of daily life are wearisome and small, and must enter sparingly into the elements of fiction. They narrow the bounds of that

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\*See Chapter II, pp. 64-65.

wonderful world, and the reality they possess is not that great reality on which the novelist can build safely--that broad truth which comes home to every heart.<sup>3</sup>

Smith does not have the kind of optimism that a younger contemporary, William Wordsworth, expresses when he asserts that nothing petty and mean in human society,

nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings.<sup>4</sup>

It is because the wear and tear of daily life make themselves felt as pervasive and relentless facts that they undermine what is pleasantly romantic in Smith's fiction. Kavanaugh points out that something grim permeates the formal comedy that concludes most of Smith's novels, and in "vain does [Smith] make her heroes and heroine happy in the end: the spirit of disappointment ever broods over the tale."<sup>5</sup>

Kavanaugh's objections to one aspect of Smith's characterization are related to her discomfort with a record of petty anxieties. It is disturbing for her that evil characters are intentionally threatening and that Smith wants the reader to feel and respond to their capacity to do harm. As if there were no place in fiction for a genuinely and consciously nasty character whose behavior is determined solely by self-interest, Kavanaugh says that Smith's "heartless people are too open in their heartlessness. They have not enough of the decent hypocrisy of life and society, and lay themselves out with too much complaisance to our contempt and abhorrence."<sup>6</sup>

By the middle of the nineteenth century, if Kavanaugh's reaction is

typical, the reader of fiction expected to be insulated from unmitigated evil. The increasingly melodramatic quality of some novels domesticated villainy by treating it as comic-grotesque; it is inevitably punished and/or ironically self-defeating. The venom of conscious schemers, like Uriah Heep, is more thrilling than toxic. Simultaneously an increasingly "realistic" mode of characterization led to a dilution of pure evil. Once the "mixed character" became normative, attention was drawn to weakness rather than to villainy and vice. Criminal behavior in minor characters seems, for example in Middlemarch, to be a lapse of literary decorum; the criminal type seems misplaced in the company Eliot assembles in that novel.

Kavanaugh's criticism of Smith's despicable characters--and they are always minor ones--begins with the charge that there is something indecorous about the fact that they are treated without sufficient detachment:

There is something like personal animosity in her delineation of her hateful characters, and this is a fault, and a great one; there is decidedly bad temper, a sin that can rarely be forgiven. Truth, her great charm, her wit and her power, is thus not without frequent alloy.<sup>7</sup>

Subsequent remarks point to the source of Kavanaugh's difficulty with Smith's novels. What distresses her in fact is the absence of an omniscient narrator who is also an amiable companion: entertaining, optimistic, protective, obviously in control and always intending to purvey a form of pleasure. In Kavanaugh's words, "there is no vivid imagination, no sparkling wit, no gaiety of mind or heart, no commanding style, to atone for the inevitable coldness, not to say bitterness, which is the tone of her writings."<sup>8</sup> Austen's tone is quite as cold as Smith's,

but the voice addresses and even confides in the reader; there is both an illusion of intimacy and a kind of "assurance" for the reader in Austen's narrative stance.

Smith's narrative voice is totally impersonal. There is no authorial intrusion of the "Dear Reader" variety. Digressions that are avowedly the narrator's are on subjects like slavery; Smith never discusses her characters or her plot with her reader. The narrator functions solely as an objective or ironic observer. Sometimes in fact the narrator is not altogether reliable. In Emmeline, for example, there is the following rather nice disclaimer: "Fitz-Edward entreated [Emmeline] to sing to him; and either was, or pretended to be, in raptures at her improvement since they had met in the summer" (II, 137). As narrator, Smith regularly admits that even for her there are moments when her characters are opaque and she, like the reader, can perceive only what "seems" to be true (albeit usually in order to allow a sub-plot to develop as it were "offstage"). For the modern reader, such tact is commendable. It is also disquieting. The reader is never quite certain that such a narrator either has or is exercising the kind of control that allows him/her to remain altogether complacent. There seems to be a genuine, if slim, possibility that all will not come right in the end, that poetic justice will not be done.

Sir Walter Scott too notes an incongruity between the formal properties of Smith's novels and their mood. He describes, specifically in terms of how the reader expects to feel after reading a novel, an

attribute of Mrs. Smith's fictitious narratives which may be a recommendation, or the contrary, as it affects readers of various temperaments, or the same reader in a different mood

of mind. We allude to the general tone of melancholy which pervades her composition. . . . The conclusions of her novels, it is true, are generally fortunate, and she has spared her readers who have probably enough arising out of their own concerns to make them anxious and unhappy, the uncomfortable feeling of having wasted their hour of leisure upon making themselves yet more sad and uncomfortable than before, by the unpleasant conclusion of a tale which they had taken up for amusement.<sup>9</sup>

The battle waged until the end of the eighteenth century over the right of prose fiction to justify itself merely as a form of entertainment had in the nineteenth century been won.

A novel was expected to entertain more than to instruct; reading a novel was supposed to be a pleasurable experience. The beginnings of an esthetic problem which would become a significant issue toward the end of the nineteenth century can be identified in what Scott says next:

The sky, though it uniformly lours upon us through Mrs. Smith's narrations, breaks forth on the conclusion. . . . Still, however, we long for a few sunny glimpses to enliven the landscape in the course of the story, and with these we are rarely supplied; so that the general influence of melancholy can scarce be removed by the assurance, that our favourites are at length married and prosperous. The hasty and happy catastrophe seems so inconsistent with the uniform persecutions of Fortune, through the course of the story, that we cannot help doubting whether adversity had exhausted her vial, or whether she had not further misfortunes in store for them after the curtain was dropped by the Authoress.<sup>10</sup>

Even if Scott's version places undue emphasis on Fortune as something external and arbitrary rather than as a consequence of the behavior of the characters themselves, he is quite correct (though that is not his main point) in locating a major esthetic flaw in her novels. It is, however, a flaw in a great many novels written during the nineteenth century, and one that can be traced back at least as far as Fielding's

Amelia. There is ample evidence that Austen and Eliot among others were conscious that the kind of ending their readers expected was incongruent with the sense of some of the novels to which it was nevertheless dutifully attached.<sup>11</sup>

Smith is remarkably unselfconscious about how arbitrarily she satisfies the convention. There is in fact so little evidence of embarrassment (and reference to earlier and contemporary novels by other writers shows a similarly brazen manipulation of the happy ending), that her novels seem to contribute evidence of a kind of compact between the writer and his readers at the end of the eighteenth century that allowed formal considerations to take precedence over mimetic ones when it came time to tie up the threads; there certainly was greater latitude about what is probable and what is not near the end of eighteenth-century novels than there is at the beginning or in the middle.

In Humphry Clinker, Smollett places contrasting marriages and contrasting examples of estate management just before a coincidence brings the last of the matrimonial pairs together; he reasserts his theme and pairs off his lovers within a highly compressed series of events at the end of the novel. The machinery includes an accident, recognition scenes, the reunion of an orphan with his father and of long separated friends, an unmasking, and so on. In order to give a tidy ending to Edward, John Moore telescopes a series of romantic alliances and even resorts to a burlesque of marvellous recognition scenes: the orphan's long-lost mother arrives--now that he is full grown and about to marry--and identification is made not only by means of the usual locket but also by a distinctive mulberry (!) mark on Edward's elbow.

There is also a rapid and melodramatic conclusion to Mordaunt, too complex to summarize here. The conclusion, although it has been carefully prepared for in the course of the novel, is radically different in pace and mood from anything that precedes it. Similarly, the conclusion of Mrs. Inchbald's A Simple Story posits a sudden change of heart, in consequence of a melodramatic abduction and rescue, in a father who has refused to so much as look at his daughter for most of her life. A Simple Story is otherwise a domestic novel, very much confined to drawing rooms.

There seems to be at this point in the history of prose fiction a desire both on the part of the writer and the reader to end a novel with a certain flamboyance. All of the novels mentioned above end with a resounding coda although none, except perhaps Mordaunt, builds to it in precisely the way in which such effects are managed in short stories. Among Smith's novels, the most remarkable ending is the one attached to Celestina: there is nothing about it consonant with the style and tone of the novel. A short tale of intrigue and vengeance, its sole purpose is to explain the mystery of Celestina's birth, hence removing the obstacles preventing marriage to Willoughby. Given the blatant artifice of an ending like this one, it is of course quite true that the reader is left with the feeling that the problems of the novel are not entirely resolved, that the union of the hero and heroine is not in itself a sufficient guarantee against all folly, knavery, error, misfortune, and misery in the world.

Writers at the end of the eighteenth century do not seem to have expected their readers to mistake a literary convention for a talisman

against existential angst. One need not be quite so cynical as Trollope's Signora Neroni, who declares there "is no happiness in love, except at the end of an English Novel" (Barchester Towers, Chapter 27), to recognize that fairytale endings don't accord well with the usual subjects of serious prose fiction. In 1871-72, George Eliot begins the last chapter of Middlemarch, entitled "Finale": "Every limit is a beginning as well as an ending." The intent of the chapter is ironic subversion of the conventional happy ending. By casting a peculiarly ambiguous pall over the marriage Dorothea begins at the end of the novel, the finale proves to be in effect anticlimactic. Insofar as Smith's novels belie their happy endings, they are forerunners of late nineteenth-century realistic fiction.

Charlotte Smith's novels seem to have appealed to relatively few readers--that is, only "persons of taste"--after the first decades of the nineteenth century for reasons that should no longer apply. Few now want fiction to skirt the sordid, nasty facts of life or to treat only those personal and social problems that can be fully resolved, or seem so, in the last chapter or two of a triple-decker. Twentieth-century readers are willing to grant that the effect of a work of art may legitimately be dismay.

For twentieth-century readers, Smith's novels are of particular interest as early examples of politically-motivated social criticism and as early examples of fiction that--sometimes more, sometimes less, successfully--manipulates the reader's response to the text by means of a large variety of narrative strategies. Smith's "fiction with a purpose" is in many respects more interesting than the thesis novels

of Bage, Holcroft, Inchbald and Wollstonecraft because it so seldom strikes the reader as propaganda. Hers is rather a fiction of protest: for example, against imperialistic wars, against powerful interest groups, against the often ambiguous (sometimes specious, sometimes paradoxical) role assigned to women. History has circled around during the nearly two-hundred years since she wrote, so that some of the issues of our time and hers run curiously parallel. But even were this not the case, the issues aired in her novels would not seem irrelevant to the problems of other times and places. The nature and terms of her social criticism are not parochial.

Although the respective achievements during the 1790's of Radcliffe, Inchbald and Godwin within their separate spheres are estimable, Charlotte Smith's fiction is certainly unique in the scope of her technical achievement. She manipulated the conventions and formal properties of the eighteenth-century novel for sometimes comic, sometimes satiric, sometimes romantic, sometimes sentimental, sometimes lugubrious, sometimes macabre, sometimes sardonic and sometimes acrimonious effects. Smith's experiments, virtually across the board, with varieties of literary irony are a counterpart, one century earlier, to Henry James's.

A modern reader is not likely to raise objections like those of Kavanaugh and Scott. Quite the reverse. The modern reader is likely to hurry past Smith's sentimental flights and discount her conventionally happy endings. If so, his loss is minimal. There is every reason to suppose that Smith too hurried through the most "sentimental," the most "picturesque" and the most maudlin passages in her novels, and many of her happy endings are so transparently engineered that it seems silly to

take them seriously.<sup>12</sup> If however one reads for Smith's rich appreciation of ambiguity and irony, both in the world and in fiction, the experience is rewarding.

In closing my study, I must admit that this essay began as a search for "forerunners" of nineteenth-century fiction. Discontinuity in the line between Fielding's Amelia and Austen's novels seemed unaccountably radical, and it did not seem credible that no precedents other than Burney's novels existed for Jane Austen's exquisite craftsmanship. Austen speaks of her "cameo" performances as refinements of novels that are more sweeping in scope and subject than hers. I took her at her word, and set out to find the kinds of novels she could not write. I believe now that Charlotte Smith is the most important among Austen's literary mentors; others do not agree. In a recent study of the literary relationship between Austen and Smith, William H. Magee concludes that Smith

offered Jane Austen no useful example in displaying everyday life, dramatizing inner conflict, or even developing the emotions of her heroines of sensibility. In every way the most artistic of English novelists had to work out the brilliant techniques of her craft without example from anyone else.<sup>13</sup>

I hope I have demonstrated otherwise.

In addition I have found quite enough, in and by way of Smith's novels, to indicate that there is continuity between the eighteenth and nineteenth century English novel. What is more, Charlotte Smith's novels in themselves command attention for all that is shrewd, wise, adroit, witty, calculated, authentic, and substantive about them and levelheaded about the woman who wrote them.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Elwood, Literary Ladies of England, from the Commencement of the Last Century (Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber, 1845), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Kavanaugh, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup>Kavanaugh, pp. 228-29.

<sup>4</sup>"Tintern Abbey," ll. 130-34.

<sup>5</sup>Kavanaugh, p. 229.

<sup>6</sup>Kavanaugh, p. 228.

<sup>7</sup>Kavanaugh, p. 233.

<sup>8</sup>Kavanaugh, p. 233.

<sup>9</sup>"Charlotte Smith," Works, IV, 38-39.

<sup>10</sup>Scott, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup>Austen laughs at the breach between experience within the novel and the reader's experience as he is conscious of being near the end of the last volume as she sets out to produce an ending for Northanger Abbey (Chapter 31): "The anxiety, which in this state of their attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity. The means by which their early marriage was effected can be the only doubt: what probable circumstance could work upon a temper like the general's?" The means settled on are just barely convincing, but Austen does not dwell on them long enough for the reader to raise questions; one takes Austen's word. As for the assurance that all problems have been solved for the young couple, and that none will mar the tranquillity of their marriage, Austen reminds the reader that to "begin perfect happiness at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen is to do pretty well." The bathetic turn of the line is irony enough for Austen.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Hilbish, p. 425.

<sup>13</sup>Magee, p. 128.

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